CHUCK BELOW

7-2-84
55 minutes

BISHOP MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. What has been your educational training and experience?

Chuck: "Jean, I have gone to school all my life. I took some special courses under Dr. George and different ones at the University, Dr. Bill Alexander, in the area of middle school. I went with a group to Dayton, Ohio and spent a couple of weeks in a seminar situation, as well as working in middle schools several years."

Jean: What was your educational training and experience before the middle school? Were you secondary trained?

Chuck: "I had vocational background and I had gone back and advanced in other fields and I went back and became certified in Administration and Supervision. I never have acquired a degree beyond the Masters but I now have an accumulation of about 100 hours in various and sundry courses."

Jean: Was your educational training at the University of Florida? All of it?

Chuck: "All of it except prior to the transfer to University of Florida I went to school in Kentucky for two years."

2. Why in your opinion did the middle school develop in Alachua County?

Chuck: "Well, I think there were two things that had an influence on it. Number one we needed to evaluate and strengthen the curriculum at this middle age bracket for the children because there was a gross increase and emphasis on the sciences, math, you name it, plus the influence of Bill Alexander for one and Paul George, University of Florida, who were proponents of the middle school program."

3. How did you get involved in the middle school in Alachua County? You mentioned a little of that with Dr. Alexander and Dr. George.

Chuck: "We had two faculties down here, I believe they were from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Dr. Alexander had a contract to prepare these two faculties for middle school experience. They would go back, while they were here at the University of Florida in this study, their schools were being constructed. They would go back and institute the middle school curriculum in these two schools. And I believe there was one group here from Maryland. Well during that time I was doing graduate work, quote, at the University and I took several courses that Dr. Alexander was teaching in the field of middle schools." (Custodians came and were loud banging wastebaskets. One sentence was not audible.)

Jean: You were here as an Assistant Principal when Bishop was a junior high. Is that correct?

Chuck: "Right. I was here with John Perdue and then with Jim Temple."

4. How did you get your job as a middle school Principal?

Chuck: "I applied for it after being at Buchholz for its first year and I decided I would like to be out in the (unclear) , came back and applied for the position at Howard Bishop."

Jean: You were at Buchholz in the interim? You were here as Assistant Principal and then you went to Buchholz and then you came back here?

Chuck: "I was at Buchholz High School, then I was at Howard Bishop then I went to Buchholz High School and came back here as Principal of Howard Bishop Middle School."

Jean: When did you come back as Principal at Howard Bishop. Do you remember the dates?

Chuck: "I believe it was 71."

Jean: And then how long were you Principal?

Chuck: "Four years."

6. What can you tell me about the history of Howard Bishop?

Chuck: "Howard Bishop was originally Buchholz Junior High School at the old high school location on West University where the medical towers are located. Then they constructed the first phase of Bishop and when they moved from downtown, it was named for a one time Superintendent of schools, Howard Bishop. That was in 1952 and I believe I came here in 1962."

Jean: It was a junior high at that time. As a junior high did it encompass just seventh and eighth grades?

Chuck: "No, 7-9 and even one year we retained the ninth graders who would go to high school as tenth graders because Gainesville High School was splitting at the seams. So at one time we had 1500 kids on this campus at one time."

Jean: I didn't realize that many were here.

Chuck: "We started an early shift at 6:30 I believe was the beginning time and the last class let out at 5:30 in the afternoon."

Jean: I was here during part of that time but I didn't realize, I didn't remember there were that many here.

Chuck: "We had a crowd on this campus."

Jean: Were you Assistant Principal then?

Chuck: "Right."

7. What was your training in the middle school philosophy when you became a Principal? You referred to some of that already.

Chuck: "Well I had, oh goodness, I think as many as three or four courses at the University under both Dr. George and Dr. Alexander. Then there were about 14 of us who went to Kettering, Dayton, Ohio, and spent two weeks in intensive study in middle school."

Jean: When was that, that you went to Dayton?

Chuck: "That was 1972 I believe it was."

8. Were you able to choose your faculty when you became Principal or did you

inherit a faculty that was already here?'

Chuck: "Inherited a faculty. That to me has been one of the problems of middle school in Alachua County."

9. That was my next question. Do you think this was a problem?

Chuck: "You may ask this later but for fear you don't I want to emphasize it. If and I don't like the word if but that is problematic. (IF) The middle school concept were privileged to be instituted as it is intended to be and the curriculum developed accordingly, it is the best thing that ever happened to this age bracket of children. But none of our schools, the purist form is Spring Hill, they have always been very well organized in this regard, but the rest of us have been, quote, on the marque middle school. We have been junior high schools."

Jean: Why do you think that is true?

Chuck: "The concept was too new for, the general public was not prepared for this drastic change. They had been accustomed to people being regimented. For example, here on this campus, at Bishop, we have been accused of having too many children out on the campus outside the building at one time. Yet the very fundamental construction of the building required children to have to go outside to go from one room to another. So to collapse all this motion into the time frame that we had for the school day to change classes, we had to have one third or more, of the student population out on campus. This meant 300 or 400 children out on campus at one time. Then by scheduling small blocks of time for certain things, large group going back to small group, there was a constant flow of children outside,but at the same time this afforded you the teacher the opportunity to meet the needs of the kids. Not just to teach but you could teach individual children. To me that is the whole idea behind middle school. Some children can learn in spite of the

teacher. Others have to have it repeated so many times that it is, and when you go into the "junior high school" setting you don't have that kind of time, to repeat, or to be as close to them as you can be with small group, large group situations in middle school. It has a lot to offer."

10. How much training in middle school, or middle school knowledge did your faculty have when you were Principal?

Chuck: "To varying degrees. Some had none, some it was a misfit for them. They were available to teach the subject that they were certified in, you and many of the others who were closest to it, supported the fact that we needed to have some inservice, if not some required time at the University for teachers who would be at the middle school. It was a new concept. It is not even remotely identical to a junior high school setting."

Jean: I think it was Harry that mentioned that he felt like teachers who felt they were more high school oriented than middle school should have been provided an opportunity to have a place elsewhere back at that time, was there provision for people who felt like they couldn't operate within this concept to move?

Chuck: "There was to a point but there were never enough openings at the high school to take those and here was another illusion that bothered me greatly, still does. If I teach at the elementary and you teach at the high school, you are one up on me because you are at the high school level. Yet we forget this child beginning down here needs all the basic fundamental background they can get to get up here and for you to teach at the high school level. So consequently we lost some teachers who were terrific teachers, I mean by that good teachers, because they felt like we were going back to elementary oriented. That has eroded away to a degree but it takes a long period of time for that to happen."

Jean: I think some of these changes have taken a long time to really take hold.

Chuck: "It takes a long time. I know when I first came here, that was one point,

I had a drawer full of perspective teachers to look at when I got here, and they were, there was no question about their ability, nor their training, but their training was not with this age level child. So we had reached a point that hey, I need employment, as a teacher. You have a vacancy but you don't fit in the shoe, so to speak, and that is a putdown."

Jean: It seems to me sometimes that we feel like there are people trained to be elementary teachers and that is where they belong and that there are people who belong at the high school, that is where their training is, that is where they should be and that there really wasn't that kind of a slot for those of us in the middle.

Chuck: "I'll take my hat off to Paul George and Dr. Alexander. They went out of their way to try to get this point across. The districts needed to afford inservice for their teachers. There was a feeling at one time that a teacher coming into middle school needed more elementary background preparation perhaps than they needed bacause we were taking these "elementary" grades into the middle school. That may be. Chris Compton and I spent long hours discussing this point.

You have seen this happen with young children. They start to school in Kindergarten. Kindergarten to me, in my frame of reference, is to get a child ready to learn. But we have so many who say, send me your child and I'll send him back reading at the end of Kindergarten. Then when we get into primary, first grade, or whatever you want to call it, they begin to get equipped. Then we get into second grade and they mesh all of this, for one year. The third grade they begin to emphasize Language Arts, English, Spelling as a proponent of Language Arts. They begin to learn numbers. By the fifth grade they are pretty well delineated with subject matters. They have it. They don't put it back together any more, except to use it together. Chris and I have spent a lot of time discussing this.

There needs to be more of that carried on into, that elementary element, into the middle school to help these children master the fact that, hey, you don't learn it one time for life, you have to repeatedly come back to it and re-learn, restructure yourself in these fields. I think we have probably hurt a lot of children who went into high school ill prepared to be taught subject matter because they did not have this association of, what made each one of them so specific. It was hatd for them. I don't know if I make myself clear. Mary Lewis, you know Mary used to teach here. Our kids here, they disliked Mary to the inth degree because she insisted they learn grammar, as an example. When they got to the high school level they could handle languages and they loved her to death. Now I'm just using her as an example because Mary was insistent. I don't mean the other English teachers didn't do likewise, but I have talked to Mary about this a whole lot.

A lof of effort has gone into study guides and teaching guides, goodness gracious, but it is a good study. I still feel personally that the middle school concept if it is carried out the way it is intended to be is good for children. It is good for teachers. It gives teachers a wide open approach to methods of getting your subject matter across that..."(Chuck trailed off.)

12. What do you consider, and I think you have covered some of this in what you have just been saying, what do you consider the most vital parts of the middle school concept?

Chuck: "I think the most vital part is the teacher, the teacher preparation and teacher attitude. You don't need to just give a teacher a job; that teacher needs to have a full awareness of what they are getting into and they need to have some advice of what they are expected to offer children at this age."

Jean: A commitment to this age group?

Chuck: "That is right."

13. Should the middle school curriculum differ from the high school or junior high curriculums and if so why or why not?

Chuck: "I think it is well that it differs because they are learning the association and a use of languages and exploratory. Now then we are saying a child goes through exploratory is wasting their time because when they go into high school and say I want to study Spanish, come on, the exploratory was jsut getting them acquainted with Spanish and didn't teach them a whole lot of Spanish. The same is true for other langauges, however there is a lot of good, background preparation that is afforded a child at this age level. When they get to high school they can become a good student in the subject areas they select."

14. How or to what extent do you feel the Central Office influenced the middle schools in this county?

Chuck: "I'm glad you asked that. I think there were a number of us who accepted the fact that by Board action they wanted a middle school concept instituted in Alachua County. We went to great lengths to send, not only our group, but other groups to Kettering, in Dayton. And had a middle school director on county staff, who was all out for middle school concept. Yet, just don't get excited about it. If you really pressed for the middle school concept or the institution, forget it. We were caught up in it over here. I had in my desk drawer a routine junior high school schedule; I was ready to blow the whistle and say, hey, I'm tired of this. Let's just go to straight, schedule everybody into these programs and let it go. Crys begged me not to. She caught flack for it and I did, because we were instituting, and yet at the same time some of the other schools were on the marque middle schools, but they were junior high schools really. It was frustrating."

Jean: You felt like there really wasn't a true commitment on the part of the Board. It was sort of do it, but you were left to flounder and do it.

Chuck: "I feel that way."

15. What do you think are the strengths that a middle school program has, compared to the junior high?

Chuck: "Well if we function as a true middle school you get away from the, junior high school is a copy of the high school. We have almost gotten back to football teams and cheerleaders. Not that I am opposed to organized sports, or anything of that nature, and all that goes with it. But these children are learning basic fundamentals and they need to explore every avenue possible to help them learn those things so that when they get to high school they can really begin to learn these subjects. They get the tools in this period and that is what I am saying--when you have large group small group some can take more than others. Any time you have two children in your own home you know neither was ready to do things the other did at the same time. There are different individuals and we try to, we say we want to give them individual attention and we just keep pushing them into the same mold."

16. What do you think are some of the weaknesses of the middle school idea?

Chuck: "The biggest weakness is ill-prepared personnel. Not really knowing what they are getting into."

17. Why do you believe the middle school developed the way it did in this county with the different schools developing differently?

Chuck: "Influence unclear for a passage

It was placed there for a certain group of people. They wanted their children taking a very structured , very directed type of program. They were accustomed to seeing five subjects coming home with five grades and if you sent home satisfactory, good, achievement met or whatever they weren't accustomed to that."

Jean: Lack of sommunity support?

Chuck: "That is right. And again I think it was just lack of preparing the community for what was going on."

Jean: Do you think that during the four years you were at Bishop that the shcool's program changed over that time period and if it did change why and how do you think it changed?

Chuch: "In the period, into the third year we were really beginning to develop very comprehensible middle school curriculum. We had some dedicated teachers who were doing terrific things. Then we had other things that entered into the picture. These things began to bring stress on the situation. We found that we weren't getting enough people who had any idea of what a middle school was. We began to get pressure from the inside and outside to go back to "a structured typical junior high schedule." (couple of sentences not clear due to custodial bangings again.) Coming in so fast we couldn't prepare people and get them ready for it."

19. What advice would you give to schools that were now beginning a middle school program?

Chuck: "If they had free hand, get some good people like Paul George to come in and give all kinds of hints in development of a middle school program. And I would, for example if they closed school in the Spring, don't have summer school, put that faculty in preparation for the beginning of middle school concept in the Fall. Be very selective of the teachers that are going into the program. Open it up so teachers who are in elementary who want to get into, there are people who want to get into this kind of situation and for those who want to go, make it easy for them. Move either way.

I think it could work. Give some time to hold meetings for preparation of the community. I don't know if you remember it or not, that year was the year that the legislature got smart and passed a law that we had to have CAC, Citizens Advisory Council, PAC, now I guess it is--Parent Advisory Council. Anyway there were many who said, hey, because we have the legislative impetus you are helpless (? not sure of last three words here.) There was no way to do some things right. They were constantly bringing pressure. They would be **(unclear)** **Superintendent. And he wasn't sold on the middle school."**

Jean: Who was the Superintendent?

Chuck: " (could not hear his answer) check to see who this was?

20. What would be some things that you think were exemplary, good examples of middle school concept that went on here at Bishop when you were here?

Chuck: "We had science (???) program. I don't know if you remember it or not but we took all the duplicating machines and put in a xerox machine. We put a person in charge of that so you could take them something today and it would be ready for you to teach from tomorrow. There are no books even today, for middle school concept. You have to be selective. Then too I think another thing that worked real well, we had some teachers who could develop for their community, for their students, a program that met their needs, and gave the teacher an impact on the materials that were being taught. They didn't all have to teach the same. What I'm saying is there were four communities in this school and they didn't all have to teach the same thing at the same time. One could be structured way ahead of another. One could be way into something else. But at the same time they had goals, objectives and had strategies by which they would reach those goals and objectives. You have heard me say this and I still stand by it.

We do things backwards. We are given money with which to hire people who are put into a classroom on a ratio of 1 to 28. We put 28 children in there--boy, girl, black, white. If we do it correctly we would have 1,000 children at Howard Bishop whose varied backgrounds indicate they are prepared and ready to meet this kind of program. They need this kind of program to meet their needs. That program will fund itself and staff itself to meet the needs of the children. Incidentally, we were the first school to be audited on the FTE. (section not clear) Dollar signs get ???? . But if you see what I'm saying, if you have an FTE weighted 2 it takes half as many children to meet the cost of that program as one weighted

ones. So if you have 12 children who meet the criteria for this offering then you know it will fund itself and look for the best teacher to put in the program. And that is where we had gotten. It worked beautifully. The schedule process---if we let the schedule process work--a schedule, we can do anything we want to with the schedule process. It will fund and staff itself if we do that. But you first have to be willing to let the schedule process work. The junior high school, as opposed, you know everybody is going to take math, science, social studies, and you know they are going to P.E. and you know they are going to go everytime forty five minutes passes, or so. If we determine that there are 10 children who need and want this offering and they have indicated that, they have parental support in taking it and it will fund itself then let's find the teachers to teach those 10 children that offering while their matchmates, if you please, are in something else available. It works and that is the whole general scope. You don't just put a program like that together right now, it takes some in depth preparation to do it. A faculty who knows they are going to be in middle school concept this fall, when they close school this spring, they need to have the total summer, minimum, with the best consultants they can purchase to work with them and help them develop that scheme of thought right there."

Jean: I think for sure we haven't had that much time ever along to do anything.

21. How would you explain why the middle school movement throughtout all of Alachua County has taken the course it has taken?

Chuck: "I think the best response to that would be failure to communicate (not clear) ." Chuck's voice level would raise and lower to a great extent and this made some passages impossible to make out.

22. Why did you change from being a middle school Principal?

Chuck: "Well, I was asked to come on to the county staff by the Superintendent."

Jean: Was that still Jim Longstreth?

Chuck: "Yes, that was Jim Longstreth."

Jean: I get lost in the years? When was that? When did you move to the county staff?

Chuck: "I believe it was 1976."

23. How do you think that the middle schools in Alachua County could be improved?

Chuck: "I think they could be improved if we went back and dared to institute in the middle school curriculum as it was intended to be instituted and again provided comsultants to work with faculties in preparation for it. You know we have people on this campus and some of the other middle schools who are not middle school prepared. And it bothers me."

Jean: One of the questions I'm trying to ask everybody just to make sure I cover this---I'm not quite ready for documents and materials yet, but do you know of anything you might have that I might not have access to in any other way in the way of documents and materials or did you get rid of everything that you had?

Chuck: "I don't know, Jean."

Jean: I'm not to the point that I'm looking for those things but I'm trying to find out where some things are. I have some things myself.

Chuck: "I have the annual report from the last year. See that is one thing that kept bothering us here. You never had a stable student population. You would lose half of your leadership role, of your student population. You and I both know that there are leaders among the students same as there are anywhere else. If you are constantly upsetting that then they are in a state of flux all the time. So if the students don't get to stay here, if they are in here one year and then gone somewhere else, even if they go into a middel school it is a new school for them and they have to learn that school."

Jean: Were these changes because of rezoning?

Chuck: "Rezoning."

Jean: Do you have any other areas that I haven't covered or any other things that you think I might need to know about.

Chuck: "You mentioned the school based management. The illusion was given that, hey, we want you and your staff to develop and meet the needs of middle school at Howard Bishop. We began to work on it. Then we began to run into all manner... Either one of two things-- you have to have knowledge, faith I guess, you have to accept that those propel know what to do and how to do it and give them free reign to do it or do some changes and restructure and turn it over. Not constantly offering resistance.

See we sent through the last year, every time we had a Principal's meeting we had to go with sharp pencils because we had to cut the budget-- constantly. I have forgotten how many thousands of dollars we lost that year. It wasn't our fault, it was because somebody goofed. But the deficit had to be made up. Fortunately we were able to sustain that and not affect the main program but it does in a sense affect it. Those kinds of things need to be guarded against. When you cut the heart out of your program it is difficult to recover. We started off you remember, the Hill girl and Wooley and I have forgotten who else, three of them working together in the TA. (Stop for custodial noise) I liked school based management."

Jean: They have changed now completely back the other way.

Chuck: "That is going to drive them up the wall. I already hear it. See with school based management, this iswhere I go back, when we were in that last year FTE count time came wrong. It has been shifted some now but it was at the break of the semester. I don't know why we got into that bind here. We pass out slips and everybody indicates first and second choices and you try to meet those cloices. We were in the framework of putting those classes together. We got a lot of criticism because there were some classes that only had four in them when FTE count.came. In reality they would have had

15 to 18. These were some of the peculiarities that show up. This demands central head-quarters planning with everything, and allowing that faculty within reason, as much laxness as possible in preparation and planning to meet the needs of their children.

That is where I go back. If you were afforded at Howard Bishop Middle School to spend a month, I think we ought to pay every teacher on this staff for one month to sit at the close of the year and become familiar with the children they will have this fall. Then the core, the community leaders or whatever you call them today, could then plan an offering to meet the needs of the children. It will fund and staff itself. But then, oh we can't afford it. It costs so much. Well, I said, are you paying for it? No. Who is it for? If we aren't out there for the benefit of the kids in this county we both better go resign and go home. So we have, it is just like fresh water, we have as much water I am told, scientifically in the world today as we did 100 years ago. But it is in different states of disposition. Well, the resources are here today.

The money--they'll spend 57 million dollars this year whether anybody makes a grade or not, and they'll spend it next year. But why not take some of that effort and help people prepare to meet the needs of children that they will be teaching. You come in this fall, Jean, here are your calss rolls. Well, you recognize a few of them but here is Sammy Jones and I don't know anything aobut him and Tommy Smith and Mary Black. Where did they come from? Well, they are new to the city. You have no back-ground on them. The concept of middle school would also erode this you see because you would come in here from another setting but that would only work in, no middle school in the county because you see we don't have a true middle school. There is 5-8, 6-8, we don't even have one at Hawthorne--Shell area, or at Newberry. So we have a hodge-podge. It makes it terrific to work in.

You would think with the influence, don't let Paul hear this, there is a semblance of jealousy that exists between UF and Alachua County School Board and its upper echelon. With all of the brain power that is available we ought to have the best middle school concept anywhere. Geographically put one where the children will be springboarding into high school and let them have a real experience in middle school to move into the high school program regardless of where they go to high school. Go up to Spring Hill and take Mebane and Spring Hill. They have a 5-8 for one purpose and one purpose only, that they can have enough people to keep that school open. Tom does a good job, Tom and I have talked about this. He can't have what you can have when you have 800-1000 kids to support the program. That is what is hurting.

Jean: That is all of my questions. It has been very interesting. I really do appreciate it. Thanks for your time.