



**Fred Weaver**  
**ROBS History Project**  
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Fred Weaver lived in Brentwood with his wife Ruth, where they resided since 1955. They had two children, a son and daughter. Their son, Phillip teaches math in Sachem High School, and their daughter Louise is a social psychiatric worker in Cincinnati, Ohio. They had one granddaughter.

Fred was born in Deposit, NY in 1909. He did a lot of fishing and hiking as a child living Upstate New York. His mother, Olive Williams (maiden name), came from a large family. His father he told us had been in the Civil War, but later Phillip thought he may have been confused and thought he may have been referring to his grandfather instead. Fred's mother was in the home most of the time, and his father ran a clothing store in Deposit. During the depression the store went bankrupt. He and his father fished a bit, and Fred helped out in the store when he had the time.

Fred was an only child and had a lot of independence. He also played high school sports, including basketball and track. In college he played basketball and ran track. Participating in sports gave him an interest in watching sports like basketball and football. In college Fred ran the hundred-yard dash.

When asked what adult influences were in his life, he mentioned the principal of his high school, Arthur Adley with whom he stayed in relatively close contact over the years. Arthur Adley was also a factor in Fred choosing to become a principal. Fred decided to go into education his senior year in

high school. One of the teachers, Ester Brown, a language teacher in the high school, was from Middlebury and encouraged him to go to Middlebury College. He attended college on an athletic scholarship. He remembered most of his teachers, especially a Latin teacher who also influenced him. When speaking of high school friends, in particular he mentioned William Beale, someone he ran into when he was teaching in Phelps.

When asked about his childhood, Fred remembered that his room was large. He had chores to do. He took care of the lawn, which was a large lot. He enjoyed family holidays and the summer when they would go to Columbia Lake. There he did a lot of fishing. Every summer, the family rented a cottage. He also enjoyed playing tennis as a youth. Growing up he rose early, but now that he is retired, he became a late riser.

With reference to his education, he attended a small community school in Deposit, which consisted of grades K to 12. He graduated from Deposit High School and attended Middlebury College as an undergraduate. He attended graduate school at St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y. His favorite subject was science, especially chemistry. His first paying job was working in Hancock in a local garage pumping gas.

His first teaching job was as a math and science teacher for two years in Calacoon, a very small school district. His first year's starting salary was \$1,400 at the first high school at which he worked. He then taught at Waverly for seven years, and then Phelps near Rochester as a teacher and Assistant Principal. He next worked as a high school principal in Newton, New Jersey, before he came to the Brentwood School District. Fred had already spent fourteen years in education before coming to the Brentwood School District in 1955. At the time, there was no high school in Brentwood. The district only had students up to 8th grade. From 9th grade on students had to go to Bay Shore High School. In Brentwood at that time there was just a small elementary school housed in the firehouse. He and his family lived on Brentwood Road. There were so few cars at the time, so his son and daughter played in the road. Fred was interviewed by Dr. Hoyt and by the Board of

Education. They were interested in hiring someone with experience who could be the Principal in order to get the high school started. Dr. Hoyt had attended Middlebury College at the same time that Fred was there.

When Fred was asked what his first impression of Brentwood was, he said that it was somewhat discouraging. They had to start from scratch to build the school. However, he felt that the advantage was that he could also do things his way. The largest issue was the poor way in which the students dressed for school. Through the Student Counsel he was able to get the students to dress properly by establishing a dress code. In the 60's during a period of adolescent rebellion against authority, so it was difficult to maintain the dress code. School was also on split session, and he had to handle all of it.

He felt that colleges didn't prepare teachers adequately for teaching. They were not very realistic regarding their expectations. He was asked, "What should be taught or told to students entering the teaching field?" He said that many first year teachers were not able to cope with situations that came up. To him, student teaching was not that helpful, because the cooperating teacher is in the room all the time, and therefore, not realistic. They should have the teacher outside the room to allow the student teacher to carry more of the responsibility.

He was asked, "As a principal what did you see as your purpose?" Fred responded that it was to build a high school that would be able to function and give students the best education possible to prepare them for what they were going to do with their lives in the future. "Do you feel proud of your accomplishment in starting the high school?" He responded that he got the school to be relatively well disciplined. "Are you in touch with any past students?" He still sees many past students when he went walking in town. There were only 64 students in the first graduating class, and Fred got to know all of them.

Fred was the first principal of Brentwood High School. Ed Sonderling was president of the school board at the time and was very helpful and supportive of the things Fred wanted to accomplish. He was very supportive of any recommendations that Fred made. The high school was housed in the Village School, and the office where Ed Sonderling worked was right across the street, making it easy for Fred to confer with him when needed.

The teachers were the first to form an organization. The chairman of the science department, David Martz, built the first organization for teachers. It was not a union at first but ultimately it was decided to affiliate with NYSUT. BPSO (Brentwood Principals & Supervisors Organization) started later. At the time each principal was paid what the School Board wanted to pay, so some got paid more than others. Principals and Supervisors eventually decided to form an organization like the teachers had so they could improve their financial standing. Fred said that unions were necessary but in some ways they tied the hands of administrators.

The interviewer mentioned that there were many “lovable characters” working in Brentwood, Reggie Poquette being one of them. Fred said that Reggie did a lot for the school. He did a tremendous amount and was somewhat of the “old school”. He believed in rigid discipline, and his shop was always run that way. He was always someone who would support the administration. He remembered one of the incidents where one of the students brought in a cartridge (starter) pistol to school. At the time there was a teacher in the shop who had a bad heart, and the student came in and fired the pistol at the teacher. The sound of the shot could have caused the teacher to have a heart attack. Reggie was very upset over this and took it very seriously. There was a hearing with the Board of Education and the student was dismissed from school.

At the time, Byrle Nott was Assistant Principal and worked in the front office. She was a hard worker who did a lot of good things, but she didn't want to work in the summer and didn't like handling the discipline. She worked better in the classroom. She didn't enjoy what she was doing, although she did very well in her position.

Mrs. Cairns, the Chairperson of the English Department, was also mentioned as a strong take-charge person. They all believed in discipline. This helped administration. Fred saw a lot of turnover of teachers at Brentwood during his time working there. Teachers would come to Brentwood to get experience and then leave.

He announced his decision to retire in 1973. After retirement, he remained active in education working at Dowling College as Head of the Education Department and Coordinator of Student Teaching. He also went to work at the N.Y. State College at Farmingdale where he taught math. After leaving Dowling, he moved to Adelphi College to work in the Education Department once again helping to place many of their graduates in teaching positions. He returned to Brentwood choosing to work in the evening Brentwood High School by running the very successful RCT Program.

Fred was asked, "What do you feel were your accomplishments while in Brentwood?" He said that there were a lot of things he wished he had accomplished but that he had not been able to do. One thing was that he would liked to have seen the faculty become a lot closer to one another than they were. He wished that they could have shared more with each other had they not lived so far from one another physically. He was responsible in helping this connection of staff by allowing the establishment of several traditions. One was the successful tradition of holding the annual staff picnic at *Heckscher* State Park with which he received a great deal of help from Mat Fay, Business Department Chairperson and Industrial Arts Chairman, Reggie Poquette.

When asked if Fred has any hero or role model, he said that the first principal he had, Charlie Lewis, was a role model as an outstanding Principal.

"What do you see as an issue facing us today in this country that we'll need to wrestle with?" He thought that the drug situation, lack of respect for authority and today's teenagers' learning choices were major changes that would be addressed in the near future of public education. He died in 2004 at the age of ninety-five. He was struck and killed by an automobile as he crossed Brentwood road on his way to mail a letter at the Post Office.