

Interview with Ken Fowler

Mary Adams Bone, Ph.D. Interviewer

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Mr. Fowler on May 21, isn't it, yeah 21st, 1982. So Charles figured out a way to, what he did was he ran it through some of his machines, which I don't understand. I'm terrible with machinery. Repaired my sewing machine in Berkley _____ . And so Charles was filtered out all the low, low registered noise.

Ken Fowler: I see.

Unidentified Female Voice: So for Anne's tape which is going up to Northern Michigan University is, so that, so that what happened is now almost the motor noise is gone. Now it's just a man's voice, sounds higher pitched.

Unidentified Male Voice: I see. And this is on now?

UFV: Yeah, it's on now.

UMV: You'd never know it, yeah.

UFV: So it's a...

UMV: Well that makes it nice.

UFV: Well it's about from you to me because I'd like to catch, if I can, the exact words, you know. And Mrs. _____ apparently has those nice terms and phrases _____ -

KF: Oh right.

UFV: _____ You know my just one daughter can have it, I did get that one but I missed Lawrence Sumpter she wasn't there _____ with a tape recorder.

KF: Oh I suppose not. Yeah. They're great people, yeah, great neighbors.

UFV: Yeah, I didn't realize that Charlie was a classmate until I saw his picture, I didn't recognize his name _____ .

KF: Oh I'm sure, oh sure.

UFV: Known him real well.

KF: Oh sure, Charlie, he would be about Janice's age?

UFV1: Yeah he was in our class _____ .

UFV2: Well, the granddaughter the one who wrote an article

Int: Yeah, I'm the one who wrote the article about her writing the article.

UFV2: oh?

Int: Well I was real impressed and I thought that's fantastic so I said, I told him the other day I'd bet _____ be interested, _____ took it down and so on and she said oh yeah.

KF: That's nice

Int: She got paid for it _____ get to the, well there's people that've written for decades, don't reach those national _____. Well everyone tells me, Mr. DeMars was telling me the other day, you gotta go talk to Mr. Fowler. _____ - Why don't you begin at the beginning that you were telling me about coming from Raber?

KF: Oh yes. We came here with, I came here with my folks in about 1912. My dad worked for the Northwestern Leather Company here.

UFV2: Oh, and then he had been a sawmill man.

KF: And prior to that he was a sawmill man. When we came here this was a booming community. Just unbelievable, the Tannery was operating, the lumber company was operating on South Street, there was a Shingle Mill owned by Kelly and Myer.

Int: Who?

KF: Kelly and Myer.

Int: Kelly, K-E-L-L-Y?

KF: K-E-L-L-Y, Myer, I just don't know, Myer I think, I'm not sure. Then there was the Pittsburgh Coal Dock, it was Pittsburgh at that time, it's Reese now, that same coal dock. And of course that was, the coal dock was a year-round business in those days. Coal was sold every month of the year, it didn't matter if it was summer or winter. In the summer time they sold coal to the merchants in town and of course they

Int: How did they use it? The merchants in town?

KF: That was what they used for heating in those days, there was no other way of heating except for coal.

Int: And why did they _____ in the summer?

KF: Well in the summer they loaded up all the schools, during vacation time, all the schools had, oh tremendous big coal bins. And they would fill them up during the summer and of course that...

Int: The same with the businesses?

KF: The same with the businesses, right. So it took a lot of, a lot of work, and of course in the winter time everybody was buying coal, you know. They'd deliver it to the houses, delivered by horses in town, they'd come across on the ice from the coal dock, over to, well just about to Meridian Street, just at the head of the canal. They'd cut across there.

Int: The horses were?

KF: With a team of horses, yeah. After the ice had, after the ice had made, they'd come across there. Um... South Street was the main thoroughfare in those days.

Int: Not _____?

KF: You could go to Fourth Avenue as far as what is known as Oak Street now. You could go that far, that was the end, that was the end of the street. There was no crossing across the railroad tracks at all. If you wanted to get up above the Tannery you had to go South Street and up in that area. Fourth Avenue was extended when the Army came here. They were the ones that put that road in from Oak Street on up to about, I would think it would be around 18th Street where it crosses there at the Tanner, at the old fair grounds. Now what year that was, that would be about '45 I think, yeah.

Int: Fort Brady

KF: That's right, yeah.

Int: _____

KF: There were many homes on South Street that were moved over in this area. Some were moved the way they were, others were torn down and moved. This house right across the street from us, my Uncle lived in that house, and it was just north of the McKinley School, and that was the Superintendent of the Peninsula Bark and Lumber Company Mill, and he was my Uncle, Ben Scott. That house was torn down and moved over here, mostly via wheelbarrow, two Polish people. They never had no family, I don't know why they would have built a house that size.

Int: Did they rebuild it the way it had been before?

KF: No, no it's changed quite a bit from what it, but he used practically all the lumber to build it the way it is.

Int: And the same family lived in it down there _____?

KF: No, no that was after the sawmill burned and my Uncle moved from here to Shelldrake and was Superintendent of the Mill for Bartlett Lumber Company.

Int: Shelldrake is spelled?

KF: S-H-E-L-L-D-R-A-K-E.

Int: And so the Polish people bought it and tore it down?

KF: They bought it and he tore it down piece by piece, and I can see him yet bringing that across, like he come across right by the store and the biggest part of it was brought over with a wheel barrow, it was unbelievable. Of course the heavier stuff was brought over by other means.

The McKinley School had just been built shortly before we came here. When we were, had been going to school in a small schoolhouse that had one room and grades from one through eight, well when we came to the Soo and saw this school here, I'll tell you, it was, we thought we were really getting into something. And that was one reason that my folks moved here, they could've stayed in Raber, the mill was still running when we left there but my dad was interested in, there were five of us boys and he wanted us all to have a good education.

Int: Was there a high school in Raber? So that would be?

KF: No, that was it, was eighth grade. And I don't know if there was a high school in Pickford even at that time, I doubt that there was. Four of the brothers went to high school, one finished college, that's the Reverend. My oldest brother is a Minister, a Methodist Minister. The other three went to high school here, but I didn't want any part of high school.

Int: No?

KF: I wanted to go to work. My folks were, my folks were really disgusted. I'm telling you, my dad didn't speak to me for two weeks when I didn't go to high school on that first day and he came home. I had taken a job at a grocery store, I had worked part time while going to school, after school and Saturdays, and sometimes evenings, they were open late in those days. I had taken a job driving the team of delivery horses, so just about the time school was out the driver quit, so the boss said, "Do you want a job for the summer?" Oh yeah, if it had anything to do with horses, I was horse-crazy! My one ambition was to own a race horse.

Int: Did you ever achieve it?

KF: Never got to it, I drove one, but I never owned one. As I got a little older, I got away from that. But come September, I had stayed with the job. I worked, I was on that delivery job for about two years and there was a vacancy inside, so they put me inside Turking.

Int: Do you want to tell me about grocery stores a little bit and where it was, for example down on Fourth Avenue was it?

KF: That grocery store was in that old brick building down on South Street. That was built, partially built by a man by the name of K. Nicholas, now what his first name was I don't know, but his last name was Nicholas. He started that building and before he could get it finished he went bankrupt. The building sat idle for a long time and finally it was picked up by one of his relatives out east, I think they were from Boston. They bought the building and finished it, and it was rented by some people that was in the insurance business, you might know them I think their names was Adams.

Int: Yeah? I might. That brick building down there?

KF: So. That brick building, right.

Int: You mean they rented it out?

UFV2: Can Ken come to the phone?

KF: Oh excuse me.

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SKIP IN TAPE

Int: Okay. Let's see, so they rented the, that would have been, we were just working it out, I think that would have been my great grandfather or my grandfather. Or both, probably my great grandfather because I gather he was the go-getter in the business, my grandfather I don't think.

KF: I don't remember now. I think they had an office in the Adams Building.

Int: Yeah, yeah, that was built around 1902. And that was my great grandfather

KF: Yeah, that'd be your great grandfather.

Int: Yeah, I've had the feeling that my grandfather was always just kind of hanger-on _____ of course he left and went to the city. Sixty years ago, I don't know, you know, he left my grandmother [they] pretty well lived apart for years anyway...

KF: Oh, is that right?

Int: and she's lived downstairs, kind of thing and then from far back as I can remember they were separated. And then he just kind of wandered around the world, I think the boys gave him money, I'm not sure but.

KF: More than likely, right. Yeah.

Int: ___my dad, so that he never really joined, I don't really know I'm only sort of guessing. So the Adams Insurance Building?

KF: They had the administration of that building. The Co-op was running that store at the time. And as I say I went to work inside, turking inside. And I decided I needed a little more education, so I went to the Soo Business College, there was a business college here in those days. That was right on the corner of Spruce and Ashmun where that gasoline station is now, Woods, was it gasoline station there?

Int: Yeah I think that's right. Rich Woods

KF: Rich Woods. I believe it was on that corner, I'm not just too sure, but it was a big, big wooden building. I forget what was downstairs, but I know we had to go upstairs. I took a business course there after work, evenings for three nights a week for a year. I don't remember if there was a summer, let up on the thing, probably there was. But I went to that business college for a year, and then Art Nelson was manager of the store. He decided that he wanted out and he wanted to build his own store and go into business up above the Tannery there. So when he left they gave me the job of operating the store. That was a general store in those days you could buy most anything. They had everything from yard goods to clothing and washboards and boilers, washtubs, you name it, they pert near had everything. I had quite a bit of experience prior to taking over the job because I had been working before and after school and I had got to know the hardware business and the clothing business. Although you could buy a suit of clothes, but you had to be tailor made for it, they'd handle what they call International Tailoring Company's clothes. I never got that far, to measure up somebody for a suit, but I think I passed everything else. [Chuckles] That was really interesting. I stayed with them for eleven years. I believe, probably after I had been there about nine years they built this store across on Fourth Avenue here, this _____ building.

Int: Is this the one that's vacant now?

KF: This one is vacant now, yeah.

Int: Well it's been here a long time.

KF: That's been there quite a long while. They built that store and I had moved from down there, they discontinued all the hardware, they discontinued practically everything. They went into just groceries and meats

Int: This was still the Co-op?

KF: That's right, still a Co-op. I stayed with him over here for a year or two. Two years I think it was, they wanted to transfer me down to the main store. The Co-op had a number of stores, they had eleven stores at that time.

Int: In the Soo?

KF: In the Soo. Well, there was one in Pickford, but they had ten stores in the Soo, they were scattered all over. They wanted to transfer me down to the main store and Leo La Lever was the manager and he wanted to train me as an Assistant Manager. Well, I didn't care to go down town, so I quit. I wasn't married then, I didn't have any strings tied, so I quit. That was in August, I didn't do a thing until along in the first part of November I think it was. I decided that I'd open up a store where they left out, left from down on South Street. I had to start from scratch for, to get started, you know. I just looked around town and I'd pick up this and pick up that. Anything that somebody was trying to get rid of, I would take it. But I finally got enough equipment together, we built our own shelving, we built a big cooler. I think our cooler was sixteen by sixteen. The meat business was really something in those days. Meat was cheap, beef was, we'd buy beef, sides of beef for twelve cents a pound, a carcass of beef and process it all. We bought beef as low as eight cents a pound. When farmers would come in with meat and they'd say, "We'll give it to you for eight cents a pound." They'd have it already butchered, and they had no way of keeping it if they took it home. And they bought some of it as low as eight cents a pound.

Int: And then what would that retail for?

KF: Well we'd usually, say eight cents then go for, it all depended on the cuts of course. Steaks would probably be selling, if you paid sixteen cents you'd sell'em for thirty-five, thirty-nine cents a pound for the best steak, yeah.

Int: That's pretty cheap.

KF: Yeah. Well let's see now, I didn't rush this thing, well, of course it took a lot of time to find all the equipment. I went by a plumbing place on Portage Avenue and I seen an old safe sitting out in the back. I just forget what the people's names that were in the plumbing business, it was right across from where the Berry's had the dry-cleaning shop. Do you recall where Berry's shop was?

Int: Was that B-A-R-R-Y?

KF: I think it was B-E. Yeah. Anyway right across from that was this plumbing shop and this safe was sitting outside, big safe it was. Just about twice the size of that T.V. So I went in and asked them if that was for sale, "Oh yeah, that's for sale." I just forget what they wanted for it. I bought that safe, someone told me that someone had bought some new scales and had some old scales for sale. So I bought two old sets of scales from, from a meat market on Ashmun Street. I can't think of the fellow's name right now. Anyway I bought a couple of scales from him, and I bought a used butcher block from somebody else. Finally I got enough equipment together to open a store. We had built our cooler. I met Andy Reinhart in town one day and he was selling cookies for the Johnson Biscuit Company from

Milwaukee, he was their salesman. He says, "I'll be up to see you, I'll get an order going for you." Well I said, "Don't be in a big hurry because," I said, "I don't think we're going to open up until about February." So about the middle of January a dray came along with a whole load of cookies from Johnson Cookie Company. We hadn't even gotten ready for any of that merchandise, but the cookies come in handy, we ate the biggest part of them. [All chuckle] I've never forgotten that, Andy sent me my first order. Well I stayed in that location. Some of the, some of the businessmen around town that were in the grocery business, they said, "We'll give Fowler about six months." Because that was in hard times, I'll tell ya '31, you know? Stores were going out in Detroit and all over the country, they were just going out by the hundreds. People were, there's just no business. Well the tannery was running good at that time and I would think it was about two years after I opened up, the tannery, the tannery got a big contract of leather from the government. They got a six year contract. They were running one shift at that time and when, after they got that contract they had two shifts on. And they run two shifts, we never knew there was a depression on other than money was hard to find and wages were small, but everybody made it because stuff was so cheap. Hamburger three pounds for a quarter, you know, that would be on the special. Donuts ten cents a dozen, bread sold for, well there was very, there wasn't too much bread sold in those first days. I think that we would probably buy twenty loaves of bread in a day, everybody was, most everybody baked bread. I stayed in that location until 1935 and I built this store across the street here. I was over here for about five years, and the Co-op decided that they weren't making any money at their store, so they closed it up. They came to see me to see if I wouldn't take it over, but I had just built this building here.

Int: And which building is this?

KF: It's this, the one right across the street here where the barber shop was, right next to the church.

Int: Okay, but now which one was the Co-op?

KF: And then the Co-op was here, on the other, across on Fourth Avenue, down, past Janice's.

Int: Is that still standing?

KF: The one over right here? Yeah.

Int: No, the one that

KF: The Co-op? Oh yeah. That building's still there that's on the corner right down here, corner of Hyde Street and Fourth Avenue.

Int: Is that the one that's for sale?

KF: That's the one for sale, right.

Int: Okay, that real nice looking building.

KF: Yeah, that's a nice building.

Int: That's quite a lot older than I thought.

KF: Well it's made out of cement block and they don't deteriorate so much. And they put a new front on it too that really dressed it up. That wasn't on there, what was it, that French front on it there, where the...

Int: Yeah, so you built this building here?

KF: Then we built this building right here, right. Yeah. After I moved out of that building down there I guess there was no one in it after that. I don't recall of anybody being in there. Someone bought it for a storage building.

Int: Why did you move out from South Street?

KF: Well everything was coming this way at the time, the road here was going to go from Fourth Avenue on up, and the people that were living on South Street were coming this way, so this was a busier area. The street car went through here and so on and so forth, well, and on top of that, I wanted my own building. And I was in this building over here until '68, from 1935 to '68. The same year we moved over here, I decided that maybe I should get married. So I found a nice gal and I still have her.

Int: You're from Algonquin too?

UFV2: _____.

Int: Where'd you find him then?

UFV2: I don't know, _____.

KF: She was a nurse at the hospital, and my mother was in there, that's where I saw her first. So I just called her up one night and asked her for a date. [Laughs] We also had the post office, I had the post office before I even opened this store. The manager of the store at the, that the Co-op was operating, the first manager that I worked for was R. J. McMaster.

Int: Now would he have been?

KF: He was, that would be...

Int: Grandfather of the dentist?

KF: Grandfather of the dentist, I think he would be his grandfather, yeah that's right.

Int: And the father _____

KF: That was McMaster himself.

Int: Oh that was McMaster the same one?

KF: That was McMaster himself, he was the same one, he'd be the father, yeah.

Int: The same one, okay, then he's the father then. And the dentist has _____.

KF: Yeah, McMaster was running the Co-op store and he was operating a post office store there. Well when he left, he wanted to turn the post office over to Art Nelson who was going to be manager. But Art Nelson didn't want it because he had it in mind that he wanted to open up his own store, so he didn't want to be bothered with it. So he asked me if I would take it, and I said, "Sure." I'd do anything, you know, in those days. "I'll take the post office." It wasn't paying very much, but I took it. So then when I opened my own store, I took the post office along with me. You know they had no hold on it, no way, I could move it if I wanted to take it.

Int: Oh because you were closer?

KF: That's right, so I took the post office with me. And I was Post Master for forty years in Algonquin, operated it along with the store. It was the Post Office and the meat business that really made a success of the business. I decided I'd learn as much as I could about the meat business, and Mr. McMaster was a meat cutter but he had no liking for it whatever. So he taught me the fundamentals of the meat business, before he left. I had found out and learned quite a bit about it. After he left, I found as many manuals as I could on meat, on cutting meat, and how to do it, and how to tell what was good meat and what wasn't and so on and so forth. And it was all through R.J. McMaster that I learned the meat business and the grocery business. I have to give him credit. We raised three children, two girls and a boy, and we have, well there's eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Int: Oh so then Connie's had her baby?

KF: Connie had hers, yeah.

Int: Oh? And Kathy's?

KF: Kathy's

Int: Kathy's is a boy or girl?

KF: Boy, two boys.

Int: Boy, they have two boys.

[Inaudible off mic speaking between Interviewer and UFV2]

Int: Well tell me about the Ukrainian/Polish professionals that used to shop at your store?

KF: Oh we really had quite a time with those Ukrainians, I guess, I think most of those people were Ukrainians and some Polish, but the language is pretty much the same. When I first started working before and after school, I would have to go around to the houses and take orders in the morning, before I went to school, I'd make all these houses around here.

Int: How old were you?

KF: I'd be about fourteen I guess, around there. I'd go to these houses and quite often, most of the time they would gather at each house and change, every morning they'd have coffee at one house and the next day they'd be at somebody else's house. So there'd usually be four or five Polish and Ukrainian ladies all together. Well when I first went in to take orders, there was about five of them, they all started to tell me what they wanted at one time. Well, if you don't think I had a time...

Int: [Chuckles] And not in English I don't suppose?

KF: Some of it English and some of it in Ukrainian and boy I'll tell ya, it was really a mixed up affair. So the next time I went, I had to go every morning to take those orders, next time I went I had the order, the name wrote on the pad, on each pad, you know, before I got into the house, that way I could keep up with them pretty good. And it wasn't long after I, they would tell me in Ukrainian or Polish the name of the item, it wasn't long before I got onto quite a bit of it. Tell me what they wanted, and I would understand it in Ukrainian. It was really...

UFV2: He can say things now in Ukrainian.

KF: I remember some of it but not very much of it. I wish I'd have studied it, to be able to really talk it, you know, to learn it from some of those people. Yeah. They were really good people, they wanted to give you something for breakfast, have something with them. I didn't have that much time, I had to go to school at 8:30, I'd start out at 7 and I'd go up over the hill here and go over by the old fair grounds up onto 18th Street and around over onto Third Avenue and down the shoreline to the store, I'd have to make that in an hour and a half. It kept you moving. A lot of the people would write out their order and tack it on the door so all I'd have to do is just pull it off and take it to the store and somebody else would rewrite it, one of the girls would take care of it.

UFV2: _____ about driving the horses _____

KF: That's when I first started. We had to go to town every morning for a load of supplies. I lived right here in this house.

Int: Is this the house your parents lived in?

KF: This is the house my parents lived in. My dad would wake me up at 5:30 in the morning. I'd go to the barn and feed the horses and run back home here and have my own breakfast and then I'd go over there and harness them up and I'd be on my way about seven o'clock or before. Sometimes I'd have to break my own trail in a snowstorm that, you know, during the night there'd be a heavy snowstorm. No roads were plowed in those days, the roads were rolled occasionally by a big, a team of horses with a double roller on it, it made a, it would build the road up until it was high enough for the snow would blow it off, pretty much. There was times there'd be a big storm on, and the snow would be right up to the horse's bellies, here to the Soo.

Int: This little roller would be made of logs?

KF: Made of wood, yeah. A big wooden cylinder. Well that thing would be probably, I don't know how big it was, maybe eight feet high. They were big.

Int: And these were the, the horses that you'd take, they were your dad's horses?

KF: No, they belonged to the company.

Int: And where were they kept?

KF: They were kept at the, they had a big barn and a big ice house over there behind the store. I'd go down to the main store, leave the sleigh there, take the horses over to the fountain house barn. That would be behind, just about behind where Wards' were in that area. The barn boss would water the horses, and if I'd need a fresh team while they were there, you could have a fresh team everyday if you wanted them. We had good drivers all the time, I think the man's name was Byde, who was the barn boss there. By the time the sleigh was loaded, I'd take the team back and hook them up and head back to Algonquin. Usually have to go around by the depot and pick up freight. That was quite an experience. Two years and I had enough of the horses.

Int: You're out for your passion.

KF: When they asked me if I wanted to be inside clerk, and I sure jumped at the chance.

Int: When did you drive a race horse?

KF: I drove a racehorse before I, that was when I first started. I started hanging around the store and riding with the deliveryman. And he had a racehorse that he kept right there in the same barn. Oh, I'd take that horse out and exercise him on a rope where you'd go around the circle, you know. How I just loved to do that. Finally had to take him down to the blacksmith's shop, there wasn't a shop here, we had to take him to the blacksmith's shop downtown. It was called Bowen and Mole's

Int: Bone and?

KF: Bowen

Int: and Mole's, _____sure it's not B-O-N-E?

KF: Yeah, Bone. I'm not sure, it could have been B-O-N-E, a big, tall heavysset man.

Int: because I think, now they're not relatives, because my husband's grandparents came here from England, they came to Canada, see they were on the way to Australia, well they never got tired of Canada so they named Kenny's dad Melbourne, named the oldest after Melbourne, Australia.

KF: Isn't that something.

Int: But we get a call about every five years we get a call to see if we know where John Bone is and I _____now I don't know, maybe he was on the boat. I don't know, but there was a John Bone, B-O-N-E just like that name that lives around here someplace and every so often.

KF: That no doubt was the man.

Int: That was the same one?

KF: Yeah, he was the blacksmith and Moles...

Int: M-O-L-E-S?

KF: M-O-L-E-S was a woodworker. He would make tongues for sleighs and whitting trees and neck yokes and yeah, you name it, you know.

Int: Whiffing trees?

KF: Whitting trees is what they'd put the horses on to draw the sleigh

Int: W-H-I-T

KF: W-H-I-T, yeah whitting trees. He would make most anything like that out of wood, anything that you wanted.

Int: And so you took the racehorse down?

KF: I took the racehorse down to Mole's, well I didn't take him down, this fellow took him down and then, I'd, he stayed downtown and I drove the racehorse back, from downtown up to Algonquin. Boy I thought I was really doing something. I wanted all the kids in Algonquin to be out to see me, but I don't know if there was too many or not. I don't remember.

Int: Did you used to slick them all up with ribbons _____

KF: Oh yeah, big, the team that I drove I had them all decked out with ribbons and the tails all braided, really they were really fancy looking. Too bad we don't have some pictures of those old...

Int: Oh I wished you did. Don't have any, do you have any of the store?

KF: I have, I think there's a picture here of the old store

Int: Whatever became of this race horse then?

KF: Well, this fellow finally quit the delivery job and took the race horse, ____ I forget, I think he went from here to Milwaukee

Int: And you're still, by that time you had an ____ you still wished you had one of your own?

KF: That was when I was, I was quite young, I was probably around twelve or fourteen at that time.

Int: Mrs. Simar said you used to market the ladies that come in sometimes and trade their eggs for some of your groceries?

KF: Oh yes. We used to take, anything that the customer had, we'd take it. Regardless, if we couldn't use it, we'd sell it to another store. But we never turned anybody down, regardless of what they had. It was never that much, of course, because they just had small gardens. And we bought butter from people around here that, well, most everybody had a cow. There were plenty of people right on this street here. We never had one here, but my dad had chickens and I remember that. We'd buy their surplus potatoes and onions.

Int: Another thing I wanted to ask you about was...

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START OF TAPE SIDE B

KF: But I do remember a lot of the Obey's, but I never knew, that's the first time I've heard it was called Obeyville

Int: Because that didn't ring any bells with the Harwoods either now the other thing I heard was there was a part called Nieceville

KF: Nieceville, yes.

Int: That's where about Oak Street is now over there?

KF: Would be beyond the tannery, Oak, yeah, where it crosses. Where it crosses the railroad track now. The first crossing from there on was called Nieceville.

Int: And how did that named?

KF: Now that name came from a man by the name of Niece that had a sawmill up in that area. Just, would be just about north of the McKinley School, right in that area.

Int: Where the McKinley school is now?

KF: Yes where the new McKinley school is. Man by the name of Niece had a sawmill there. That was before my time, that was even before the turn of the century, I think. I think that's where it got its name is Nieceville.

Int: That's why the Harwoods don't know then, of course they came...

KF: That was later, right.

[Inaudible off mic back and forth]

Int: I'm glad I got that cleared up, I've been wondering about that. How old were you when you told your dad you weren't going to high school?

KF: I was sixteen.

Int: Wasn't anything he could do about it then, I guess?

KF: Nope. No, I have thought many times afterwards that, as I got older, think that maybe I did make a mistake, but as it turned out, why, it didn't turn out too bad.

Int: Well, you know my dad didn't want to go to college.

KF: Is that right?

Int: He wanted, he had his eye on that wye out toward the _____.

KF: Oh yes.

Int: He wanted to put a trailer park in there _____

KF: Is that right?

Int: But his father insisted he go down to the University of Michigan so, here he could have been a rich trailer park owner instead of a retired judge.

KF: I'll tell you, he would have done alright. It would have been a...

Int: Yeah. I'd bet he would have been a wealthier man than he is now.

KF: Oh, there's no question about it, yeah.

Int: Never, I mean because he could be anything, he retired from politics and opened a fancy law practice and charged what he was worth.

KF: Sure, right, oh right. Yeah.

Int: There's an old fellow down in Barbeau used to be a bodyguard for Theodore Roosevelt.

KF: Yeah, what is, I've...I know I've heard of that man. Yes, I've heard of him.

Int: Well he had had some law...

KF: Can't think of his name but I've heard of him.

Int: There's a couple of lawyers I guess that every so often he'd have something done and of course they just charged him, well he told me the story himself it's funny, you know, well and somebody told him about dad and he was a boat builder you know he used to build these wooden boats. So whatever it was dad's solved his problem and dad, said, "Well how much do I owe you?" and dad said, "Well, why don't you just build me a boat?" Well, that was, boy you know, he couldn't say enough good things about, well dad knew the old fellow didn't have much money, he had the use for a boat, just like you and your store?

KF: Right. Same thing, yeah. I remember when I rented that store it was thirty five dollars a month for that building. A great, big building

Int: That great big building, in what was then a booming area.

KF: I don't know if the upstairs, if I had the upstairs along with that or if they rented that. I think they rented the upstairs, there was a nice, big apartment upstairs, over the store. And right behind the store on South Street, between the store and the tannery was the big, what they called the Tannery Boarding House. That was a tremendous big boarding house. I believe they had as many as seventy five men living there at one time

Int: Now this was probably where Christie _____ visited, and Ed Bennecke said twelve men to a room or something at one time?

KF: Yes. That's right yeah. That would be it. Well then just north of the store, northwest was a Greek boarding house.

Int: Oh well that was ____ _____.

KF: That might have been where he was, because there was an awful lot of Greeks here at that time. That would be, that would be just northwest of where the store was, facing the south. Then right in front of where Venus's store is now was another boarding house but much smaller. I think they had probably eight or ten boarders. People by the name of Moore's I believe were the owners of that.

Int: I was just trying to think, now the story I heard about your store was that this gal Marcia, [Snaps fingers] she and her husband I guess had the store after you did? Is that?

KF: Oh yes, Marcia Barrett. Yes, they bought the store from me. No, I sold it to Bright first, they sold it , they sold it to Barrett that was it.

Int: Same people who have Bright's Superette?

KF: Bright's Superette, down, right. On the east end of town.

Int: And then the Barrett's after that?

KF: Then the Barrett's had it after that, yeah.

Int: And then when did it stop being a grocery store? Do you recall?

KF: Well let's see. I don't think Bright had it over two or three years, possibly six years probably after I've...

Int: Yeah after I came back in '72.

KF: '72.

Int: But I didn't get up to this end of town much, and then I moved over the river and then came back to this side of town. Just about the time it closed I suppose.

KF: I think it would be, would be just about that time, yeah.

Int: About six, seven years ago. '75, just want to make sure ____ _____.

KF: Yeah it's too bad you know, to look across there now and see that building now all boarded up and there was so much activity around here.

Int: Well there was really just a couple of years ago they had the pizza place, and the soft serve, and then of course _____...

KF: Oh yeah, hairdresser and a barbershop. And they've really done well here in that, seem to in that barber shop and that lady in that hairdressing shop. They were busy, I'd sit on the porch there and see them coming and going, you know, cars there all the time.

Int: Yeah I went down there to get my...

KF: Yeah, she was really busy there but.

Int: She wanted to go back home, she's _____

KF: She wanted to go back home and these fellows wanted to open up a barbershop downtown so.

Int: Oh are they the ones that opened that new one by ____ Street bridge?

KF: Yep. On the corner there at Bingham and Hursley.

Int: King's Corner or something like that?

KF: Right, yeah, that's it. They opened that, now why, I don't know.

Int: Oh I see. And I, do you know why Fred went out of the _____?

SKIP IN TAPE

Int: Whatever happened to him?

KF: Well, I am sure I don't know. He was, he lived here for quite a while. His name was Richard Atkinson. And he was a, he had the tripod and the old hood, you know, the old system of taking pictures? He'd go around and take pictures, all around everything that was going on around Algonquin, he'd take pictures of it. I'd often wondered whatever become of, well I know that he's passed away now.

Int: Did he live here all his life?

KF: Well no, he moved away from here, oh, he was gone from here thirty years ago. He built a house out on M-28, out near Strongs. Lived out in that area for quite a little while, and then of course we lost track of him.

Int: Well I could check and see if there are any Atkinsons, Atkinson, A-T-K-I?

KF: Yes that's right.

Int: If there are any Atkinsons in Strongs they might know him.

KF: No.

Int: No?

KF: There was nothing, he was never married, there is no...

Int: Oh, no? Yeah they have to have black and white prints ____ in the paper now so. There's a good one coming into the next week of the Jim and Billy Robertson in 1936.

KF: Oh? 1936!

Int: The pictures I saw, Billy didn't change at all from then before he died.

KF: No, he always looked the same. I remember hearing him speak at the Algonquin Methodist Church, he had that there Scotch brogue and that was really something. I can recall, he'd sure get the turnout when he was going to speak, I'll tell ya, they really turned out to hear Billy Robertson.

Int: [inaudible]

KF: He was a wonderful man, yep, sure was.

Int: Yeah, there's going to be two more in June, there's the next one is more about Billy Robinson here, and the last one was about the laundry mat was really off the subject of Algonquin and of course we couldn't help but get onto it..

KF: Oh, you couldn't help but get onto it, right.

Int: So then there's an old picture, got an old picture in the Laundry before that second part was built _____.

KF: Oh yes, before they put the addition on, right.

Int: Right.

KF: Right.

Int: It's gone now.

KF: Right, it's gone now, the whole...

Int: So it's sort of back where it was, it's kind of interesting.

KF: It's long gone.

Int: There's an old car in front, you know.

UFV2: _____

KF: Well it'd be nice to have that.

Int: Well I sure thank you for your time, and see that you get the photograph back.

UFV2: It's really interesting _____ times.

Int: Thank you

KF: Yeah, it's all coordinated nice. We're cutting out, cutting them out and saving them and putting them in our scrapbook.

Int: Oh! Well gee, that's nice. I made a scrap book for the Greeks of course I save the clippings too _____ myself but I made up a scrapbook for the Greeks for the church, and I _____ gave it to Mrs. _____. She had lent me all the things, all these church documents and made me copies of things she was just so _____. So I thought well there's probably _____. Do you know that Father Mantle, you mentioned him I think the one that's a Greek.

KF: The Greece?

Int: Greece but in Greek, you know?

KF: Right, yeah.

Int: And so they had come to our house for supper cause he, they were way up in Eagle River and so they came to our house for supper and _____. In the meantime I found the clippings for the ones I already had on Greeks and businessmen, _____ and Mrs. _____, _____ she's Italian and _____ she was quite interested. She said, you know she learned a lot of things that she hadn't known about these people who had been friends of theirs for many years.

KF: For many years, yeah.

Int: So I thought, well, you know _____ collection

KF: Oh, right. Yeah, a nice thing to have.

Int: It sure is. _____. There was one that wasn't in the paper that I actually liked better where he was just in a black cassock, she gave me that.

KF: Oh yeah, that's be nice.

Int: Well thank you _____ back in about three weeks, go home and start transcribing this. This takes more time actually than taking notes, this...

KF: It does take more time?

Int: Because it's, you know, when I worked in my dad's office we had these, oh I don't know what you'd call them, but they were for transcription where you operated with your foot. And you put in an earphone, one earphone.

KF: I see.

Int: And you just press and stop and press and stop. And so you don't have to take your hands off the typewriter. And when you lift and start again it gets you right to where you were before. But with a tape, what'll happen.

END OF INTERVIEW