

INTERVIEW WITH SYLVIA KINNUNEN
NOLOCATION GIVEN
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SUBJECT: Studying and teaching at Northern Michigan University and life growing up in the Upper Peninsula

START OF INTERVIEW

SYLVIA KINNUNEN (SK): So, then my husband continued to drive after I retired, cause he's just so accustomed to doing, he likes to drive, then as he gradually became more and more incapacitated Parkinson's was taking its toll, well, its Alzheimer's now, so you know its combination. So I had to start driving a little bit and I haven't really become a really competent driver, or confident driver, but I do drive [inaudible]

INTERVIEWER (I): So for twenty five years you didn't drive at all?

SK: I didn't drive at all. I didn't touch the wheel.

I: Did you live here?

SK: Uh huh.

I: So you just walked to campus?

SK: Either that or my husband would give me a ride. And I have two daughters. One or the other of them would give me a ride, so, it was alright walking. Because me first office was here in the old buildings you know there were four buildings connected together. And uh, my office was in the basement of John D. Peirce. Well, first of all, in the Longyear building then in John D. Peirce, so it was easy to walk from here. You know, just up a couple of blocks. But then as the campus expanded my office was in the Learning Resources building.

I: Oh really?

SK: Yes, which is kind of far to walk, in the cold winter weather, but as I said I had three people who provided me with rides. [Inaudible]

I: [Inaudible]

SK: Well, let me tell you how accommodating my husband was in another respect. When my second child was born I had just come to Northern to teach. I hadn't been here a month or two and I realized

my [inaudible]. I hadn't had a child in twelve years, and the doctor had said 'you don't have to ever worry about having another child unless [inaudible] surgery.' Well, anyway, when the second child was born my husband said to me at the hospital, he's going to do something for me. He's going to wash all the diapers and he did, can you imagine? He'd go down the basement and wash diapers every day, dry them, fold them, and bring them up. And as long as she was in diapers [inaudible]. It's amazing. That was Marcus completely.

I: You told me when we were down at the Landmark Inn that you thought at first you were sick with the pregnancy before you had realized that college teaching was making you sick.

SK: Yeah, it was a lot of work. I remember the first semester. I had five different classes to teach. So, I know others who teach at the college or who taught at the college when I did who would be sick in the mornings [inaudible], imagine.

I: Oh, just because of the work load? Because, three classes would normally be full time. I think that five classes is an overload.

SK: Yeah, well it was different in those years. [inaudible]. And some of the classes were two hour classes and some others were three, so they weren't the regular four hour classes.

I: They were two or three out of three credits?

SK: Yeah.

I: And normally they are four credits now?

SK: Yeah, so a twelve hour load is a normal load.

I: And how did that compare with how many hour loads [inaudible]

SK: Well,

I: About the same?

SK: Well, let's see, three times four, twelve, maybe, no it was more. It was probably a fourteen hour load that I had then.

I: Okay so, you knew other staff members who were sick and, just from the stress of it?

SK: Uh huh, yeah,

I: And with that stress there were so many classes to keep and so much preparation to do?

SK: Well, I suppose my early friends here were people who were beginning just as I was you know, and so it might have been new comers. Although I have a good friend who taught there for years and years

and he felt stressed all the way through his teaching career. But Northern was a good place, too. And then,

I: Why?

SK: I had good departmental chairman. Everyone that I had was just an excellent [inaudible]. I remember them with fondness and, and the people I worked with in my department were fine people. Students were conscientious. By and large, you know, it was pretty good. There were some conflicts. I'll tell you about a committee I served on. The one that, I remember two, most particularly, but this one a variety of task forces were organized. We were going to take a look at our university. And this was in Dr. Jamrich's day. And as we met once, he wondered if there were other areas anyone would like to explore. Now this is [inaudible]. So, I thought well, if we're going to take a look at our university, let's take a look at a variety of things. So I said, well, I'd like to explore the equality of opportunities for women at Northern. And he said, fine, fine, okay which means, good. And if you go ahead and get yourself a group of women, or a group people, it doesn't have to be women, and we'll make all the data available to you that you would like to have and we'll see. And so, I got a group of women together, and we still remember that, when we see each other we'll talk about that. And um, we looked at salary between men and, equality of salary between men and women, you know, and rate of promotions, and we found that there were some very definite inequalities, obvious inequalities. And so, we got our report together and we presented it to Dr. Jamrich and to one of his cohorts, whom he brought with him and he nodded and said well, [inaudible] and he said, well, if we'll polish it up just a bit he'll present it to the board. So we polished it up a little bit, and that was the last we ever heard of it. I saw absolutely no change, well, it was a lot of work for nothing.

I: Did you present it, did he ever present it to the board?

SK: I have no way of knowing. I don't know, I'll tell you something that I wouldn't want to have published. His cohort, as we were walking out together, out of the room where we met, and I heard the other fellow say to Dr. Jamrich 'Well, uh, next year let's give them a little raise, toss them a bone, and they'll be quiet for a while.' Can you imagine that? And that really is what I remember of that committee [inaudible]. The other committee I remember, most of it at least, is the committee, the academic proficiency committee. This was in the days before computers, of course. Grades were computed by hand and recorded by hand. Then the academic proficiency committee met at the end of each semester. In those days we had terms, three terms, so, we had three blocks of time scheduled for meetings. Everybody else at Christmas time, for example, might have been gone to, Florida or wherever, and here us poor committee members were there adding honor points. Four for an A, three for a B, adding them, dividing them. We had to decide whether a person was going to be simply put on probation or that we had to improve his scholastic average, or whether it was time for him to leave the university for a while, get his act together. Then people had to write to a few, so these committee meetings lasted from say, eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. We were calculating averages and honor placements and then we were looking to appeals. People who for one reason or another felt that they should be given another chance. Do you teach shorthand?

I: No, I have my own strange little language that no one else can read. Which actually has worked well for me, [inaudible] sitting next to me by reading what I write [inaudible].

SK: I've never, well, let me talk about my student teaching, first of all.

I: I have a question, what are honor points?

SK: Well, one had to maintain a C average to be considered a bona fide student, you know, good standing. If one dropped down to a D average or, even a D+, then there were questions about probation. So, we were looking for a student's grade point average, GPA, grade point average.

I: And do you know what years those, what decades those took place?

SK: Hm, well, let's see, the academic proficiency committee was probably in the sixties some time, the other one might have been in the seventies.

I: Because [inaudible]

SK: Well, when I came here to teach, when I came here as a student. Northern was a very small school, maybe four hundred students or something like that. Because we were just pulling out of the Depression. [inaudible]. And there were no dorms. Students lived in people's houses. I roomed just about two blocks from here. I lived with an elderly couple and there were two bedrooms. The second bedroom was real plain. And they had two of us girls living in that bedroom. And I think we paid two dollars a week for a room. And we had kitchen privileges. So we cooked our own meals. We worked the schedule out with them when it would be a good time for us to be pattering around in the kitchen. Do you know for the life of me I can't remember what we cooked? But we made our own meals but what we cooked I don't know. But during the two years I was here as a student, I was just here for two years first of all, I don't recall going out to a restaurant to eat not even one time, money was so tight. My roommate lived on a farm I think [inaudible] she would and so she would occasionally get a pound of butter from home, and my folks, my mother would send stuff that she had backed. So we looked forward to those food care packages.

I: And you said you were here two years, and earned your associated degree here?

SK: A state limited certificate. With a state limited certificate one could teach grades one through eight, and so, while I was here I was on the debate team. I told you that my first recollection of Northern was from my high school days when the debate team came here and we stayed at the Northwind. 1930s, 1935, 1936, it was a [inaudible] hotel, and it was my first trip to Marquette. People didn't travel much in those days. And so, um, we [inaudible] and it was a, and during well, so I was on the debate team in high school. And then at Northern when I was here for those two years I was on Northern's debate team. And I'll tell you what incident occurred. I don't remember the questions we debated. But Mr. Roberts, Forest Roberts, was our debate coach. The women had their own team and the men had theirs. And the women's team went either to Southern Wisconsin or Minnesota, I'm not quite sure where, to a debate tournament. And we went to bed early that night. When we were on the road and we had no radio no

nothing and it was a surprise when we got to the school the next morning to find things in an uproar. That had been the night of Orson Welles broadcast and, oh, there had been chaos on campus the night before. Kids had been calling home, the lines were all clogged. They worried about their folks and their folks worried about them. Some students were out playing ball someplace and then got on the bus, and my recollection was that there had been some kind of a bus mishap, the driver got so excited, how they knew about it, I can't imagine that they would have had a radio on the bus but maybe they learned about it before they got on the bus to come home, whatever. But we really had a little bit of an edge, because we hadn't heard this and we were debating against people who had heard it and who hadn't slept so well during the night.

I: Did you win the debate?

SK: Oh, we won some, we lost some. It was a tournament. So my high school debating, I remember the Northwind Hotel, which is now of course the Landmark Inn. And [inaudible] the Orson Welles broadcast. Um, let's see. Let me tell you a little bit more about student days. The bookstore was down in the basement of the Longyear building and there was a Dutch door. No one ever went into the bookstore. We were taught that if the door was open you stood there and you shout [inaudible] and asked for the books you wanted or the paper you wanted, or whatever. There was no place on campus to have a cup of coffee that I can remember. It was strictly business. I can remember the days that an announcement was made that foreign languages were no longer going to be required for entrance to Northern. In Longyear, in Kaye Hall, which was the middle hall, there were a couple of balconies that went around with a foyer. Between classes people lined up, leaned over the rails you know and watched the traffic below and waved at their friends across on the other side there, over there. And Mr. Gant, he was the registrar, came out of his office and he stood at the foot of the stairs and just called out in a loud voice raised his hand, 'I have an announcement to make. Let's have quiet and I'll make the announcement.' And so he did, that foreign language was no longer needed for entrance to Northern. I don't know if that's changed. I wonder. I haven't checked.

I: What was the response?

SK: Well, we were all there. We had all had our foreign language. So, it didn't really mean much to us at all. The library was in that building in Longyear, or in Kaye hall, and they were closed stacks also. You just filled out a little slip indicating what book you wanted and somebody ran it by for you and that was that.

I: You would, they would just have a regular card catalogue and you would look for what you wanted and then, I can't imagine that because I spent my whole life I take my daughter to the library and I walk her through the stacks. It's amazing.

SK: Yes, it is. Well, a new library was built. It was added on to these buildings that were already connected together, these four buildings. And so it was a fifth building that was connected and that fifth building was known as the Lydia M. Olson Library. She had been a librarian. The head librarian or something. And that building didn't last, I'm thinking longer than twenty-five years. But that's something I'd have to check. It was such a surprise to have that torn down. Apparently it was on unstable ground or something and the engineers figured that it had better come down. But that was closed stacks also. We

used to have freshman-sophomore days in the spring time. Everybody had to take PE during their freshman and sophomore years and so this was a big athletic event. But it was more than that. But I remember especially the athletic events. I was scheduled [laughs] with a group of people from my class to roll a hoop around the track and we were racing the other group, sophomores or freshman, I don't remember what year it was. And the hoop got away from me and it went hobbling across the grass in the middle of the oval and there I was running after that thing trying to get it back on track. That was, they had a tug of war contests and that kind of thing, but they were [inaudible]

I: What was it like to be a college student [inaudible]?

SK: Well, yeah, it was still Depression days. Nobody had much money. We were all pretty much in the same boat. I had never been on a campus before I came to Northern as a student. And um, I have a letter before I came here from some woman, some student, who had been assigned me as her, that she take me under her wing, at least to the extent of writing me a welcoming letter. But not as many people went to college in those days, so I didn't even have anybody I could check with. So I made myself a new suit, I remember that suit so well. A brown woolen suit with pockets that were inset. And I can still see the little etching on those pockets on either end of them, I wore that to the day that we first came here. And I was practically the only person dressed in a suit. So, I put my suit away for special occasions.

I: Had anyone in your family gone to college before?

SK: My sister had. Yep. But she, apparently wasn't around to tell me much about it. She hadn't been to Northern. She had been to Swimmer[?] college and then she had gone to a college in Minnesota. Although she ended up here and got her degree from here, too.

I: How did you happen to be able to go to Northern? Did your parents [inaudible]?

SK: No. Well,

I: I was going to look it up, because I'm writing about it [inaudible] I was going to look up how many women that, the numbers must have been pretty small.

SK: I don't remember what the proportions- when I was graduating from high school, one day the superintendent stopped by in study hall and said to me, 'Well, Sylvia, you're eligible for the Michigan Tech scholarship.' Michigan Tech used to give a scholarship to the top student in each class. But he said, 'I don't suppose you want to go there. It's practically all guys. And furthermore, who would hire a woman engineer?' I look back on those days and I think, well, that's probably true. Who would have hired a woman engineer? But you know I didn't hesitate at all when he said you don't want to go and I said no I don't. I thought afterward, well my goodness, I should have at least talked it over with my parents. And done a little exploration to find out what programs were being offered at Tech. Maybe there was something there besides engineering in those days. And it would have been so much more convenient for me because I could have stayed at home. And in those days I thought I was pretty good in math. Wanted to be a math teacher. Now I don't balance my check book anymore. I'm a couple thousand dollars off and I've been a couple thousand dollars off for years. I don't let it worry me. So, my

mother was, well, both my mother and father thought that I had to go to college. They could only see two options for us. We could either be a nurse or a teacher. So both my sister and I opted for teaching degrees. My mother did something, bless her heart. Sears-Roebuck in those days had a mail order business. A big mail order business. The company was strongly supportive of scholarship programs. Actually what it consisted of was that you'd have your name imprinted on order blinds, and anybody who ordered on the blind with your name, you'd get a certain percentage of that money. And my mother really beat the bushes, so Sears-Roebuck would send a check to the cashier here, the registrar, whatever office it was, at the beginning of each term. So there was some tuition money there.

I: So you [inaudible].

SK: Hold on, my [inaudible]. I was always motivated to study. And that was true right through my doctorate. I never had to force myself to study. It was just something I wanted to do. And what a blessing that is. I think of kids even who just hate to do their homework, they just have a hard time settling down to do it. [Inaudible] The plan was that I would go to college for two years and get a state limited teaching certificate and my sister in the meantime would take a year off and wait it out until I got to teaching and then I would help her go through her last two years. And then she would help me go through my last two years. And it sounded like a good plan, but we both got married shortly after we started teaching, so it didn't quite work out that way. So, I finished my degree doing correspondence and summer school, that kind of thing.

I: Where did you teach after you graduated?

SK: My first teaching job was in a one room school outside of Mass City, a little community in the Ontonagon county.

I: [inaudible]

SK: Is that right? Well, I had all eighth grade. There was a little girl in the kindergarten. They had a kindergarten. But there was nobody, there were two grades that didn't have anybody in them. And I really wasn't equipped to teach in that kind of situation. We lived in a small town in Hubble when I was a kid. But we didn't have a one room school, we had two grades in a room. I could have coped with two grades in a room better, I guess, than with eight. But you know, you live and learn.

I: How did you function in that? Because I remember, I used to be an education reporter, and I sat in a class just of fifth graders, and it wore me out, just watching the teacher because even when the kids were in the same grade there were so many different levels. How did you manage with eight different grades?

SK: Well, the school board didn't supervise and had very few guidelines but one thing they said was not to combine grades. They wanted kids to go through a structured second grade program, third grade program. And, so you know, slice up a day into five minute intervals, except that if someone needs to be working with children who are younger, or needed to be, I'll use the past tense, it was possible to have them work with the other kids. And older ones helped younger ones.

I: How long did you teach at that school?

SK: One year. And I earned eighty-five dollars a month. And the school board didn't know. How this happened I'll never understand, but when my pay check came every month it was for eighty-five dollars. There were no deductions, there was no income tax in those days and they didn't realize that they were supposed to be deducting for teachers' retirement. The state caught up with them, in I think December. So for my December check I had the teacher's retirement deduction for September, October, November, and December so that December check was not very much. It was bad month for that to happen.

I: How much was eighty-five dollars in those [inaudible]?

SK: Well, my sister was in school and I was able to send to her money. I paid twenty-five dollars a month room and board. So that left me sixty dollars a month to play around with. Did I have a car that first year? I don't remember, maybe it was the second year. My dad bought me a car. Because there was no public transportation in those outlying communities.

I: So eighty-five dollars was a pretty good pay?

SK: I can't say it was pretty good pay but it wasn't bad. If I had been teaching in a larger school system I probably would have earned a hundred and fifty, you know there was quite a difference between a one room school house and a larger school system.

I: And what did you [inaudible]?

SK: I got a job teaching in another school where I only had two grades per room. Which was what I was accustomed to.

I: And where was that?

SK: In Mallard[?] township. Which is where I met my husband. And after I'd taught there for two years, then we were married. And let's see, we were married in June and he was drafted in October.

I: What year was that?

SK: '42. I can remember the day that we didn't have school. We teachers were to register all the draft age guys at the town hall. That was our job for that day. But I didn't happen to register my husband. I didn't know my husband at that time. The registration must have taken place a year and a half, maybe two years before the draft. Or before he was drafted.

I: [inaudible]

SK: Yeah, he was drafted. So then I asked the school board if I might quit my teaching job in the middle of the year and join my husband in North Carolina. And they said 'if you can find a substitute, if you can

find someone to take your place, okay.' And in those days married women weren't permitted to teach. So, I think they were kind of thinking, you know, she's married anyway. But you know, they hired a married woman to replace me. That was the end of the regulation of married women not teaching.

I: Because of the board?

SK: Um hm, absolutely. So, I joined my husband in North Carolina in a bit. Well I was going to, I should say. But on the way, on the train he began to worry about 'Do you have money? Do we have enough money? How are you going to live in Fayetteville?' and by the time we got to Detroit where we had to change trains, we had talked ourselves into the notion that I probably had to stop off in Detroit for a while and earn the big wages that would be earned there. And when I had enough saved so I could live in Fayetteville for a while comfortably I should come down. And so I got a job in Detroit with no problem at all, they were hiring just anybody. I remember, I went to Woodbury's, north of Royal Oak someplace and filled out the application papers and what not, I had a quick little interview with somebody some fella and he said 'well, you have such a nice record we'd like to have you work for us and we'll let you know in a week or two.' And I said, 'Oh no, if I don't get a job today, if I don't land a job, I'm going to be going on with my husband tomorrow to North Carolina. So before I got back to the place where I was staying in Detroit, he had called and said 'come back immediately we need you' so I went and I worked there until I had money collected.

I: And what kind of place where you working for?

SK: Oh, that's where I checked plug gauges. They manufactured, I don't know what they manufactured. We never got to see the rest of the factory, we were in our own little area. But we worked in a cage, it was a room that had no walls, except it had wire all around it, chicken wire cage, I think. We had, I checked plug gauge. One end of the plug gauge was smaller than the other end, and they were used in the factor. The gold end was supposed to go in the hole that was being measure and the [inaudible] end was not supposed to go. Well, after a day of use in the factory, these things being poked through so many holes, why the plug gauges would kind of wear out. They needed to be checked. We had my [inaudible], then we piled up Jill block, and there were two prints in the file cabinet for every plug gauge, every size plug gauge and the blueprints indicated what the colors [inaudible] how many thousandths of an inch or whatever, so I sat in front of this machine all day long rolling plug gauge under it to see if they were still in their-, I remember after being there a couple of days the boss came up to me and he said 'Hey, what's the matter here? You don't seem to find any gauges that are any good.' And I said, oh, no, that they all seem to be worn because the [inaudible] I'm thinking in thousandths of an inch, maybe it was hundredths, I don't remember, but he said 'You can't exactly go by that. We have to have gauges in the factory, you have to be a little more lenient than you are. So I thought okay.

I: You never saw the inside of the factory?

SK: I never saw the inside of the factory.

I: So, it's just woman out there checking the gauges and men working in the factory?

SK: No, it was women working in the factory, too. [Inaudible] But that happened to be the job I had. It was okay. One of the women I worked with was interesting. Her husband had been a member of the purple gang in Detroit, which apparently at one time was kind of a notorious gang, not like [inaudible] but a notorious gang. So then I went to North Carolina and stayed with my husband for a while. But I figured that I'm not going to use up my savings, I'm going to get a job in North Carolina, too. And I did, I got a job taking care of three children. The mother was a nurse and the father was the manager of the dime store, so I had the children all day long. So I cooked and I did the wash. His white shirts were sent out and her uniforms were sent out. But other than that I did all the wash in the back yard on the scrub board with tubs of [inaudible] and I had never used a scrub board. But, when I wondered about it with Mrs. Rad[?] the lady of the house, she said, oh you know, it's so much cheaper to get somebody to do it rather than to send it out to the laundry or to get a machine, and so we don't [inaudible] everyone get a washing machine. Isn't that interesting? I don't remember what I earned there. But I had room and board and maybe five dollars a week. It was just slave labor. But, there were so many women looking for jobs ready to do anything for room a board, for a place to stay, because the base there was a big one. And there were lots of wives floating around.

I: And that was at Fayetteville? Did you, when you were growing up was there [inaudible] this is 1940s, SK: '42. Or '43 by that time.

I: So, did you know, you worked for a professional [inaudible] did you know that when you were [inaudible]?

SK: No, I don't suppose. Only the teachers. [Inaudible] My father worked in a copper mill. My mother never worked outside of the home. And my poor mother when, after we were married I was teaching and especially after I had my first baby, and I was taking care of a house wife, she used to feel so sorry for me, that she never had to work outside of the home. I think of how hard she worked. She had a wood range that she fired and she canned a hundred cans of blueberries at least every summer and she made the family bread and she sewed our clothes and she just did so much work around the house. Although after a bit, I was teaching and housekeeping, and mothering, why, I still didn't have a life as busy as hers was. Well, so, then my husband was [inaudible] got a [inaudible] so we decided to come back to the upper peninsula for his [inaudible] couple of weeks.

I: [Inaudible]

SK: Yeah, sure. And the trains were crowded. People were all over the platform there waiting for the train to stop. And normally you know, you think of the conductor or whoever from the train standing there and putting the little stool out there and people using the stool to step up into the car. In Fayetteville they went in through every door and every window. The train was full, immediately. So, anyway, we got on, we stood. We had our suitcases with us, no checking suitcases. And eventually we found a spot we could up end our suitcases and sit on them. And that's the way we got all the way to Washington D.C. By that time it was a pretty tiring trip,, when we got on the train to Washington to head to Chicago I remember falling asleep on the train and being shaken 'Hey, I think this is where you're supposed to get off' the conductor said. So, I agreed that's where we were supposed to get off. So, when his furlough was over, we were going to go back, the same worry beset us. Maybe I should

stop in Detroit and work for a while. Well, in those days you weren't supposed to quit your job if you were working in a war plant. You were supposed to stay on the job. So I wondered, do I dare go back, what will they say? Well, I'll go back and try. I went back and I was told no. 'You quit without notice. You quit so we can't rehire you.' So I said okay. So I went to another plant to Murrays. It was the first place I tried, and they were desperate for people, so I got a job riveting airplane wings.

I: [inaudible]

SK: And that was interesting. I can't say I became an expert riveter. But I spent six, eight, ten months riveting airplane wings. I had afternoon shift. So I worked until twelve o'clock at night. I worked I suppose from four until twelve. [Inaudible] I took the street car from Murrays to Gratiot. And another street car from Gratiot to Ten Mile and then I caught a bus from Ten Mile to whatever street I was going to get off at, where I was rooming. Although it was late at night, I only had one occasion that gave me any pause. I had been traveling that route a couple of months. And people at twelve o'clock were factory workers going home. I knew approximately, I could recognize that these were familiar faces who were standing in the middle of Gratiot waiting for the street car. And then standing on the corner of Ten Mile waiting for the bus. One day, one night, there was an unfamiliar guy who got on Gratiot, he got off at Ten Mile, same stop where I did. So I had my eye on him kind of. When I got off, lo and behold if he didn't get off. And I was kind of afraid. And he struck up a conversation when I told him immediately 'oh I just [inaudible] folks always wait up for me.' Probably had no ulterior motives, anyway I was glad to get home that night. Now I wouldn't think of traveling in Detroit at night. Making those changes. But in those days it was pretty safe.

I: Was it [inaudible] because of the war out there?

SK: Oh yes, oh yes. People were so supportive of the war. Then when I finished up there I went back to, what did I do? Oh, then my dad got ill, so I went back to Hubble and I taught in Houghton for a while. Until my husband got out of the service.

I: How long was your husband in the service?

SK: He was only in for sixteen months. His father had a stroke. Was it the Red Cross? I think the Red Cross made arrangements for him to come home and take care of his father. We lived in Laird Township then with his father for eleven years until his father died, and then we locked up the house and I came back to Northern and I got my degree. And we went directly here, then, to Ann Arbor. And then back to Northern.

I: So, Laird Township is where?

SK: In Houghton county.

I: So you taught. Did you teach [inaudible]?

SK: I had eleven and a half years in the public school before I got my degree.

I: And what year did you first start at Northern?

SK: 1945. And the second one was 457 and I came back [inaudible].

I: What year did you come back to Northern [inaudible]?

SK: It must have been, '53. '52 maybe. Something like that.

I: And you got a bachelor's degree in education? What did your husband do?

SK: He worked for [inaudible]. And then when I got my bachelor's degree, we were living in Vetville.

I: Where?

SK: Vetville.

I: Vetville?

SK: Vetville. Spelled just as you would expect it to be. Vet-V-I-L-L-E all one word. This is where veterans, returning guys, lived with their families when they went to school, or in my case when the wife went to school. They were green huts. There were two sections to the one we were in. And my brother and his wife lived in the other half, which was nice because we had to share a bathroom. They were not fancy at all. They had little linoleum on the floors and I think the walls were finished. They had heaters in them I think, probably oil heaters they were located, well, in front of what is now the student center. On the drive there, that was a long road. One day, Ray got home before I did. Dr. [Inaudible] who was on a scholarship committee, I suppose went over to my place to talk to me. We didn't have a phone of course, so he couldn't call me to find out when I was going to be home. So he told Ray, 'Well, your wife is eligible for the university of Michigan scholarship. But I don't suppose she's interested in going because you have a baby already.' Our daughter was not a baby anymore, she was in the second grade by that time. Or third, second grade I think. 'So, you don't think she'll be interested, do you?' and my husband said, he wasn't like me, he didn't say 'nah' he said, 'well I'll check with her when she comes home.' We thought about it, and we decided that my husband was such a versatile man he could do so many things, that we would go to Ann Arbor. Just for a year and get my masters and he'd find a job there. And he did at [inaudible]. After I got my masters, [inaudible] apply for a fellowship for the next year. I was fortunate, they give me a full ride scholarship fellowship for the next two years. With the stipulation that I don't accept any outside employment. [Inaudible] So that suited us just fine.

I: So [inaudible]?

SK: It just fell into my lap.

I: Did the University of Michigan offer this scholarship for some of the best students [inaudible]?

SK: Yeah. Then when I finished up we had decided, where do we want to go to live? We had sort of thought about Florida, because there was an opening there that I was kind of interested in. And there was another opening in Ypsilanti that I was kind of interested in. Dr. Peerman[?], who was in social work

here at Northern, had come to see us in Ann Arbor and had suggested that when I'm ready to come back to Northern, or get back to work, to think about coming back to Northern. He thinks that there would certainly be a place for me at Northern. And I thought, well bless that dear man's heart, I only had one class from him. But it was in social work, which was my area, and as a part of that we all had to take a state test for social work. And I don't remember what kind of a test it was anymore. But I remember going down. [Inaudible] to take the test. And I had apparently done well. Because I had impressed Dr. Peerman[?]. He said I that I did better on that test than his own students whom he had in class for semester after semester. So I think that's why he kind of kept an eye on me. Then Dr. H[?] who was the chairman of the department of education stopped by to see me. And he said '[inaudible] are you thinking of coming to Northern at all when you finish here?' so I said I don't know when I'm going to finish at that point. And he said, 'well, maybe we can just have a job waiting for you.' So I didn't have to interview for the job, it was really nice. I think the people today have to go through so many hoops. [Inaudible] so many groups of people. [Inaudible] And so, we decided we'd go back to Marquette, we kind of liked Marquette. My folks were still living here, so this is where we came. [Inaudible] and we never regretted it.

I: How did you manage working, you had a small child [inaudible] Master and your PHD, and then when you get her you have a baby. [Inaudible]

SK: Well, we had a woman who came, and she was a gem [inaudible]. All that I expected her to do was take care of the baby. But I'd come home from school and I would find dinner waiting on the stove. She just did all sorts of things, which she didn't need to, I didn't expect from her. And she stayed with us for a number of years. And then this was a busy household, and my mother died and my dad was unable to live alone. So he came here to live with us. And then Ray's, my husband's, nephew decided he would like to go to school at Northern. So, he came to live with us. He was with us for two and a half years. This house was just bursting at the seams.

I: How important was your husband's support [inaudible]?

SK: Oh, yeah, he was a dear. When he worked for-, he went back CCI when he came here. And he would work in shifts.

I: Did he work in the mines?

SK: Ah, yes, and then when they started [inaudible] at Eagle Mills, he worked at Eagle Mills. So when he had night shift, he'd get home just in time to take me to school if I had an eight o'clock class. But if I had a nine o'clock class, we'd go out for breakfast. Which was kind of nice. After he had his sleep, why Anne would go home and he would take care of the little one. And he took her wherever he went. There was a bakery shop on Third Street. About where the habitat is now. One day, I went in there with my daughter and Mrs. Flamir[?] the woman who had the shop, who always gave Mary a cookie or something when she went there, she threw up her hands and she looked at me and said, 'Are you a,' and I told her I'm Sylvia Kinnunen, I'm Mary's mother. 'Oh my goodness, and here I thought all this time your husband was a widower or that Mary didn't have a mother.' She was happy to see me.

I: You had the husband change the diapers?

SK: Oh yeah. Washed them.

I: That's a new phenomenon. I mean, most fathers have not been involved in raising their children. My generation, [inaudible].

SK: It's a little sad to see him with Alzheimer's. I was there today. He has no idea what's going on. None at all. [Inaudible] He's got [inaudible] he's really not been well since last Friday. And I'm afraid he's getting dehydrated. The doctor was in today, and didn't think he needed to go to the hospital. But I think he belongs in the hospital. But we'll see. I think it'd be good for him to have some fluids, [inaudible]. He has trouble swallowing because of the Parkinson and liquids are especially difficult. And now he's had diarrhea. [Inaudible] He just is in rough shape. So, anyway,

I: You must have been, I mean, I assume, when my husband takes the baby my [inaudible] goes to the store because women are so excited to see the father taking care of the baby. So you're, you must have been one of the women. I assume your other friends were [inaudible] not doing the same things he was.

SK: No, not really. What may have helped, I don't know, but Ray's mother died when he was very young, and he had one younger sister. Not much younger than he is. Anyway, he had to become helpful around the house, handy around the house, with all the [inaudible]. Naturally, [inaudible]

I: When you took the job at Northern, were there other women in the department?

SK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In the education department at least there were. I remember a student saying to me, right at the end of the first semester, that they were so interested to see a young person was hired, because at that time I was thirty six years old. That a young person was hired into the department, that they hadn't had a younger person there for some time. And then she discovered that she was pregnant, well, I thought Northern was really breaking all sorts of barriers.

I: You said married teachers were not [inaudible] I have a friend who in the sixties was told they wouldn't hire [inaudible] pregnant. What did they do when you were first teaching, what was the next thing to let you know you're not a teacher anymore because you're married?

SK: Well, that didn't happen to me, you know. I asked for permission to leave in the middle of the year so that I could join my husband. And see, that was already war time and men were being drafted left and right. So even when I came to summer school at Northern during those years, why, there were so few men around they were as scarce as [inaudible]

I: But later on when you were teaching after the war you were married and so had they [inaudible]

SK: Married women got into the school and they've been there ever since.

I: Okay, because if women got into a lot of jobs we wouldn't otherwise have had during the war, but women got kicked out of most of those jobs after the war. So teaching was different?

SK: It was different. I don't know a single school that has any regulations against married women teaching. Or school systems that might have had such regulations after the war. I think that ended with the war.

I: Did you ever think that you'd get your PHD?

SK: It was not planned. No. When we left the farm in 19-, what, well, after Ray's father died. The notion was we'd come to Marquette so that I could get my degree. My master's degree. And we were going to take a year to do this, although I only had a half year to finish up, but that we would take a year. So that

our daughter would have a chance to live in a larger town and to go to a different school and see how the other half of the world lives. [Inaudible] And so, things just happened, Serendipity.

I: What was it like being a professor?

SK: Oh, well, it was hard work. It was for me. I'm not able to really get up and stand in front of a class and extemporize. I had to have my lectures prepared sometimes. And then there was always so much committee work that needed to be done. We had departmental committees, and then university wide committees, and some of them were very time consuming. And then of course we taught extension courses, and that too was time consuming.

I: What was it like being [inaudible] especially since you were so young?

SK: Just some of the young women?

I: Well, first of all, they're kind of looking at their future, because here's this professor who's got one child at home and is pregnant and is in their first year of teaching.

SK: I don't know what they thought of all that. They must have thought the world was changing.

I: But the world was changing. That must have been pretty extraordinary.

SK: Now of course, Northern [inaudible] and I suspect they may even hire a pregnant woman by accident once in a while. It certainly was an accident that I was pregnant at that time.

I: How do you think things have, over the time period, how many years did you teach at Northern?

SK: Twenty-five.

I: How did things change for professors [inaudible]?

SK: Well, I have a feeling that there is much more equality of opportunity for women now. After our famous committee that I chaired. Eventually it got to be called, and I didn't give it this name, I don't know who did, equality of opportunity for women in the academics. It became known as committee W, which was a part of a regular part of the university professors organizational scheme. And I think committee W must still function here.

I: This is the information that you brought to Dr. Jamrich? You said that when the [inaudible]

SK: That was our supreme [inaudible] tenure [?]

I: You said you could, of course [inaudible] but you often had difficulty [inaudible] a job anyways so what was the point?

SK: Yeah, I agreed with him. That's why I could kick myself all over the place. There was no thought of equality of women in those days. And I certainly wasn't a woman liber in those days. I didn't know anything about it. Of course, the women's lib movement wasn't, I was not a forerunner in it I should say.

I: But you were, though, because you got your PHD.

SK: Yes, that's true.

I: And you said that you were going to college, which was pretty extraordinary.

SK: I have, I just emptied out our farm house. And I found some old year books there. And I had fun looking through old years books from, oh, 1932 and stuff like that. There were lots of them in those days. Let me just show you. There [inaudible] good and better, good and better. [inaudible] library, and their pretty teachers, see because all the students in those days did their student teaching at John D. Peirce. And most of their teachers there were women. There was our dean of women, Ethel Carrey, she thought student teachers should not wear red. Red was, oh, suggestive, it was violent, inappropriate. So student teachers at John D. Peirce did not wear red. There's the fellow who went and told my husband I could have that scholarship to Michigan, the University of Michigan if I wanted it. But, [inaudible] librarian, and secretary, and secretary, and there's the fellow who said foreign language will no longer be required for entrance to Northern. There's a fellow I had as a teacher. He scared me to death.

I: There were a lot of women here.

SK: Yes, well you see it was a teachers college. There were more women here than there would have been at the university.

I: Oh, that hall is named after him.

SK: You see, John D. Pierce, John D. Pierce, John D. Pierce,

I: Betty Allison. Forest Roberts.

SK: Yes, he was a debate coach.

I: VanAntwerp.

SK: There's a hall named after her. We shared an office for a number of years after I came here. Well, here are students. And you'll see [inaudible] there are lots of them. And this was before the war.

I: Which would be preselected for women students because it is a teachers college.

SK: There was my high school debate coach. [inaudible] Well, so, lot's of them [?]

I: Now, we need to go back because we didn't start at the beginning. You were born and grew up in Copper Country?

SK: Yeah, in Hubble. [Inaudible] I'm sure [inaudible] and [inaudible] became one of the most highly [inaudible] all the chemicals that were used in the processing of copper ore went through big launders, raised troughs, that went over the roads. All the stuff went into the lake, fish couldn't live in the lake. And even a few years ago, as little as three years ago, I remember reading an article about the tumors on the fish in Torch Lake. And just today I heard something on the telly about the cleaning up of Torch Lake. I see people building cottages on Torch Lake now, and I find myself thinking, oh dear Lord. We, well, I had a brother who came along nine years after I did. And he was more adventures, nobody swam in Torch Lake except he and some of his buddies, they'd have to try it every year to find out what he water was like. It was opaque. Absolutely opaque. But they'd go in there and he said they came out of there and their hair would be all gunky and they'd have to take a sauna to wash themselves clean after being in. It was truly a company town, we had a company doctor, who bless his heart made house calls, I don't know how he had time to do it. But he did. Hubble had a main street about maybe a mile long, but there wasn't much on either side, you know, it was just that one long main street. Oh, there were a few side streets. There were various locations in Hubble. There was what we called French Gully, where the cathedral was and where many people of French descent lived. And our family, we lived down there, too. Out at one end of the tamarack hills. We lived on Au S[?] Hills. And across the gully was another hill, Tamarack Hill. And practically all the people living on those hills were Finnish people. And in between the two hills was a Finnish hall. And we had our Sunday school classes in Finnish Hall. And for the first maybe four or five years we were in Sunday school we were being taught to read Finnish. We had a special book, the [?] that we used. And the rationale was that we had to be able to read the Bible in the language in which God wrote it. [Both laugh] Obviously. So, on the back of our [?] was a picture of a rooster, and I don't know if this happened in many homes, but it happened in our house. People, well my mother and father, after we finished our studying, our lessons, for Sunday school why, we would turn our books upside down on the dining room table, leave them there for the night, when we got up in the morning, the rooster would have brought us something. Nothing very much because they were poor times. But maybe a candy or a stick of gum, a piece of fruit or something. So it was like Christmas morning every Sunday, a little bit like Christmas morning. My father didn't speak English. My mother spoke beautiful English. Scrabble became her favorite game in later years, and crossword puzzles. But my dad wasn't particularly... he was so clever with his hands. He was a copper smith and a silver smith and he made all sorts of things out of wood. Including a boat, many boats, he was a boat builder. And he made us our skis. And he made sleds. He made all sorts of things. But I think languages were difficult for him. And so we spoke only Finnish in the home. Until my older sister, a year older, went to school. And then my mother saw what a hard time, how unhappy it made Joana not to be able to speak English, well, I won't have the same trouble. And all of a sudden English became the language that my mother, and my sister and I spoke. We spoke Finnish to my dad and English to my mother.

I: That probably gave you a little bit of an advantage though [inaudible] you already, it was easier to learn a language when you are little than when you are older so you already had that. Did your father ever speak English?

SP: Well, he spoke a little but not very much at all, no. He much preferred to speak in Finnish. And I wish, my father and I used to say to each other once in a while 'let's just speak Finnish today, we've got to keep that language alive in this house.' And before we knew it why we had already switched to English.

I: How many children [inaudible]

SK: There were four all together. And my dad had big gardens. He had a field for raspberries and he had a field for potatoes, and then he had a garden that was devoted to all sort of interesting vegetables. Because I think about vegetables, I can think he never had parsnips, he never raised parsnips, or turnips, or broccoli, or Brussel sprouts, but almost any other vegetable I can think of he raised. Well, he liked for us to go up with him after we had evening meal and look at the gardens to see how the plants were going. So it was kind of a family time, we'd go out, at that time there were only four of us. When the first cucumber started to grow we decided we would watch it every day and we would measure it once in a while to see how it was doing. And suddenly one day when we went out there, it was still not a very large cucumber, four inches long or something like that, the end of the cucumber had been bitten off, mother and father were highly amused by this and they wondered what on earth could have happened to that cucumber? And I was just [inaudible] I hadn't taken a bite. But I thought they're wondering what could have happened there must be some explanation, so I volunteered an explanation, I said well I think a big grasshopper came along and took the end of that cucumber right off. And there was my sister chuckling to herself. [chuckling]

I: You had an older sister and then you were second, and then you had another sister,

SK: And then I had a brother nine years younger than I am, and a sister twelve years younger. So we were two families.

I: You had a sister twelve years older?

SK: No, no. Twelve years younger. But she died when she was [inaudible] she had cancer.

I: But your parents kind of did the same thing you did.

SK: Yep, two families. You know I was telling you that I have written the article, ten things about growing up in the twenties that I really don't miss at all, well, I think about that potato field. One of the things I don't miss at all is picking potato bugs. We were given a tin can with some kerosene in the bottom and we were paid a penny for every twenty bugs that we picked and so we were on the honor system we [inaudible] we were to keep track. And then potatoes bugs lay little orange eggs on the underside of leaves and we were to look under leaves and tear off any section of the leaf that might have eggs on it and that counted the same as a potatoes bug. Well, I don't miss doing that at all. But um, the use of insecticides, my dad didn't use insecticides much at all.

I: Nut soup, that was one of the things.

SK: Oh yes, that was another thing. Nut soup. It was like bread.

I: Like bread?

SK: One of our neighbors, who lived up, we lived on a hillside. Well it's that big hill the runs all the way through the copper country. You know there's that hill in Calumet. And there's that hill in Hancock and it goes all the way through to Mass. Well we lived on the side of that hill. And a farmer who lived maybe a mile up from us, who'd always walk down with two led pails full of blood after he butchered. And regardless of what my mother was doing, she'd drop everything and stir up the blood red goo and fire up the stove to bake it. We ate what we could when it was hot and with apple butter it was good. But then it dried very quickly and she let it get as dry as Trenary toast, [inaudible] and then she'd break it up and drop it into the soup so it was like dumplings. And it kept forever after it was once baked. So we were [inaudible] to have blood dumplings any old time. Now I don't miss that. I don't know how to make blood dread. And I don't intend to learn.

I: You [Inaudible]

SK: I haven't sent it out. I was going to. And I have just dilly dallied.

I: Yeah, you should. What were the other things on the list?

SK: Well, our water system was terrible. My dad would, he dug a well for us. It was shallow, well I don't know how many feet deep. Not a driven well. The water was sometimes rusty. Sometimes mother would wash sheets for example and they would come out even worse than they did when they went into the wash with that rusty water. Sometimes in the summer time the well dried up, so we had no water, and that meant that father had to get out there and father had to dig the well a little deeper or dig an entirely new well. I don't know how many wells he [inaudible] people who lived in company houses, and we didn't have, no we did have company houses on our hill but that was really before my time. The company supplied its company house, most of them, with water. But people who owned their own homes were responsible for getting their own water. Which, so, since we didn't have running water in the house we had to use pumps. Obviously we had to have an outhouse. And that's another of the things I don't miss at all. No fun going into an outhouse when it's cold and snowy. We had a couple of incidents that happened, and both of them involved my mother. My mother and father tried to impress on us that every time you go to the outhouse you've got to close the door. Don't forget to close the door. But my sister and I wouldn't always remember to do that. One year, we had a camp in Little Travers, one year when we left the camp in the fall, one of us girls didn't remember to close the door properly or perhaps the wind blew it open I don't know, but the porcupines got in there during the winter and they chewed the walling [inaudible] so, we were told again, got to close the door, got to close the door. One night at home, my mother went out in the evening. She had already put on her night gown, ready for bed. But we had no close neighbors, the house next to ours was vacant on the hill. And she heard a scrabbling noise on her way to the outhouse. The door had been ajar and there was a skunk and she had gotten sprayed.

I: Oh, no.

SK: Well, I'll tell you, it was really impressed on us then, you have got to close the door.

I: I used to get [inaudible]

SK: Well, being poor, I suppose is something I don't miss. That's not to say that I'm wealthy, because certainly not. But, we really had to pinch pennies [inaudible] already back in, I was born in 1920, the mills closed in 1920 because the government had bought so much copper during the first world war that copper was stockpiled and there was no need for more copper to be dug so the mines were closed and the mills were closed. People moved away from Hubble. Some moved to the city looking for work. Some bought farms. We moved out to the camp. And my father became a fisherman until the mills opened again. And then the big [inaudible] back to Hubble. There wasn't a school in Little Traverse. And there wasn't a road there, either. So, we went back to Hubble.

I: When did the mines reopen?

SK: It was only I think closed for a year or two.

I: So it was a real hardship for him [inaudible] that you and your sister go to college.

SK: Oh, yes. Oh you bet. The mills closed again during the depression years. But then there was WPAs. And of course the banks closed. As kids we had been taught that we had to save money. Everybody saved money. So we had our own little banks. The bank was the only place where there was a key so we were not tempted to open our little banks. We had to take them down to the banks to have them opened and have the money deposited in our accounts. Well, when the banks closed, when did ours close? Did it close around '30? I don't know when it closed. We were heartbroken. All the coins we had saved in our banks now we couldn't get them out. So my father worked for WPA for a while. And I know the WPA had some worthwhile projects. But he also worked on some not so great projects. There are still a couple of stone boats up beyond [inaudible] and Alloway[inaudible] in that area that WPA guys built. Stone boats. Maybe as long as the stream was wide, maybe four or five feet high. It was made to work, which is something [inaudible]

I: Did you get your money back?

SK: Yeah, we did. When I was in the ninth grade. Well let's see that would have been in 1933, I suppose or '32. I had a class in cooking at Alloway[inaudible], we went to high school in Alloway[inaudible]. The cooking class learned to make a variety of things. But another of its responsibilities was to make something to serve to [inaudible] everyday, one dish. Once baked potatoes, or twice baked potatoes, or salmon dish, or whatever it might be. So then the cooking class not only made that food but [inaudible] and um, a slip was passed around in the boys lunch room and in the girls lunch room the day before and people could sign up if they wanted to be [inaudible] and my sister and I had instructions from home that if they're serving something that costs four cents we are not to consider signing up. If it costs three cents only on rare occasion are we to, only if it's something that we really,

END OF INTERVIEW