

An Oral History Interview

with

Esther Bloomer

Civic Leader

by

Mr^s. Hollana

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with

Esther Bloomer

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Biographical Notes - ESTHER BLOOMER (cont'd)

Community Activities (cont'd)

Maryland State Teachers Association, lay member 1950 -

Montgomery County Junior College Advisory Council, member 1946-65

Montgomery County Citizens Ctte for Public Schools, member of
Council 1962- ?

The Bethesda Public Library Advisory Council (resigned from this)

Young Women's Christian Assoc., Mont. Co. Branch 19__ to present
Interim Board Planning Ctte, member
Interim Ctte, ?chairman
Public Affairs Chairman for Montgomery Co.
Area Public Affairs Ctte, member

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Esther Bloomer

Interviewer - Blossom Holland

HOLLAND: This interview is with Mrs. D. Beale Bloomer, that is Esther Bloomer, who lives in an apartment on Bradley Boulevard in Chevy Chase, Maryland. The date is September 13, 1971, and the interviewer is Blossom Holland.

Mrs. Bloomer has taken an active part in educational organizations in Montgomery County and the State of Maryland, as well as being active in other community activities.

Mrs. Bloomer, would you tell me--when did you move here as an adult? I know you said on your biography that you had been here off and on since 1911, but when did you come here to stay? About?

BLOOMER: When I came to stay was about 1946.

HOLLAND: 1946. Well, when was your earliest involvement, then, in county affairs?

BLOOMER: Well, I think it was with the Chevy Chase Elementary School. I knew the principal, Anna Rose. I was very fond of her, and somehow I got drawn into things.

HOLLAND: Well, did you have a child in the elementary school then?

BLOOMER: Yes. I had one child, and he was in the elementary school.

HOLLAND: When did you first start with the PTA and the interest in the elementary school?

BLOOMER: Well, I started at that PTA through Anna Rose. I can remember the first time I went down to a PTA meeting, and it was way down in a basement, and they had all these dusty mattresses. I thought this was horrible.

HOLLAND: What were the mattresses for?

BLOOMER: Well, you see they had a multi-purpose room. In fact, it was the only room that they could use at Chevy Chase Elementary at that time. That was the time that people were talking about frills, and how could you need anything for elementary children. Why would you need a room where they could meet? Or really where their parents could meet. It was ridiculous.

HOLLAND: I understand about the multi-purpose room, but I don't understand why there were mattresses there.

BLOOMER: Well, the mattresses were there because they were doing gymnastics. You see?

HOLLAND: Oh.

BLOOMER: And sometimes they got moved, and sometimes they didn't.

HOLLAND: And did you become an officer in the Chevy Chase Elementary PTA?

BLOOMER: Oh, no. Not at Chevy Chase Elementary. But the thing that was interesting is that we had a canning class. World War Two, I guess it was, came along, and we started canning. Edith Dinwiddie was working with that, and I got to know her. And then Dorothy Himstead, of course, but not with that.

HOLLAND: Now wait a minute. I'm not up on the people who were in the county then. Now who was Mrs. Dinwiddie?

BLOOMER: Edith Dinwiddie was a past president of the Montgomery County League.

HOLLAND: I see.

BLOOMER: She insisted on giving up the presidency when her son, David, who is now married, and who I think has several children, was born.

HOLLAND: And the other person you mentioned in the elementary school PTA?

BLOOMER: Oh, Anna Rose was the principal, and I was devoted to her. She was really terrific. She would somehow insinuate little things, and I will never forget the way she jumped on the sixth grade when they got all hysterical when they were having one of these evacuation things. I can remember her standing up with a crooked little smile that she had and saying, "What you'd better do is to come down here the next time we have this evacuation drill and take lessons from the third grade." And they were just like pricked balloons. It was marvelous.

HOLLAND: Mrs. Bloomer, would you please tell me who Dorothy Himstead was?

BLOOMER: Dorothy Himstead was Mrs. Ralph Himstead, who was the first woman on the County Council.

HOLLAND: Oh.

BLOOMER: For one thing. Her husband, Ralph, was the executive secretary of the American Association of School Professors.

HOLLAND: I see. And she was in the elementary school PTA with you?

BLOOMER: No.

HOLLAND: Oh, I'm sorry. I misunderstood.

BLOOMER: But she kept saying, "Well, when are you going to join the League of Women Voters?" And I said, "Dorothy, as soon as I get through the canning class."

And then later on, when George, my son, moved to Leland Junior High School, and Ralph Himstead was president of the PTA there, I said, "As soon as Ralph lets me alone, I'll do this."

HOLLAND: So you were an officer, I think, in the Leland PTA?

BLOOMER: Well, I was chairman of grade mothers, and this was quite a job because this was, again, war time, and it looked as if I was going to have to organize all the grade mothers in some way because we had great trouble in the lunch room. Kids would grab off bread while you turned your back. You could not keep a loaf of bread going around properly.

And another thing, too, was the fact that a lot of the cafeteria workers found they would get more money in the District, and so they left just before Christmas.

HOLLAND: Oh, that wasn't very nice.

BLOOMER: And Elwood Mason, the principal, known as "Bugs", said to me, "Well, what are we going to do about this, Mrs. Bloomer?" I said, "What?" And he said, "We've got to have some kind of an organization." So I had to organize the grade mothers, get them to get some more. On the other hand, we got the only roast beef in Montgomery County for roast beef sandwiches because Mrs. Laddie, who was then the provider and

arranger for the cafeteria, was a wonderful person, and also a very able person, who seemed to produce things out of a hat.

HOLLAND: Well, as I understand it, you were in the Leland PTA from 1940 until 1943, and I assume that this is when your son George was there.

BLOOMER: Yes. This is.

HOLLAND: And you were also after that a member of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School PTA, and an officer there, too. Weren't you?

BLOOMER: Well, I was chairman of the Library Committee, and I can remember that Bill Pyle, who was no relation to Tom Pyle. . . . Oh, I was devoted to Tom Pyle, who was the principal at that time. He was a wonderful person.

HOLLAND: He was the one that Pyle High School, or is it Junior High, is named for?

BLOOMER: Yes. That's the one. But then, Bill Pyle, who was no relation. . . . But I knew Bill because he came from Hancock, Maryland, and he got me to be chairman of the Library Committee. And then also he was asked to have two people who had no connection with the schools. The idea was that you were supposed to have everybody learn what went on at the high school. Again this was in the McCarthy era, and I don't mean Gene McCarthy.

I said, "Bill, you don't want me." I said, "You want a brand new person, who doesn't know anything about the high school at all." And Bill looked at me and said, "I haven't time."

So I had a lovely time, but I still think it would have been better to have somebody else who didn't know anything about the high school.

HOLLAND: Well, I don't quite understand. You were in charge of the Library Committee. Was this to get volunteers to run the library?

BLOOMER: It was to get volunteers to keep the library straight, and see that the books came back. You know, that kind of thing.

HOLLAND: But was there a paid librarian, too, or not?

BLOOMER: Well, she was paid in a way. She ran the public library at that time--Mrs. Keesler. . . . Oh, I see her all the time now.

HOLLAND: You'll think of it later, and we can say later. So you mentioned Dorothy Himstead was trying to get you into the League, and I guess that it was about this time that you did join the League, wasn't it?

BLOOMER: Yes. Now that was in 1946, and Peg Colton, who was my next door neighbor at the time, said, "Come on. We're going to a meeting of the League of Women Voters on education." And at that time, Florence Saunders was chairman, and she was leading for the kindergartens--that kindergartens would be free in Montgomery County. Of course, they had been free at one or two other places--I think, Baltimore City.

HOLLAND: But there were kindergartens in the county?

BLOOMER: Oh, yes. They were just beginning to have kindergartens.

HOLLAND: But I don't understand though. Were they in the public schools and people paid to go, or were these in private schools?

BLOOMER: Well, there were, of course, some in private schools, but these were in public schools, and the whole idea was that you had to pay for their lunch--because I worked down in the lunch room at one time, and Mrs. Sowers, Dorothea Sowers, Dorothea Sowers, who was in charge of the lunch room, said, "You must wash your hands." I said, "I washed them just before I left home." She said, "I don't care." So I washed them.

HOLLAND: Right. Well, then your first activity, then, in the League was connected with the Education Committee? Is that right?

BLOOMER: Yes. It was because, as I said, Peg and I went to this meeting. I have tried to get some of the people who were there to recall some of the things that happened at the meeting. But all I can remember is that Irv [Wensink] said that he remembered that it was in the fall because he remembered the sun warm against his cheek. And I guess it was in the fall. He was legislative chairman for the PTA, but Dr. Broome. . . .

HOLLAND: Just a minute. Let me get his name again. Irv?

BLOOMER: Mr. Wensink. W E N S I N K.

HOLLAND: Okay.

BLOOMER: And Dr. Broome got mad, and when he got mad, he was crystal clear.

HOLLAND: Now, you'd better explain to us who Dr. Broome is.

BLOOMER: Yes. I am. Dr. Broome is Dr. Edwin W. Broome, who was the first superintendent of the Montgomery County Schools. He was educated in one of the old academies, which were in the upper part of the county.

HOLLAND: Maybe we'll come back to Dr. Broome, but you've identified him for us. Let's go on with your connection with the League of Women Voters and later we'll talk about Dr. Broome. You were talking about this first meeting you went to and . . .

BLOOMER: And Dr. Broome got mad.

HOLLAND: Was he there at the meeting?

BLOOMER: He was there at the meeting.

HOLLAND: I see.

BLOOMER: He was supposed to speak, and somebody said, "Well, why shouldn't the teachers live in the District of Columbia, even if they teach in Montgomery County Schools?" And Dr. Broome always tried to get the very best arrangement for his teachers, and the system was small enough at that time so he could do it in a way. I mean he could work in things.

So this was when he got mad, and he said, "How would you like--" and then he gave the hours that they had to work and the fact that they had to come to and from the District. And he got just as clear as could be. Ordinarily, he was rather quiet, gentle, good-natured. He just sounded like a gentle, good-natured old man.

HOLLAND: Well, this, I gather, was a public meeting then that you went to.

BLOOMER: Yes. This was a public meeting.

HOLLAND: And then, right at that time, though, you did join the League?

BLOOMER: Well, I did, as soon as I could, since I didn't have to work for Ralph Himstead, you see? Because I was chairman of grade mothers, organizing the cafeteria service, and this was a job. I sat on the phone day after day. You

know what it is like.

HOLLAND: So then, what were your activities in the League at that time, back in 1946 when you first joined? What were your activities?

BLOOMER: Well, of course, I was interested in public school education. So I did a survey of the public school education at that time, which really reads very strangely now because it was small enough so that we didn't have all these ramifications that we have to have now.

And Dr. Broome put his stamp on every one of those teachers. You can really tell the ones who worked under him, and not by their age alone.

Dr. Broome was asked to speak at a meeting at the Leland Junior High School, and Ralph Himstead said to him, "Now, will you be the speaker?" And Dr. Broome said he would be delighted to, and he said, "What do you want me to talk about?" Ralph sort of looked at him sideways and said, "About twenty minutes." And then they both burst out laughing.

HOLLAND: Let's go back to the survey of education that the League did. What was the purpose of the survey?

BLOOMER: It was just about the time for a survey of education from the League. I started out with another person, and we were working under Marjorie Garfield, that's Mrs. Frank Garfield on a local education item. She was a past president of the League of Women Voters, and she was doing this survey, which was a very good thing to do because you knew everything that went on.

And somehow I became interested in education, and there was another woman who was supposed to be working with me, but

she had to drop out. So I got more and more involved. This is what you do, and I worried like mad over it. I worked over the U. S. Chamber of Commerce plans about Culture Means [Customers].

HOLLAND: Now wait a minute. I don't understand. What was this? The U. S. Chamber of Commerce had put out a study? Is that it?

BLOOMER: They put out a study, and they called it Culture Means [Customers]. The whole idea of the study was to show that as you learn about things and broadened your interests a little bit, wanted books, for instance. You wanted. . . . Well, they didn't say antiques, but this is what has come about. And all that kind of thing.

So it was extremely interesting, but I got more and more involved, and Edith Dinwiddie planned some kind of a meeting, and we met at that lovely house of hers on Meadowbrook Lane. We discussed everything. It was an all morning affair, and then she suggested that I would be a good person for a chairman of education because I had learned so much. I had it all down on paper.

But actually the main thing about the whole business was that we were considering doing away--in fact we were considering the League's urging the county to do away with the Superintendent of School Property. This was a political job in the first place. It was a political appointment. It was a man who had worked hard for somebody's campaign and was either too illiterate or too. . . . Not a good person--to have any professional status.

HOLLAND: Who appointed him?

BLOOMER: Oh, I think he was appointed by the Governor, or he may have been appointed by the County Commissioners, as we had at that time. But the whole thing was that it was a man who got some kind of a salary and very often did nothing. So these schools were perfectly frightful.

I was talking to a friend of mine in the League of Women Voters the other day, and she said to me, "I don't understand how Dr. Broome could have allowed these schools to be in such condition." I said, "Dr. Broome had nothing to do with it because the Supervisor of School Property was beyond the Superintendent of School's jurisdiction."

HOLLAND: I see, and so the League had gotten interested in doing a study because they were disturbed?

BLOOMER: They were all disturbed. Oh, some of these schools. . . . That Scotland school was a perfect example. It had a huge potbellied stove, and it was all you could do to squeeze between the stove and the wall to get out the door. And mud all over the place.

HOLLAND: I think we will talk more, Esther, about the schools, but can we go back first to a little bit more about the general. . . . How the study was done. How was the survey done by the League?

BLOOMER: Well, for one thing, we had a. . . . Well, I really did pretty much the survey because, as I said, this other woman who was going to do it had to drop out. So I got somebody to lug me around different places, and I was much more mobile then than I am now.

HOLLAND: Well, did you go and visit the schools?

BLOOMER: I went and visited a number. Then, of course, I knew a great many people who were connected with education, and I would get somehow. . . . I would say, "Come on. Are you going up to so and so?" "Yes." "Well, I would love to go with you." So this is what I would do. And then my husband was alive then, and he could drive me to some of the schools.

HOLLAND: Well, then, what were the findings of the survey you did?

BLOOMER: Well, the findings were. . . . There were so many findings, but the one finding particularly was that we felt we wanted to do away with the Supervisor of School Property, which we urged and which came about.

Then another thing that we were very interested in was the elected School Board.

HOLLAND: Who chose the School Board at this point?

BLOOMER: At this point, the School Board, like most of the colonial holdovers in the way of states and counties, was picked out by the Governor. It was what was known as a green bag appointment. When it was a green bag appointment, this was written and put in a green bag, and it was taken to the Governor. The Governor appointed whoever was decided on by the political leaders.

HOLLAND: Well, then, the League, I gather, worked very hard, after having this survey, in order to get an elected School Board.

BLOOMER: Well, it worked hard, but in one way, it didn't work too hard because they kept putting qualifications in there.

Now the first thing that started this business was a study of the method of selection of School Board members for Montgomery County. This was done by the PTA, prepared by Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations.

HOLLAND: Now, let me understand this. The PTA did a study about how the School Board should be chosen?

BLOOMER: Yes.

HOLLAND: I see.

BLOOMER: Mrs. David Stowe was the chairman.

HOLLAND: Was that S T O W E?

BLOOMER: Mr. Mason Gilbert, who is now still around, was on the committee. Mrs. Celia Ramosa, who was with the PTA in, I think, Harford County. Mr. Koukal and Mr. Hadley.

HOLLAND: Well, now, Mr. Koukal--how do you spell his name?

BLOOMER: K O U K A L. I don't remember him at all, I do remember Mr. Hadley.

This was very good, I thought, and it was brought to an annual meeting of the League of Women Voters. At that time, there was only one man present, and that was Blair Lee, who was reporting for the Maryland News. When we proposed this thing, Blair Lee shouted loudly, "Over my dead body!" [LAUGHTER]

But we voted it just the same.

HOLLAND: Well, would you say then that the League took action on a study that the PTA did, or did your survey also include something about the elected School Board?

BLOOMER: Well, this survey did include it, but I can remember fighting the entire Board of the League on Marie Bennett's side porth--walking up and down, I did, just like somebody. . . .

I don't know who. Well, maybe it was Little Black Sambo. . . . walked up and down and said, "We've got to support this thing."

And Helen Scharf was at that time legislative chairman and said, "We can only support it in principle because" Then she pointed out why, but I was not at all pleased with that.

Then I was on the State Board, and I'm sure that the State President was perfectly infuriated because I said, "This has got to go through." Well, of course, it didn't, but we did work out something. We supported this elected School Board in principle.

HOLLAND: When did the elected School Board come about? That was some years later, wasn't it?

BLOOMER: That was some years later because Leona Rush, a member of the Legislature, as she was at that time. . . . She is now Leona Goetzman, Mrs. George Goetzman, she brought this thing up for Montgomery County alone, and it took eight years to get this through the Legislature.

HOLLAND: She had to have a great deal of patience and persistence.

BLOOMER: Yes. She did.

HOLLAND: You started to talk about the Scotland school, and I asked you to wait. But let's talk a little bit about the inequalities between the schools for the whites and the Negroes. Were the Negro children in particular schools than the white children were in?

BLOOMER: They were in particular schools, and I can remember the first meeting that I went to on schools. It was a dinner meeting. I guess it was some place. . . . Maybe it was in Rockville, some place where we had dinner, and after the dinner. . . . And I went with Edith Dinwiddie, Mrs. Dean Dinwiddie, and after the dinner, everything was very dusky, and in came

these Negro teachers and stood back of our seats. They didn't join in the debate, but they were there.

So this was one of the things that the Maryland Council on Education was interested in--that there were separate teacher organizations all over the State for the Negro teachers and for the white teachers.

HOLLAND: And did all the Negro schools have only Negro teachers?

BLOOMER: That's all, and the first time they had a Negro principal, I think it was in Kensington, and this was something that Ruth Smith was engaged in, involved in. This Negro principal, who was very good, was known as Stevie Smith's Negro teacher.

HOLLAND: Who was Ruth Smith?

BLOOMER: Ruth Smith was Mrs. Lyman Smith, who had been working for this thing, and she was the one that got me into the YWCA. You see, everything goes.

HOLLAND: Yes. Was she also in the League?

BLOOMER: She was in the League. In fact, she still is.

HOLLAND: Well, I don't even have any idea about how many schools there might have been in the late 1940's and early 1950's in Montgomery County.

BLOOMER: Well, I think, and I say again--I don't know really. But I think there was somewhere around a hundred.

HOLLAND: And of those, give me some idea of how many were Negro schools.

BLOOMER: Oh, I guess there were seven or eight, something like that. I'm not sure that I am correct about all those things, about all those figures.

HOLLAND: Well, then, you were talking about the one at Scotland, having the potbellied stove and . . .

BLOOMER: . . . Mud all around the place. There was no attempt, not only at landscaping, but there was no attempt at sidewalks. It was perfectly appalling.

HOLLAND: And I assume that there were no indoor toilets either?

BLOOMER: No indoor toilets. No. There was a horrible little toilet outside that you had to go to.

HOLLAND: Well, when or what did the League do about the inequalities?

Did it try to do anything at this point?

BLOOMER: I think we did. I'm sure we did. I remember this one friend of mine Patty Rowse (Mrs. Edwin Rowse) who objected to Dr. Broome's allowing this business. She went and taught there, and she used to take books to the children, and she used to have a fit every time she went.

HOLLAND: Well, I suppose at least part of it is that, in the white schools there were PTA's where parents got interested in the schools, and then contributed or in some way helped the school to get what might have been considered frills.

BLOOMER: Yes. There were a great many people. Now, for instance, I remember when I was working with the BCC PTA that they didn't have any money to repair typewriters. So we had to raise the money to get the typewriters repaired because all these youngsters wanted to take typing.

Now, gradually things have. . . . We all said at the time, "This should be a function of the school. They should put this in the budget." But it takes a while for all these things.

It was just like the elementary school lunch program. Now we went down and worked, but we brought, very often, a lot of the food, and then gradually. . . . This is the whole thing about the League of Women Voters in Montgomery County, particularly, that we pioneered in a great many of these things.

So that when you think--Oh, we have this. We have that. We have the other. How did we get it? Because somebody stuck her neck out.

HOLLAND: I think maybe we'd like to go on. Well, I'm still more interested in the school situation, though, because certainly now the schools are pretty well integrated, I would say, in Montgomery County. Maybe, they're not. I don't know how you feel.

BLOOMER: Well, I think that there are lots of them that are quite well integrated. I can remember Miss Lynn Moore at BCC, when we started integrating the schools, and Lynn said, "Well, now let's have plenty of Negroes. Don't just have three or four so that we will make pets of them."

HOLLAND: Very fine idea to do so. When were these one and two room schools of the Negroes eliminated?

BLOOMER: First of all, they were eliminated when the Supreme Court said, "With all deliberate speed, etc." But then later, I think that a whole lot of these things were eliminated, but there were poverty pockets. Now, for instance, Scotland has charming houses. I go by there quite often, and they are attractive. They're small. They're sort of cluster houses. I think cluster arrangements have been awfully good. But they are charming looking. They are different pastel shades.

HOLLAND: I'm quite amazed, Mrs. Bloomer, that you have

continued your interest in education now that your son is a grown man. Yet you are still serving on education committees and working in the League for good education. What kept you going? What motivated you to keep going?

BLOOMER: Well, I've got seven grandchildren, and they are being educated, all but one who is too young, in Montgomery County Schools, and while I don't see them a great deal, I'm still interested. You get started in this kind of thing.

HOLLAND: Well, you have seven very good reasons. That's for sure.

You've mentioned Dr. Broome quite a little. You told me that he was the first Superintendent of Schools in Montgomery County. Who brought him in and what kind of a man was he?

BLOOMER: First of all, he was brought in when they had the 1915 Bac man and Flener Report, which was adopted by the State of Maryland, and this was in 1915, because the State Legislature felt that they were not getting their money's worth in education, statewide, and this report, which was done by Bachman and Flener. . . . The year before they did that wonderful report on the medical schools, which resulted in a great deal of change in medical schools.

They said that the whole trouble with the State of Maryland was that we were in politics with the schools, that very often when they would change the complexion of the State government, as we do from time to time, that even the teacher in the one room school would be changed, and that this was all wrong. Well, we don't have to say that this was all wrong.

But this was the thing--that we should have professional standards for all our teachers and that we should have professional competency for all these people.

HOLLAND: Well, you said that it was right after this report in 1915 that Dr. Broome came in as School Superintendent?

BLOOMER: He was in beforehand, but this was when Dr. Pullen was [State] Superintendent of Schools, and he was only the second State Superintendent of Schools we ever had, and he was very good, and he and Dr. Broome realized each other's worth.

HOLLAND: Dr. Broome, then, was here before 1915?

BLOOMER: He was. He was just in the old system, you see. But it was the State Legislature, to its credit, that adopted the Backman and Flener Report, the essentials of it. Of course, lots of times, they departed therefrom, but this is understandable.

HOLLAND: But then, Dr. Broome. . . . I don't quite understand. He was not School Superintendent before 1915?

BLOOMER: No, he wasn't School Superintendent, though he had a wonderful political sense of timing. I would go up to see him, and I'd say, "Dr. Broome, when are we going to do so-and-so?" And Dr. Broome would say, "Well, now, we'd better wait [until] after so-and-so, and let's see how this works out." Well, almost invariably, he was right.

HOLLAND: Well, when then was he made School Superintendent?

BLOOMER: Well, I think this was in the whole development that followed the Bachman and Flesner Report.

HOLLAND: Shortly thereafter then? But he was still appointed,

wasn't he, by the State School Board or?

BLOOMER: No. This was a Well, it was the State School Board in a way, but the whole thing was it was removed from politics. You had to have a certificate, and you had a whole set-up of professional qualifications.

HOLLAND: For the teachers?

BLOOMER: For the teachers and for the State Superintendent.

HOLLAND: And the county Superintendent.

BLOOMER: And the county Superintendent.

HOLLAND: Well, this is very interesting, Mrs. Bloomer, because I had been told by somebody else in the county that Dr. Broome's whole operation was strongly affected by the political organization of the county in pre-charter days.

BLOOMER: It was, but simply on account of timing. He had a wonderful political sense, but he would say very gently, "Well, now let's wait. When so-and-so happens and when they do so-and-so. . . ."

Because we were all for county-supported kindergartens, and Dr. Broome said, "When more than half the kindergartens in the State are supported by the State, then we can push for it." And of course, he was right.

HOLLAND: Was he able to do things on his own? I realize he had the political timing, but could he make decisions about the school system without being affected by the political organization?

BLOOMER: Yes, he could because he had that ability to do so many things, to know the things he couldn't do, that he wouldn't even attempt to do, and then to do the things that he thought would work out.

HOLLAND: Tell me about Dr. Broome as a Superintendent and relations with his teachers and so forth. What is your assessment of him as an educator?

BLOOMER: The school system was small enough so he could put his own stamp on the teachers, and I know that there are still some teachers in Montgomery County who are stamped by Dr. Broome, I find that the thing that is particularly interesting is that they have the same idea as the Post Office claims to have--it's devotion to the children. It's not devotion to wages and hours. It's not devotion to salary. I have heard teachers in the county, because I know a number of them, say, "Well, we went through the Depression. We knew when we had to tighten our belts, and we felt that the main thing was to see that the children in Montgomery County got the best education that they could get."

Somewhere along the line, in exchanging a profession for a job, many of the school teachers, I think, have forgotten that their main purpose is to teach the children, and then the rest of the things can come in later, if they can come.

HOLLAND: That's very interesting. I'm sure that since you've been active on the Education Committee in the League recently too, you know that the League is very much interested in what they now call individualization of the educational opportunities for each child, and that sort of thing. But from what you've just said, I gather that these people were interested in each individual child and were working to help each child, and perhaps some of that was lost.

BLOOMER: They were, but of course, now the whole system is so big. Now Dr. Broome could never have existed under the present system because he was not a good administrator.

HOLLAND: I see.

BLOOMER: He just wasn't, but he would talk to teachers. During the McCarthy era, and I don't mean again Gene McCarthy.

HOLLAND: I think his name was Joe, wasn't it?

BLOOMER: Joe. Joe was it. Joe. That was it. During the McCarthy era, there was a great deal of attacking this and attacking that and so on and so forth. Then during the Depression, it became a question of whether you were going to shriek for an increase in salary or whether you were going to take what the teachers took, which was a moratorium on salary.

I've talked to a number of teachers because I've known quite a few, and what they had to say is quite interesting and quite different from some of the accepted ideas.

Another thing also was the fact that they were not as permissive. But I remember one teacher Lucile Maurer, telling me that somewhere during the years of World War Two, the parents seemed to have lost control over their children.

HOLLAND: As early as that?

BLOOMER: As early as that. Well, of course, all of the mothers were going out to do war work, and the fathers were working, and they were all struggling, and somewhere. . . . Now this I think is what happened.

HOLLAND: Of course, some people, I guess, blame it on John Dewey and his progressive education.

BLOOMER: Oh, lots of people do, and I think that John Dewey maybe takes a little share of the blame, but you can blame television, too. It's the whole thing. You can't blame any one group, but it's the combination of the groups.

HOLLAND: Was the growing citizen interest in education and in the school system an asset or a liability to Dr. Broome, do you think?

BLOOMER: Well, he handled them awfully well. I think that, in a way, it was an asset, the way he handled it because he was such a gentle, sweet person, but he would come out with the one remark that would somehow clarify the whole thing for you. Then as he got older, of course, he had these terrible heart attacks, and he kept on longer than he should have.

HOLLAND: Oh. He had the heart attacks while he was still Superintendent.

BLOOMER: Yes he did, and he just wouldn't give up. You see, he had his own school system, and like a lot of people, he didn't want to delegate authority to anybody. So this is unfortunately bad.

HOLLAND: So how long did he go on as Superintendent, or about when?

BLOOMER: Oh, I've forgotten. I can remember very well that, at the time he retired, we did a sort of appreciation of Dr. Broome and Eleanor Beard, Mrs. George Beard, who is now on the School Board of Oregon State and Mrs. Marjory Baylor No, Mrs. Baylor is on the School Board. This was the elected School Board.

But Mrs. Beard and I went around, and we were writing up

an appreciation of Dr. Broome, and Mrs. Nancy Black at BCC and Miss Catherine Graney, who taught English at Bethesda-Chevy Chase, insisted that this should be a formal citation.

Mrs. Beard and I said Dr. Broome was loved by everybody, but it was his friends and neighbors that ought to write it, and we're not going to have such a formal thing. So we had the most ridiculous time because Mrs. Beard at that time was living out around Manor Club, and she was supposed to pick me up, and she didn't come and she didn't come, and she didn't come. I thought she had been set upon by [thieves] or something, and I got my husband to call and find out. This was when we were living in a house, and my husband was still living, and I got him to call because Mrs. Beard's mother was there and she was quite an old lady, and I didn't want to get her upset. So he just called up and said, "Is Mrs. Beard there?" And Mrs. Beard was not. Finally, she arrived and she told me she had been fighting with Mrs. Black and Miss Graney because she didn't think, and I didn't think, that we should have a formal citation.

So as a result, we gathered all the stuff together and rushed up to the School Board and they read what we had and thought that what we had was the right thing. So we didn't try to triumph over these English teachers. We just let it go.

HOLLAND: Can you give me some idea. Was he still School Superintendent in the 30's? Oh, me must have been because. . . .

BLOOMER: Yes.

HOLLAND: . . . because this was in the 40's.

BLOOMER: He shouldn't have stayed on so long but he couldn't

bear to let it go, you see.

HOLLAND: Yes.

BLOOMER: He had all these heart attacks, and then he would go back. I can remember some of the people who were on the School Board at the time said, "Of course, Dr. Broome should not be the Superintendent now."

HOLLAND: When he retired, was this when your son was still at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School?

BLOOMER: No, I don't think it was.

HOLLAND: It was afterwards?

BLOOMER: I'm sure it wasn't because Mr. Pyle, Tom Pyle, was the principal, and I can remember very well that when George graduated, Dr. Byrd, who was then the head of the University of Maryland, was picked as the speaker.

HOLLAND: Well, I was trying to pin down when it was that Dr. Broome did retire. Was it before your son was in high school, do you think?

BLOOMER: I don't think so. No, it wasn't. I'm sure it wasn't.

HOLLAND: But it was some time in the 40's.

BLOOMER: Yes, it was some time along there. He'd had to drop out. You see what he did was he had these heart attacks, and he would have to stop and take a little leave, and then he would go back for a while. He gave it up much too late.

HOLLAND: I had one other question to ask you about these years when you were in the PTA and so forth. We do like to comment on the effectiveness of the PTA at that time. You've already told about that report about the elected School Board. So it would seem to me that they were quite an active group.

BLOOMER: In Montgomery County. They were, but the first PTA's--they were awfully nice women. They were just delightful but they were very ineffective. Dr. Pullen, I think, was delighted to have them ineffective because they were pains in the neck, a lot of them, as they are now. I've been a pain in the neck.

HOLLAND: A very effective one, I hope.

BLOOMER: I don't know how effective, but the trouble is that PTA people only get aroused when there is an issue, and maybe the issue is something that their husbands think is all wrong, and they haven't really thought about it very much. But this is what happens.

I remember what happened at Chevy Chase Elementary School, and I can remember. . . . Oh, I can't go into that, but it was really very funny and it was because of the voice of one of the trustees.

HOLLAND: Well, if you have something funny, let's hear it.

BLOOMER: Well, one particular trustee, who was a very able person, but she had rather a condescending voice which she didn't mean to have that way, but it was sort of looking down at the peons. I mean this is the way it sounded, and they all got mad, and so they voted to do away with trustees at one meeting.

Then another thing that used to happen was these silly thermometers they used to put up showing how many people had joined the PTA, and I guess they still do. I don't know, but the children would get their fathers and say, "Now, come on, Daddy. You've got to go. Our class is way behind." So Daddy

get interested. He wouldn't know nothing from nothing, and then this made more difficulty.

HOLLAND: What about the effectiveness of the PTA organization at the State level?

BLOOMER: It's much more effective now than it was. It wasn't so effective, but again I think Dr. Pullen much preferred to be able to say, "Well, now I think we ought to do so-and-so." Because I can remember when I sat on the Maryland Council on Education and Dr. Pullen would look at me when he said it. "This is not for publication." And I'd say, "No, Dr. Pullen. I'm just making notes for myself." But it was so funny. He would point a finger at me.

HOLLAND: Mrs. Bloomer, you mentioned the Maryland Council on Education. Would you tell me what this was. Was it a statewide committee then on education.

BLOOMER: This was a statewide committee, and I think that it was again something to inform people all over the State of Maryland about the status, perhaps, of the public schools. I was made chairman of the Bylaws Committee, and this was in November. Yes, it was November 1948, and they picked the bylaws to pieces. They always do--every bylaws.

HOLLAND: Right.

BLOOMER: And the fact that I was able to live through it and didn't get mad, I guess they thought maybe I would be a good chairman to start it. So I was then on the Maryland League of Women Voters, and they picked me as the first chairman. It looked good, anyway.

There was somebody from AAUW, and Mrs. Betty Bull from the Maryland Council of PTA's, and I'm very fond of her, and

then a Mrs. Flook, Associated women of Maryland Farm Bureau.

HOLLAND: What was her name? Mrs. . . . ?

BLOOMER: Flook. F L O O K.

So this is what we did, and again one of the reasons that. . . . Perhaps there were two reasons. There were three reasons. There was the selling of the public schools and the events and the problem, and this was just the beginning of the McCarthy era, not Gene. Then there was the interest that we had in having one PTA organization in each county, not a Negro and a white. So this came into the whole thing. But it was mostly. . . . It was at the time that they had these little articles "How Red is the Little Red Schoolhouse?" and all that kind of thing.

We got a kit out which we sent around to anybody who asked for it, and I think this did a great deal of good. But what we, first of all, realized was that there was no use having an organization that was called together just when there was a crisis, that we needed to have an organization that was year round, even though it didn't meet too often, in order to have it functioning and having it going. Now what they are doing now, I don't know because I don't get over to Baltimore.

HOLLAND: But it is still in existence?

BLOOMER: But it's still in existence. Oh, yes.

HOLLAND: How were the people chosen who served on it? I mean who appointed you, for instance?

BLOOMER: Well, I was voted on, I guess.

HOLLAND: Well, does the Council choose its own people to be on it?

BLOOMER: It chooses its own people. They have an executive committee. Now there are some people. . . . Mr. George Schwartzman was on it. He was the chairman of the Bylaws Committee and he is Phi Delta Kappa, and he lives in Baltimore. Leslie Abbe of Rockville was a member.

There was one thing that worried us a little bit. We said, "Well, this is just going to be Baltimore-based. It's turning out to be that way because Baltimore people can go to the meetings." You see, this is the trouble.

HOLLAND: So it meets in Baltimore, rather than in Annapolis, for instance?

BLOOMER: Oh, yes. It meets in Baltimore, and you have to be there at half past nine on Saturday morning. But we have very good people who have been on this.

HOLLAND: Well, it's major purpose is to tell the public then about the schools?

BLOOMER: Yes, tell the public, and to discuss the issues that come up. Now the last meeting that they had. . . . I've forgotten.

HOLLAND: The last meeting was what?

BLOOMER: They are having a meeting on all the fragmentation of the schools and all the discussions about dope and maybe permissiveness. I don't know. They wouldn't call it that, but that whole subject. I don't think they have gotten into whether your hair is long or short.

HOLLAND: For instance, when there was all this discussion about sex education in the schools, were they active in putting out information?

BLOOMER: That comes in. The idea is to disseminate what different

people say, and they get a good panel, which is really representative of different ideas, and then they have the proceedings written down. They send the proceedings around.

HOLLAND: well, while you were on this Maryland Council on Education, I understand that you had an invitation to the workshop of the National Citizens Committee on Public Schools. Could you tell us about that?

BLOOMER: Oh, yes, that was fascinating. You see, I was a lay member of the State Teachers Association. Occasionally, they asked someone to be a lay member of the Association. I went to workshops on education and training, one at the Mayflower and one in Albany. But this was the meeting that Mr. Toy, who was the executive secretary of the whole outfit, National Education. . . . I went out to Cleveland because. . . .

HOLLAND: Now wait just a minute. I have to clarify something. Now, you say that you were a member of the Maryland State Teachers Association, a lay member.

BLOOMER: I was a lay member.

HOLLAND: Right. Now when was this?

BLOOMER: This was. . . .

HOLLAND: About?

BLOOMER: Along about 1950.

HOLLAND: And why did you become a member of that?

BLOOMER: Well, they asked me because they wanted some lay people. I wasn't the only one, but they wanted people to work on this because they thought it was better to get some lay opinions every now and then from people who were willing to express them, which I was.

HOLLAND: All right. Now I understand that, but then this

Mr. Toy was a member of the National Citizens Committee on the Public Schools? Is that the right name?

BLOOMER: National Citizens Commission.

HOLLAND: Commission on the Public Schools.

BLOOMER: This was the thing. Later on I think that Agnes Meyer took it over.

HOLLAND: What was the purpose of this group, this National Commission?

BLOOMER: The purpose of this group was again to disseminate information about the public schools in general, and to discuss what they did in different states. It's just the same thing we're doing everywhere. We're doing it in the YWCA.

HOLLAND: Well, I guess I was a little confused, and I don't know as it matters, but were you invited because you were on the Maryland Council on Education?

BLOOMER: I was invited, yes, because I was on the Maryland. . . .

HOLLAND: Or the State Teachers Association? I don't think it really matters.

BLOOMER: They were receiving demands from states for know-how on organization of state citizens commissions.

HOLLAND: So it was probably because of your membership on the Council on Education? I see.

BLOOMER: And it was really awfully interesting because I went, and Evelyn Sellers, who was the State Teachers Association president. . . . And when I walked into the room, they said, "Oh, here comes the woman who is responsible (or more or less responsible) for the only elected county School Board."

HOLLAND: In Maryland.

BLOOMER: For Montgomery County. Miss Sellers, who was very

nice, but it was so funny. . . .

HOLLAND: You want to tell us a little bit about the workshop or. . . .?

BLOOMER: It was awfully interesting. We had wonderful food. I can tell you that. [LAUGHTER] But again we got all these viewpoints. This was the same thing that happens in every national organization, I think. It certainly happens in the League of Women Voters, but you've got to be willing to speak your mind.

HOLLAND: Maybe we should talk about the Montgomery County Junior College and how it came into being.

BLOOMER: Yes. Well, as a junior college, it was perfectly fascinating.

HOLLAND: Well, how was it organized? As I understand it, it started in 1946?

HOLLAND: Dr. Broome suggested that we have a committee, a few members from all the county-wide organizations, and of course, some of us stuck to it and some of us didn't, Judge Mathias, who is now a Judge in Montgomery County, was on this in the beginning. I was on it as a parent because my son was then going to junior college.

HOLLAND: To the high school.

BLOOMER: He started at the junior college. He was just going to the junior college. But it was perfectly fascinating. Dean Price, who was the first Dean of the college and was a marvelous person--he said, "The Dean of the junior college is the loneliest person in Montgomery County." --because he said he didn't feel he could take up the Superintendent of Schools' too much, and he
time

was not flesh, fish or good red herring.

So he suggested that we have this committee, and some of us stuck, and we used to go, and we had most interesting times, and came out with some of the most wild suggestions. But actually we were the people that were, in a way, catalysts. What did we do? How did we get Negro students to the junior college? It was a long time before we got them. Now that we have two campuses, I think it is much better, but I can remember Dean Price saying, "Well, now what do we do?" And Mr. Hines, who was on this committee, said, "Give them time." And I think that is the answer to so many things.

HOLLAND: Some people, though, don't want to wait that long.

BLOOMER: Well, I find myself saying in meetings of the League of Women Voters, when we have annual meetings, I say, "Look back." But you've got to give them time because if you get too far ahead of public opinion, you're just going to have to back-track.

HOLLAND: Let's go back to before the junior college was started. I'd like to know a little more about who wanted it and who didn't want it. For instance, I understand that at one point it was called 'Monkey College'.

BLOOMER: Oh, it was called 'Monkey College' by many people, and they sneered at it. There was one particular principal of one high school, and I remember Dean Price saying, "We're never going to get anywhere with that man." Well, of course, now he's retired, and they've got a different principal.

After World War Two, there were all these veterans who wanted to go to college and they could go under the G. I. Bill of Rights. Where did they go? They couldn't get into the colleges,

the four year colleges, and then a lot of them didn't want a conventional college education. What they wanted was something combined, in a way, with a trade school, and that was where the Bliss Electrical School was so good because Dr. Bliss had more or less given it up, and Mr. Joseph, who was then on the Board of Education, resigned from the Board in order to make it no conflict of interest because he made the arrangements, you see. But this looked like a good arrangement.

HOLLAND: Now wait a minute. I don't quite understand. Before the junior college was started, there was this Bliss Electrical School?

BLOOMER: Bliss Electrical School.

HOLLAND: Which was a private school?

BLOOMER: Which was a private school. I think it was subsidized in some way, but not by the county, and Dr. Bliss was the head of it. Students came from all over the Eastern United States because it was the only school that taught electricity as such. You see, they had all the equipment and everything like that.

HOLLAND: How was this then connected with the junior college? I don't understand.

BLOOMER: Well, Dr. Bliss had gotten old, and he wanted to resign, but he wanted to go to something that was representative of the public school system. He didn't want it to just be a private thing, and I imagine Mr. Joseph spoke about it to the Board of Education. Anyway, this was what they finally decided to do, and of course, Mr. Price, who was the Dean, had taught chemistry at BCC before he was asked to be the Dean of the junior college.

HOLLAND: So that the School Board voted to take over the Bliss Electrical School and make it into a junior college?

BLOOMER: Yes.

HOLLAND: Well, where was the opposition then?

BLOOMER: The opposition was mostly from the idea of a junior college, 'Monkey College', you see, and also there was great opposition from the citizens of Takoma Park, and I believe that that has now been set to rest.

HOLLAND: Why was there this opposition?

BLOOMER: They didn't like the idea. They didn't want to see all these students coming around. It's a quiet, little community, or it was. I can remember as far back as--oh, I guess it was eight years ago, that they had a meeting. And I went over there, and these parents were all sitting there, and they brought their children with them, and they said, "What am I going to do with my little boy?" He'll run out in the street." All that kind of thing.

HOLLAND: Oh, because of the traffic from the college?

BLOOMER: The traffic, and a lot of the traffic was because Takoma Park has grown. Takoma Park was planned as a sort of a quiet, leafy suburb of the District of Columbia, according to Mr. Leslie Abbe, who quoted this to me, and this is what has happened everywhere in Montgomery County.

HOLLAND: So that in about 1946 then, the county took over the school, and then it became a part of the public school system.

BLOOMER: Well, it didn't become part of the public school system right then. They had three arrangements. If you lived in Montgomery County and went to the Montgomery County Junior

College, you paid one-third of the tuition. If you lived in the District, and a lot of students came out from the District, you paid full tuition. If you lived in Maryland, like Prince George's County, and came across, you paid two-thirds.

HOLLAND: So about what are you talking about in tuition? I mean a hundred dollars or what?

BLOOMER: No. A hundred and fifty [dollars], it was in the beginning, and then we went down to Annapolis to plead with the Governor, and it was a Republican Governor at the time--I've forgotten who it was. It wasn't Governor Agnew. But anyway the Republican went to see the Governor. I went in to see Senator Lee because I'm a non-partisan on account of School Board, and then somebody who was a Democrat went in to see somebody else.

And the thing that really made the impression on all of them was the fact that it was so much cheaper to have the small classes, and also it was much more sensible. I mean it was more. . . . I can't think of the word. You'd better turn that off.

HOLLAND: Maybe, useful? To the students?

BLOOMER: No. It was more practical. This was a more practical thing for the different students, and of course, there was this growing feeling that we must be technological, computerized--all that sort of thing worked in, you see. And this was what made the great impression with a lot of these State people because I can remember that we went down. As I say, the Republican went to see the Governor, whoever it was. I can't remember who, and I went into see who was then Senator Lee, and this was what they seized on, you see. This was a practical

thing. This cuts down taxes. This makes it less important to enlarge the University of Maryland, which is too big anyway.

So we were very pleased with this, and then of course, they kept having more and more junior colleges, all over the State now they have them, but they don't call them junior colleges, which is sensible because this was a sort of an implied. . . . It wasn't a sneer, but it was a sneer in terms. They call them community colleges, and this is what they should be because they are based on the community.

A lot of the youngsters can go to released time, you see. They can go to the school, or they can work half a day, and then they go to

HOLLAND: Community college.

BLOOMER: Junior college.

HOLLAND: Now you served on the Advisory Council at the time.

BLOOMER: I served on the Advisory Council.

HOLLAND: And you said that there were a couple of people from each county-wide. . .

BLOOMER: Organization.

HOLLAND: Organization.

BLOOMER: I was supposed to be there. Well, of course, I was very interested in the whole thing, and I'd say that this is the nearest that I ever approached a college education. [LAUGHTER]

But I was interested because I liked Dean Price, because it was up at BCC, and then we had a radio program, which was quite a lot of fun. Stella Werner was on this committee.

HOLLAND: Who was Stella? Stella Werner?

BLOOMER: Stella Werner, who was the first woman on the. . . .

Mrs. John Werner, who was elected to the She was with the American Association of University Women.

And then we had some people from the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County. Both of these were Montgomery County, and we did a study called Montgomery Junior College-- Its Place in Our Community, report of a study by a committee composed of members of the American Association of University Women and the League of Women Voters.

Mrs. Ben Baylor (Marjorye), who was at that time on the county School Board, the non-partisan School Board; Mrs. George Beard, who is now on the State School Board of Oregon; Dr. Grace Folmes, who was with the District schools and she was with the American Association of University Women; Mrs. Leila Iffert was another one--she's still around.

HOLLAND: Iffert?

BLOOMER: Iffert. I F F E R T. And so on and so forth. And one very interesting person who went on this thing and did her work out of gratitude was Mrs. Jesse Yauckey (Grace), Pearl Buck's sister, because she said that so much had been done to help her son when he came back from World War Two because there were small classes and there was individualized instruction. There were quite remarkable women on that faculty. One who is sort of an emeritus person of the Takoma Park faculty and who typifies the good things in a small college is Sadie Higgins, Miss Sadie Higgins, who is perfectly wonderful. She can tell what you are thinking and what you don't want to do by what you say, which has nothing to do with the subject at all. She was the placement person, and she was perfectly wonderful and she is still around, and this is good.

HOLLAND: But the function was really to publicize the junior

college and get the things that you felt it should have?

BLOOMER: It was to publicize the junior college, and also it was because, as I said, Dean Price said he was the loneliest man in Montgomery County.

HOLLAND: Was there a Board of Trustees, too, for the college?

BLOOMER: No. Not at first.

HOLLAND: No.

BLOOMER: There was no Board of Trustees.

HOLLAND: So you were the only citizens group?

BLOOMER: We voted to be completely unofficial. We said we didn't want a chairman. We didn't want a vice chairman. We didn't want anything like that. We just wanted to get together with Dean Price, and later with Dean Deyo because we felt that we could talk things over and send up a few balloons, trial balloons, if you like, but we had a wonderful time.

We would discuss some of the craziest things you can imagine, but this was a help to the Dean, and it was a help to all of us because this was a brand new pioneer idea.

Then there was another thing which has developed recently, and that was, and I went to a meeting on this--are we going to have own Board of Trustees or are we going to go into the state system? And a charming man--who was with the State Department of Education, said to me, "What do you think? Should Montgomery County?" And I said, "Listen. Haven't you learned something about Montgomery County by now?" I said, "Of course, we are going to want our own committee."

And Mr. Beck, who then on the State Board of Education. . . . Oh, no, he was on the county Board, and he went on the State

Board and he said that we would want this.

So when I was invited to the meeting, the twenty-fifth convocation, twenty-five years of Montgomery. . . . of 'Monkey College', it was loads of fun. I had a marvelous time. They had it in the Cathedra. We all went there, and they had some terrific music which Mr. Petranek put on.

HOLLAND: Who is Mr. Petranek?

BLOOMER: Mr. Petranek is the county music person. It is very interesting to me to see that those youngsters from the District of Columbia got stranded in Ghana.

HOLLAND: Oh, yes.

BLOOMER: But when Mr. Petranek took his crowd over, we had the money for the return trip.

HOLLAND: Well, that's good. I'm glad they got back.

BLOOMER: Now we had as a result of this study. . . .

HOLLAND: That's of the AAUW and the . . .

BLOOMER: League.

HOLLAND: League.

BLOOMER: We went and presented this to the Legislative Committee of the Board of Governors of the League of Women Voters. The AAUW accepted it, but unfortunately for the committee, we had somebody, who was the national secretary, and she--and I don't remember her name--she said, "Now that's the problem with the League. You get interested in a local project and then you just go all overboard for it."

So after that, nobody could push too much for this, but the American Association of University Women did adopt it, and these are the recommendations, which I would like to speak about because this was a fore-taste that the Montgomery Junior College

be developed as a community college to serve as a community center, continuing to provide curricula for the young people who have finished high school, and at the same time expanding to care for the needs and desires of the community in general; that an overall plan be made for the future development of the Montgomery County Junior College as funds are made available to include the acquisition of a permanent site located where it will be of the greatest benefit to the entire community. Of course, we have two sites, and I believe we are going to have a third.

The erection of adequate buildings and facilities, the extension of the program to include day and evening classes; that the tuition of the Montgomery Junior College be reduced as rapidly as circumstances will permit to a point where it is more in line with that of other public junior colleges; that the Montgomery Junior College be encouraged to continue making surveys in order to determine the needs of its students and of the community which it serves as a basis for additions and revisions to the curriculum.

HOLLAND: Now what was the date of that study?

BLOOMER: 1949. And the fascinating thing about it was that we typed this thing, and then we decided that what we should do would be to take a copy by hand to every member of the County Council. So we had a little fleet of automobiles and we worked at Margie Baylor's house, and she just fixed little salad bowls for her children, and we sat up there, and husbands began calling and saying, "Where is my wife?" we said, "We can't stop now."

So we went on. I don't remember what we did in the end, but it was late before we got those things all done.

And then another funny thing about it was that at the first commencement of the junior college, Governor Lane was the speaker, and then there was a graduation banquet at the Kenwood Country Club, and at this banquet, Mrs. Brooke Lee. . . . No, it was Mr. Brooke Lee, Mrs. Lane, and I guess it was Mr. Presley of the County Council, and Dorothy Himstead, again, worked out a plan by which they were going to devote the revenues from the liquor fund to support the junior college.

So at a subsequent meeting of the County Council, everybody was sitting around, and they were having glasses of beer.

HOLLAND: At the County Council?

BLOOMER: Oh, this was dinner, afterwards, and Mr. Fred Lee said, "Drink up, gentlemen, and support the junior college."

HOLLAND: Mrs. Bloomer, tell me about your service on the Maryland State League of Women Voters Board.

BLOOMER: Well, I was put on that Board because I had been working on education, and I was education chairman, and I think Gladys Barber. . . .

HOLLAND: I know Gladys Barber. She lives in Virginia now, doesn't she?

BLOOMER: I guess she does. I don't know where. I haven't seen her. But anyway, I think Mrs. Barber was president of the Maryland League of Women Voters, and later it was Mrs. Wood, Mrs. William Wood (Caroline). But I was on as chairman of education statewide.

Then I was invited to talk to the Legislative Council at

the State level, and that was the funniest thing I ever knew. This was on the subject of various different things that we were interested in, and I went to the Legislative Council meeting, and Mayor D'Alessandro came in.

HOLLAND: The Mayor of Baltimore?

BLOOMER: The Mayor of Baltimore, the original mayor, you might say, and it was really just exactly like a Gilbert and Sullivan opera again. He came in. He dashed in, and everybody stood up and saluted, and so on and so forth. And then I spoke on the subject of the School Board, and various other different things. I've forgotten which. I was representing the State League, and the whole thing was simply screaming, and then I kept getting telegrams from all these counties-- Approve your stand. The telegrams came at twelve o'clock at night. My husband nearly died. He said, "What are you getting into?" And I said, "Oh, nothing. It will be all over in a little while." But it was really so funny.

HOLLAND: Now this was around 1954 or '55?

BLOOMER: Yes. Something like that. This was simply on the education issue, you see. They wanted to be counted in, but then later I was the editor for the Maryland Voter. I followed Peggy Colten, and we had a lot of fun, and the reason I felt I couldn't go on with it any longer--in fact, I think it was time for me to get off--it was logically time--was because no matter what I thought I saw ahead of me, something always came up at the last moment, and my husband said, "You're crazy. You mean to tell me that you've got to write that thing all over again?" And I said, "well, my Board says that we must put in thus and so." And of course, we page proofed everything so that we knew

it would fit in.

But one thing that I was very pleased about was that one particular issue was the runner-up for Leagues all over the United States of a comparable size to Montgomery County.

HOLLAND: Now I guess I don't understand. What do you mean? You were talking about the issue of the elected school board?

BLOOMER: No. I'm talking about the Maryland Voter.

HOLLAND: Oh, oh. I see.

BLOOMER: You see, the Maryland Voter. . .

HOLLAND: Yes.

BLOOMER: . . . which I edited.

HOLLAND: Was runner-up. . .

BLOOMER: It was a runner-up for. . . .

HOLLAND: Excellence.

BLOOMER: . . . all Leagues of a certain size, you see, and I lost out to Ann Arbor, but I felt that it was no disgrace.

HOLLAND: Oh, goodness, no. Well, what were the statewide educational issues that the League was interested in? You mentioned the elected school board. Were there others?

BLOOMER: The elected school board. Oh, there was everything.

You know we think that Montgomery County is a pioneer. I believe it is a pioneer. What we want to do, the rest of the State will see the point to later on. So it's a little bit this way about everything. The Eastern Shore has one point of view, and Montgomery County and Baltimore City, perhaps, and part of Anne Arundel County has another point of view, and then you get to the Western part, and you find another point of view, perhaps. So this is a kind of a melting pot.

I always laughed to hear what some of the League of Women

Voters members said from Montgomery County when they went down to State legislative hearings, and they would say, "Where did that man come from? why, I never heard such talk. Why, that talk was done with in 1880." And I said, "Girls, don't talk this way. This is one of the great Civil war orators only he's just forgotten when he is acting."

HOLLAND: Very good. Well, was there any particular educational issue that the State League was interested in back in the '50's when you were active?

BLOOMER: Well, of course, Montgomery League was very interested in the elected School Board, but some were dead against it because Dr. Pullen, for one thing, said that he did not like the idea of having two methods of selecting School Boards.

HOLLAND: Oh, throughout the State? He wanted it to be the same. I see.

BLOOMER: Throughout the State. He wanted it to be the same, of course, I can remember when I was on the Education Committee statewide, and I said to the state president of the PTA, Mrs. Doty, "But you've got to put this on the agenda." It got on the agenda because I practically beat her on the head.

HOLLAND: Well, let's go on and talk a little bit about the Montgomery County Citizens Committee for the Public Schools. I believe you were a member of the Council.

BLOOMER: I was on the Steering Committee. Pat Holt, who was then president of the County Council of PTA's suggested that I be on Steering Committee. So I was on the Steering Committee. I hope that I steered a few people off of some ideas, but the trouble was that there were a lot [TAPE RAN OUT]

The trouble was that some of them were too anxious to get

rid of that School Board, and I said, "Please let them hang themselves." But a lot of them weren't willing to do that. So that was one of the things, but it was a very good thing in many ways, and it still goes on. One thing was that we helped a lot of people who are now on the School Board to get educated enough to realize that they wanted to run.

HOLLAND: Well, was the Committee organized mainly because of the concern about that School Board, or were there other concerns that people organized it for.

BLOOMER: Oh, there were other concerns, too, but the trouble, particularly, was that that School Board was the thing that got everybody's dander up so terribly.

HOLLAND: Well, who organized this Committee?

BLOOMER: Well, actually, it was a whole lot of people who organized this. Mr. Phil Claxton, whose father was the U. S. Commissioner of Education in his time, was one of the people, and he was the first chairman. But also, they helped to line up people for voting for the School Board in the elections, and they helped to organize people from all the different schools. Of course, you don't tell them who to vote for, theoretically, but actually, plenty of people do tell them.

But this was a good Committee because they talked it all over through PTA's in every school. They had somebody who will discuss the issues and point out this, that and the other thing, and this, I think, is excellent.

HOLLAND: Well, then, you'd say that it has been successful in that it educated the people to run for the School Board?

BLOOMER: I think that that is one of the things.

HOLLAND: And then helped to get them elected is another thing.

BLOOMER: And then helped to get them elected, and of course, a PTA cannot do this, by its charter. But people on the PTA who learn about things can, and often I find that there are two schools of thought, and there are two people who are running against each other, and I think the Citizens Committee and the PTA and various other things let them know what the issues are and where different people stand on the issues. I found this was true in the last election.

HOLLAND: This Committee has been going on, then, for about nine years, hasn't it?

BLOOMER: No, I don't think it's that long. No, I think it's about. . . . Oh, maybe, it is. It has been going on as long as we've had an elected School Board. I guess it is that long.

HOLLAND: The years creep up. Well, tell us a little bit about your other community activities. I understand that you were on the Bethesda Public Library Advisory Council? Is that the name of it?

BLOOMER: Yes.

HOLLAND: And what was this?

BLOOMER: This was a Council which, again, was supposed to raise the interest in the general public around the Bethesda area in the library and the issue--where are you going to have the library? There were some people who wanted to put it in one place, and some other people who wanted to put it some place else.

We all realized that it had outgrown the place where it was, and either we were going to have to buy or have condemned some houses, or we were going to have to move it.

So then the general public talked about moving the thing

further down toward the District Line. So that's out now. Then Mr. Chamberlin, Mr. Donald Chamberlin, had a building, and he wanted to rent us a floor in that building, but everybody was worried about that because they said, "How can we let children run out?" the way you can at Bethesda Library now. They can run in and get a book while Mother is parking the car. They can run into the Library and get a book, but you couldn't do that in a highrise apartment.

And also you've got to have specially constituted floors, constructed floors, for the . . .

HOLLAND: . . . weight of the books?

BLOOMER: The weight of the books. So I am very happy to say that through the help of Mr. Gleason, we are going to extend this library. We are going to have a two story building, perhaps, but they are going to extend it, and they are going to leave that lovely courtyard, which the Bethesda Garden Club filled with camelias and which I love every time I go in there. I spent hours just sitting out in that courtyard.

Of course, this is going to take some time, but I feel very good about the whole thing.

HOLLAND: Well, good. I understand, though, that you resigned from the Advisory Council. Why was this?

BLOOMER: Well, this was because we couldn't meet there any longer because we were practically living in the--oh, not the restroom--but there was this little tiny bit of a room where you could sit and eat your lunch. So we had to move to the Battery Park Clubhouse.

HOLLAND: The which?

BLOOMER: Battery Park.

HOLLAND: I don't know what you mean.

BLOOMER: Well, that's on one of those streets over there, and we moved there, and then I found that night meetings and a hearing aid and the accoustics in the Battery Park Clubhouse didn't work with me.

HOLLAND: So it was nothing against the work of the Council but it was just personal?

BLOOMER: Nothing against the work of the Council. I had great pleasure in going up to the Rockville Library which they have now constituted and going to take a good look at the Marie Bennett collection to which I'll add something later on.

HOLLAND: Fine. well, I assume that tape will be in the Marie Bennett room some time, too.

BLOOMER: Oh, yes. Oh, it's lovely. It's just a beautiful library.

HOLLAND: And then I understand you were very active--I guess are still very active--in the YWCA, in the Montgomery County Branch. How did you get interested in the work of the YWCA?

BLOOMER: Well, I got interested in that work through my friend, Ruth Smith, Mrs. Lyman A. Smith, she was president of the Montgomery County Branch, and she wanted a personnel chairman, and she decided that the thing to do was to ask her friend of the AAUW, Alice Merrill, Mrs. John Merrill, then also her friend of the League of Women Voters, Mrs. Beale Bloomer, to act as personnel chairmen.

HOLLAND: Now, when you say personnel chairmen, you mean in charge of the staff?

BLOOMER: In charge of the whole idea of the paid staff. And then later on when they more or less amalgamated, they decided they wanted to amalgamate with the whole National Capital Area. There are four YwCA's. At the time, there was the Phyllis Wheatley, the K Street, Alexandria, and Montgomery County. Some of them wanted to amalgamate right away, and some of them didn't like the idea.

But I was asked later on to be chairman of this interim committee, and I figured we were doing just the right thing because some of them were trying to push us one way, and others were trying to hold us back. So I figured that this was exactly right. But I was chairman for a couple of years, and then I was with the Montgomery County YWCA, and I went off the Board in April.

Now it's so far out. It's way out on Bel Pre Road, which is the place where it should be. It's a little too much for Grandma to get out there.

HOLLAND: You mean you just resigned this last April?

BLOOMER: well, I didn't resign. My term was. . .

HOLLAND: Term was up.

BLOOMER: Term was up.

HOLLAND: So how long had you been connected with the Montgomery County YWCA?

BLOOMER: I was in the YWCA in Montgomery County for at least eight years, perhaps ten or eleven. You know, you don't remember these things too well. But I started out because Ruth Smith, who was then chairman of the Montgomery County meeting, wanted

me to work with Alice Merrill, Mrs. John B. Merrill, on personnel, and then gradually they worked up this whole business of the amalgamated committee, the four then YWCA's, and I was chairman of the interim committee to help work it up.

HOLLAND: What about the Yw's education program? What does that consist of? Or what did it consist of?

BLOOMER: well, the education program is, again, the idea of everybody in the seventy-eight or eighty YWCA's all over the world working for certain principles. Now one thing that we do is we no longer consider that we are WASP organization, and of course, we never were an organization which barred any color because we have Chinese. we have Negro. we have Indian. we have everything, and it's fascinating to see the different ideas that different people have.

HOLLAND: Well, the C does stand for Christian, doesn't it?

BLOOMER: The C stands for Christian, but we don't exclude anybody, and I do find that people are getting more ecumenical, if you can call it that, every year.

HOLLAND: So that you would say that its educational program is devoted to these ideals of brotherhood?

BLOOMER: Yes. Devoted to the ideals which are thought of as the ideals of Christ, the ideals of God, the ideals of Buddhism, with a few exceptions in each case. These are the ideas of Mohammedan with a few exceptions, but the general ideals are exactly the same thing. So what's the use of trying to exclude anybody?

But I do find one thing that the YWCA is noted for is the fact that you can walk into a YWCA in [ASSAM] or in Chile, anywhere, and say, "I'm a member of the YwCA" and you meet a

warm welcome. So it is a little like what they used to call the USO, a home away from home.

HOLLAND: That's a good description. Well, what would you say was the value of the YWCA to Montgomery County?

BLOOMER: I think the value to Montgomery County is the fact that we are too layered. We're much too layered.

Now exactly what I think the value is is what Marion Hemingway, who is Mrs. Rene Hemingway, another former president of the League of Women Voters. . . . She used to say, "We're getting too compartmentalized." And when she said that, it stuck, because she is a very decided person. She was a former school teacher and one of the funniest things I ever knew was the time when she brought a dictionary to a meeting of the County Council. This was under Brooke Johns, and [she] read out a few definitions in this precise, clear, firm voice, and then she would look down her nose at people, and you would squirm.

HOLLAND: So then you are saying that the YW helped to defeat this compartmentalization and bring people together?

BLOOMER: Well, I think it does. One of the funny stories that they tell us about [is] some man, who was quite a big business tycoon, and he apologized for being late for a meeting. And he said, "I'm awfully sorry. My wife flew out to some middle-west city for the YWCA convention." And another man who was there said, "Well, don't apologize to me. My daughter went to that convention." And another man said, "Well, I'm really sunk because my cook went to that convention." So I said, "There you are." There is nothing compartmentalized about it.

HOLLAND: Well, I thought perhaps you would like to talk a little bit now about what you think about present day Montgomery County schools and about public education in general perhaps. Would you like to make some comments?

BLOOMER: Well, again, I think everything has gotten so big that the rules that held when Dr. Broome was county superintendent of Schools no longer hold. But somewhere along the line, when the teachers have exchanged professions for jobs, they've forgotten what, it seems to me, is the most important thing of all, and that is the children. I'm sorry for anybody who has to teach now because somewhere there is too much permissiveness, and of course, I hate to see the long hair and the dirty feet, but what are you going to do? I mean you've got to strike a balance, and you've got somehow to make them realize, these youngsters, that they aren't going to change the world in twenty minutes.

But, it seems to me, that the need for haste everywhere, and the need for meetings all the time so that nobody has time to sit down and think things over beforehand--this is bad. This One World conception of Wendell Wilkie's has its advantages but it also has its disadvantages.

HOLLAND: I certainly thank you, Mrs. Bloomer, for giving us this interview and I think it has been an extremely interesting one for me to learn about the educational history of the county. Thanks so much.