This is Lois Myers. Today is Friday, April 19, 2002. This is interview number eleven with Dr. Bill Lamkin. We are in 313 Carroll Library on the campus of Baylor University. This interview is sponsored by the Baylor University Institute for Oral History, and it’s part of our project on the history of the university. Dr. Lamkin, last time we ended with a topic that you said was very dear to your heart, the Hillcrest Professional Development Center. I’d like for us to talk a little bit deeper about that. That involved a relationship with the Waco ISD.

Lamkin Right.

Myers How did that work out?

Lamkin We’ve always had a very close relationship with the Waco ISD because of the fact that we place so many student teachers in the school district. At the time that I was dean we initiated our new doctoral program in school administration. And in that program we had several Waco people, including the wife of the then-superintendent of schools, the associate superintendent of schools, and unknown at that particular time but also the eventual superintendent of schools that would—the superintendent was Dr. [Jim B.] Hensley at that time and his wife was in the program. And this was the very first class of that particular program. Bonnie Lesley was the associate superintendent and she was in the program. And—I’m blocking all of a sudden.

Myers Roseanne?
Roseanne Stripling, who was to become the superintendent of the schools later on was a part of that program. So anyway, I did a little bit of lecturing to those people in those classes and everything, and through some of that Bonnie Lesley approached me and said, “Why don’t we work together on a school?” At that point Waco had several vacant school buildings, some in better repair than others. And she said, “Why don’t we just designate a particular school, one of those empty schools, and make that a school that Baylor will cooperate with the school district in operating?” And that was very, very appealing. A similar thing—or coincidental with that was a new development at the national level in what was being called professional development schools. We talked earlier, I think, about the Holmes Group, of which we were a member, and they developed several monographs that would direct the activities of schools of education who were involved in the Holmes Group, and the last—the one that came out in the mid-eighties was on professional development schools. The model that was used was the teaching hospital, in the fact that physicians are generally trained in hospitals that are designated as teaching hospitals where the faculty or the physicians who are a part of the staff of the hospital become the faculty for the residents in that hospital. And the idea was why shouldn’t education have something that would be similar to this where practicing professionals would become the instructors of the new professionals coming in. So professional development schools were being advocated. Not too many were being developed at that time. There were a few around. Of course, this was kind of a throwback to a time when we had schools that were operated by universities as laboratory schools. We have lab schools, the most famous of which probably were the University of Chicago, when John Dewey was there, and others that developed specific kinds of programs. The Winnetka Plan came out of the laboratory schools at the University of Chicago, named for Winnetka, Illinois, where it was established. This was one of the first attempts at the so called ungraded or non-graded schools. But those schools were a little different in the fact that most of the laboratory schools were highly selective as far as their students were concerned. The University of Texas operated schools in the Austin area close to the university, University Junior High being the most notable of those. But also not far from that was Casis Elementary School. And, you know, all those universities paid salaries for part of the people and helped to staff them much more fully than the staff of other schools, and also the schools were either built in affluent sections of town or, in the case of University Junior High, they drew students from all over town and they were selected because of their abilities. A lot of faculty children went to school at University Junior High School. So they became pretty selective kinds of laboratory schools. And the experiences that student teachers received in those particular schools were not necessarily equivalent to the kind of experiences they might have when they moved into the public schools. So the idea of the professional
development school was that it would be a regular school in which teachers could be trained, but also one which would be a cooperative endeavor between a teacher training institution, that is, a university, and the public schools. So we worked on that particular plan and worked to develop this idea. The school board in Waco was very, very receptive to this idea. And we just designed a program for our teachers whereby there would be a group of teachers—we started with twenty student teachers—not student teachers, actually, teacher education students, that in their junior year would spend a significant amount of time in that professional development school and would take some of their applied courses in that school, such as teaching reading, or teaching mathematics, or other teaching skills areas. And they would spend—what we set up is that they would spend about twenty hours a week in that school during their junior year. And then during their senior year, they would spend the entire year there. And they would take the rest of their professional courses at that particular time, and they would be doing their student teaching also. But there would be a mentor teacher all the way through for students—not mentor, they would be working with students in the classrooms alongside the regular teacher during that entire year. The Waco schools then developed the kind of program that they wanted to see in that school and brought in a person to be the principal of the school approximately a year before the school was opened. And he participated in the final development of the renovation of the school, what it would look like, because they wanted it to look like the program they were going to put into it. And the program was going to be not specifically a non-graded situation, but was going to make use of larger groups that could be broken down into smaller groups. So they decided to create what they call learning environments. So that there was not a room for first graders, there was a larger room, which would have those who were generally achieving at the first and second grade, and they would be in a classroom together. But there would be two teachers in there. There would also be an aide and, working with Baylor, there would be at least two student teachers in there and there would be at least two junior-level teacher trainees in there. So there would be around six or seven individuals in that class of about forty-five students who were first and second, and then there would be a second and third grade. And there would be then a third and fourth grade and a fourth and a fifth grade, overlapping groups. And sometimes there were two sections of each of those. Since it was to be a school which mirrored the city as a whole, there were also places for special education students as well as students who were having learning difficulties. So there was a need for remedial types of work as well as teachers for special populations. Dr. Tom Proctor, who is chair of the educational psychology department and is involved in special education, moved many of his classes for undergraduate training of special education teachers to the professional development school, and they work there with the students in that school. The principal of the school was part-time on the Baylor faculty as well, and could teach some classes, usually out
there. And one or two other staff members also served as adjunct faculty for Baylor and taught some of the classes, so it wasn’t all our faculty going out there and teaching classes. We always had faculty members—were to have faculty members out there, but we were also to utilize the teachers who were there. And Waco was very selective in the teachers that they put there, teachers that would be good models. But again, they tried to keep the ethnic diversity present so that there was racial diversity within the faculty. Now, we went through all of that, and the year I resigned as dean effective in the first of June of 1993, the school opened in the fall of 1993. I was on campus and was able to keep up with it some as it continued to mature, and at the present time I have two granddaughters who are attending that school.

**Myers** Well, let me ask you a little bit more. Who else at WISD besides Bonnie Lesley was part of this development?

**Lamkin** Part of this development. Most of the central office staff, if I can recall a few names. Randi Reisinger was one of those, and I believe that she was the coordinator of elementary education at that particular time. Mrs. Fadal was the language arts supervisor. We worked with Ken Howard, who was a music director at that time. And all of those who had specializations related to the elementary school worked with the principal and with the Baylor staff in designing the program that would be in there and then in designing the building to match the programs.

**Myers** Okay. And you mentioned school board support. Was there any particular person on the school board or committee or group that got particularly involved?

**Lamkin** I don’t recall any particular involvement. They were very supportive. They received reports, usually from Dr. Reisinger, about the things that were going on, or from Dr. Lesley, about progress, and they were always interested and asked questions, and they freely made the money available for the renovation of the school which was several million dollars because the school had not been used for several years. If you go to the school now and remember what it once was, it doesn’t look anything at all like it did.

**Myers** Did Region 12 have any involvement in this or was it just a local thing?

**Lamkin** Region 12 was not involved at that particular time.
Myers: And how about your work with HPER folks here at Baylor? Did they get involved?

Lamkin: They did get involved with us and they worked on the physical education programs there at the campus. And one of our HPER teachers who taught the physical education in the elementary schools had class that met out there for those students who were involved.

Myers: So I assume that these—school of music perhaps got involved. Did they—

Lamkin: Yes.

Myers: —put a student teacher out there?

Lamkin: Right. Right.

Myers: Yeah. You mentioned that it was costly for the renovations. How did it come about that you picked the school that you picked? Tell me about it before, its previous life. (laughter)

Lamkin: Well, it was—Hillcrest had been an elementary school built soon after World War II. As I recall, that school was built in probably 1956–[5]7, somewhere along in there. I was in the Waco schools as a teacher at the time that that school was built. And the design of the school was very much like several other schools that had been built during that time with the open kind of a central hall and then open wings where to get to each room you had to go outside walking along a walk outside. As the population shifted in Waco, that school was closed, and most of the students who would have gone there went to a newer school, Meadowbrook Elementary School, which is on the other side of Lake Air but not too far away. And so the students who went in that direction—primarily, some of those students would have gone—that lived in the other direction, would have gone to Dean-Highland Elementary School probably. So the school was closed down. As I recall, it probably was closed sometime in the late seventies or early eighties just because of the lack of population and the shift in population. But of all the schools that they had closed down, and Waco had not closed very many—they generally had, in a few cases, consolidated some schools so that they could move. For example, South Waco Elementary School—they abandoned that location
and built another school, but when you look at the condition of South Waco
Elementary and Sanger Heights and Sanger Elementary and most of the
others—were much older schools and would have taken a great deal of
money to just bring them up to standard. And so, that one was chosen as
being the most ideal because of its present conditions. It had good area
around it for playgrounds and such, and it was located in an area that would
be fairly convenient from any section of town from the east or west or
whatever. So that was the main reason that it was chosen as the site.

Myers  How is it different then after the remodeling from that?

Lamkin  Well, all of the outside walkways and so forth are now enclosed, whereas
originally there were several small rooms for twenty-five or thirty on each
end of the wing. The partitions inside were completely knocked out and
large rooms were made there and then large rooms for the music activities
and speech activities and such. Then, the computer technology was brought
into it also, and all of the rooms were wired at the time they were built. And
then an interesting little innovation, a little pod, call it for lack of a better
word, was built outside of each room. It was an outside area that was
covered and that was an area where students could get together in small
groups for projects. The plan was also that there would be some computer
terminals out in there. I’m not sure whether that developed or not. But it
does give some small areas where the teacher—where one of the student
teachers can take just a small group out to work on something in an area.
And there were several of those on each wing that they could utilize. The
gym, cafeteria, office area is relatively untouched. It’s about like it was at the
time that it was built.

Myers  Now, did it include rooms set aside for the Baylor students to go apart and
have their classes?

Lamkin  There were classrooms, yes. There were classrooms for Baylor classes,
not—I believe two were incorporated in the original where there could be
two classes going on at one time—not dedicated wholly to Baylor classes,
but they were available for Baylor classes first and then could be used by the
school for other things when Baylor was not using them. Baylor faculty are
included in all of the faculty meetings and all of the planning that went on on
campus.

Myers  How successful has it been in creating the kind of diversity that was the goal?
By design it’s been successful, because the students are selected for participation or attendance at Hillcrest Professional Development School by lottery or a lot. Parents apply for the admission of their children into the school, and at the beginning of the year they draw—not the beginning, but at the end of the year before, in about April of each year, they draw for the kindergarten class of that year. And they divide them ethnically and also they have a special education group, knowing that there is a certain percentage of special education students in the Waco schools. Okay, and so that’s the— they have whatever the percentages are. I believe they run at the present time about 40 percent black and 30 percent Hispanic and 30 percent Caucasian, I think. And then they have another Other group to take care of several immigrant groups, in other words, Vietnamese or such, and they don’t try to divide that out. It’s just another group that says they don’t fit into the African American or such. And so they divide them, and they say, We need so many from this and so many from this and so many from this. And they draw them out at that particular point. In the likewise, there can be applications made at later years as well, and they fill the vacancies by again a lottery to draw for vacancies because there are people who move away. For some reason they may decide that they want to attend a neighborhood school rather than Hillcrest. I would say, to my knowledge, at the times that I had kept up with it, there are very, very few dropouts from the school after the first year, so there are not a lot of places to fill during those other years. So they fill it in that way. They also have some little rules that they work with. For example, in drawing for the kindergarten, first choice before the drawing is given to any sibling of a child who’s already in school there. So first off they would see how many they would get just from siblings of children already in school. And then they would assure that the family could stay together. I’ve mentioned I have two grandchildren in there. Their family just moved to Waco last year. In the spring they made application to the professional development school. One of them was going to be in the first grade and the other one was going to be in the third grade. Well, the first grade is kind of an open lottery, too, because in kindergarten they don’t have as many kindergarteners as they have in the first grade. So the first grader was chosen—was selected—well, her name was drawn for participation there. But they could not draw—there wasn’t any drawing for the third grade, and all they could do is to wait and see if there was an opening in the third grade. An opening did occur, and so having a sibling there, well, she was given an opening when it occurred in the third grade. And so, both of them ended up in that way.

What would you estimate to be the percentage of those who apply who get chosen?
Lamkin: I do not know. I have no idea. I’ve never asked that question.

Myers: (speaking at the same time) Generally, do you think there are more applicants than there are places?

Lamkin: I know there are more applicants than there are places, yes. But I don’t know, you know, what it is, how many. Of course, I think I mentioned earlier when we were talking about this, that there is a certain amount of selectivity to this. The parents have to be interested enough in their children to first of all make the application, and secondly, to commit themselves to providing transportation, because these students are not transported. There is no busing to the school because—of course, they could come from all over town and there would be no way that they could operate a bus line. And so the parents have to provide transportation if they need transportation. And I would guess that probably 90 percent of them have to have transportation. Probably very few that are within walking distance of the school. So that in itself eliminates some of those that you would find in the public schools, some that would be—where the parents would be less interested and where the children might be less motivated. So it is selective in a way except that they—as I understand it, the test that they have given to students and so forth, it pretty well mirrors the public schools.

Myers: Besides applying for their children and bringing them to school, do you know of other ways the parents are involved?

Lamkin: Yes. They have very active volunteers who work with the school in various ways. Of course, so many families now are either a single-parent family and that parent works or both parents are working. And so the time that they have available during the day to work with the school is very limited, but those who have the time are utilized very fully in many, many ways, not only providing cookies and punch, but also in tutoring and, of course, for transportation and any aid that the teacher may need.

Myers: This may not be relevant at all because I don’t always understand these concepts, but I’ve heard of magnet schools. How does this differ from—a professional development school differ from a magnet school?

Lamkin: Okay, a magnet school is identified as a school which is specializing in one particular type of educational emphasis. In other words, supposedly, the idea...
is that that specialty will draw all students who are interested in that specialty to it. So magnet schools, typically, are schools that are emphasizing the health professions, maybe emphasizing just academics, maybe emphasizing drama, the arts, such as this. The school that operates now at what was Jefferson Moore High School is a magnet high school, that is, an academic high—the emphasis is academic. The students who go there take the courses that are in the so-called college-bound curriculum. So they select their students based upon their application and their interest in whatever that school is doing or is emphasizing.

Myers  Okay, thanks. Have there been any studies of follow-up to follow these Hillcrest Development School children as they leave and go to junior high? Have there been any studies?

Lamkin  As far as I—I do not know. I do not know of any, but I would assume that there are studies which are being done to see about the effectiveness here.

Myers  What would you expect to be some of the benefits for the students?

Lamkin  Well, I would think the major benefit would be the motivation that the students would come out with to continue to excel and to do well in school, because that’s such a major emphasis there. They have shown well on the testing, the statewide testing, that is done each year and the students seem to be highly motivated. And I think that would be one of the major things that would keep them moving and such. I understand that Baylor is in the process now of trying to develop a professional development school at the middle school level, so potentially—and I don’t know what they’re doing or how they might go about it, but it would be possible that this professional development school could be more or less a feeder school for the next level as one possibility there. But I think motivation would be the main thing.

Myers  How about benefits to the teachers in the schools?

Lamkin  I don’t know just exactly what has been followed up on. As I say, the school was opened the year—the fall after I resigned as dean in the spring. And I was on the periphery and kind of kept up with a few things there. In the original plans, the opportunity was to—made for teachers across the schools to come into the professional development schools from time to time, taking a day off and come in and observe and work with the teachers in the professional development school for their own professional development.
And whether or not this has been followed through, I do not know. Also, at one time, there was the idea that teachers would rotate through the school, that they might come to the school and stay for two or three years and then they would go back to the other schools and someone else would come into that. Again, I don’t know that—my observation is that that has not been followed, because I know that there are some teachers who are in the school who have stayed there—

_Tape 1, side 1 ends abruptly; side 2 begins._

_Myers_ Please continue.

_Lamkin_ Okay, so I’m not—that might not be a good idea to move the teachers in and out, because one thing you don’t want to create in the school is instability. And if a teacher is just going to be there for three years, you don’t develop the same kind of loyalty and dedication to the school as you have if they see this as being their career. So I’m not sure that would be a good idea to move them in and out.

_Myers_ What benefit would you say were to your teacher education students, your juniors and your seniors who are out there? What do they get from it that’s special?

_Lamkin_ Well, I have always maintained that teachers should be trained in the classroom, not exclusively, but as a part of their total training. I mentioned earlier I tried to build programs where students would get out into the schools early in their formal education career. I think that the opportunity to be in the schools for basically two years, to see students as they mature over two years, to work with teachers over that period of time, to be able to meet with college professors who sometimes are accused of living in the ivory tower away from the real world, but be able to meet with their mentors at the college level, and then to take what they’re saying back to the classroom immediately, I think, is a very meaningful kind of thing. I think one reason that professional education has sometimes gotten a bad rap I think is because what goes on at the classroom at the college is too early or is too far removed from the time that they’re going to spend in the schools. And so they have forgotten what went on in the classroom. And so I think that this has been a tremendous benefit for them to be able to have that experience in the classroom, but also to have the expertise of the college teachers who can give them some new ideas and show them new directions and give them some feedback that they wouldn’t have been able to do if they were not
seeing them in the classroom later.

**Myers** Well, it would seem to me that this would take on education majors’ part some foresight. You’d have to plan ahead because there are certain courses you need to take early on to reserve those years—

**Lamkin** That’s right. And again I’m not sure how they are selecting them at this particular point. At the time that we envisioned this, we were going to make these selections in the freshman year, that they would apply for and be selected and they would know what their program would be and what they would have to do during their junior and senior year. Then they would be prepared for it and get their other courses taken care of. I don’t know what’s going on at the present time. But I think that’s exactly right. They would have to prepare for it.

**Myers** Are you aware of any unexpected challenges that came along with the new school as it was developed?

**Lamkin** Well, from the university point of view, I think that the major challenge was in the logistics of things because we’re talking about teachers conducting classes in an applied situation as opposed to a rather artificial classroom situation. And teachers had to—the faculty had to learn new ways of instructing when students were actually on the job as opposed to the way they were doing it when they were saying, Just imagine you are on the job. So I think that it was a real challenge to faculty to adapt what they were doing to this new setting. And then just the travel time and working around schedules of classes that they teach on campus as well as those that they teach off campus. Those are always difficult kinds of things to deal with.

**Myers** All right. Anything else about the Hillcrest Professional Development School?

**Lamkin** The Hillcrest School has become a model for many, many other professional development schools around the nation, and there have been many visitors who have come to the school. It has been cited in many situations as an ideal professional development school and emphasizing the way in which the school districts and the universities can cooperate to build very fine programs. And I’m just pleased that I was able to be in on the beginning of it.
Myers

Well, that illustrates, I guess, really well the relationship that Baylor had with the Waco Independent School District. What about these other school districts around in the area in which you place student teachers?

Lamkin

We have a good working relationship with schools all throughout the county, McLennan County, and in some adjoining counties. Of course, the number of student teachers at any one time in any semester varies a great deal. We have had as many as over three hundred in a spring semester, and when you start placing those, you have to be concerned about what teachers you place them with because, frankly, there are some teachers who may be very effective teachers in the classroom but do not work well with someone else. And then there are others that most of us wish were not in the classroom.

And so there is a process that we developed sometime ago where actually teachers apply to have a student teacher. They have an application process and that has to go through their principal and the principal has to recommend them and so forth. But still, there would not be enough within the local district, plus the fact that we have other programs that go out in the schools, and because of the demands of on-campus classes, students can’t travel thirty or forty miles to observe in a classroom for an hour and then come back. And so we have to use the Waco schools for those kinds of things because of the distance involved. And so we’ve always had a good relationship with the schools in the area. And we’ve always placed a lot of student teachers particularly in the Midway School District, the La Vega School District, Connally School District, and those right around, and then gone on out to China Spring and McGregor and as far as Mart. So we’ve gone in that direction. And I believe that they are now placing some student teachers in the Spring school district [Spring Independent School District] in Houston, that they have a center down there and are placing some student teachers in that area. However, we have never really engaged in any kinds of other activities with these other school districts. We had not at the time that I was dean. We had limited our cooperative endeavors to the Waco Independent School District. They are, actually, of course, because of their presence, because of their closeness, they are the logical ones that we would work with on things of this nature.

Myers

Well, we’ve been talking about school districts and we know that they cooperate together—many counties—in Region 12, so tell me about the relationship with Region 12.

Lamkin

Well, Region 12 was established the year that I came to Baylor. And I think they actually started in the fall of ’68, the summer of ’68. I came to Baylor in
the fall of ’67. And the directors have always been good friends of mine, and we have worked close together on many, many occasions in various kinds of things. While I was dean, we worked on several grants in the area of technology with them. We worked very closely with the service center in their special education areas. Of course, this was one of the big areas, initially, for the service centers to identify students, special needs students, who were not receiving any kind of assistance in the schools at that time. And so, we worked with them on developing identification programs and doing in-service and things of this nature. Our faculty, individually, have done a lot of in-service work through the service center as the service center has called upon them to lend their expertise to the various school districts. It’s always been a good, close working relationship.

Myers
How about other colleges here in town, MCC and TSTC [Texas State Technical College]?

Lamkin
We’ve had very little relationship with TSTC. Of course, the types of things that they do are not really related to the public schools since we do not have any kind of vocational programs or certification of vocational teachers as such. We have worked closely with McLennan Community College in several different endeavors. They—I guess one of the major things that we worked with them and with other junior colleges throughout the state was in developing a plan whereby students could complete all of their freshman-sophomore work at the junior college and assure that it would be transferable to Baylor so that—and signed agreements with these that in teacher education that their work would be transferable fully into Baylor. We worked with them somewhat in developing some remedial reading activities, and as the testing for students in the colleges came along, well, we worked with them on some of the development of some of the tutorial things there. Not a lot of activity there I would say, though.

Myers
Was that faculty-to-faculty kind of activities?

Lamkin
Mostly faculty-to-faculty, yes. And we did establish, while I was dean, a program in junior college administration, and under the director of Dr. Hastings, who had been vice president at MCC, we developed an annual conference for junior college people. Every fall we have a two-day conference—I believe it’s mostly one day now—offering special workshops and activities and such for the junior college people. They come to campus; gives them an opportunity to get acquainted with our campus so they can talk to students about our campus, but also gives us an opportunity to know
about them and to give them some of the—well, a lot of them to take
advantage of some of the resources that we can bring together.

Myers  Okay. Anything else about those topics—Hillcrest, Region 12, MCC? What
I’ve come to appreciate in these interviews is the distinctiveness, I think, of
Baylor school of education. You’ve named several programs that are unique
to Baylor. It would seem to me that there would be some interest in other
places modeling after Baylor. Do you know of any instances where other
universities have picked up an idea and used it?

Lamkin  Well, of course, the model that we use for our doctoral program in school
administration is being utilized now by a lot of universities. Now, whether
they saw what we were doing and decided they would like to do that too, I’m
not sure. Without being negative let me say this, Baylor being a private
school had to make a decision about whether they were going to stay in the
teacher education business or if they were going to drop out of it. SMU
dropped out of it. TCU pretty well dropped out except for their graduate
programs. Baylor made the decision to stay in it. Private schools have to
make those kinds of decisions and then they have to fight to keep things
going. Public universities deal with the students that come to them and
they’re not called upon to do things until the legislature gets upset with them
and says, We’re not going to give you any money unless you do something
different. And so they’re more reactive, whereas the private school has an
opportunity to be more active. And so I think that we’re not—we’ve tried a
lot of things that would get us before the public, that would help us in
attracting students, and I wouldn’t say we were forced in that, we just
recruited faculty who were interested in doing things of that nature.

Myers  Is this correct, too? It seems to me that there was kind of a service
motivation there? The Center for Christian Education, for instance. There’s
a population that has a need in the area of education and Baylor tries to fill it.

Lamkin  Yeah, I like to think of it in that way. Now, some people would say, Well,
no, all you’re doing is really just establishing a recruiting process, you know,
and you could look at it either way. But I also like to think we’re being of
service. Even with our University for Young People, we give young people
an opportunity to come to campus. And of course, one of our ideas is that
they start feeling comfortable on the Baylor campus, that when they graduate
from high school they’ll say, That was a comfortable feeling, I think I’ll go to
school there. But at the same time I think that the university has an
obligation to be of service to its clientele whether they are local or wherever
they may be. And so I feel like we should offer University for Young People just because it’s an opportunity to be of service to the young people in the area. And the same thing is true with the Center for Christian Education and our Adult Learning Center and so forth. I think it’s a matter of fulfilling the role of the university of being of service to others.

Myers  All right. We’ve had a good talk about your dean years. What factors led to your decision to step down from that position?

Lamkin  I had always determined that I was going to retire from Baylor about the age of sixty-five. And the plans I had made originally, I did not follow through. I had planned then to continue my psychological practice for about five years after that and live on what I could make in that particular area at that time. But in 1993, we were in the midst of our self-study for our NCATE visitation, which would be the second go-round. It had been ten years since we had our first one, actually a little bit more. We got a little extension there. And in the fall of that year, Dr. Betty Jo Monk was chairing that committee to get the self-study together, and that was most of her job during the fall of 1992. And I looked at the situation and saw the changes that were occurring administratively and needs—across the campus the things that were going on. I knew that probably Dr. Reynolds would retire within another year or so. I felt like probably it was time to move on. Also, in spite of the fact that I had spent twelve years in administration as dean, plus then a few other years as associate dean, I still considered myself to be a teacher. And I wanted to end my career as a teacher and not as dean. And if I was going to retire at sixty-five, I really just had one more year, because I would have turned sixty-five in 1994, so I decided that that was the time to do it. By announcing my retirement in December, that would give the university time to appoint a committee and hopefully have a dean by the summer of ’93, at which time I would be resigning, my term would up. So it just all seemed to work together. We would be through with the NCATE visitation in the spring of ’93, and they could be interviewing people for the dean’s position in the spring or summer or whatever in ’93. Just seemed to be the best way. So just before the Christmas holidays in ’92, I presented my letter to Dr. Schmeltekopf asking to resign as dean and to return to full-time teaching. I didn’t put any limit on it at that particular time. I just said full-time teaching. And it worked out very well because we then—one of the last—just before the last time that—I guess it was just before exams were to start in December, well, I had a faculty meeting and read my letter to the faculty at that particular point.
Myers  Had you discussed this with any of them before?

Lamkin  Only with my associate dean, Dr. Karaffa. About two or three days before that, I had also told all of the department chairmen, but that was all. And we had the visit from NCATE in the spring, which was a very positive visit, and received our accreditation with a lot of commendations. And a committee was appointed, and the new dean came in, I believe, August of ’93 to take over.

Myers  So did you stay through that summer?

Lamkin  Well, the university gave me a nine-month sabbatical which was to be beginning in June, June through December of that year. But by the time the first of June rolled around, they had made a decision on the new dean. And so, Dr. Karaffa and I kind of shared responsibilities. I didn’t have any particular plans for that summer. And I used that time to move into a different office. I did not teach any classes or anything, but we shared responsibilities of the dean during the summer. There’s not a lot to be done during the summer because you already have to have the fall things ready and budgets are all taken care of and you have a new budget that starts the first of June, and so we shared responsibilities until the new dean came in around the first of August. And then I was on sabbatical for the rest of the year.

Myers  Would you recommend that plan for other retiring deans, too?

Lamkin  Well, I think—you know, I said earlier that I never did set my sights on being an administrator or becoming a dean. There are a lot of people who do set their sights in that direction. If a person wants to be an administrator, then I think they have to work out their retirement in that way. I enjoyed my time as dean, but I still considered myself to be a teacher, and that’s what I wanted to do, so that was right for me.

Myers  So then how long did you teach?

Lamkin  I taught two years full-time. And at the end of those two years—and I sought to teach undergraduate classes. I taught the—actually, it was kind of a survey of special education. All teacher education students were required by the state to have a special education course in diagnosis and treatment and
so forth of children with learning problems. And so I taught two large sections of that each term. And then I taught, generally, one graduate class that met during the day. So I taught two full years, and at that point I asked to be relieved and to cut down to a half load. And so for three or four more years, and I don’t remember which, three years more I think—yeah, that would be right, until ’98—I taught in the school administration doctoral program. I redesigned their program in statistics and evaluation into a one-year course. And so I started in the summer with part of it and then I had—which was a three hours, and then I had three hours in the fall and three hours in the spring. And that was my course load. And I did that for three years, which was very enjoyable. I enjoyed that very much, teaching statistics and evaluation and research as kind of one thing. And, of course, that’s a cohort class, so you have the same students, you see, all year. You have the same ones for a year, which was very rewarding and very nice. And then at the end of that time, I asked to be relieved of teaching and to continue for three more years completing the dissertations that I was working with at that particular point. So I continued to receive a small salary until June, I guess, June the first of 2001. And my last student graduated in August of 2001.

Myers: Well, since you’re still in the department, you’re still faculty, you then came under the deans that followed you.

Lamkin: Yes.

Myers: What was that experience like?

Lamkin: I tried to stay out of the way. Actually, the first dean I was very disappointed in. He was a person I had known through some of my associations with the Holmes Group and with AACTE and such. I had known him for some time. And I thought that he would be a good people person, but I was personally very disappointed in him. He, I feel, came here to use this as a way of getting another job. He was associate dean at the University of Missouri, and the University of Missouri had basically told him, or had the policy, that they didn’t promote from within to their deanships. And so he could not move up to dean there, even though there was a vacancy there. He came and stayed at Baylor for two years, I believe, maybe three, and then he went back to the University of Missouri in Saint Louis as dean there. And I felt like that was what he came here for, and he didn’t do very much, in my opinion, for the school of education during the time that he was there except to promote himself. And very disappointed. I did not—I had not had the opportunity really to work very close with Dr. [Robert] Yinger. Dr.
Williamson served as—after Dr. [Charles] Schmitz left, Dr. Williamson served as interim dean for two years. So by the time Dr. Yinger came, I was no longer teaching any classes. I was working only with dissertation students. And so I just came in occasionally and never went to faculty meetings or anything. And so I really never had an opportunity to work with him closely. I feel like he’s done some good things for the school from what I know in talking with other faculty. I think that he’s had some good ideas. And I hope he can continue to fight for the school of education.

Myers

If I may, I'll turn the tape and we'll go just a little longer.

Lamkin

Okay.

Tape 1 ends; tape 2 begins.

Myers

This is tape two of interview eleven. You mentioned that you had thought that you would spend some time using your psychology afterwards. May I assume that because you kept teaching you did not fulfill that or is there another reason?

Lamkin

Well, I did continue some. I did continue what I had been doing, which was two or three days a month with several residential treatment centers for adolescents, and I did continue with them. And the idea that I had was that after I taught two years, which would have been ’95, I then would limit what I was doing here and I would increase those. I guess the problem was that the ones I was working with were all a hundred miles or 120 miles from here. And so I could drive over and spend the night at our place there, but life became rather fragmented in trying to work all around that. And I just felt like I didn’t want to do that. And so in ’96, I told each of the places I was working with at that point that that summer I would have to—that I was going to quit my consulting business with them. And in order to reinforce that, in ’97 my license came up for renewal and I had done all of the in-service work and everything that I needed to do in order to renew it, but I told them I did not want to renew it. So I let my license lapse at that point. And they let me keep my license so I could hang it on my wall. (laughter) But it just, I guess as I—it just seemed to be a time to get out of those professional things and do some of the other things that I was interested in and devote more time to the community and to the church and things. And, of course, during that time, then, we started making our move to Brownwood and Brookesmith.
Lamkin

Well, I'm glad you brought up those two words, church and community, because it's been awhile since we talked about your involvement in those two. Tell me about your church involvements.

Lamkin

Well, we had joined Seventh and James Baptist Church in 1983. We'd been members at Calvary for quite some—well, when we were in Waco, first we were members there; and then when we came back to Waco, we were members there. And our children, oh, they graduated from high school while we were members there. And in fact, our last daughter graduated from Baylor in 1983, and we were there at that time. But we reached a point where we felt like we needed a little bit of renewing. And also Calvary called an individual as pastor who was ultra fundamentalist. And I never have made a selection of a church based upon the pastor because pastors come and go. But coupled with the fact that we just were feeling a little bit restless, we decided that it was time for us to look and see if there was somewhere else that would fill our needs. And so we went to England in the summer of '83; and when we came back from England in the fall of '83, we started visiting churches in the Waco area. Visited most of them. Didn't make any decisions rapidly, but we enjoyed the services that we were experiencing at Seventh and James, enjoying the people that we were meeting there, and so we made the decision that's where we should be. And that was 1983, and so we were members there until 2001, which meant we were members there for eighteen years, I guess, which is longer than we had ever been a member of any church anywhere. I guess we were members of Calvary actually for seven years plus fifteen. So altogether, we were members there twenty-two years, but they were separated by a time period in the middle. And we quickly became involved at things at Seventh, and we were both deacons there and active on committee works and singing in the choir and teaching Sunday school and so forth and enjoyed it very much. It's still home to us and we haven't found a substitute for it in our new home, but you adjust to whatever you find yourself in, I guess.

Myers

Well, how about community involvements?

Lamkin

The community involvement is limited somewhat because of Baylor activities and so forth, and, of course, I worked with the schools in a lot of different kinds of things. I worked with several professional organizations, communitywide, the Personnel and Guidance Association of Waco and served as their president one year. Then, I was member of the board of the Behavioral Health Institute, the organization that tries to work with schools in dealing with learning disabled students. And other than that, mostly just
serving as a member and as a supporter of various—music symphony and so forth as well as the art center and the historical foundation, and serving on some of the boards occasionally as asked.

Myers Sounds like a very full life.

Lamkin And Robbie was doing the same thing.

Myers Well, we started your story, I guess, in Cleburne.

Lamkin Right.

Myers And then to Brown County and now you’re back in Brown County.

Lamkin That’s right.

Myers Tell me how that came about that you returned.

Lamkin Well, both of our families, of course, as I mentioned in the first interview probably, were in Brown County. My parents had moved there in 1932; Robbie’s parents were born there. And when he was about seventy-five, Robbie’s dad gave the family land to her and her brother, about eight hundred acres of land in south Brown County where he had been reared. But he had not lived out there since he became an adult; he lived in town in Brownwood. His mother continued to live on the farm until the 1930s, and then she moved into town, too. And so no one had—well, they had rented. They’d had a sharecropper actually who lived in the house there on the farm, but by the 1950s the house was unlivable and was falling down. But she and her brother had the land and they leased it, but we became interested in keeping up the land and watching after the fences and making sure that the stock tanks were in good repair. And spent—most of the income that came from it, we put back into building fences and then rebuilding stock tanks and other upkeep that would be needed. We enjoyed fishing. There was good fishing there and we used to go down to—of course, both of our parents were still living. Her father died in 1988 and my parents died in ’95 and ’96. And so we would go there for a weekend and go out and fish and come back and spend the weekend, then, with one of the parents. After her father died in 1988, my parents were not—well, my mother was not in good health at all
and my father still was quite active, but we said, You know, it’s just—we
don’t feel comfortable in going in there, and mother gets all upset having to
prepare things and so forth, so why don’t we build a little fishing cabin down
there on the farm where we can stay and we can still visit with them and they
can come down there and that would be fine? So in 1990 we actively started
looking at plans where we could build a fishing cabin. The fishing cabin
pretty soon became a log home, and so where it started out to be a kitchen
and table and a place to sit and a bedroom, it became three bedrooms and
two baths and so forth. (laughs) So we built the cabin. My brother-in-law
still teases me because after we had built it, we were out on the front, and the
guy who had built it for us had brought in some dirt and put in the front the
yard even though I told him I didn’t want any dirt in the front yard. I just
wanted the rocks. But he nevertheless put some dirt in the front yard. And
my brother said, “You need to get you some rye grass and plant some rye
grate out there on that.” You know, it will hold the soil and everything. I
said, “I don’t want anything that I have to take care of in any way. I don’t
want anything out there.” Well, since that time we have put flower beds
around, and he still comes back and teases me about that statement that I
made. But we became—you know, we just made more and more
investments in it. We had her dad’s pickup, which was new when he died,
and we left it down there. We hated just leaving it sitting out in the open, so
we built a garage. And then later on—it was just a lean-to when we built it,
and later on we added to that and we closed it up and doubled the size and
so forth. When my parents died, some of the woodworking equipment and
so forth I took down there from them. And we just continued to do things
like that. And we found ourselves in the late nineties really frustrated
because we were not in Waco, wanted to do the things that we wanted to do
at our house in Waco, and yet when we’d go to the farm we spent all of our
time working, keeping up with things there. We didn’t have time to sit and
enjoy things there. And so we just said, We’ve got to make a choice. We’re
gonna either have to stay in Waco and just really go down there very, very
seldom, or we’re going to have to go down there and live. And so we
wrestled with it—we’d wrestled with it before several times. And this time
we were free to do it, and we just decided that that’s what we wanted to do.
We were not going to get rid of the land that had been in the family—well,
Robbie’s grandmother had bought the land about 1900. The house was built
in 1900. That’s when she had bought most of the land. Her dad had added
to it. So we just made the decision. Well, the first problem was we had two
houses full of furniture and so what do we do, particularly things that had
become to mean a lot to us. There were a lot of heirlooms and things like
that of china and crystal and things of this nature. And at the farm we had
no place for anything like that, so we got to working and talked with the
builder about what we could do, and decided how we could build a dining
room and a master bedroom onto the house and make it where we could put
in those things that we really wanted to keep. And that’s what we did. And
so it just kind of evolved. So then in the summer of 2001 we moved down there.

Myers  So this is your first spring out there full-time?

Lamkin  This is our first spring full-time.

Myers  Well, we’ve talked about the school of education, and we’ve talked about your life. What have we left out? What do we need to talk about?

Lamkin  When you told me that you interviewed somebody and it took seventeen sessions, I thought that was ridiculous, that we would be through in three. And when you said today this is session number eleven, I could hardly believe it. I don’t know of a thing we’ve left out. (laughter)

Myers  Well, if we have we’ll go back and do number twelve. We want to cover it all. What do you see as the future of teacher education?

Lamkin  Well, I think that there are a lot of changes being made in teacher education, and I don’t know that it—it’s very much like a lot of changes that are made in education as a whole. Sometimes it’s change just for change. I’m not sure that teacher education is that much in need of change. I think that experiences in the schools are very, very important to get students kicked off in a good way when they get out in the schools. I look back, however, and I think about my own training, which was all classroom work, never saw the inside of a school except remembering what it was like when I was in school until I went to my student teaching one hour a day. The first year of teaching was really pretty difficult because I had had so little experience with students. I really had a lot to learn. And fortunately I had some good teachers, some of my peers there in the school who helped me learn about these things. So I would have been better off, I think, if I had had some of those experiences, but it was not absolutely necessary that I have them. And so I don’t know that we’ll accomplish a great deal by moving all of teacher education into the schools and making it all practical education as some people want to do. I think a lot of the things I learned in the classroom were very important things for me to know and I think contributed to my being a success as a teacher. So to say that—I think the parallel that I was drawing is that through the years we’ve seen the public schools—things come into the public schools and say, This is going to change the way in which we do school and it’s going to make major differences. Perhaps you were here
when Waco—the school that is now Jefferson Moore was built. And it was an open concept school. There were no walls in the whole school. It was all open because that was the thing that we were to do when that was built at that time. Well, not too many years passed until they were putting up walls in the school. And then we go from one thing—you know, closed circuit television was going to change everything, and computers were going to change everything. Computers have made things easier for us and made us be able to do things faster and more economically perhaps, but they really haven’t changed much of what goes on in school and what needs to go on in schools. So I think the same thing is true in teacher education. I think that professional development schools are very, very good. I don’t know that there is enough—that there are enough schools out there to take care of the universities. In other words, as I mentioned, Baylor—if we have four hundred student teachers a year, and they have to be within driving distance of Waco, you know, where are we gonna get the schools for it? And I don’t know that it’s going to make that much difference. This is one thing—we’ll have this for a while and then something else will come along and such. But basically, the thing that I think makes a good teacher, first of all, is a person who wants to teach, who has a feeling for students of some age or all ages, and one that can get a background in human development, some basic methodology of processes of reading, processes of solving mathematical problems, research, and gain that basic knowledge. And I think that’s what makes a good teacher. And we’re just trying to find new ways to do it.

Myers
Anything else you’d like to add before we close?

Lamkin
I appreciate the opportunity.

Myers
Well, we appreciate you and all that you’ve taught us and we’ve learned. Thank you for eleven times together.

Lamkin
Yes.

_end of interview_