

Gathering Our Voice

Interviewee: Peggy Whitmore

Interviewer: Nancy Warner

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Transcribed by Jennifer Riccitelli, AmeriCorps Volunteer

Nancy Warner: Okay, this is Nancy Warner and the date is August 21, 2012. I'm here at the home of Peggy Whitmore in Entiat and we're going to do an interview on Peggy's experiences, long years of experiences, in being a student and then teaching and then being a volunteer associated with the Entiat School as part of the 2012 Success Summit that we're holding in Entiat this year. So, thank you Peggy for making time in your busy calendar to sit down and talk with me about some of these things. I look forward to learning from you. So for all these interviews, we just get some general background from people. And I am anxious to learn a little more about you're background. How long have you lived in North Central Washington?

Peggy Whitmore: All my life. I was born in the Saint Anthony's Hospital in Wenatchee many, many years ago. And so, I've lived here all my life. I left to go to college and teach one year away from Entiat and then I married and came back to Entiat. The rest is history.

NW: So what's your birthday?

PW: (laughs) September 19, 1939.

NW: Oh, okay. So it's coming up on your birthday? No wonder you like September. What a great time to be born.

PW: Oh it's great. It's a beautiful month.

NW: Might have been a little hard on your mom going through the summer... great for you.

PW: (laughs) Yeah. Well I had one in August, so I know about that!

NW: So you went to the Entiat High School and went to grade school...

PW: Well I went to grade school in Ardenvoir so then when I was in sixth grade we moved down to Entiat. We finished fifth grade in Ardenvoir then you got on the big bus and rode into Entiat then. And so I did one year, third grade. My family decided to move to Entiat. My dad was the mail carrier and he decided it'd be easier to live in Entiat to carry the mail. I went one year when I was in third grade down here. Then we went back up to Ardenvoir and I finished up in Ardenvoir for fifth grade and then came down here. So sixth grade on, I was in the actual school here.

NW: Okay. So how many people were in your class?

PW: My graduating class, I think we only had fifteen. I'm trying to think. I'm not sure all fifteen of those that were in the class graduated. But about fifteen. A small class.

NW: And what was it like up in Ardenvoir?

PW: Well we had multiple classes in one room. We had third, fourth and fifth. And then in one room they had first and second. And gosh, I want to say when I was in fourth grade we only had five or six kids I think. Maybe. I'd have to sit there and figure out who they were. It wasn't nearly as big of course until we had moved down here. It was small, and everybody knew everybody. [Inaudible]

NW: So, then where was the school when you first started attending it? Was it located where it is now?

PW: Yes, but it was a totally different building when I first, you know, when we came down. In third grade it was still the big building. And I don't know if you've seen the new archived pictures or not, but they were building the gym and... I'll have to think about this a little bit. When I was in third grade, they were just starting to build the grade school where it's at now. So I went to third grade in the old school building. The three story one.

NW: Okay.

PW: And then I graduated high school in the same building. When we were in the, I'm trying to think, gosh... I can't remember. I think when I was in sixth grade... when I moved down here in the sixth grade from Ardenvoir, we were in the new elementary building. Our class was in that and then we moved to the high school, the big building for junior high and high school. And then graduated from the old high school building. It still had the old stage and auditorium and stuff in the old building. So I don't know, Keith always talks about it. I think Keith's class might have been the last class that graduated from that old building, before they tore it down.

NW: I think he told me that. So what year then did you graduate?

PW: 1957.

NW: So you're painted up there on Numeral Mountain?

PW: Mhmm. That was before girls went up. Girls didn't go up on those trips before then. It was just a boy thing. Now girls can go.

NW: Oh! When did that change?

PW: Oh I don't know. When my daughters were in school, they could've gone up. I don't know if they did or not. So I don't know. It was probably in the seventies or so that it changed where girls could go up.

NW: Okay, well let me back up and get a little more information on your family. Of course I've heard of your dad. Everybody has heard of your dad. I'm so sorry I didn't get a chance to meet him. So he went by a nickname...

PW: Shorty. [Laughs]

NW: So was he?

PW: Yeah. He was short. And how that nickname transpired was when he was in school, and he was one of these... I don't know if it was dudes who had superior academic achievement or what, but he was moved up, he was advanced. So when he actually graduated high school he was just sixteen. So when he went in as a freshman he was pretty little, just a little guy. So that's where he kind of got the nickname Shorty, when he was in... first started high school he was so little. But he never did get that tall... 5'10" was probably as tall as he got.

NW: So he and your mom, when you were born, lived in Ardenvoir?

PW: Mhmm, up there.

NW: And had they lived there a long time?

PW: Well, they got married and lived there. I mean, he grew up here too so I think he came when he was ten. So he grew up here and he was working here and she went to school here so they lived up there... I guess you'd say it was a long time. He had since he was ten.

NW: So what brought his family to the Entiat?

PW: Well, I always ask. I kind of thought his dad was one of these; the grass may have been always greener - but they kind of always moved around. But I don't know what for sure, may have been the property... they were able to get the property in their price range or what. They sold a lot of vegetables and stuff like that you know. And his dad worked a lot of different jobs like sheep shearing, all kinds of different things you know? So a pretty frugal family but dad said we never went hungry. Even in the depression times they didn't go hungry.

NW: So they were pretty self-sufficient then?

PW: Yes, very self-sufficient.

NW: And then your mother's family?

PW: They didn't really settle here. Mom, her father died when she was ten. So she had a lot of older siblings and her mother was very, very poor. And mom kind of got shuffled around and they lived... I don't know if her mother ever lived here in Entiat but she lived with a sister or something here. And then they lived in Chelan, you know, different places. I think both of her parents... I knew her mom, my grandmother, but I never knew her dad. They're buried in Tonasket so that's where they lived evidently when he passed away. So she wasn't from a pioneer type family. Although her mom's maiden name was Bonwell and there are some Bonwell's that were old time people here in Entiat that came when it was just beginning.

NW: Maybe Phyllis can shed some light on it.

PW: She does. I think she does have some information on the Bonwell's. I know she does. I think mom's dad would work on the big farms. And they came... she was actually born someplace over by Waterville.

NW: Oh Douglas?

PW: No. It wasn't Douglas. I can't...

NW: Farmer?

PW: It may have been Farmer. But anyway, the family worked on wheat farms over in that area. I'm not sure they owned the wheat farms but they worked on them, you know?

NW: So what was your mother's first name?

PW: Mavis.

NW: Mavis Bonwell. Okay. And she met Shorty. What was Shorty's real name?

PW: Albert.

NW: Albert.

PW: They met, I suppose going to school here. I don't know.

NW: As little kids? Junior high?

PW: No, I'd say high school or later. He was four years older than she was. She did not graduate from high school but she would have graduated in '38 had she stayed in school. And he graduated in '32. So he was only four years older than she was but I don't know whether they met at a dance or at roller skating. They used to have roller skating around here at a place. So I'm not sure where they did meet, you know?

NW: Oh, okay. So how many brothers and sisters do you have? I know Wayne.

PW: There are six of us altogether. Two boys and four girls. So I have three sisters and two brothers.

NW: And where are you in that?

PW: I'm the second one. Wayne's the oldest and I'm just a year younger than Wayne. Then I have a sister that's four years younger than I am. Mom and dad actually had two families. They had Wayne, myself and Judy. And then they waited about seven years I think. They didn't have kids for about seven years. And then they had Rick, Leanne and Debbie which is almost two families. My youngest sister is fifteen years younger than I am. And I don't know why that happened.

NW: That's an interesting...

PW: Things I don't know, but the same mom and dad. All of us have the same dad [laughs].

NW: Okay, good. Do you know much about the ethnic background of your family? Long and Bonwell sound English.

PW: English, Pennsylvania Dutch... I remember dad talking about they don't know... I don't know for sure how far back they've traced the ancestry through his family. But there's a possibility that it was not always Long. Might've been DeLong or whatever when they came from the old country. I don't know any of that information for sure. But yes, English, German, that sort of thing.

NW: So then you have made a living, your family made a living when you were a child it sounds like your dad was a mail carrier...

PW: Mail carrier, worked at the mill, went logging, he had a farm. He raised cattle and sheep. He was quite versatile. He was a hardworking man. He would have two jobs. He'd work the mill nights. Mom carried the mail when the weather was good and then dad carried the mail up the valley when it'd snow and bad weather, he would do it. He worked at the mill for several years before it closed doing the shiffer in the boiler room where they had the steam to dry the lumber. So that was his main job as I was growing up. And of course he worked in the logging industry too. We always had cattle and horses and sheep and pigs.

NW: Could you tell me that word again? He worked as a shiffer?

PW: Shift work.

NW: Oh, shift work.

PW: Yeah he worked nights and days. He'd have midnights and then maybe he'd have the evening shift until midnight. Then he'd have the day shift.

NW: Wow.

PW: Yeah so it was grueling. It also allowed him to run the farm. That sort of thing, too. Pick up the hay...

NW: So your mom and you kids were partners in all that?

PW: Yeah mom worked in the fruit and then she carried the mail. And she was an excellent apple packer. I remember the gals down at the packing shed always would see who could pack the most pears that day or the most apples that day... she was a good apple packer. Then she worked carrying the mail too.

NW: So where was that shed that she worked at?

PW: She worked at J.K. MacArthur's which is about three or four miles up the valley. It's where Naumes is now. That was the main place she packed in. She worked several years for that company. And then you know, pretty soon... at first it was you just worked in the fall. Then pretty soon it started where they did some spring packing. They got the CA, the Controlled Atmosphere storage changed the working time. So pretty soon it wasn't a year round job but it took a lot of her time. Mom was an excellent seamstress and the domestic arts if you want to call it that. She could make dresses for us without a pattern. It's fun telling the grandkids how dad carried the mail and he'd always take the mail to Cooper's. And he'd be there whenever Cooper's got the big shipment of feed or flour and they made clothes out of the flour sacks. I don't know if you've ever heard that story but they'd be all printed. So he'd get in there a little early so we could go down there and shop for our fabric [laughs] back in the feed room at Cooper's. So she'd get two sacks that looked alike so she could make dresses for school.

NW: Do you still have any of those dresses?

PW: I don't. My mom and dad, they went through two fires. The '94 fire of course but that was after mom passed away. In '65 they lost their home and everything in it. Unfortunately my stuff, I was married at the time and had a baby and one on the way. I had a big trunk, my wedding dress and all that stuff was in their house when it burned. So I lost all that and I don't know if there was any of those dresses there or not. But yeah I can remember going down to Cooper's and shopping like we'd go to Joann's Fabrics you know? [Laughs]

NW: That's a great memory. A number of people have told me about that. And domestic arts, boy do I think there is a lot to that.

PW: Oh I do too and of course I feel bad because Home Ec. was my main thing and I wasn't as creative as my mother. But I always felt bad because we don't have it so much anymore and I think those are things that help destress our society. Mom could crochet and knit and she just did beautiful work. I think that's what kept her sane all the time [laughs]. Just to be able to sit down for a little bit and relax with your crochet hook. We don't do that kind of stuff much anymore.

NW: Although knitting is on kind of an upswing right now...

PW: I know.

NW: So how old was your mom when she passed away?

PW: She was 73 I think. When she passed away I think she was 73. About the age I'm going to be.

NW: Oh okay but you'll outlive her.

PW: Yeah.

NW: So, then your dad... I know he's died within the last six years or so I think.

PW: He was over 90. His goal in life was to hit the change of centuries, when it went from '99 to 2000. He surpassed that and lived to be over 90. He lived a good life.

NW: Great, great. When you think about your family and your own experiences in the Entiat, what are you most proud of?

PW: Most proud of... I raised my kids here. When I got out of college I met my husband who came out here from Iowa to work for the Forest Service. Of course me being young, my goal was to get out of the valley, spread my wings. Well he loved it here so we stayed here. And then when I started teaching here, of course we had our family. What am I most proud of? This valley, you know, we have a lot of things we need to work on. But this whole community is unbelievable in a lot of ways. The way they stand behind each other. It is just amazing when there is a tragedy and they pull together. I think I am most proud of the way our community works together. Sometimes it feels like we're treading water and we don't get very far. I feel that way working on some of these committees and stuff. But I think we really kind of hang together. I think the roots go real deep here. I don't know. Is that kind of what you want?

NW: Yeah, I think what we're trying to learn about the community and the individuals who have shaped the community and you as well as your family have shaped this community.

PW: And this I don't know if I want on the recording necessarily but just the other day, because I'm starting to give some thought about moving, and of course my kids all grew up there. My

oldest son and I were sitting out there visiting and I said I need to settle one or the other. Going into old age you don't want to have all this property trying to maintain it. So, my kids have a real strong tie to the environment. Marty lives in Missoula. He's seen some absolutely beautiful, incredible and gorgeous scenery. He likes to go on a hike and they like to come out and go up the Entiat. He said it just doesn't feel the same in Montana.

NW: Yeah the Cascades are really different.

PW: Yeah, deep roots.

NW: Strong attachment. I kind of got a little ahead of myself asking you that question before we had gone through all of your background that brought you to today. So we'll come back to it again. So you did say you graduated from school here and then you went away to college and you didn't tell me where.

PW: WSU.

NW: Okay. Pullman.

PW: And I had a teacher that I had just loved here. Mary Perkins. And she was my home Ec. teacher and so I decided you know, most kids would go into at the time... most girls got married and became a nurse or a secretary. I wasn't good at secretarial work at all. I didn't have anybody to marry so... [Laughs] I decided I was going to go into Home Ec. and be a teacher like Mary Perkins.

NW: So did you meet your husband over in Pullman?

PW: No, I met him here. He came out from Iowa to work in the Forest Service. I came home from a vacation or something and we met. We didn't get married until after I got out of college. He loved the mountains and the woods and he worked for the mill and the road crew out in the woods until it closed and he ended up working out here at Big Toy. Well anyway, he just loved it here and he wouldn't have gone back to Iowa for anything. And so, this is where we stayed. My very first year out of college I took a job teaching up in Omak. I really liked it very much, but he didn't want to move up there. So I said I'll look for a job down here and I applied in Wenatchee. I was actually offered the job and just before I had decided I would take that job, Mary Perkins called me and said "I've been offered a job something or other in Wenatchee and so my jobs going to be open". So I was able to get that job to teach Home Ec. down here. I started that my second year after college.

NW: Yeah. That must've been gratifying for her.

PW: Oh it was and it was really gratifying for me except I knew I had big shoes to fill. It was pretty scary too. FHA (Future Homemakers of America) was a big deal then and I had been a state officer when I was going to high school so I had stayed officer. It was kind of like reliving high school over again but on a little bit of a different level.

NW: At a professional level. That would have been very gratifying.

PW: And it was very difficult because I had always said when I start having children I'll be a stay-at-home-mom. And it was very hard for me to leave that. Especially the FHA part of it. We just had a fiftieth (alumni reunion). Well, not a fiftieth but a big all alumni class reunion over here last month. One of my students, she was going to be a national officer at the time I was deciding should I quit cause I was going to have [inaudible]. I quit, and I didn't get to travel with her but she was always one of my favorites. We had a good time reminiscing after all these years.

NW: So how many children did you have then?

PW: I had four.

NW: Four children.

PW: Two boys and two girls.

NW: And so then you did quit teaching for a period of time.

PW: I quit teaching when I had Greg and Marty. And then one year, we hadn't really decided on how many kids we'd have anyway. One year they couldn't find a fifth grade teacher so they asked me if I'd come down. So one year when the boys were little and I was actually pregnant with Garci, I came down and taught fifth grade. But I didn't go back until my youngest one was in school. And then, of course there was no home ec job then, so I went back to college and got certified to teach elementary school. I taught first grade for thirteen years or so.

NW: Wow from high school home ec to a little fifth grade and first grade.

PW: I've seen it all. Then, I don't remember... it must have been 1990 or so. Wendi I think had just graduated my youngest. And the superintendent and principal scared me to death. It was a day before spring break and they had called me up to the office. They wanted to talk and I couldn't fathom... and they took me into the office and sat me down. I thought oh am I in trouble? They wanted to give me the spring break to maybe think about possibly moving back up to the high school to try and rejuvenate the home ec program. I thought about it, was scared to death. I thought about it all spring break. When I went in there it was just like going home. At the time it was before the remodeling. It was the same old home ec room I had years ago. It was a

really good move for me. And I had all these little first graders all over again. I had them for first grade and then again for high school!

NW: Oh how neat! I never thought about it.

PW: Yeah I said “you guys haven’t changed a bit! You’re just bigger first graders.” [Laughs]

NW: Yeah you probably see their personality traits by the time they’re six.

PW: Oh yeah. So that was fun. I think it was seven or eight years before I ended my career at the high school.

NW: High school, fifth grade, first grade then back to high school.

PW: It was like being a mother. They start little then get big.

NW: And since you’ve retired from teaching, after all those years of teaching, you came back as a volunteer.

PW: Well, I decided when I quit teaching; I was going to quit teaching. A lot of people substitute and I just had other things that I wanted to do. And so I’d volunteer on committees and I’ve helped with a lot of different things. I don’t go to the school and volunteer in the classroom or anything like that. I haven’t done that so much.

NW: Haven’t you been on the board though?

PW: I was before I was teaching. In that interim between having children, I was on the school board for a short time. I just didn’t like that at all.

NW: Oh yeah it’s probably really different.

PW: Yes very different. But anyway, that was just a short time that I was on the school board. But I’ve served on a lot of different committees with school and even was teaching a lot of curriculum classes and you know all that. Even since I’ve retired I’ve sat on some interview boards and things like that too. But actual time in the classroom I haven’t done much of that. Once in a while with the grandkids. In fact the other day, a couple of my grandkids were at the house. They’ll be in sixth grade this year. I said to one of them “what are we having for dinner tonight?” and they looked at me. Oh I said “what are you going to cook for dinner tonight?” I said “this is what we have”, and of course we live up river so you can’t just run to the grocery store. I said “we have some thin steak, Drew you plan to barbeque the steak.” And he just looked at me like I must be crazy. I said “Blake, you can fry the potatoes.” And anyway we had this meal all planned and it was so funny because when they were eating, Drew said he had barbequed the steak with a lot of supervision. He said “This is so good” and I always said if kids

fix their own food they'd eat almost all of anything. They just really enjoyed it. And anyway we were all just kind of laughing. I just said I'm so sorry they don't have home ec especially for kids in sixth, seventh, eighth grade. That's a really good age for that and he said "grandma why don't you come down? There are some stoves over at the school. Why don't you come down and help us cook?" [Laughs] It is kind of sad we don't have that. But you know, the money only goes back so far and they have to cut back some place.

NW: Yeah it's a terrible place to have to cut though.

PW: Yeah and my son teaches health and fitness, PE teacher, so I asked how much nutrition does he teach in class? And he does but they don't do any food preparation. They don't talk about preparing the food to make it nutritious and that sort of thing. They do talk about label reading and stuff like that though. Especially in this day and age when there is so much talk about childhood obesity. But like I said, there's only so much money.

NW: I'd like to go back to the question when you look back on your life and what you're most proud of. There are three sorts of categories that we're asking people about as we look for stories of success that can help shape a sustainable future in NCW. At the Summit [NCW Community Success Summit] two years ago there were about sixty people who participated in this exercise to identify what are the three things that are characteristic of a sustainable community. One of them was meeting basic needs, human needs... food, shelter, water. And then another one was having a clean, healthy diverse environment. And then the third was bridging political and cultural divides. So, if you look at your experience in Entiat and with so much of your time having been spent in the school district, are there some examples of things you're particularly proud of how people work together to meet human needs?

PW: In the school, of course at one time for example, our Hispanic population was basically very migrant. We went through the whole migrant thing. And now they're more permanent. But one of the things that made me feel really good was... I still almost every year go down and listen to the senior presentations. And there was one, shortly after I retired. There was a little gal and I could not tell you her name, but she was from Mexico. And when she came as a freshman she could not speak English. But she was in one of my classes. When she was a senior, she gave her presentation all in English. I was very proud of her. She had worked so hard and she knew the importance of speaking the language in the country she was living in. I think we've seen a real strong movement towards accepting people of diverse cultures and that sort of thing. It used to be that there was some contention there and it's helped by having different cultures on the school board for example. And with people working in the schools with different backgrounds. So that's one thing I'm pretty proud of. We've come a long way there. I love the fact that they do a lot of education in the fields of Forest Service and conservation along the river. We do recycling...

we've come a long ways in that department in our community. We used to be terrible. You used to just walk up and down the road and there'd be junk just thrown about everywhere. And I think I see a lot less of that than we used to. I think our community has been pretty strong in those areas. I've always been very proud of our school. I think it's one of our strongest assets that we have in this community. It's always a place where we have our meetings and things like that so I think it's very important that we keep that strength in our community. We try to keep the businesses and it's so difficult to keep the businesses here. But we've got to keep our school open. It is kind of a hub in this small community, as it is in any of these small communities around here. So I'm very proud in what our school has tried to do in staying in touch with community needs.

NW: Could you talk a little bit about that? How the school does stay in touch with the community.

PW: First of all we have had a lot of administrators who have been very good to promote the school and meet the people. I think that's one of the things we need to be very careful of is when you have people that intermingle with our community. I think most of our administrators have tried real hard to do that. And to use our resources in the community for education. For example, when you need hamburgers, we go down to the Food Center.

NW: So another example of connecting the communities is this reunion.

PW: Yes and always before we had the class reunions or the major reunions about every five years or so in Wenatchee which is where we had the facilities to do it. Well this year, we decided we'd try to do one here at the school. We talked with Mike [Wyant, School Superintendent] and he said fine and postponed the sewer work. We just didn't have a clue on how many people we'd get and we had the preregistration but so many we couldn't get a hold of. So we ended up with somewhere between 225 and 250 people. I don't know. But we set the tables up in the gym and the people had a wonderful time. And they want to do it again in five years. But they liked it at the school. It was such a home coming for all these people. Even though the building is different and they went to school in the old building, we didn't get a lot of the younger ones. But it was a fun, a very nice evening. I was really appreciative that Mike helped us so much on that. He emailed me the other day about how we did the table thing for the Summit because it'd be real nice to set them up like that in the gym and have people sit at a circular table. I assume there is a lot of brainstorming in that type of thing.

NW: Yeah and we want conversation. We want people to meet new people.

PW: One of the things that was suggested a while back at the school was to do something about archiving the pictures...the graduation pictures. Because if anything happened, they'd be gone.

The alumni pitched in to do that and they were so generous. We got that all paid for plus money left over to help maybe we a scholarship. The alumni were very generous after this reunion so I was very proud at the way that all worked out.

NW: You said earlier about when I asked what you were most proud of that you liked the way people stand together at the Entiat. The first advisory meeting for the summit which was over the summer, we dubbed at the idea of the community glue. The Entiat has this way of taking care of its community. Standing together as you said. Could you talk about that a little more? I think that's something that we'd like to understand and other communities that maybe don't have that could learn something.

PW: First of all, there are a lot of multigenerational families that live here. Not as many as there used to be but there are still a lot of multigenerational families. Generally multigenerational families have a real strong tie here. One example that I can give you of this is they were having trouble getting kids enthused about doing the number on the mountain. Somebody as Keith and myself and somebody to go ahead and talk to the seniors. And when I came away I was like some of the kids don't have that tie to the mountain like some of those whose fathers went up and their mothers maybe two or three generations ago. Some of these don't have that tie. But we still have enough of that where I think it provides a strong glue to keep the families together you know. Sometimes I think we think we're kind of the poor step child of NCW and that may make us stronger. Sometimes I feel like we're left out of a lot of things as I'm sure other small communities feel that way so we stick together, take care of our own kind of thing.

NW: You are a little bit isolated. Even though you are on the way to Chelan.

PW: But we're kind of a drive through community. That's been one of the hard things about keeping businesses here. People are so used to going from Chelan to Wenatchee for dinner. We don't think about stopping in Entiat necessarily for dinner. One of the comments that came up while I was working on the economic development community was from somebody on the west side. They said well Entiat is the place you stopped at to get cheap beer on the way to Chelan. We are kind of a drive through community. And of course with going through all the stuff with the relicensing of the PUD and stuff, there's a lot of resentment from way back when, but still kind of all cling together.

NW: One of the things they talked about at the advisory meetings was all the clubs. It seems like a joining community. There's a tree board, a woman's club, the library was started by the women's club. And if somebody needs help, if they're someone who has recently moved here, or been here for a long time, the community has a quiet way of including them. That's that glue!

PW: We have the women's club that has been very generous with their help and the Chamber... and the unfortunate part is the same people work for all these different entities and sometimes we get burned out. That's when we need to really gain strength from the younger people. I think there was a junior chamber of commerce that somebody was trying to start in the elementary school. So the students become aware of what's happening in the community. I think the churches are pretty good too at keeping the kids involved. They set up booths at the bazaar and keep the kids involved so we get some younger ones to join some of the organizations. The women's club has been very strong and of course the chamber has been too.

NW: So are there any particular stories that you could share about a family or an individual? You wouldn't have to use their names. But that they were in need and the community stood by them and helped get them through it? Or are there just so many it's...

PW: My own family. I mean, when my mom and dad lost their home in '65, mom and I had gone to Wenatchee because I was having tooth problems or something. We came home and found out our home had been burned and they had lost everything. I mean everything. I think I've got a teapot that belonged to my grandma that was sitting in the kitchen window. My little sisters never missed a day of school because of this community. I mean, that night we had clothes for the kids, food, it was incredible the way people came to help them. That's just one small example. When my husband died, I could not believe the outpouring from this community from the food and the help. I mean, there's hundreds of stories. My neighbor, he lost his wife. I couldn't believe how the people rallied around him to help him get through that. There are just hundreds of stories. When the rocks came through here about three years ago, that was a big thing. The people in the community helped provide for the families that lost so much. They do rally around whomever. There are a lot of good stories around here.

NW: Sort of an Entiat habit.

PW: It is. It's the Entiat way. There's always somebody who jumps and says "Let's have a dinner or..." Everybody's just so generous in that respect. I remember when my husband died, there was just so much and it was incredible how somebody at the church said we'll do the dinner. It's amazing how they'll just call and say don't worry about that. We'll take care of that. It was just really... you just don't worry about stuff when you live here. You know there will be support.

NW: It's a caring community.

PW: Very much so.

NW: How do you think Entiat will hang onto that once it becomes more developed?

PW: That will change the atmosphere a little bit but I also see young people moving here that want to have that small town atmosphere and I see well established families moving here. If the waterfront gets going we will have families that want to start business. I think we'll keep that. It may not be from the generations long ago but I find most people that do move here are very interested in the history. They want to know about what happened in the past. That indicates they want to preserve some of that. I think it'll hang on.

NW: Now that seems like a cookbook to write. "How to take care of your community." That is kind of a community art.

PW: It is. A lot of it is participation. And I always kind of go back to the school because it is the hub but the people who live here have been so generous and supporting of issues with the school like levies and things like that. They really value what we have here, the school and that sort of thing. I don't see that changing a lot. I mean, we all want the best for our community and education is part of it.

NW: So how much home schooling goes on in the Entiat do you think?

PW: There is some I think. I don't know too much about the home schooling situation. I don't know much about that but I think there is some. I think the majority of the kids go to the school. And of course there are different opportunities for the kids. Kids from Wenatchee can come up here on approval. We have several kids going to Running Start at the high school and that sort of thing. I don't know how the online courses are going but that will change things.

NW: But it will remain a community meeting place.

PW: I think so. When we have the PUD meeting, it will be at the school. When we have the Summit meeting, it will be at the school. It's a major meeting place. We have to have a facility, definitely for that. People in the community use the school for a lot of different things.

NW: Could you give just a few more examples of how people in the community have used the school over the years? I know the valley has changed. There used to be the ski area in the winter and sort of a gathering area.

PW: Well people have started doing a yoga class. Fitness things, classes you know. Ongoing adult education classes. The Forest Service uses it for training in the summertime. They set up tents and use the cooking facilities and the shower facilities. We've used it for when we have had big fires in the area. The school has been used as a staging area and a place they can take showers and that sort of thing. A couple of times that's happened. It's used for a lot of different things. They used it for the bazaar. That was a major one. If we didn't have the school, where

would we have it? They tried it a couple years ago at the Grange but it got too big. It had to move up here.

NW: Oh you mean the holiday bazaar?

PW: Yes and it will follow the Summit very closely. So yes it's used for a lot of different things. A lot of recreational things. The adults get together and play basketball. People use the tennis courts to play tennis in the summertime. I have a friend that comes over and hits golf balls on the football field. Practicing his golf swing, it's a nice big green!

NW: So a lot of people have access to it. It's a lot more than a K-12. It's a community center. I am getting that feel for it and I'm getting that understanding for how important it would be to have a space like that. Let me ask you, are there any other thoughts you have about the importance of the school as you've experienced it in bringing this community together that you haven't already talked about? Just the way it's functioned. You've talked about so many ways already but it's sort of like an information center [inaudible].

PW: We've had funerals down here. I don't know that they've ever used it... the Red Cross coming in here and using it. I can't recall off the top of my head. I'm trying to think if there was a fire one time that we delayed the start of school because they were using the school for a staging area.

NW: Oh would that be '95?

PW: No it wasn't '95. I want to say it was... I don't think I was teaching at the time. That's the only reference I have. I couldn't give you the year or even the fire. I think there was one year it delayed a couple days. Not because they were using the school but because of road traffic too. Might have been the '70s fire. They were using a lot of Army vehicles on the highway. They didn't want to run buses. I think they were also using the school. I can't think of anything. When they had, for example, when the Chamber has their run. This is where it always starts, right here at the school. The chamber had their 3 on 1 basketball thing at the school. The school is definitely the community center. It is the hub of the community. This is why, in my opinion, it always needs to be well taken care of. It's a show place. When people come here to buy property, I'm sure they look at the school. In fact, I heard somebody say that very thing. "When we came here for property, that was one of the first things we drove by, was the school to see what kind of school there would be for our children." So to draw people, you want a nice school facility. I don't think we're unique. A lot of the smaller communities use their school as the community center. I'm very proud that we do use our school in that respect.

NW: I guess we'll find out over the next ten years. Seems like you have such a variety of things that take place at this school. It may be used a little bit more because of the alternate facilities.

PW: Grange Hall is our only other place. And when you don't need something quite as large as the school, people use the Grange Hall. It's a great facility for the Forest Service because its right next door for them practically. For some of their meetings they use the Grange Hall a lot. But it's not big enough for the class reunions. And we've even had a funeral or two in our gym because of the size. So yes it's definitely....

NW: I want to ask you one question, and then I'll probably need to wrap this up unless you have other things you want to say. But... you taught for a lot of years in this small community in a small school where a lot of people know each other. You had continuity with the students who went from first grade to high school seniors. In your professional world and your professional experience, what do you think were some of the benefits in teaching in a rural school as opposed to a bigger place like Wenatchee or Spokane?

PW: Well, I love the fact that I knew their parents a little better than you would in a larger community. I love the fact that I saw continuity with a lot of these kids that I might not have had in a larger community. And part of that was their families still lived here and I still did. There are a lot of connections like that. Somebody said to me... and you know the school has not been without conflict. I remember one person saying to me... they were fussing because they said there weren't enough offerings here for their kids. They weren't being exposed to enough different things. I've been proud of the education my own children got here. This person said "Well Peggy, do you think you're kids got a good education here?" And I said "Well obviously they did. They've all been very successful in their adult lives. I don't think they got it all from their mother and father." I think in a small school like this, when the kids are growing up, they know the people care about them. You're not just going to a big high school. They care about you at the ball games. And they watch you and they know who you are. People see your kids' downtown and they know the parents. I think they know who you are. So for kids, it's great to go to a small school. And for teaching, yes. One of the things, I was the only home ec teacher so I didn't have anyone to collaborate with or anything like that. But there were other advantages. Getting to know the kids and their families...definitely advantages.

NW: Was it useful for you to network with other home ec teachers in other rural schools?

PW: Yes. And we had a consortium kind of thing. We did that. We had a great consortium thing going on for a while. I think it was Manson, Pateros, Chelan, and Methow Valley Schools. We were in this consortium when Jeff Davis was here. When we were here we did a lot of good things together in collaboration with the schools.

NW: When was that? Was that in the 90s?

PW: Yes, that would have been the 90s because I retired in 2000. It was a lot about rural education. It wasn't necessarily to get more money but to look at opportunities for rural schools. We got involved in Real, Rural Entrepreneurial... I remember going to a conference in Colorado for this. But it was a great idea. It goes for a while and kind of fizzles out due to lack of interest or change in administration. It was to try and get advantages for rural education. I don't think it got started here in Entiat. I think in fact it the Methow Valley district really got it rolling. We made some great connections. I still see when I go to a ball game in Pateros, the girls coach was on that consortium. I still see here. I run into a lot of people we had collaboration with in the 90s. So yes, we did do some collaboration with the small schools. Which I loved, I like it very much.

NW: That sounds fun. So I think you just explained something that helps me get a different angle. When your kids go to a school, you want to support your kids. You become part of a whole social network with the other parents. It meets social needs as well as supporting your kids. You get to know everybody and their needs, what do you need the phone for? What do you need email for? [Laughs]

PW: I know and I love it. It's a really good way to stay connected. I remember my dad saying the calculator would be the ruination of us all. I wish he could see where we're at now. It satisfies a real social connection. You go to the ball games and everyone knows where I sit. It just kind of evolves that way. When my kids were going to school, they knew oh where Peggy would be sitting. I didn't like to sit with the crowd because I didn't like hearing stuff about my kids. So yes it satisfies a real social need, the school. Everyone loves it when basketball season starts.

NW: Yeah, you guys are always hot on basketball.

PW: Yeah because it's the social connection more than anything. For one thing that happens, the sixth graders go to camp every year. To raise money, they run the concession stand. So when basketball season gets here, you sign up and your parents sign up to run the concession stand to raise money so it doesn't cost them so much to camp. So the kids are looking forward to that already. One of my grandsons said yeah the worst part is maybe missing the basketball game because he'll be working down in the kitchen at the concession stand. Maybe we won't be any good and he won't miss it. This is one of the reasons I bought this house down here. It's close to the school and I have grandkids going to school and I love going to their events. The children, when they do a music concert down there, that gym is packed! Every parent comes out. It is very much of a social satisfaction. We don't have theaters, swimming pools or bowling alleys. This is our social connection.

NW: It's kind of like Entiat still has a lot of those really strong rural values that used to be part of every rural community.

PW: And I like the connection that the community and school...for example, the city does a movie night. It's the PTO, the school and the community working together for the funding to put on this little movie night two or three times a year at the school. The city is helping to sponsor that. Because you know, we don't have a theater. It satisfies that need.

NW: Oh that's neat.

PW: So there's events like that going on all the time that keep you connected with the community.

NW: It's fun learning a little more about Entiat and it's going to be fun for others to learn more about Entiat. Anything else we haven't talked about that you would think would be important to bring up about the school or your own families experiences? More about your experiences as a teacher in this community and what it's meant to you? I get the feeling you just loved it.

PW: Yes and it is not like it has been without controversy from time to time. Different times, different situations in the school. But yes on whole I would not have changed my career for anything. You can look back over your life and think what would I change? There's not a whole lot I would change. There's times where I think "Why didn't we go to Australia and teach school there?" But why we didn't do those experiences, but I have been able to travel since we retired. Been able to see some of those different places but you know I look back and think we should have taken some other opportunities in exchange. But we didn't. I wouldn't really... I'm fine with what I did.

NW: You sure know a lot of people.

PW: I do know a lot of people.

NW: You've impacted a lot of lives.

PW: It makes me very proud when I see some accomplishment and I think of the little influence I may have had on that kid. And we laugh because I have a former first grade where she and her husband own a brewery and I have another first grade student who is developing a winery. I think I had some influence on these people. But when you see these kids you've had become successful... they hired a person here to help in the kitchen. And I'm anxious... she went into the culinary arts and I have to have had a little influence in that in home ec. It's very satisfying at my age now to see kid become successful. The scary part is when I go to these reunions and a former

student of mine is a great grandmother and I think now that is... I'm getting way too old. They got married really young. I don't know if I answered your questions....