

Interview
with
W. S. CREECY
December 26, 1990

By Goldie F. Wells

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CREECY

INTERVIEW WITH MR. W.S. GREACY

By Goldie F. Wells

Goldie: I am doing an interview on December 26, 1990 and I am at the home of Mr. W.S. Creacy in Rich Square, North Carolina. Mr. Creacy is one of the 1964 principals of a high school.

Mr. Creacy: My name is William Spencer Creacy, Jr., and I taught at W.S. Creacy School all my life from 1935 to 1976, and then I retired.

Goldie: Tell me how you became a high school principal.

Mr. Creacy: Well, I was working with my daddy from 1935 until 1940. He died and they made me principal in his place.

Goldie: So your daddy was a principal. And he has a brother who is a principal too.

Mr. Creacy: He is retired also.

Goldie: Now when you were principal of the high school you had some responsibilities. Tell me how you dealt with the people you had to supervise.

Mr. Creacy: Well, we had meetings whenever necessary and discussed things and we had a kind of a "we" program. It wasn't just an "I" program. I would hand out to the faculty members and the staff what the Superintendent wanted and we would get together and work it out with the students so we didn't have any trouble along that line.

Goldie: What about the instruction and the curriculum? How did you decide what the curriculum was going to be? Did someone tell you or did you have some autonomy? How did you do it?

Mr. Creacy: Well, the curriculum was sent by the State but we still had a chance to change some things in certain subjects but we never had any trouble with that and finally at the last we had some television classes in history and citizenship and they were very nice. Everything went pretty good.

Goldie: What about discipline?

Mr. Creacy: We didn't have any trouble with that. In my day you could spank a child and you wouldn't have any more trouble but in this day you had better not touch them. We didn't have any trouble and all the parents agreed to that. We had a PTA meeting once every month and if anything came up

like that it was at PTA. We had the right to expel a student so we didn't have to worry about that.

Goldie: But you didn't have the discipline problems like we have now days.

Mr. Creacy: No, we didn't have any discipline problems. We had to expel some students sometimes and we had to spank sometimes but not discipline problems. It was cured the same day it started.

Goldie: What about transportation? Did you have a lot of buses?

Mr. Creacy: A while ago we had twelve buses but at first we had to pay a down payment to get our buses. We had to raise the money through the school so we did some football and basketball games and the PTA and we carried the Superintendent the down payment and in two or three days we had a bus.

Goldie: You had to give the down payment for the bus? Well who finished paying for the bus?

Mr. Creacy: The state I guess or the county, I don't know but we gave the Superintendent the down payment and that's all. The first six buses.

Goldie: How much was the down payment? Do you remember?

Mr. Creacy: Around four or five hundred dollars in that day. It's far different now.

Goldie: And the parents helped you raise that money?

Mr. Creacy: That's right. The parents helped raise that money.

Goldie: How did you get money to run your school?

Mr. Creacy: Well, we had football, basketball, and baseball teams and during the seasons we sell the sodas and athletic tickets for about a dollar and those who came to the game did get a season ticket for about a dollar and that dollar just made it. We had around 1000-1200 students and that gave us a big jump over those who had smaller schools because we had K-12.

Goldie: You had a union school--K-12. Well, how much money did you get from the Superintendent's office?

Mr. Creacy: Well, we didn't get any money but we got materials. Sometimes books for the library and sometimes the lunchroom would get help but just dollar for dollar we didn't

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get any money. It was always in material.

Goldie: Material. Were those new books you got?

Mr. Creacy: Some were new and some were used.

Goldie: Where did the used ones come from?

Mr. Creacy: From other schools.

Goldie: From the White schools?

Mr. Creacy: That's right unless a school was closing up, then we got the books and seats and that was the trend in that day. That was the trend.

Goldie: That was the trend that you got what they didn't need.

Goldie: What about running it. After they just left you over there to get your funds and run the place did anybody make any demands on you? Did the Superintendent say that you had better make sure the children reach a certain standard or just left it up to you.

Mr. Creacy: Just left it up to us. We would have different tests every year. Standardized tests, etc., but we never had a demand that we had to reach a certain goal or anything like that but at that time all the teachers were interested in was trying to do the best that they could.

Goldie: What about the cafeteria? Were you in charge of that too?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, we had the cafeteria. We started it ourselves and finally the Superintendent handed over-- Government Programs got into it and finally we built a cafeteria with the gymnasium.

Goldie: Who built it? You had to raise the money for that too?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, we did. Parents, and students and the Superintendent said if we would give him twenty feet across he would help us get some tables and a stove for our lunchroom and so we did. The building was 75 feet long and about that wide and so we cut off 20 feet of the gym and made a lunchroom and that worked fine until we built another building and in this building the lunchroom was included.

Goldie: So you had to see about the supervision of that when they were building it. Did you have to see about the construction?

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Mr. Creacy: Well, we had a class in carpentry and masonry and we failed three times but when that class was started we finished it with the class and the teachers. But we failed three times. We had the walls up three times and the money gave out. But when we got a class in carpentry and a class in masonry we finished it and then we got a lot of criticism from the brick masons in town.

Goldie: Because you had used the students.

Mr. Creacy: But it was too late then. We would not have been able to have done it anymore.

Goldie: Do you remember how much that building cost?

Mr. Creacy: No, I don't. I did but I don't know now.

Goldie: What about the buildings and the grounds? Was all of that your responsibility?

Mr. Creacy: That's right. That was the principals and teacher's responsibility and the maintenance of all, of everything. We had to cut the grass and everything.

Goldie: Did the teachers have to cut the grass?

Mr. Creacy: No, not the teachers. Some of the students and I was the main one with the tractor and the janitor.

Goldie: What about the school and the community? What place did that school have in this community.

Mr. Creacy: Well, I think the school was next to the church. The people had a great respect for the church and I think in the line of sight the second greatest effect for the school.

Goldie: What about respect for you and the teachers?

Mr. Creacy: Well, that was so too. We had great respect and sometime, we didn't have any theatre or anything, a lot of people would stop by the school and ask when we were going to have something and the classes would have plays and we didn't have to worry about the crowd. The community just harassed us to give a program sometime.

Goldie: The school was a part of the community.

Mr. Creacy: That's right.

Goldie: Well, if you had to say how much control you had in administrative power, what would you say?

Mr. Creacy: I'd say about three-fourths. If anything went wrong, I'd be the man that they would get. Maybe more than

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that. Of course I'd use the teachers and the staff but most was left up to the principal.

Goldie: What kind of relationship did you have with the Superintendent?

Mr. Creacy: Good.

Goldie: Did you see him often?

Mr. Creacy: I'd see him at least once a month but every time I had a need I'd go to his office and probably once a month he would come by the school. Yet, we could see each other any time or I'd telephone after we got a phone. We didn't have one all the time.

Goldie: Did you have to buy that too, or pay for getting that in too?

Mr. Creacy: The Ag Department did and then the Superintendent told me that I needed one and I told him that no, no that I would go to the Ag Department and they put the one in the office cause the other principal told me if you don't have one don't try to get one because they would worry you to death. So I didn't want one but they put it in.

Goldie: They made you have a telephone. Well, W.S. Creacy after the desegregation of schools how did it affect your role as principal?

Mr. Creacy: Well, at first I was a little nervous at the first meeting because I didn't know that the White teachers had the same problems as the Black. At our first meeting I soon found out the problems were the same. But at the first meeting I was a little nervous. That passed away at the end of the first meeting.

Goldie: Problems on both sides.

Mr. Creacy: Yes, I found out that some things the Black teacher was doing a better job and other things the Whites were doing a better job. Especially in discipline.

Goldie: Who did a better job in discipline?

Mr. Creacy: The Blacks did a better job in discipline.

Goldie: Did anything change with your funding or materials or anything?

Mr. Creacy: Oh yes, a lot of things changed when the White kids came here. We didn't get any old used books, used seats or things like that. All that came new then. And construction paper, tag board, what we had to buy and

didn't know that that was available. But out of desegregation we got all the tag board, construction paper and paint, the elementary teachers knew about and I didn't even know about, and different papers and different teaching materials.

Goldie: You didn't even know that they had them.

Mr. Creacy: I didn't know that they had them. The elementary teachers did. But I didn't even know about it.

Goldie: But they had been buying it themselves.

Mr. Creacy: That's right and in school they used it. But in the high school I didn't know anything about construction paper and tag boards.

Goldie: Did you have any problem after you got over that initial nervousness? Did you have any problem with leading those folks?

Mr. Creacy: Not a bit in the world as soon as I found out that they were all the same.

Goldie: Did you really enjoy being a principal?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, I did but somehow I preferred teaching and all the time I taught a class even until my last year--one class in economics or sociology. I just wanted to know the students and that was the best way for me to know them all.

Goldie: So you taught a class!

Mr. Creacy: Every year. First and second semester.

Goldie: That's unusual.

Goldie: Well, what gave you your greatest joy as a principal?

Mr. Creacy: Well, seeing the children achieve and I don't know what gave me the greatest joy but the children was one great joy and to see the improvement in teachers was another great joy. Most everything I looked at it on the positive side--everything that happened, even games--winning or losing that was joy.

Goldie: What did you consider the major problem that you had?

Mr. Creacy: Well I don't know that I had a major problem. It could be school attendance. We never did get all the students to come every day. We had a good bunch who did but I guess that was it; it couldn't have been discipline because

we never had that trouble. And we didn't have much of an attendance problem. We just wanted everyone to come everyday that could.

Goldie: So you kept that as one of your goals?

Mr. Creacy: That is right.

Goldie: Perfect attendance. So the rewards was seeing people develop, the students, and the teachers improvement.

Mr. Creacy: That is true, that's true.

Goldie: Well, if you had to give some advice to someone that wanted to be a principal, what would you tell them?

Mr. Creacy: Well, I'd tell him he had to listen and make his own decision along with his teachers. He couldn't jump at everything that he hears because every teacher would have a different idea and they would be coming all the time so they just couldn't jump at everything that comes up. He has to be fool enough to stand on his own two feet and just tell the same thing to everybody. That is where the trouble comes when one group means one thing and another group means something else. But when you feed everybody out of the same spoon you don't have any trouble. You don't have any trouble out of the students if you feed everybody out of the same spoon. But when make a difference between a child due to his family you are looking for trouble. But I had three children and I treated them the same way I did those in school.

Goldie: So all of them went to your high school, didn't they?

Mr. Creacy: That's true. All of them graduated and the one that just left here is home now from Durham. He teaches at the college, North Carolina Central.

Goldie: The school is right here in your yard literally because you live right next door to the school.

Mr. Creacy: My daddy gave them the land to build it there. I plowed many a day from there all the way to the road, so he gave them the land to build the school. The school was on the other side of the road and we started other roads you can go out.

Goldie: Just observing some of the things that go on at school now can you see a whole lot of difference.

Mr. Creacy: Well, I go to PTA. I haven't been this year but I usually go to PTA. I don't know. I think they run a good school over there now.

Goldie: Is the PTA still a strong, viable PTA?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, but it's not a financial PTA. There is the difference. In our case it was mostly finance but I think this is more for scholarship.

Goldie: So it was more survival in your day.

Mr. Creacy: That's right--in my day. If you didn't have a PTA in my day, you didn't have anything to fall back on. But some schools didn't perform.

Goldie: The school was like the center of the community.

Mr. Creacy: That's right. The center of the community.

Goldie: Everybody looked to the school.

Mr. Creacy: Yes, we didn't have any movie. We had one for a while but that soon closed up and any time you had a program, day or night, you didn't have to worry about a crowd. Pay or free, you didn't have to worry about a crowd.

Goldie: Mrs. Creacy is sitting in here. Do you want to add anything?

Mrs. Creacy: I think he has talked enough!

Goldie: Well, he remembers those times, I'm telling you. It is a lot different now. Most principals you ask now, what is your major problem and they will tell you discipline. What do you attribute the difference?

Mr. Creacy: The parent. That's right. A parent can't handle his child and he jumps on the child's side when the child is wrong. That's the main thing--parent.

Goldie: Do you think that has anything to do with the desegregation?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, it has something to do because when a Black teacher would spank a White child and they didn't like that and finally they passed a rule that you couldn't spank a White child unless you were in the presence of so many others or something like that. That wasn't in my day. That came after my time because I had some that they sent to a private school and every school and finally sent him to me. Mr. Poole, the man who sells automobiles, he came to me and thanked me for straightening his boy out. I spanked him one time for going off the campus. I told him, Wayne, don't go off the campus or I'm going to do what I do to these Black boys. And he would leave the campus and I had to spank. I just hit his seat and scared him to death. I didn't have any more trouble. Some kids have never had a spanking.

Goldie: When you first desegregated, did you get much opposition from the community?

Mr. Creacy: Not from the community. I got some from the students. Some students came to me and told me I was treating the White kids a little different than I was them. I was. I had to lean back as far as I could. I said, you've been here but they are just coming so I called a meeting of the whole high school people in chapel that day and told them what the criticism was and I said I am aware of it. I said these folks are new and I have been bending backward but from now on the same thing I do to the Black child I'll do to the White child.

Goldie: So you had to kinda get used to them. I think we had the myth that they were different and we didn't know how to handle them. But you found out to be a good administrator that you had to treat all of them the same.

Mr. Creacy: I found that if you do that you wouldn't have any trouble.

Goldie: That made it easier for you.

Mr. Creacy: And the Blacks were the first to see it. I knew what I was doing but they came to me and told me what I was doing and I admitted it but then I changed. I called a meeting and told them all. Then if I had to send one home when his time was up he came by the office and got a slip and one day a boy came by the school, he's in construction work now between here and Jackson, and his name was Rick Jones and a Black boy came in named Jacobs, said I came for my pass to get back in class. He said you don't treat me right. He said you send us home. You don't send Whites home. Rick said, why do you think I'm in here? He said, you haven't been sent home. He said, that's why I'm here to get a slip and if I hadn't been right there I don't know what those two boys would have done. They've got some nerve and in fact those two did. So I just told them that there wouldn't be any fighting here. If fighting starts here, we're all going to fight. I didn't have any more trouble. But a lot of times it looked like there was going to be some trouble. Yes sir, a lot of times.

Goldie: After everything cooled down you were getting the same from the Whites that you had gotten from the Blacks?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, but I had some experience with the White that I didn't have with the Black.

Goldie: What was that?

Mr. Creacy: Well, I had a girl's basketball team. I had a

good man coaching them and girls will obey a man better. But he said I have to put my foot down and I said go ahead if that is what you want. They were playing Murfeysboro one night and I think Murfeysboro beat them one time and the next day the principal called me up and the Black Assistant Principal did the talking. He said, we like to have had a mess over there last night. He said while the kids were dressing, you know they go in different classrooms, and when they came back my coach came in there and asked the girls what they were doing in the room. They said, we were just talking and he told them to get out. That liked to have caused a mess over there. It doesn't take much to set things off. So I had to talk to her and then I told them we were canceling the game until after Christmas when they came here. They said you want to cancel. They just beat by one point and they were ready for them. Yes, but I know Murfeysboro. The coach sent word to go ahead and have the game. He said had I notified the officials but I told him that as soon as I got in the office I would. So I stood my ground. On two or three occasions see them all sitting around. Just one person but I wouldn't have told. Last year I told them I couldn't handle anymore and he jumped back and didn't say a word so I asked him if he wanted me to leave this in his office or did he want me to go to Raleigh. I was about as old as he was. But he told it--it wasn't long. He asked what he should do. I told him to go see him and if he wasn't satisfied go to the Board of Education. He said he was told to come see me. I said there isn't anything I can do. I been talking to you all Spring. But the next year she came by and we had a football game and we've been friends every since. I don't know where she is now but I think I did her more good than any school could do.

Goldie: Being honest with her.

Mr. Creacy: That's right. She just wanted to have her way and lot of things you just can't do. I wanted to do a lot of things but just couldn't do. You can't afford to do everything you want to do.

Goldie: Well, you hear a lot of people talk you know they say that we wish we had left the schools the way they were. Just never had integrated at all. What do you think about that?

Mr. Creacy: No, that's going backward, I think. I think they were right. I think integration. I think they were right. What was that Bill? I can't think of the Bill now. The Black and White--treat them all alike.

Goldie: The Civil Rights Bill.

Mr. Creacy: It's better to have them all together and those who don't want to come they can go to the private school and

things would have been different if those students who went to the private school had come to the public because

So things have definitely changed.

Goldie: It certainly was an advantage getting all those materials.

Mr. Creacy: That's right because we didn't know anything about construction paper, tag boards at the high school. The elementary teachers did because they had had it. Yeh, a whole lot of changes and more money came to the school then.

Goldie: Oh, really. You didn't have to worry about the PTA supplying all that.

Mr. Creacy: That's right. The PTA was no more just a money raiser.

Goldie: Well, do you think that the same thing was happening at the White school? Do you suppose that they were raising all their money?

Mr. Creacy: No, they weren't because they had all the tag boards, construction paper and buses. They used to tell us that they didn't know anything about that. When they came here they didn't know anything about that. We had a rule if a child would break a glass out of the bus and they had to bring the money to pay for it--50 or 60 cents. Sometimes the White kid would just kick the glass out and wouldn't bring anything so I told the county I just had to stop charging. I said if I can't collect from one I'm not going to collect from the others. Because some of them would kick it out just for meanness.

Goldie: I guess you can say that you came from a line of administrators and it came to you kind of naturally to handle it.

Mr. Creacy: Probably better than some and having taught five years and my daddy too. He was my daddy and my principal and some days we would have a game like on Friday afternoon. He said boy, I want you to go to Raleigh tomorrow. I said, Pop do we have to go? He said, that's all right, that's all right, go ahead. Well, he was my daddy and principal too so I had to go.

Goldie: You didn't have much choice, did you.

Mr. Creacy: I didn't have any but his point then was to get me acquainted with the staff in Raleigh and when he died they asked for me, they asked for me--it wasn't the county asked for me. Dr. Newburg and all those folks in Raleigh. He was getting old and he'd send me to all the principal meetings

and they were the ones who asked for me. I was surprised. I told them I didn't want it so he said would you finish the year? I said yes, I'll do that and finally one day he showed me applications from everybody and here is the job we are offering you and you haven't got sense enough to take it. I can home and talked to my mama and told her. She said, well, I'm here and Mrs. Hardy is here and Mrs. Fisher is here. We helped your daddy and we can help you. And so I told them I would try it for a year. I got used to it. Those teachers were mighty supportive. I had never kept a register and I didn't know how to make a report. I made a report after other principals come to me and I had to get the teachers to show me how. I tell you. What you don't know, you just don't know. I had to learn. Then I found that some teachers were helping other teachers with their register. What you don't know, you just don't know. And some people who strive to get that get it quicker than others. To some it didn't seem important but others wanted what they turned in to be right.

Goldie: Any words of wisdom you want to tell?

Mr. Creacy: Yes, I'll tell them what I've always told my teachers--that a teacher on his feet was worth two in his seat. And I believe that. A teacher on his feet--if anything happens he can see it and, is worth two sitting down. I have several little slogans in there that I use.

Goldie: Go ahead and give some of your slogans.

Mr. Creacy: I have to go get them. (Mr. Creacy showed some pictures and memorabilia then.)

Mr. Creacy: The slow child needs the teacher more than the fast one just as the sick child needs the mother more than the well one. That was one of my expressions. I believe where there is no teaching there is no learning; where there is no purchase there is no sale; I believe that everybody who is anybody has been in contact with a good teacher. I believe that the success of our educational system depends on reading; I believe if it is right for a teacher to take a National Examination all other professions should take one. I believe that teachers who follow the same pattern of teaching they followed their first year after reaching their maximum have just one year experience. A teacher who doesn't go to summer school doesn't improve himself. I believe present human relations enhance the possibility of learning. I believe that the employee who wants to work has a lower absenteeism than those who have to work. I believe that older teachers should be the better. I believe every teacher knows exactly how he rates with the rest of the faculty.

Goldie: And you came up with those from your own experience?

Mr. Creacy: That's right. From my own experience.

Goldie: They are sound truisms.

Mr. Creacy: When I make the yearbook sometimes I use some of those and that is how she picked them up.

Goldie: How many graduating classes did you have?

Mr. Creacy: Forty.

Goldie: Well, you've given me a lot of information here and when I finish this work I'll get back with you so you can find out what I found out. I'll give you a copy of what we talked about.