



## Charlotte Narrative and Conversation Collection

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- ▣ **Interviewer :** Combs, Meredith
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### Abstract

Jane Combs talks about her experiences with reading as a child, as a teacher and as a parent.

### About the Interviewee

- ▣ **Sex:** female
- ▣ **Agerange:** 45-64
- ▣ **Age:** 57
- ▣ **Native Language:** English
- ▣ **Languages Known:** English
- ▣ **Education:** B.A.
- ▣ **Occupation:** teacher

## Transcript

Date: 2000-03-06

»MC (Meredith Combs): I am Meredith Combs and it is March 8, 2000 and I am interviewing my mother, Jane Combs [pause]. Um, what can you tell me about the stories that you first remember being told as a child?

»JC (Jane Combs): Um. The stories I remember being told, the most, came out of the Little Golden Books. It was a series of little fiction stories, and my mother must have read me every single one of them. Um, do you want names of them?

»MC: Sure.

»JC: Well, there were names like the Pokey Little Puppy, um, Mr. Bear Squash You All Flat, um, just, they were just little stories about animals and they had Big Golden Books and Little Golden Books and my mother, I know she bought me every one of them and read them to me.

»MC: Did your dad read to you too?

»JC: Sometimes, but I remember my mother reading to me the most. I had aunts and my grandmother, one of my grandmothers read to me too.

»MC: Um, how old do you remember being--

»JC: Um, well I know it was before I was five, probably, I know at least four and I'm sure she read to me before that.

»MC: OK. Um, what do you remember any stories they told you, your parents told you?

»JC: You mean like imaginary, or fictional stories? They made up stories sometimes, my mother in particular, she made up stories. In fact I think she still does now [laugh]. But she made up a lot of stories then, um, sometimes they had us, my sister and me, in the stories, and then sometimes, the just were from I don't know where. But she was very imaginative and creative and she made up lots of little stories for us.

»MC: Did they ever tell you factual stories about the area that you lived in?

»JC: Oh yes, yes they did. They told me lots of family stories about people that I knew, about my grandparents and my great-grandparents, and um, lots of family stories, history, history of the people we knew or heard about.

»MC: Um-hum. So that helped you learn about people that you had not necessarily met.

»JC: No, hadn't seen some of them. Um, beyond my grandparents I hadn't seen any of them, I guess, but they began to take on a personality and something I could kind of see in my imagination.

»MC: Um-hum. Um, what kind of things did you remember reading when you started to read?

»JC: Um, I read some of the same books that they had read to me, first, and then, as I got older, I just got hungry for books. I read, my parents had a lot of books. They had bookshelves, um, that my daddy built, that were built in bookshelves and he um, they were filled up with books, and one summer, I remember when I was a teenager, I just made it a mission to read as many of those books as I could, and I plowed, they were fiction most of them. There were some were history books in there, too. But I plowed through a bunch of them that summer. I just kept reading until I finally had read almost every one of them. Lots of them.

»MC: Do you remember the names of any of them?

»JC: They were, um, they were best-seller type fiction from the um, 40s and 50s and 60s and on, just, they were members of a book club and they got a lot of books that way. And whatever they got, I read.

»MC: Um, well, let's see, so do you think that those experiences helped you figure out the kinds of things you liked to read? Like what, the stories that they told you and read to you, did--

»JC: Well, they must have because I still read fiction. I still read history. I love historical novels. I love to read just plain history, um, it must have rubbed off in some aspect because that's the kind of thing I still read.

»MC: Um, well, do you think it also helped when you became a parent that you naturally wanted to read to your kids?

»JC: Yeah, I'd always been a reader. I'd always been read to, so I think, yes, I mean I did read to my children, to you guys, to you and your brothers. What was that? [pause] Oh, that. I had to let the dog in. Excuse me. All right, now what? Oh I know what I was going to tell you. Um, another thing my mother read to us was poetry and she also had books that had songs in it, children's songs and so not only did she teach us the words to all those things, but we sang them too. And, um, she read, I forgot about the nursery rhymes. We learned all of those and the fairy tales, the classics, she read all of those to us. But the poetry I remember and she taught us, you know, some poetry. She remembered poems that she had learned when she was in high school. I think she must have enjoyed it because she read them to us too.

»MC: Original poetry that she--

»JC: Not really original, no, it was, uh, poems by well-known authors that you'd find in a book, but she had to memorize a lot of them, and she, but she read us children's poems, too, out of books, books that were written for children.

»MC: I see. Well, as a teacher, do you see reading as something that is still important in families today?

»JC: I think a lot of parents are still reading to their young children. I, I do think they read to them when they are little. But as they get older, I think children are so involved in other things. They're going to lessons for this and that, and sports, and they're playing interactive games with their computer and, uh, watching TV, and I think, really, they're not reading on their own, like maybe we did when I was that age because we didn't have all those other things to do. So I think maybe, reading for young people, is not as important. They're still a few that you get in the classroom who are avid readers and they just stand out. The others, you can see in things like vocabulary and um, just their general knowledge of things, um, they're not reading anymore. They don't even watch the news, but they're not reading the newspapers or new magazines or anything. You see it, I think you see it in their, in how they do in school.

»MC: Does it affect their comprehension?

»JC: I think it probably does, because they're just not reading as much. Um, the good students, the ones who do well academically, they're going to do OK anyway, but the ones, um, there are some that would really benefit from continuing their reading, either being read to or reading on their own, for pleasure--

»MC: Right.

»JC: I don't think they do that so much anymore.

»MC: OK, well [pause], um, going back to you, do you think, uh, are there any other ways you can see that reading and listening to stories, and literacy, um, being exposed to literacy, has um, affected you in your life?

»JC: Hmm, well [pause], I had some teachers that were really, um, influential about what I read and their love for literature. I don't know rather, how much it directly affected the fact that I was an English major in college, but I know that, um, it didn't hurt to like to read when you have that major, um, there were some times, I remember, a fifth grade teacher and a seventh grade teacher who were especially, um, full of the love for reading and literature and they made that come alive for me as a student. So, I hope somehow along the way

that I've been able to pass that along to my kiddies.

»MC: Well, I'm sure you probably have. Well, um, is there anything else you'd like to add?

»JC: I can't think of anything, but it's been nice chatting with you.

»MC: Thank you.