

**Mrs. Terrien Fennoy, Madison Junior High School Principal**  
**Transcript of interview for the Madison Historical Society Oral History Project.**  
**Interviewed by Tarion Wilbourn, Madison High School Social Studies Student**  
**Date: February 27, 2023**

Tarion Wilbourn [TW]: [Start recording] Hello, this is Tarion Wilbourn from Madison Senior High School, and I am here with:

Terrien Fennoy [TF]: Mrs. Terrien Fennoy, Principal of Madison Junior High School.

TW: Okay, I have a couple of questions for you today. Okay. So, let's talk about Madison. Where is your family mainly from?

TF: My family is mainly from East St. Louis, Illinois.

TW: So, how long have you lived, or have been in the Madison area?

TF: I have been in the Madison area since 2004. What is this 2023? So it was, like 19 years. I came here as an instructional coach at Harris Elementary School at the time, which was a K-3 building.

TW: Okay, now what can you tell us about your experience with the Madison Area?

TF: Um, well, I guess I have to start by saying it has been very positive. I think Madison is a small town of wonderful people. Lots of great connections here. A lot of people are related. It's really a family-like town. Coming from East St. Louis, which is a much larger city, we don't have as many small neighborhoods; we have larger neighborhoods of people here in Madison, where there's really two sides of town. There's West Madison, and then there's the main Madison side, or anything that's on the other side of Madison Avenue. So, the students here have always been engaged in learning, always been respectful. Parents have always been supportive. Now after school on the weekends, you may get some not-so-great things that take place in the town. I know we've had some burglaries; we've had some murders. A lot of them are some of the students that I've had the opportunity to teach. But nevertheless, I think the whole goal and the vision for the town has always been to be successful.

TW: Okay, that's good. What can you tell us about what was different about the school area? How was it different from now? Like back then, how was it different?

TF: Oh, my goodness. When I first started here that were two elementary schools. That was Harris, of course, the kindergarten through third grade building, and there was Blair, which was grades four and five. There was the middle school, which was grades six through eight, and the high school nine through twelve. We also had the Early Childhood Center and the student support program. So, at the time, we probably had twice as many students, because even though, you know, the town has been small, we still had roughly maybe 12, 13, 1,400 students that we were educating. Now we have half that size. So

around 2009 or 10 or so I do believe, we, the mayor and the community decided to raze some apartments and so they tore those down. So, once they tore those down, those residents had to be relocated. So, we lost students, and the board decided to combine the school. So, we closed Harris Elementary school and Blair Elementary School, and put them into the junior high and then brought the junior high down here to combine with the high school. So, the enrollment has gotten smaller. One other thing is, I don't know what has happened with our students, but they don't seem as driven, and career focused as they were before. But of course, you know, we have the age of the cell phone, computers, Apple, Android, and so they're caught up in the whole social media frenzy. And I don't see them really valuing their education as much.

TW: So, you said you've been teaching for 19 years, right?

TF: Here in Madison. I taught 12 years in East St. Louis. So, this is my 31st year in education.

TW: Okay, was it difficult? Was it difficult learning how to communicate with students as the principal of all these kids? Was it hard?

TF: No, I think initially, when I first came, I didn't know the students having come from East St. Louis. That's my hometown. In fact, I taught TJ's dad. Um, but once I got to know them, they gained a level of respect for me. I think when I was hard on them, they understood that came from an area of love. Even the parents supported me. So, it hasn't been difficult for me at all. Not at all. I can't say that for everybody else, but it's been pretty cool for me.

TW: Well, thank you, Ms. Fennoy. We are done here.

TF: Oh, you're welcome.