

C.E. McGlothlin
Interview 103c
1973
Kathy Saxton, Interviewer
Dorothy Farley, Transcriber
Retyped by Daniel Guerrero

ABSTRACT: This is an interview about the Depression with Mr. C.E. McGlothlin, who is the educational director at the First Baptist Church here in Diboll. Kathy Saxton is the interviewer. This is a “Dunlap Tape” – 1973.

Kathy Saxton (hereafter KS): Mr. McGlothlin how old are you?

C.E. McGlothlin (hereafter CM): I am now 74 years old.

KS: Where did you live during the Depression?

CM: I lived in three different places during the Depression. At the beginning, I lived in Prairie Grove in Northwest Arkansas. I later moved to Waldron in West Central Arkansas and finally to Texarkana in Southwest Arkansas.

KS: Were you married when the Depression hit?

CM: Yes, I was married and had three children.

KS: What was your occupation when the Depression hit?

CM: I was a school superintendent. I was the superintendent at Prairie Grove, Arkansas for 2 years, superintendent at Waldron, Arkansas for 6 years and the mathematics teacher and Texarkana, Arkansas.

KS: You had this job all during the Depression, didn't you?

CM: I continued to teach all during the Depression, although I taught in three different locations during that time.

KS: Just generally what do you think caused the Depression?

CM: I think the problem of the Depression was that there was not sufficient money to carry on the business of the country. The products produced by the country had expanded more than the financial standard of the country. At that time, money was of real value. It was based upon real gold. Since the United States possessed just so much gold, there could only be a certain amount of money. This amount of money was not

sufficient to carry on the business that was needed to be carried on in the country during that time.

KS: Would you consider yourself high class, middle class, or low class.

CM: Well, high class, of course. I was a teacher, a college graduate at the beginning of the Depression and during the Depression, while teaching school; I completed work for a master's degree at the University of Arkansas. I wrote my thesis on some of the situations that existed during the Depression, especially that related to that profession.

KS: How much was your salary during the Depression.

CM: My salary was varied somewhat. Sometimes it was teaching on credit and sometimes it was teaching for cash. On the credit, receiving warrants that could not be cashed, but could be discounted. My salary was two thousand dollars a year. When that situation became so serious that the warrants were no longer of any value, I had to take another position where the payments were in cash. That salary was \$115.00 a month, making a total of \$1,035 for the nine months.

KS: Since you were superintendent of schools back then, could you tell us if you think the school suffered very much during the Depression.

CM: The schools did suffer. They suffered severely—as much or more than any other part of the economy.

KS: Did you vote for Hoover the first time that he ran in 1928?

CM: I do not recall whether I voted for Hoover or not the first time when he ran.

KS: What do you think for Hoover's promises the first time he ran?

CM: I think Hoover's promises were not the best in the world. He did not find any way to relieve the situation. However, I do not think the Depression became about as the result of his promises nor do I think that anything that he could have done would have alleviated the situation. Moreover, Hoover faced the situation in his day as President Nixon does today. The congress will not do anything that he wants done. They are so opposed to him because of their different political view that the congress and the president did not work together in that case.

KS: How did you feel about Roosevelt when he ran against Hoover in 1932?

CM: Roosevelt gave great promise of accomplishing something. He did some wonderful things. He did some things that helped some people and hurt others. The Depression was finally relieved. I think he could have followed a different policy which would have succeeded much better. Namely, his policy was not enough money to match the materials that was available to sell, he went about to destroy those things which were

needful to the people. Cows were shot and burned, cotton was partially plowed up and destroyed to prevent the glutting the market in cotton. And various other activities were carried on to balance the materials which were available to bring them down to the money instead of bringing the amount of money up to the produce. If he had instead entered into a strong effort to sell our goods abroad, while we had such a surplus and had succeeded, it would have meant a lasting benefit to the country—a much greater benefit than to destroy them so that the people did not have food, clothing and other things available for them. To show you how little some things sold for, during the Depression there were times when we paid fifteen cents for two dozen eggs or fifteen cents for sliced ham. For the country produce, all the produce was practically valueless so the farmer had no money with which to pay his taxes and there being no taxes, there was no money to operate schools. Schools closed and there were various difficulties there. I wrote a thesis on what Roosevelt did to try to help—what he did to try to help the schools which I will discuss a little bit later. But concerning the prices of materials and other things, houses were sometimes torn down because there was no sale price. I lived for a time in a six-room brick house for which I paid \$12.50 a month as rent. That house sold and I had to find another place to live. I bought a five-room house on a lot and the total cost was \$978.00 for the house and lot. It was the house I lived in for more that 30 years in the city of Texarkana. These prices were low and money was very valuable. Today, money is losing its value. It is going in the opposite direction to the extreme as it went to the extreme in its extreme value and the low price meant the low price in other things.

KS: Mr. McGlothlin, of Hoover and Roosevelt, who do you really think is the stronger of the two men as far as politics were concerned?

CM: Roosevelt was the stronger in politics. Moreover he was of the same political party as the congress of his day. Consequently, he had almost unlimited power and whatever he said was done. Many things were done for the relief of the situation. As I mentioned a while ago, cattle, cotton and other crops were destroyed, bringing into balance the products of the land and the money. There were other things which he did to relieve the situation. Congress developed a system called the WPA—the works project. Many young men were without work, had nothing to do and no hope of finding jobs. They set up camps in the woods or various places throughout the country. They moved in army tents, army equipment and moved these young fellows out there and put them to work. They gave them their food and their clothing and a small amount of money. And that relieved rebellion and difficulties in cities and towns where these young men would have caused trouble if they were allowed to congregate. With reference to the schools, the school teachers who were without work were placed on the same basis and given work as were others without work. They were given work as were others without work. They were given this money on basis of need rather than on the basis of their qualifications as teachers in the schools. They were paid provided they would go to the schools, schools which had been closed because of lack of funds in the community or threatened with closure because they had no funds with which to operate. It was in this area that I prepared a thesis for my master's degree, comparing the qualifications of teachers in the schools in Western Arkansas who were employed by the school board in the normal way

and comparing these with teachers who were receiving aid from the government and were assigned to the schools to teach the children of various ages.

KS: What was the average salary of a teacher during the Depression?

CM: At the beginning of the Depression in the rural section of Arkansas where I was, the salaries were usually approximately \$100.00 a month for high school teachers and \$75.00 for elementary teachers. With the coming of the Depression, various reductions were made and depending on the local school board and its condition. Under the program of the federal aid, the salary for an elementary teacher was \$42.00 for a month of 20 days. Later, there was another program instituted where the salary was \$65.00 a month. These, of course, would be impossible today, but under the situation of cheap food, it was possible for teachers to live upon that amount, in that area because many of them, of course, by living on the farm or at least having gardens, could produce their own food.

KS: What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word “Depression”?

CM: I think of the banks closing. Not only was the state and the schools wrecked, but the banks. People who owed the banks money would not pay them. People who had money on deposit in the banks began to cash out their money, and the banks had to close their doors to prevent the run on the bank. The people who had money in the bank received only a small portion of the money they had deposited in the bank. Many people who were wealthy and well-to-do lost all that they had and were left in dire straits just the same as the poor people were in that day.

KS: Could you tell us if you lost any when the banks went out of business?

CM: I did not lose very much because I did not have it to lose. I did have the experience of having an account in one bank that closed. I had only a small amount of money. That particular bank was rather unusual because when it was closed and liquidated, it paid 90 cents on the dollar for the amounts for all those people who had deposits in that bank.

KS: Mr. McGlothlin, when people who are my age when we hear that the Depression hit, we think it just came all at once. Really, in your opinion, how long did it take the Depression to come about?

CM: It was increasing over a period of about six years. There was a sudden shock at the beginning which struck hard. It was a run on the stock market when the bottom dropped out of the stock market in 1929. But it was 6 years before that was felt in all phases of life in the states and in the community. So it was just not realized at the very beginning that it was so serious, but it just gradually developed there. Then it continued for a period of time and then gradually diminished in the end.

KS: Do you believe there will ever be another depression like the one in the thirties?

CM: I do not believe we will have one like the one in the thirties. As I mentioned earlier, my thought is that the Depression was due to lack of money—lack of the medium of exchange which the business of the country could be carried on. Today, our money is based on entirely different—is furnished in an entirely different way. And its quantity is variable and varied by the government so it will never come in the same way that it did then. It may come in other ways and there may be catastrophes and inflation or other problems that will develop and cause serious difficulty and upset the business of our country. In the foreseeable future it will not be of the same type that it was in that time.

KS: Thank you, Mr. McGlothlin.

END OF INTERVIEW