

NELDA RUBY

Interview 107a

December 10, 1986, at home of Nelda Ruby in Diboll, Texas

Mark Kelmer, Interviewer

Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Mark Kelmer, Nelda Ruby reminisces about her school days and compares school discipline, rules, and class offerings in the 1940's and 1950's to the 1980's. She recognizes good and bad changes in the education system since her graduation in 1955.

Mark Kelmer (hereafter MK): This is Mark Kelmer, I am interviewing Nelda Ruby at her home in Diboll. The date is December 10, 1986.

Nelda Ruby (hereafter NR): Mark has asked me to make a few comparisons between schools as I knew when I went to school in the '40's and '50's to what we see at the schools now. The main thing, I guess, that comes to my mind is the dress code. Whenever I was in high school, all the girls wore the crinoline petticoats and the real full skirts and everybody always had their hair fixed to perfection, their faces were always fixed, we wore a lot of lipstick, that was back in the '50's when that was the real popular thing to do. Nowadays the kids go to school in their blue jeans, the girls can wear jeans, they can wear the shorts in the summer time and the boys wear the blue jeans with no belts on. Whenever I was going to school the boys had to wear belts and their shirttails tucked on the inside. The girls were not allowed to wear their hair rolled up at all in school. Everything was different; it was a more formal education, or formal way of school than we have at this day and time. I'm not saying that this day and time is not the best because I haven't experienced it, but I know we had strict rules to abide by in all phases of school.

Discipline was different. Then, if a student misbehaved in the classroom they didn't have to be taken to the principal's office, they were spanked in the hall, or in the room in front of everybody else. They could be called down, they could be suspended from school for several days or whatever it took to make the student line up and "toe the mark." The things that we have now are so casual in school, smoking pot, drinking, the casual relationship that we have on the school campus with the male and female. We just didn't have that. The girls did not hug up with the boys and things like that that you see now whenever you drive by the campus. No one would talk about smoking a joint, or we didn't know what a joint was, we thought a joint was a place where people hung out who didn't have anywhere else to go, that was a joint. Nowadays this is so common, the kids don't think anything about it. Anybody in the schools in the '50's, if they drank, even a very small amount, it was the talk of the school and a lot of the kids wouldn't have anything to do with them because they felt that if they drank they were people that we didn't want to associate with. There were a lot of "cliques." We had groups of people that if we ran with those people, we didn't necessarily run with anyone else. The kids that were in our clique came from similar backgrounds. We had similar financial problems at home; everything was similar. You did not necessarily get outside your culture group. I

think nowadays they are more relaxed, starting with the children. You don't necessarily have to have a lot of money in this day and time to be the most popular kid in school, which I think is excellent. That was not the case, I don't think, in the '50's. I think we looked more toward the material things.

We didn't have as many elective courses as they have in school now. Now when you go to high school you are preparing your way for college in a lot of the courses that you take, leading up to what you hope to take in school. You are making those plans already. Whenever I was a girl there were things you had to take and you had few electives. And, of course, we didn't study about computers; we knew about computers, but in the school I attended we didn't have computers on campus. I had never seen one and I'm sure that most of the other kids were the same way. We had our first television in our house when I was in the 9th grade and we were one of the first people in that town to have a TV and I think now, they are so common, they have them in every room and schools are actually taught on TV for students who are not able to go, they can tune into certain channels and pick up courses and things, which is excellent. We didn't have that ability. Our handicapped are welcome at the schools now, they can attend classes. Just because you are blind or because you are on crutches or something, that does not mean you cannot go to class. Whenever I was going to school the handicapped students would not attend classes, or if they did I didn't see them and I was in a large school system. The handicapped were more or less pushed back and were not allowed a lot of opportunities that they have now. It is wonderful the students that are going to school now accept these handicapped students so readily into their class.

Mark told me I should mention something funny, or something that I recall that was a funny story that happened whenever I was going to school. We were talking about discipline; the lack of now or the lack the teacher has to enforce discipline. I had one teacher in particular that was so stern and so straight-laced until in her room she had all the desks lined up in a straight line, we had a mark on the floor and our chair had to sit on that line, if it didn't sit on that line then that was a big thing, she made a case out of it. If your books stuck out the side of your desk, you know, she disrupted the whole class and that person, whose book was sticking out over the line, and that's what she would say "You are hanging out over the line," so we disrupted the whole class room in order to put all our books just inside where nothing went across the mark. I think, comparing the '50's, I graduated in 1955, and comparing the '50's against the '80's, we can see real good points on both sides. I think we have a lot of openness in the classroom now that is good. I don't necessarily agree with the fact that the teacher doesn't have that much control over what her students do while they are in her classroom. But you have so many more studies to look at, you are so much farther advanced at your age and in your classroom than I was at your age and in the same class situation. You are so much more knowledgeable; there are so many more opportunities for you. You can get into the computers that can help you so much in your outside life, whether or not you are going to college or whether you should go to work just out of high school. The opportunities are great now and I think it is a better time than it has ever been and I trust it will continue to be better as the years go by.

MK: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW