

Jennifer Rogers' interview
with

Barb Ducas

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me: Hi, I am Jennifer Rogers and I'm doing my interview on Barb Ducas. She was a teacher at National Mine when it was a high school. I am doing my interview on Dec. 7th. I am doing my interview in Mrs. Ducas's room at National Mine. Um, when and where were you born?

Mrs. D.: I was born here in Ishpeming Michigan on November 24, 1943.

me: Um, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

Mrs. D.: I have two sisters and they're both teachers, but my older sister has retired now. She used to teach at Westwood.

me: Ok, um their names?

Mrs. D.: My older sister's name is Lois and my younger sister's name is ~~is~~ Nancy and she teaches at Ishpeming High school right now.

me: Mm, ok, um when and whom did you marry?

Mrs. D.: Um, I've been married twice my first husband's name is Howard Harris...

me: mmm.

Mrs. D.: and I married him in 1963, and then my other ~~husband's~~ name is, my other second husband's name is um, ~~his~~ Louis Ducas and I married him in December of 1980.

me: Ok, um how many children do you have?

Mrs. D.: I only have one son and his name is Allen and he graduated from Westwood high school and um, now he's living in Sunnyside.

me: Ah, um when and where were your parents born?

Mrs. D.: Both my mother & father were born in Ishpeming.

me: mmm.

Mrs. D.: and um my mother ~~&~~... Do you want to know more about my family? - I mean my mother & father?

me: It doesn't matter.

Mrs. D.: Ok, my mother's family came right from Finland.

me: mm.

Mrs. D: So both my grandfather + grandmother ~~it~~ spoke only Finnish they couldn't speak English.

me: Ok.

Mrs. D: My father's family was French-Canadian and my great-grandmother was part Indian.

me: M

Mrs. D: And so they spoke, my grandfather spoke English, but my great-grandmother's father spoke only French.

me: Neat- um When and where were your parents born? - Oh - haha

Mrs. D: I don't really know the year they were born, I would have to, um check that for you.

me: ok.

Mrs. D: But I don't know what year they were born but they were both born here in Ishpeming.

me: ok um. What year did you attend school, ah
Um - what years did you work at National Mine School

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Mrs. D: Um I started, I graduated from Northern
in 1965 and

me: Mm

Mrs. D and I taught in Besemer township for
two years so I came to ~~the~~ national mine in
the fall of 1967.

me: Oh, um in as much detail as possible please
describe your job

Mrs. D: Oh, ever since I ~~got~~ got here in 1967, I've
always taught third grade and I've never had
a different grade so I've always been here in the
same place, but I used to have the um room
next to Mr. Bett's room right now. That used
to be the third grade classroom and then
~~upstairs~~ fourth + fifth grade were upstairs
in Mrs. Nevert's room and then the room right
next door to hers

me: Weird.

Mrs. D Yeah, so they used to be upstairs + when
I first started teaching here sixth grade used to
be a regular classroom too.

me: oh

Mrs. D: So sixth grade used to be the room right next to um, to the computer room, and then the fifth grade room use to be the room right next to the Home Ec. room and I don't know who's room that is right now.

me: Yeah ah & that's Mrs Richards ~~room~~.

Mrs D: and then the seventh + eighth graders used to change classes with the high school kids so it was like 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, they all had the same teachers and they used to change classes together

me: mm

Mrs D: So the junior high, the seventh + eighth + the high school were kinda put together then

me: M, um what was the most rewarding ~~part~~ part of your career?

Mrs. D: Oh, I guess I've always liked children and I think that just seeing children come in and they don't know anything and seeing

them leave when they've grown up so much that has been probably the most successful thing me: mm, um, what was the most difficult part of your job? There,...

Mrs. D: ~~xi~~ hum, I guess ~~they~~ there hasn't been anything that's been really difficult I guess the hardest thing for me was when the millage was defeated; 'cause I always felt as if... um, as far as our school goes we were doing a good job and all the parents here have been cooperative, I've ~~se~~ never had a parent that hasn't been co-operative or has complained about things I really like the parents of my students and so it's kind of a disappointment when they went out and voted no...

me: Yeah

Mrs. D: on the millage 'cause I thought they really supported our school and they liked our school.

me: mm, um How do you see the duties of your job change over the years?

Mrs. D.: Well, I think children have gotten much smarter, and that's probably because of television, one of the main reasons. I know the materials that I used to use when I started teaching, I had to throw away and get different ones because boys and girls these days know many more things have many ~~more~~ more facts and information at their fingertips, and probably part of that comes from watching T.V. it's a very important part of it.

me. Mm. During your career where were you and were you involved in any special projects, programs, or extra curricular activities?

Mrs. D. Well in the elementary grades it's hard to really get any extra curricular activities...

me. Yeah.

Mrs. D. although, we used to have a big carnival here every year. That was our, our highlight of the

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year as far as elementary students go and we used to have a big fund-raising project, um Mr. Johnson used to dress like the Easter bunny...

me: Ha ha.

Mrs. D: and they used to have their picture taken with him.

me: Oh.

Mrs. D: and then we used to ~~have~~ sell, like jackets & t-shirts, and, and that was a lot of fun.

me: M.

Mrs. D: I guess the other thing that involved in a, um, educating teacher experience, the math department and so we traveled through the U.P. and gave um, a miniatur workshop ~~that~~ ~~at~~ ~~gave~~ every school in the Upper Peninsula.

me: um did you receive any special training for your job?

Mrs. D.: Well I took, when I went to Northern instead of having a major you had to have five minors...

me: Um...

Mrs. D.: So, then I had to be trained, like in um, Math and Science and Social Studies and then the fine arts which would be art and music.

me: M

Mrs. D.: and then um, Phi. Ed., but um after I graduated, then I went back and got my masters degree, and when I got my master's degree, there's certain things that have really helped me in my classroom. One is I got Remedial reading certification that helps me teach the poor readers

me: Yeah.

Mrs. D.: And another thing is I got a grant from the National Science Foundation, so I had to go to school this summer for a whole month and

Mrs. D.: then I learned how to use a hands on approach to science n...
me: Oh.

Mrs. D.: that's why there's always a lot of animals and things going on in the third grade
Ha, ha.

me: Yeah.

Mrs. D.: because of that program. Then I also had a, a um, directed study with Dr. Vanbation (I don't know what it is, something like that) and he helped me set up my own math program. And, so I've used that for many years now.

me: m.

Mrs. D.: And it's been really great.

me: ^{Oh that's good, um.} Yeah. What did this training involve?

Mrs. D.: We kind of covered some of that huh?

Mrs. D.: ~~Yeah~~ Another thing that, that I did was very important is, I went back and got special

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Mrs. D.: training in learning disabilities so I
could help those people that, you know are
having learning problems.

me: ~~oh~~ Uh-ha.

Mrs. D.: And then after I got my master's degree
I had to go back to school and get classes
in computers. So I would know how to use
computers in my classroom and also in
teaching a new- definition reading, cause that's
something ~~we should~~ that Michigan just developed.

me: M, About how long did it all take to like?...

Mrs. D.: Well, I'm still going to school.

me: Oh.

Mrs. D.: I just took a cooperative learning
workshop, and so, when you're a teacher, you
have to go to school for the rest of your life.

me: Oh, ha.

Mrs. D.: You're never done. Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, there's always
something new coming up

me: Oh

Mrs. D.: and so it's always important that you go

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Mrs. D.: back and learn about it.

me: Ummm, um, could you describe some interesting or humorous events that happened during your career?

Mrs. P.: Well, I think when you teach with a bunch of people it, it's really fun to play jokes on them, ok?

me: Ummm

Mrs. D.: and so um, we've had a facility facility that's really fun to play jokes on and so, we really have a good time here, I think there've been some, ~~some~~ sad times, some sad things that have happened, and some tragedies in our school, but I think the most important thing is, is to have a sense of humor and, and have the kids enjoy what they're doing. ...

me: Umm.

Mrs. D.: Ok, and do you want specific things that happened ~~not~~ maybe here, is that what you're asking?

me: Yeah

Mrs. D.: Yeah um, there've been many, many things that I remember that stand out and are really things that you really like, and enjoy.

Mrs. D. Um, one thing I think is when Mrs. Gleason used to teach here, she really had some great appetizers and they were fun to listen to and of course, us getting the award is one of the, um, ten most outstanding schools in Michigan is really a, a highlight, too, in my teaching career.

~~me: mm.~~
me: mm.

Mrs. D. I was proud of that.

me: Yeah. Um, could you describe what your co-workers were like?

Mrs. D. Well, when I first started teaching here, of course, there were many older, older teachers that taught here...

me: Um.

Mrs. D. and so, um, it was kind of hard when I first started teaching because they really liked the old way, and of course when I first got here, I wanted to try some new things

me: hm.

Mrs. D. and so that was kind of hard but, um, as time ~~was~~ passed by, then of course they all retired and most of the people that are working here ~~are~~, right now, especially in the elementary

Mrs. D. grades, most of them graduated around the same time I did.

me. Oh.

Mrs. D. So were about the same age, and we've been here together for a long time. And my aide Mrs. Alderton has been here for um, 23 years. So she's been my teacher aide.

me. Oh my goodness.

Mrs. D. And that's a record, I told her, she's not allowed to ~~quit~~ retire either. Ha Ha

me. Ha, Ha. Um at any time, did you feel like changing careers?

Mrs. D. Um, well, you know, I went to the workshop and they said not really changing careers, but you should try a different grade level. And I really thought about that, I taught first grade, for a year, and I just went nuts. Haha, like I just started with a lesson, I'd be almost done, and somebody wouldn't have it done - oh, this one little boy told me well I dropped my pencil down my back and I can't get my underwear out of my pants to get it out, Ha, Ha.

me. Ha, Ha.

Mrs. D. And so I really didn't enjoy teaching

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Mrs. D.: first grade I think third grade is the best grade there is, and I really wouldn't wanna switch.

me: Yeah. How did the community feel about ~~the~~ Nat'l Mine school?

Mrs. D.: Well, I told you before - since I started teaching..

me: Yeah.

Mrs. D.: here, which is many, years ago, this is my 24th year at Nat'l Mine, and I have never had a parent that failed to cooperate with me. And I think that's a great record. Right now, I'm starting, so I have kids of my kids and that's really interesting to have a conference with one of your former students, haha.

me: Yeah, haha.

Mrs. D.: That's really interesting to do. I think but, ~~that~~ that um, that probably the best thing that's happened to being able to teach at Nat'l Mine is because the parents are so supportive of what you do, and they're so positive towards the school, and ~~that's~~ that's great.

me: ~~Do~~ Do any of your family members or relatives work for the school?

Mrs. D: Um, well I told you, both, my sisters were teachers.

me: Yeah.

Mrs. D: and my sister um, my older sister Lois, she worked for the N.E.C.E. school district.

me: Oh.

Mrs. D: and my husband is the head mechanic, so he works over at Northlake.

me: Oh, neat.

Mrs. D: so we really have the same employer.

me: Mm.

Mrs. D: But we don't see each other.

me: Oh. Um. how, has the building itself changed over the years?

Mrs. D: Well, I told you about the, before, about the 7th + 8th grade, how they went with the high-school. That probably is the biggest change, you know, taking the 6th grade and putting them in with the 7th + 8th. And then the elementary classes have changed places and, of course, we used to have a beautiful auditorium here, which is the lunchroom now, and so that

Mrs. D! has changed a lot, it was really funny, 17
because in the older days, where Mr. Keto's, the
second half of his shop is where he stores his wood in ~~the~~
me! ~~Ha~~ Aha

Mrs. D! that used to be the kitchen

me! Oh my goodness

Mrs. D! And then that's where we used to go, and the
cooks used to make things, everything was really
good, they had a good hot lunch program. And
then we used to have hot lunch, well, first of all
we started having ~~hot~~ lunch in the hallway right
down by the office they used to put tables down there,
and then they used to put tables in the gym, and
that was real interesting, cause sometimes you'd
be eating and a basketball would come and plop
in your mashed potatoes. Ha Ha.

me! Ha Ha.

Mrs. D! And then I remember one of the, the um corp's
helpers here that was um, Mrs. Swanson's mother,
and her name was Hali Maki and one day she told
the kids that anyone who doesn't want their
oranges throw them to me, so the whole lunch
room threw them at her. Ha Ha,
me! Aha.

Mrs. D! and so that was really funny, I mean ~~I don't know~~ but, having lunch in the gym was not a ~~very~~ good idea. Ha Ha, me! ha ha.

Mrs. D! especially when there was a gym class going on. Ha me! ha ha.

Mrs. D! and then we also used to have it in this hallway right here by the music room, and then we used to have to eat hot lunch there for a while too, so, even though our lunchroom is ~~crowe~~ crowded ^{over what we used to have} something it's really a big improvement. ha ha. me! ha ha. Yeh Um,

Mrs. D! Oh, and of course this wing wasn't here at all you know, it's all new. me! ch.

Mrs. D! so what happened is, the door right by the bandroom there? me! mm.

Mrs. D! If you went out that door, you used to be outside, just like on the other side by the lunchroom. me! ch. Mrs. D! And so these rooms weren't here at all.

me: Oh.

I accidentally erased some of it.

Mrs. D. we used to come here like all the high school, and that was real interesting because in the auditorium we had these old wooden seats and they used to have to have study hall there then they had like a lap board on there lap that they used to have to write with. . .

me: Oh, weird.

Mrs. D. because there was, we were really over crowded, and then what they did one year is, they took the elementary out of here and um in fact Mrs. Denny + Mrs. Kangas, were the only elementary classrooms here. And Mrs. Goin, who had kindergarten she used to meet in the Lutheran church, out on 581.

me: mm.

Mrs. D. and then I got sent to West Ishpeming for a year + Mr. Emblem and Mr. Johnson had to take 4th + 5th grade, went to ~~the~~ north Lake.

me: Oh.

Mrs. D. so, we had a lot of changes that went on.

Me! If you had to do it all over ^{again} would you choose the same career?

Mrs. D. Oh Definately.

me! Yeah.

Mrs. D. there's nothin' like being a teacher. Believe me, me! m.

Mrs. D. the only hard part is when you have to work with some turkeys right Mrs. Denny? Ha Ha, (Mrs. Denny was there). Ha Ha and I'm only teasing about that, I really enjoy the people I work with.

me! What were the greatest challenges you faced during your career?

Mrs. D. I, that's a hard one, I guess every day is a challenge, especially when you have to get kids to learn, there are a lot of kids that have learning disabilities that you have to meet, and also a lot of the kids that are gifted in extra things, I guess the biggest challenge is just meeting every child, in where they are, and you know, supplying their needs, and and getting them to learn, so, at the end you've taken them as far as you can for the year.

me! Did you ever win any special awards or be recognized for your job performances?

Mrs. D! Not really that I can think of, that we got a really special award we won um the conservation award because um, we did a really good display on farms they honored us that way but as far as special award or or achievement no, I don't think that there have been any that stick out in my mind.

me! Oh, uh. What are your fondest memories of ~~the~~ Natl mine?

Mrs. D! I guess when I look back that probably the fondest memories would be just having my former students come back and and see you know what has become of them and how successful they've been.

me! Yeah.

Mrs. D! and that probably would be the best thing that I can say that I look forward to, course, when I look over the years there've been so many of them that I guess some things that ~~have~~ ^{happen} been

Mrs. D. every year that have been really special.
me! mm. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Mrs. D. I don't know, I think that probably as far as schools go, this is probably the best one to work at. Ha Ha

me! ok.

Mrs. D. And that means that including in that, the students we have and also the people we have to work with + also the parents.

me! ok, thank you.

Mrs. D. alright.