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contractors with the Canadian Air Force. Interviewee: John Kronquist

Interviewer: Jeff Outinen

Q: Please tell us your name?

A: John Ernest Kronquist.

Q: What is your Birthdate?

A: November 21st, 1961.

Q: What is the date today?

A: September 2nd, 2009.

Q: You are a student of NMU correct?

A: Yes I am.

Q: Since what year?

A: 2006.

Q: Were you ever enrolled in any other school prior to Northern Michigan University?

A: No but I was enrolled at Northern Michigan University from 1980 to 1981.

Q: What was your impression of the school in 1980-1981?

A: A lot drabber building wise as it is today, the buildings West Science has been added onto and expanded. The campus looks a lot more orderly. Chahodas is a entirely different atmosphere upon entrance to the building.

Q: What made you come back to school?

A: To begin my college education towards achieving a teaching certificate in history and social studies at the secondary level.

Q: Do you mind me asking what you did prior to coming back, from 1980 to 2006?

A: From 1981 to 2006, I spent 12 years in the Marine Corps, did various jobs with civilian contractors with the Canadian Air force in Toronto, The York Aero Drome, and different contracting jobs here and there, just to pick up work.

Q: What got you interested in pursuing a teaching career?

A: I call it the family business more or less. My mother and her five sisters were all teachers, my father had a four year degree and was the clerk book keepers at the county road in Newberry. I don't like that so that pretty much threw me into the teaching career angle.

Q: What has been your opinion of the program here at Northern?

A: I would say it's a little lighter work load than I expected, but I'm not going to complain about that. Professors seem well competent and well trained. I have had no problem with any of the faculty or staff as of yet, students seem to be all right, normal American kids.

Q: Have you done any observations or working with school aged children, for the school of education program?

A: For one class I have, and that primarily observation hours at Bothwell middle school. And working with middle aged students at a after school program at Lake Superior Village, which is more or less home work helping.

Q: Do you remember what room your first class was with?

A: I don't remember the exact class number, but it was a history course in Jamrich at 8 in the morning, taught by Fredric Stedcamp, who drove in from Skandia. My experiences with him were, I was a stupid freshman at the time and I came in late one day he must have been having a rocky day that morning, because he stopped class and began questioning me, "Why don't you go outside the door, and comeback in and see if it breaks the flow of the class, the same time the second time around. So you know, I'm sure my face turned beet red, I remanded silent being a

meeek little freshman, and he proceeded to speak to the class. He could not understand why it would take someone 12 minutes to walk from any spot on campus and get to his class. Which struck me weird at the time, because classes got out 10 to, so he was giving me those ten minutes to get to wherever. That struck me as strange cause who's going to have class before 8 o'clock anyways, because back in those days no one did. So I guess I bothered him coming in 10 seconds late and sitting down quietly. Then he proceeded to take the next five minutes of class to rip me a new one in effect. So that kinda turned me off from the class, but now I chalk it up to he had a bad day, and he's a professor Ameritis at Northern, so he must have been a well qualified teacher, which he seemed at the time, but I don't like how he dealt him authority out to minor transgressions.

Q: Was that in 1980?

A: 1980, the fall semester.

Q: Did you have to take orientation in 1980 and in 2006.

A: I had to take it in the summer of 1980, I came up with three of my buddies from Newberry. It was more or less of what it is now. You come up, take a tour of the campus, get let around by your hand, you dream of ways you're going to smuggle beer into the dormitories once your living on campus. I remember we had one welcoming posters, a big album at the time was Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, and the take off for the poster was "At NMU your not just another brick in the wall." So of course us being the creative little guys we were, we altered the B to make brick into another word, [so it read] "so at NMU your not just another (blank) in the wall." We actually got caught doing that so we ended up having to fix the B, and that was our illustrious orientation start. But when we arrived on campus, we pretty much straightened out, just your average freshmen incomers.

Q: So did you have to stay in the dormitories your first year?

A: I don't know if they still do, but at Northern at that time, freshman and sophomores were required to live in the dorms, unless financial reasons would allow it, or they got parental excuse signed by their parents, which was not easy to get as I remember. Being 45 when I came back in 2006, there was no way I would have done an orientation, even if I had to. But I more or less came on campus, met with my advisor, signed up for courses, I think it was the end of May. That was it, sign up for courses, give us your money and your good to go.

Q: What is your opinion of NMU forcing to stay in the dorms for their freshmen and sophomores years?

A: I could understand their view point for doing it, because if they have the open room, they're going to want to make money off that open room. So this is their property, they can make whatever rules they want. And of course if the dorms ever did exceed capacity they would be letting freshmen sophomores stay of campus right away. From the student angle I would say, require them for the freshmen year, because you pick up the whole dorm experience, which is valuable. But sophomore year I would say, a lot of them are ready to move out on their own off campus without all the hassles of being watched over. Their independent enough and mature enough to move off campus run their own households; keep everything on schedule during their student career. But as I said, Northern's here to make money partially, so they're going to require the dorms to be filled to make that money.

Q: Who is your favorite professor here at NMU?

A: I wouldn't say I really have a favorite, but my favorites which are three, would be all from within the history department. Dr. Keith Kendal would be rated one of the top professors in the department, and besides his work ethic, the way he pulls his lessons together and delivers them. I

want to incorporate his professional dressing style, into my own dressing style when I become a teacher, because he's got it dead on.

Q: Did you have any favorite assignments or any favorite things like that? Any in particular you may want to use in your classroom?

A: I had him for a 100 level history course, and what I took from the course mainly was the first five minutes of class he would have music going on his laptop. So that would kinda get people woken up, a casual gear up time for class. Once we started class, if your cell phone went off, you were done for the day and asked to leave. He was strict about that which I admired. If it was a repeat offender the first week, he would give them one warning and if it happened again you were out. After the first week, if it went off, you were done for the day, leave. He set apart a pretty good work schedule that you could lock into, where he would require a two page report on whatever issue in history every three weeks, nothing major but it was enough to keep you delving into history and looking at different tangents in history to educate you on how they all are interconnected through the ages. Other than his class demeanor, his work load and the process he delivered it by, I had no complaints about the course, nothing but compliments.

Q: Who would be another professor?

A: I would say Dr. Milahopolous. I describe his method as old school European style for an instructor. He expects a lot, doesn't let anybody slack off, he keeps steady progress. He comes off as a bit of a hard case to the majority of students, but once you meet with him face to face you learn that is just his style, and he is just a human being. Students benefit a lot when you actually met face to face with him during office hours, if not that they just end up staying in fear of him and are intimidated by him. He has a hard time getting a lot of interaction going with his students during class because as I have said, he is old school, strict, and the whole British type

accent intimidate a lot of Americans. Which I had no problem with what so ever, he and I ended up telling me when I was still in his course, not to address him as doctor but as Bill. So you give him respect, he'll give you respect, to help you achieve your desired goals, which are also his desired goals for you.

Another one I would have to include is Dr. Nicholson. He is more of a casual delivery method, but he also requires that the work be done. I think he believes if you're here in college you should be mature enough to keep yourself in line and on task, and he's not going to hold your hand and walk you through it. He has little patience for that, period.

Q: Do you have a least favorite professor on campus?

A: Yes I do. She was from the geography department; I had her for Environmental section, Dr. Linah Ababnah. She was hired at Northern I have heard with a two year contract. She is repeatedly unprepared, has very low preparation skills for her exam setups. She is not completely fluent in English and therefore it causes her to not be able to word questions in a way a majority of students can understand, without reading them three or four times, and they are still left wondering if they are giving her the answer she is seeking. Complaints have been made about her by students but she just gets her back up, digs her heels in, threatens a lawsuit. Word of mouth is that she has her two year contract, in fact this is her second year. The interim head of the Geography department wants to save himself some bureaucratic agony, and he is not going to simply compile and record her vast array of mistakes to get her fired. He is just going to wait until the two years are up and not renew her contract. Which in this case I have heard it from enough various sources besides the students, that I believe that to be true. She had no business being hired her for her performance level from the get go.

Q: What is your favorite out of school activity?

A: During the school year my favorite activity is working out at the PEIF, the local gymnasium, well the universities gymnasium and field center. That helps me work out my stress and organize my day, it helps me sleep good at night and I can basically go in there any time of the day I feel like it, whether it be six in the morning or 11 o'clock at night, do my work out routine, see and meet people, here some news.

Q: Do you ever play racquet ball there?

A: Racquet ball I do not prefer because I would have to buy my gargoyle eye protection goggles, which would make me look like I'm a gopher trying to tunnel to the center of the earth whenever I was wearing them.

Q: Is there anything else you like to do in Marquette?

A: I like Marquette because the lake shore is right on its but. You got the whole city set up with green areas for biking paths, walking paths, and are well maintained. And if you want to go in the city you got downtown Washington, go two blocks to the east your on the lake shore, the lake shore can take you all the way to the woods north of town. You see people greet people, and if the lake shore starts blowing cold wind, you just cut through the neighborhoods and see a whole different type of scenery, meet different people.

Q: Do you have any favorite recreational activities to do in the region? Hunting, fishing, biking, kayaking, skydiving?

A: Being born and breed in the U.P. of course I grew up hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, winter sports. Broomball is an activity that Northern had back when I was here initially and I'm glad to see they still have it during what we called it Winterfest, now it's another name, same difference. In Marquette you can partake in anything. The biking, intramural sports, I basically stick to the biking, walking, longer of the two I'm not going to pick up rugby or soccer at this age. So I'm

content biking, a little bit of strenuous hiking up Sugarloaf or Mount Marquette, do it the hard way and cut through the woods make your own trail rather than stay on the official trail.

Anything that can take me to the outside scenery on a good day.

Q: Have you ever spent any significant time at the Superior Dome?

A: Yes I do, during the winter months after my work out at the PEIF, when my clothes are usually sweaty and drenched, I will walk the dome just to air dry before I leave to head by to my apartment. Other than that the dome, I don't like attending football games there. It just has a bad aura for me inside, I don't know what it is, and I can't get over it, it's just not a good stadium for me.

Q: Your opinion of added food stuffs here on campus? Such as Starbucks and Fiestas.

A: I have never bought a Starbucks coffee because I refuse to pay four dollars for what Mrs. Folgers can make me for 50 cents. So I think it is just a bunch of pretentiousness, I'm in the library a lot of the time during the day, during the school year, and I see younger students coming up with their little bubble cup of whatever café frapichino that they just blew four, five dollars on. To me it is just a bunch of pretentious façade. I bought a pop once from Starbucks when my sister dragged me to one. I refused to get the coffee, but I bought a pop. The pop was not that great, so I am not a fan of Starbucks, especially their food. They do not have anything healthy, its all drenched in sugar and icing. I don't even want to think of the price of a muffin there, but I would imagine it is three dollars minimum. [Other franchises] we have had: McDonalds, Burger King, which everyone would hit that on Sunday night. I don't know if they still do it but the students had to find their own meals on Sunday nights on the week end because the cafeterias were not open. So that was that was a thriving business for McDonalds, Burger King and so on. So I think it was the year before I came to Northern in 80, there was still one of

the Sambo's restaurants out on U.S. 41. But luckily those restaurants died by the wayside. A few students if I told them today, the history behind Sambo's and actually the little Big Boy-esk type icon of their restaurant chain was actually on full display, the students wouldn't believe me that, that kind of restaurant would last until 1979. Given the racial mix of the U.P. it doesn't surprise me that the Sambo's in Marquette lasted till 1979.

Q: Care to enlighten me what the Sambo's mascot looked like?

A: Well the unvarnished description is, you imagine a minstrel show from a hundred years ago and that led to the Mammy's cookie jars and these other, I'd describe them as cooned up pottery or ephemera, I guess would be the official name for advertisements. And it was this stereotyped imaged of black people, big lips, big behinds, nappy hair. The Sambo's restaurant chain their icon was from the story *Little Black Sambo*, the tar baby or whatever. So actually you would imagine the picture of the Big Boy's Big Boy, out on his stand in front of their restaurant. Now Sambo's had Little Black Sambo standing outside. That would have been right on the corner of where Washington turns onto U.S. 41, so its prominent right there at the busiest intersection in Marquette.

Q: Recently there has been a lot of hoopla about the new Wimax internet across Marquette. What is your opinion of the new Wimax internet is?

A: It was one of the best things the University decided to do. Since so many students do live spread out across the city of Marquette. So there should've a system like that since day one. Since the laptop initiative was initiated, there should have been a process for the students anywhere in town to get the signal, rather than having to come to campus to print some stuff off, which I'm sure that everyone had to do at one point or another during the school year. But, I am weary of Wimax's functionality because for the previous two laptop series that have been

procured. The man that made the decision to procure them, orders them with the software bundle included, then he shows up on a Friday and gives the work study students in the computer repair department. He says “okay, these are the new laptops and the new software bundle, tell me what you think.” So there [students at computer repair] supposed to look over them over the weekend, but he has already made the order. So for the past the software ends up causing a ton of problems for students, papers have disappeared, connection problems. You can go and get your computer reimaged but you’re in effect getting a software bundle from three years ago to make the fix. That gentleman, the first time it happened should have almost lost his job, the second time it happened he should have been fired. So Wimax, I’m sure he was involved at some point getting that set up. SO I’m glad Wimax works, it did not work this previous weekend for three days, so I hope that is not the teller of bad news coming to stay. But time will tell if Wimax is durable or not.

Q: What is your opinion of parking on the campus?

A: I’d say there’s actually more parking than is needed. I drive by the campus in 1980, most students drove clunkers, rust buckets of cars, anything that would just roll with four wheels. Maybe one or two cars in the parking lot were brand new, either the parents were wealthy, his mom or dad’s car, or they were given as a gift to the students as a high school graduation. Now days when I first came back to campus I was amazed driving by the freshman parking lot, I don’t think I noticed one car with major rust on it. So dare to say the incoming freshmen drive better cars than most of the professors on campus. I think there is ample parking for the students living in the dorms. Where the university really makes a lot of money is on the tickets. In front of the library they have four parking meters marked visitors only. So one would assume if you’re just coming to campus, even if you’re a student you can park there, put your quarter in the meter and

you're safe to go. But once you get your ticket, then you learn, if you want to park there in the visitor spot, you are going to get a ticket unless you go to public safety and get a visitor pass that lasts you two weeks. You only learn that after you get your ticket, it's on the back and it's also on the public safety website, somewhere on the little link section, but who's going to look at that? So the university, I bet, makes tens of thousands of dollars a year on just those four little sites.

Q: How about off campus students? Do you think it's ample enough? Or should they increase the size?

A: I would say it's ample enough, students can learn to walk. In the winter time I walk here in a raging storm. I have no problem, that's what boots are for.

Q: What about having to pay \$130 dollars to park here on campus?

A: That is a ridiculous fee; students are already charged enough, with what a \$250 activity fee? On top of every year, on top of everything else and how many actually go to the student's games and all that? Not that many. So the \$130 is just another way the university is making money. It's not a fair way to do it.

Q: What is the biggest change between students in 1981 and today's students?

A: I would say mentally the American kids are always going to be the same from generation to generation. One thing that I noticed quickly and this is when the weather was still warm, when school first started up, you know the end of August beginning of September, my first year back was the number of girls that have "tramp stamps". Tattoos right above their buttocks, so when they sit down at their desk, their shirt will ride up, if it's not already a short shirt, so you can see their little tattoo. So that threw me back, so I was thinking, well I could make that work for me, because if the lecture gets boring I could just admire all the art work in front of me. Another

thing about the women on campus, students women, it took me a while to get used to them showing up with flannel PJ's bottoms and UGGs, their hair up in a pony, unwashed, you can tell they haven't taken their shower for the day, or even the previous day possibly. But then thinking about that I decided well they can make it work for them. Talking to a few of the female students the reason they do it, is they sign up for morning classes, nothing in the afternoon or evening, so they can roll out of bed not even bother getting out of their PJ's, go to class, look like hell, and once their classes are over by noon or whenever they go back to their domicile or dorm room, or off campus apartment take a shower and that's when they start their actual day.

Q: Any activities that were different back then, or any similarities between them?

A: Quite a bit more intramural activities than back in the early 80's. Basically all I can remember is baseball. Baseball is all I can really think of other than the Winterfest activities. Now I don't think they even do that, it used to be a real big deal back during Winterfest to do the ice sculptures on campus. I don't think there has been any noise about them for the past two years. I don't know when those stopped but that was basically fraternities and sororities or dorm wing would do that. You didn't always have a great sculpture that came out of it but at least it got people outside for a while and they would socialize a little more than they otherwise might have done.

Q: Any other pressing information you would like to speak of Northern Michigan University, its students, professors, policies?

A: I think they have done a better job at picking higher quality instructors. There's a lot more diversity in the faculty and staff. I cannot think of one person who is non white in the professor sections 25 years ago. There is only one woman in the history department that I know of, I heard someone comment just last week that there are not a lot of female instructors in any field on

campus. But you do notice them. I think in today's world, you have to be constantly turning out your own products on the side to keep advancing their professional self and repertoire, whether they are required to or not. That can only reflect good upon them, once they get back into the classroom the next year. The acquired more knowledge and tweaked their delivery methods, which all comes out to the prime mission; turn out a well rounded students who knows how to perform in their field.