

Tape #1008: Interview with Merrill Angevine

Let's see, you were principal for a long time. I was superintendent here for a long, long time – 28 years.

Is that when we had our own sort of district, or something? Yes. I came here in 1929 as a teacher and athletic coach, and the spring of 1930 I was made high school principal, and I was high school principal until the fall of 1934. I became the superintendent in 1934 and continued in that capacity until the reorganization, and I went to Boulder on July 1, 1961. Then from 1961 until 1967 I was Director of Teaching Personnel for the Boulder Valley Schools.

When did they combine with Boulder and Louisville and all of that? When did they? The election was in January 1961. The new school board was elected in March 1961. So, it became effective upon the election of the new school board in March 1961.

I don't know – I heard that Louisville kicked up a lot of dust about that. Yes, there was an election scheduled in, as I remember, about 1960 on it on the recommendation of the Reorganization Committee. The Louisville school board took it to court and got an injunction preventing the election on a real technicality. The notices of the election, the law says, must be posted 20 days before the election. The election notices, as I recall, were posted on the morning of a particular day which would make it 20 days, they figured, until the election, but because of the fact that the polls open at 7:00 in the morning and the election notices weren't posted until two or three hours later, the judge ruled that it had not been 20 days. So he granted the injunction and it delayed it about a year. There was a similar case over on the Western Slope – almost identical – and the same lawyer handled the case over there as handled Louisville's board's case here, and the judge said in words to this effect: "Do you mean that you are counting hours and minutes?" And he said, "Yes, we are." The judge said, "Ridiculous!" and threw the case out. So they went ahead with their elections. They had a different judge who had a different interpretation.

In Lafayette, did we mind it too much? No, Lafayette was for it. Our school board was in favor of it and the people voted for it here.

For a long, long time Lafayette, had their own revenue and their own school district? Yes, a separate, autonomous school district – Louisville, the same way. Boulder, Longmont, Broomfield, and all the others. As I recall, at the time of the reorganization there were 29 separate school districts in Boulder County. When I first became acquainted with it, we had about 60 school districts in the county. There was one over here between here and Boulder – the district was two miles long and a mile wide. We had a fairly large school district in area, and at that time there were about 60 school districts. But at the time of reorganization there were only 29.

Were we bussing kids in from the rural areas before? Were we what?

Were we bussing from the rural areas? Well, yes, our school district took in down south, almost to Broomfield, we went about a mile west, and then to the county line on the east, and then north – the farthest point was about three miles. We bussed those children in, and in addition, we had a contract with other school districts. The Broomfield district at that time was a very small school district. We bussed their high school people in. We went over into Adams County and bussed a number of their children in from over in Adams County, and that part is now part of the Thornton School District. And we bussed in a few from the Canfield District. That was a separate district, too, and we bussed in high school people from there. We had two busses. Each of them made two trips a day. We should have had more busses, but we couldn't afford it so we made each bus do double duty.

How many people were on the governing board? At first there were three members of the school board, then later on, oh, it seems to me, it was about three or four years before reorganization we increased – by vote of the people – we increased the number of board members to five. And it was five at the time of reorganization.

When did they build the original high school building? Well, the original high school building was built before I came here and it was occupied about 1926 – I think it was, or '25. The date was on the corner stone. Maybe you've seen it. It was on the east door, to the right of the east door as you go into the building. That was the date the corner stone was laid and then it was occupied about a year later.

Were the locational buildings built at that time, too? No. That was built later. That was during about the middle 30's – about 1934 or '35 that was built. And that is an interesting thing, I think. That was during the depths of the depression, which you've probably heard about, and it was built entirely with youth labor under the National Youth Administration. These young fellows who were out of work and couldn't find a job, the government paid them, we employed them on this construction of this building and they did all the work on this building except the plumbing and the electrical wiring. They laid the cinder blocks, they laid the floor, they did the plastering, they did all the carpenter work on the building under the direction of a foreman whom we employed at that time. So that was quite an interesting experiment.

Let's see, when did the gym addition come on and the middle one? In 1952. The place where the present office is, then the room opposite on the north and from there west, including the corridor that goes north and south and the gymnasium, rest rooms, and locker rooms were built in 1952 – started in 1952 and occupied in 1953.

Let's see, the new library and everything else came in – I don't remember what year – 1965, maybe? About then. That was after reorganization. The addition that I just spoke of, including some classrooms and the gymnasium was before reorganization, and the addition to the building – the library and so forth – was done after reorganization.

I can't think of any questions. Well, the enrollment has increased considerably since reorganization, due to several factors. Due, of course, to the enlargement of the attendance area. It takes in now, I understand, more than our original school district. And then the increase in population within the

boundaries of the old district, within the city of Lafayette, for example, which has increased the enrollment considerably, I don't know just how much. The largest class I ever graduated from up here was 38 – 38 students. Last year, they had what – about 60? What do you have in your class?

I think there's about 70 that are supposed to graduate, I'm not sure. So you can see the school population has almost doubled in the last ten years or so. I think they have as many students in the grade school now as we used to have in the whole school system before reorganization.

Yeah, they've had to add onto everything. Wow! They're really crowded up there. Someone told me that – I don't know what the enrollment is this year, but last year they had around 700 up there at the grade school.

That sounds about right. I think they've got four rounds of classrooms. I went to the old grade school until about the fourth grade. There is quite a contrast between the new grade school building and the old one, isn't there?

Yeah, especially during the summer. That old building, either it was too hot, too windy, or too cold. But it was a lot of fun. There were some good things about that old building: the rooms were large and the corridors were wide and the stairways were wide, but it was just very, very old.

I liked all the wood, the stairways and the railings and all. I remember one time in the spring of the year, one day we had a very heavy wind storm, and I happened to be at the grade school building along about the middle of the afternoon, the old building would shake, I deliberated whether to send the kids home and let them blow away or keep them there and let the building fall on them. By the time I got through thinking school was out so that solved my problem for me.

Can you think of anything else interesting, you know, that you can think of right off hand? Well, I don't think of anything more that you might want to know about. I might add this. For a number of years we had student teachers here – that was during the depression years when we didn't have money enough to hire teachers to man all the classes, so we contracted with the University of Colorado to furnish us

with student teachers to take the place of the teachers we couldn't hire. We hired, then, a supervisor, and this supervisor looked after the student teachers – three or four of them each half day. We carried that on for a number of years until we got into a little better financial condition so we could have full-time teachers. I guess you have now, student teachers, but they are not replacing regular teachers.

The superintendent of schools here when I came in 1929 was B. V. McCready. The principal of the high school was a man by the name of Van Lowe. The principal of the grade school was a man by the name of Morrison. In the fall of 1930 we got a new superintendent by the name of Ray Stinnett. They abolished the position of grade school principal, and I was made high school principal in the fall of 1930. In 1934, Mr. Stinnett left; I was appointed superintendent, and they abolished both the high school and grade school principalships. I was superintendent, principal of the grade school, and principal of the high school. It went on that way then until 1952 when I was allowed to hire a high school principal, and I hired a man by the name of Don Solo. In about 1937 I was empowered to hire a grade school principal, and I employed a man by the name of Charles Long, and I continued to act as high school principal until 1952 when Don Solo came here as high school principal. Mr. Long was here for about three years, I guess, until about 1940 perhaps or '41 when he left to take a principalship over on the Western Slope. Then Mr. Walter Houser was employed as grade school principal. As I said, Mr. Solo came here in 1952. He was here about 6 years, then he left to go to Jefferson County as principal of a junior high school there – Wheat Ridge Junior High School. At that time I employed Mr. Glen Overture as high school principal – with Mr. Houser continuing as grade school principal – and he continued in that capacity until his retirement about 1969, I guess, was when he retired. Well, as you know, Mr. Overture left his principalship here to take the principalship of Burbank Junior High School. Then eventually he went to Fort Collins where he is Director of Admissions. He was followed here, as perhaps you may remember, by Mr. Robert Black who was high school principal. From that time on you know who the principals are. They've had Mr. Green at the grade school is the second principal they've had up there since Mr. Houser

retired. I don't remember the name of the one succeeding Mr. Houser, but from then on you know who the principals are.

Let's see, after Black, Mr. Bennington was the acting principal for about a year and then somebody else came. Dr. Black was principal here for about three years, I think, when he took a leave of absence to work on his doctor's degree. No, he wasn't gone three years, he was gone one year, and while he was gone, Mr. Bennington, who was assistant principal, carried on as acting principal for one year. When Dr. Black came back he thought he was coming back here as principal but they assigned him a job in the central office, and Mr. Schreiner was appointed principal with Mr. DeSantis as assistant principal.

Mr. Black was a good principal. A very good man, very good. Prior to 1929 I don't know who the principals were. The superintendent, Mr. McCready, was here about six or seven years, and he left in 1930, so he came here in about 1923 or '24. He was superintendent when they built the original high school building.

[End of tape #1008]