



Harold Dean Trotter
Interview by Leigh Ann Atkins

(1) Q: What year did you start school at Ambler?

A: I started school at Ambler in 1944. I was ten years old and in the fifth grade.

(2) Q: Who were your teachers at Ambler?

A: My teachers at Ambler were Mr. Roper and Mrs. Ester Mauldin. They were both good teachers. I liked them.

(3) Q: Which teacher did you like the best? Why?

A: I liked Mr. Roper best because he never sent me home from school like Mrs. Mauldin did. She sent me home one day because she thought I made a remark toward her while she was disciplining a student who I was sharing a desk with. I went home and told my daddy and he said, "Get in the car," and took me back to school.

(4) Q: How long did you go to school at Ambler?

A: I went to Ambler for four years, though seventh grade.

(5) Q: What was your favorite subject?

A: My favorite subject in school was reading. I can remember reading all the books the school owned and reading them over.

(6) Q: What funny things happened at Ambler?

A: I think the funniest thing ever at Ambler was when walking to school one day, one of the boys found an empty liquor bottle on the side of the road. The boy used the bathroom in the bottle and tied it on the bell rope. When Mrs. Mauldin approached the rope to ring the bell, she screamed and shook her head. Another time was on the last day of school. Someone collected a handful of rocks and climbed up the pole to the bell, turned it upside down then left the rocks in the bell. Mrs. Mauldin pulled the rope and rocks fell all over her. She wasn't hurt.

(7) Q: What scary things happened?

A: The scariest thing was on a field trip. My Uncle Lloyd took the class to Clemson to the John C. Calhoun Museum. I rode in the back of the pickup. I was scared to death.

(8) Q: Do you have anything else to tell me about your Ambler days?

A: There are several things I can tell you about Ambler while I was there.

The school had two rooms—one for 1-3 grade and one for 4-7 grade (10 to a grade or room). Most of the time we walked to school. We weren't out of school in the summer like kids are now. We were out for fall months, harvest time. In my days, kids had to help with farming.

Once we were out of school due to a foul odor. Bruce Jones, who then owned the land where the school is now, owned a cotton house. It was located about where the lighted sign is now. He also owned a chicken house, and of course the chicken poop stunk really bad in June and July. Teachers and parents asked him to move it several times. The smell was so bad school was closed. The trustee's of the school had to meet and discuss the problem. The trustee's went to talk with him and he finally moved it. Bruce's brother, Prue, operated a corn mill that was located where the playground is today.

I can remember the seventh grade; boys were responsible for keeping wood in the heater during the cold months. Another boy and I went to load the heater one morning. When we were done, I was closing the heater. The boy ran to his seat like something crazy and left me standing there by myself. I didn't know why he did that. All of the sudden the heater starts to explode, or at least that's what it sounded like. The teacher, Mrs. Mauldin, got on to me because she thought I had done something. Turns out, the boy put a handful of twenty-two bullets in the heater before he ran to his seat.

Another thing I recall is every student having a drinking glass at their desk. Two boys went to the well to get water for the students daily. One day the handle of the dipper broke. It (the handle) later became the bathroom / outhouse pass. The teachers hung it on the wall so all the students could reach it. If the handle wasn't on the wall, it meant someone was in the bathroom / outhouse and you would have to wait your turn.

Back then we did not have P.E, Art, and Music classes. We stuck to the basics, although, sometimes Franklin Gravely, who was a Forest Ranger, came to show the school movies about Forest Fire Awareness.

(9) Q: Were you here when Lewis Brown was here? Did you know him?

A: Yes, he was two or three years ahead of me in school.

(10) Q: Was the High School back then in the same spot it is now?

A: It's at the corner of the teen canteen. They tore it down sometime in the 50's.

(11) Q: How far did you have to walk to get to school?

A: I think a mile and a half.

(12): Q: Did you learn how to add and subtract?

Yea, it's pretty much the same stuff you do now, but not as advanced as it is now.

(13) Q: When you look back on Ambler do you look at it as a bad memory?

A: I look at it as a good memory. School is really important in your life if you think about it. If I could go back to school, I'd study more.

(14) Q: Were you sad when you left Ambler?

A: Not really, it was just like a new experience.

(15) Did you still ride the bus to school?

No, only high school kids rode the bus. I think the reason for that was they had very few buses and didn't have the room in them.

(16) Did you have a play ground?

A: No, we mostly had just a rubber ball and stick. We played Dodge Ball, of course we didn't call it that, and Red Rover.