

Kurt Prond

Mrs H: Good morning! This is Mrs. Maxine Honkala, today's date is September 16, 1996. We are here at National Mine school in room 217 in Mrs. Richards Classroom I am interviewing Mr. Ronald Kulie who is Superintendent of the Nice Community School District

Mrs. H. Mr. Kulie, when and where were you born?

Mr. K. I was born in July of 1945 in Marquette Michigan which makes me older than dirt. But I grew up in Marquette County. I was just born in Marquette I never ~~lived~~ ^{lived} there.

Mrs. H. How many brothers and sisters did you have? ^{sorry}

Mr. K I had three sisters and two brothers all younger than I and one of my brothers passed away at age 30. So I still have one brother and three sisters

Mrs. H. Did anyone else live with your family?

Mr. K. Yes, we had a grandmother who lived with us for a time when my grandfather passed away and we had an uncle who lived with us for a little while during some poor health times so we had anywhere from 9 to 10 people in house anytime it seemed

Mrs. H. Where did you live during your school years or when you were growing up?

Mr. K. I grew up in the village of Champion, I lived there my whole life other than a few months in Detroit when I was an infant and didn't know about it I'm told. But I grew up in Champion and went to school there and spent my whole life there as a child.

Mrs. H.

Mrs. H. Where did you first attend school, and how old were you when you began?

Mr. K. Well there was no kindergarten when I went to school in 1950, forty-six years ago, we just started school as first graders in the Champion School. You would be in a classroom with what would be first grade age children but some kids were kindergarten age. I was a very young first grader I remember other kids, my friends a year older than me in first grade. There was no kindergarten.

Mrs. H. Do you remember the name of your teacher?

Mr. K. Very well. Her name was Mrs. Berling, Adina Berling, she lived in Champion and walked up the street with eight other ladies every day with their little bags in their hands and she was from Marquette originally and she lived to be like eighty-eight years old I met her when she was eighty-seven years old and she remembered me.

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Mrs. H. What are your earliest memories of going to school?

Mr. K. I remember being a little afraid going to school as we walked down the street to school with some older kids and they told me all these horror stories about how it was going to be and I remember having fun we did a lot of drawing and writing and I remember that. One thing that sticks in my mind is that our teacher taught us everything,

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Mr. K. We had gym, art, music, everything with the same teacher we never left the room except for recess and to go to lunch.

Mrs. H. You mentioned walking to school. How far away was your home from the school?

Mr. K. We were just about a mile from school the only kids who were bussed to school were the ones who lived out of the village of Champion. If you lived in Humbolt or Spurr or Michigamme you got a bus ride. But if you lived in Champion no matter how far away, you walked so we walked about nine-tenths of a mile each way, every day.

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Mrs. H. Mr. Kulic could you please describe a typical day for you in elementary school?

Mr. K. Sure, we would start school about quarter-to-nine, and I remember singing the Star Spangled Banner or doing the Pledge of Allegiance or both depending on the teacher and every teacher I had played the piano. They would bang out the star spangled banner and we'd sing along in our off key voices and do the pledge that was first thing and then they took roll, but it was always reading, a lot of reading in the morning. I remember that we had reading groups and the rest of us would work at our seats...

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Quote

Mr. K. ... just like some of you may have done in elementary and we then had different classes: Social studies, we had music twice a week, the teacher would lead us in songs with the little songbooks, we had art every Friday in the afternoon, it was pretty much drawing what you wanted to draw it wasn't projects like you have had in art through the grades. If it was fall, trace some leaves, color the leaves, cut 'em out put them up, that kind of thing. I remember it as not being boring. It was a lot of work but it was fun.

good detail

Mrs. H. You remember that very well. You must have pleasant memories.

Mr. K. I do, yes.

Mrs. H. How many students would you say were in a typical classroom?

Mr. K. Our class as we went through the years averaged about twenty-two or twenty-three right through the grades until we hit ninth grade then sixteen kids from the year ahead of us flunked and our class doubled and then the next year they all quit school and our class went back to its original size. A tremendous group of kids failed as freshman ahead of us so our freshman class virtually doubled then in our sophomore year it went back to the old group of eighteen kids or so.

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Mrs. H. Would you say that the students who failed then became school dropouts or did they go back as retainments

Mr. K. They became school dropouts but I know almost every one of those people personally and they went out and got a job because you could do that then. You didn't necessarily get hurt too badly because you didn't have a high school diploma. Some got jobs driving trucks and made a good living some went to the mines, but that ~~was~~ isn't possible anymore they were fortunate.

Mrs. H. Speaking of your elementary school days, do you remember during those years having any typical childhood diseases? If so, what were they?

Mr. K. Before I go into diseases I broke four different bones: ankle, leg, wrist, arm, falling out of apple trees and stuff like that. But I had measles, mumps, chicken pox, and pneumonia as a kid and three of those diseases I had in the course of two years I missed nine weeks of school in the fourth grade and I still passed because I was virtually a straight A student and the teacher would send the work home and then she'd come and visit me every night and see how I was doing and I was in this big tent in my bed with pneumonia with this medicine blowing on me from old Dr. Van Riper

Mr. K But I passed the fourth grade I remember a big meeting and I was worried I wouldn't get to go on with my friends but I made it. But I had them all, anything you can imagine.

Mrs. H. Speaking of the doctor could you explain to our students who Dr. Van Riper is and what the significance of that name would be.

Mr. K Dr. Van Riper, you've probably heard of Van Riper state park which was named after him. He was Champion He came there as a mining company doctor around the turn of the century around 1900 and he was still a doctor in Champion when he died in 1972 at age ninety-three he was still treating people at his house he would give you the red syrup for a cough and sulfa tablets for any infection and he had a hospital in Champion right across the street from his house; it was a big old building probably about twenty rooms but he was a very interesting man. I knew him very well I used to sit on his front porch and he'd smoke his pipe every night and take his walk and tell us stories like you wouldn't believe I wish you could've met the man he was one of the most interesting human beings I've ever met.

Mrs. H. So obviously you received excellent care from Dr. Van Riper.

Mr. K. Dr. Van Riper probably attended more births in that area he did Champion, Michigamme, and Republic most people who are a little older than I, Dr. Van Riper was at their birth and many of them he was at their death and took care of them all the way in between all the vaccines and all the broken bones and amputations of fingers from accidents stuff like that. he did every thing right out of his house.

Mrs. H. Speaking of vaccinations brings to mind the subject of Polio. Do you have any recollections of that disease?

Mr. K. I remember deeply fearing it because I had a friend who ended up with polio after we came home from swimming one day in August and he got a fever and became very ill and I remember my brother telling me that Bobby might not live and I couldn't believe it I had just been swimming with him the next day they were telling me he might not live, He ended up in a big machine called an iron lung that breathed for him at Bell Memorial Hospital when he finally came back to school three years later, his right leg was shriveled up permanently and he couldn't hardly walk he walked with a serious limp and he could never play games with us any more he couldn't breathe right he died at about thirty-eight years of age and I'm sure it was from the terrible toll that polio took on him and I remember the polio vaccines when Dr. Jonas (Salk?) invented ~~it~~ it I think it was 1955

important

Mr. K. ... we were all put on the bus brought to the Ishpeming High School Gymnasium. There had to be hundreds of us lined up there, kids crying you were just marched through a line a lady rubbed your arm with the alcohol they jabbed you and it hurt but I wouldn't cry, I was in the fifth grade and it wouldn't be cool to cry if you were a fifth grade boy kids were fainting I remember that it was just incredible, you were just herded through like cattle. I think they vaccinated every kid in the county in that short period of time and none of us got polio after that, not one child. It was a miracle.

Mrs. H. It was really a miracle vaccine I'm sure.

Mr. K. Oh, it saved so many children's lives.

Mrs. H. What about, speaking of vaccines, do you remember anything about tuberculosis being prevalent during your school years?

Mr. K. It wasn't as common by the time I was in the grades, I had an uncle, my grandfather's brother who had TB and survived it he was very sickly and very frail after that and I had friends whose parents had had TB and were either left pretty much housebound the rest of their lives or they died very young because once you had it you just never had good health again you were always very susceptible to any bronchial infections pneumonia, things like that

Mr. K. ... but I remember it well but not as kids I don't remember any children having it

Mrs. H. Do you remember as a student receiving any other type of medication or pills for preventative reasons while you were a student?

Mr. K. I remember Miss Murray the county nurse she used to come around and she would scratch, she would put a tape thing on your neck or some other thing below your neck and it was a T.B. test and then she'd come around a few weeks later, she was a really nice lady a gray haired lady and she'd say, "This won't hurt," and she'd rip it off your neck and you wanted to just kill her. I mean just (umph) it felt like your skin was gone and she'd always say, this won't hurt sweetheart and oh, it just took everything with it. But I remember her that was a TB test every year.

Mrs. H. Do you remember, speaking of Elementary school years, any type of thing, collections, for instance, savings bonds.

Mr. K. I remember that, I remember the Korean War really well. We had a drive, a savings bond drive in our school and in the town. This was in 1953

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I was old enough I was about eight years old I remember that well but I remember a savings bond campaign, yes.

Mrs. H. Do you remember bringing money to schools where you might purchase stamps and eventually buy a bond. Was this offered at Champion School?

Mr. K. Yes it was. I remember that through about the sixth or seventh grade. Into the late fifties.

Mrs. H. Continuing on our thoughts of elementary school, how was discipline handled in your elementary school?

Mr. K. Discipline was very strict the classroom teacher was allowed to clack you with a ruler or some teachers had little paddles but I never saw one used until I got up into high school. I remember teachers pulling the hair on the back of your neck we had a teacher who could make you if you were five foot seven be six foot eight. by just pulling the hair on your neck. You stood as high as you could on your tiptoes and she still, she was so small but she still could get you to stand higher. We had one that we called the ear twister. She would just take your ear and twist it till it felt like it was coming off. But you had to be really bad for that to happen it wasn't just because you were giggling or something like that. But discipline was strict.

include & quote parts

Mrs. H. Did you ever remember getting into trouble and if so did you ever have to go to the office?

Mr. K. Oh, I visited the office occasionally, for snowball throwing. One of my friends put a piece of coal, the school was heated with coal, put a piece of coal inside of a snowball and nailed somebody else with it and it really hurt and I was implicated as the master mind of that project but to this day I maintained my innocence. Pulling girls hair, I remember getting sent to the office for that. Rough games of tag we used to play football in the schoolyard stuff like that. Yeah, I made a few visits there and I always came back very, very humble like a puppy that just got sent back to the pen. You never came out of the office with a smile, never.

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Mrs. H. Who was your principal during those years?

Mr. K. A gentleman that I later taught with and who's son was my best friend and we went to each others wedding as best man. Bill Koski Sr. was our principal. He was a gruff, tough but fair person. As I got older and taught with him, his last couple years and my first couple years of teaching, I got to know and understand what he was all about. He was really a fine person but he had this front that he had to put on that he was a tough person and you knew it.

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Mrs. H. Could you describe for us the kinds of things you did during recess time at school?

Mr. K. In the following spring we would play baseball a lot and we'd play games, red rover, red rover let somebody come over and that kind of thing, a lot of tag.

Mr. K. ... a little bit of football as we got older.
I remember girls and boys playing together a lot in elementary. We played things that the whole class would play or several classes would play. But the old games we made our own fun there was no playground equipment. We didn't even have bases, we had little pieces of wood for bases. But we had fun.

Mrs. H. How long was your lunch break during those years, do you remember?

Mr. K. Yes, it was one hour. We had a noon hour of one full hour. You could get in lots of trouble. You could sneak across the swamp and pick cattails and break them all over the schoolyard but you weren't allowed to leave the schoolyard, technically you had to kind of sneak out way out. But it was a full hour so you'd eat your lunch as fast as you could so you could play for fifty minutes.

Mrs. H. What was your favorite subject in elementary school?

Mr. K. Everybody but (Hero?) wrinkled their nose. It was Geography. I am an expert on geography because I was so interested in it. I liked to know where things were where places were, I just liked it and one of my boys took that same interest in Social Studies. I liked History too. I was good in math, I was an excellent speller...

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Mr. K. ... I was the Marquette County spelling champion when I was in the fifth grade I won at the North Lake School but I liked geography I loved it, I still do today.

Mrs. H. What grade did you enjoy the most?

Mr. K. Fifth grade, without a doubt, it was the ^{quod} greatest teacher I have ever had in my life and I still tell her that today. I wrote her a letter last year. She lives in County Road 581.

Mrs. H. That was going to be my next question. Did you have a favorite teacher and who was your teacher?

Mr. K. Her name was Ms. Honkala she is now Mrs. ^{Kempus} Copas Martha ^{Kempus} Copas and she had kids go through National Mine. She was the most outstanding teacher you'll ever see. She cared about every kid. She was interesting. She was just a warm, loving, caring professional.

Mrs. H. Obviously learning was fun when you were in her class. What do you remember as having to be the most fun activity that you participated in?

Mr. K. Jeez, just being with her was fun but one thing that really sticks in my mind. every day after lunch we would come in just wound up I mean, steaming red, sweating and she would read to us from a classic like Lassie come Home or Robinson & Crusoe...

Mr. K. and once she took that book out you just
shut up. You just sat there and you were spell-
bound and then she would finish after about ten
minutes she had you settled down and we'd beg
her for one more page, well alright. So she'd read
another page, and we'd beg her for one more page
That's when we were exposed to books that I
would never have read or known about like The
Yearling. I can remember us crying when the
sawm died in The Yearling and where the Red Fern
Grows all those books. She exposed us to those books
and in those days, she had us. We were just a
captive audience. That was the fun thing and then
she knew I liked geography so she just went out
of her way to make it really great for us. And I ~~remember~~
remember seeing a movie in fifth grade. First
one ever in school 1955. We had a movie projector
that she borrowed from Marquette and it clacked
and clattered and the film kept jumping out of
place and it would break but it was thrilling. We
watched a movie about Ecuador and
Guatemala and wow! You know. It was great.

quote part

Mrs. H. You still remember.

Mr. K. Oh, like it was yesterday. I just remember
it so clearly.

Mrs. H. You mentioned having had the opportunity
to speak to your favorite teacher and to
share your feelings with her. Have you had any
feed back from her since she recieved that note?

Mr. K. No. I think she's still sentimental about those days. I don't think she wants to talk about it. I've written her a very sincere letter when I came back to the NICE District in 1995. She had called me or she had sent me a very nice note saying she was glad to see me come home and so forth. So I wrote her a letter telling her what a difference she made in my life and she was the reason I became a teacher. I just wanted to do the same things for kids that she did for me.

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Mr. H. That's really special. Could you tell us what kinds of activities you did after school or on summer vacation?

Mr. K. Well, when we were younger we used to make camps and break them and wreck each others forts and stuff like that. We did our share of BB gun hunting and exploring and playing cowboys and indians on the bluffs behind Champion. In Champion when you grew up, every kid walked to the beach every day which is about a mile and a half down the trail behind Champion so you swam a lot if it was warm just went out there. It was automatic you spent the day there if it was a nice summer day. A lot of swimming. Baseball games that you would not believe today. Many of you are involved in organized baseball. We used to have games in Champion with six kids, three on a side playing baseball. A pitcher, an infielder and an outfielder...

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Mr. K. ... and you couldn't hit it to right field because there was nobody over there. You were automatically out if you couldn't hit it where the fielders were. Played a lot of sports, pickup games, rode our bikes. Every body had a bike. I would say, I had a little speedometer, one summer I put like three hundred sixty miles on my bike and never left the town. That's a lot of miles and we just rode our bikes a lot.

Mrs. H. Speaking of summer, I'm sure, during the hot, warm days you probably consumed some pop. Could you tell us what the price of pop was when you were a kid and maybe a candy bar or gum.

Mr. K Pop was ten cents a bottle and you got two cents back when you brought the bottle back so it really was eight cents and that was a full bottle of pop and candy bars were a nickel and there was penny candy I remember baseball cards, you used to get a nice pack of baseball cards with a piece of gum in it for a nickel. About ten baseball cards for a nickel. That's what I forgot to tell you. We used to trade baseball cards a lot too. Don't ask me how you could spend a whole afternoon trading baseball cards but we did it. But, yeah, pop and candy were, well I thought it was alot because I would get a nickel from my mother and I would go and get a candy bar. If I got a dime we got a pop.

Mrs. H. Speaking of food, what kind of food did your school serve for lunch when you were a student?

Mr. K. We had hot dogs, hamburgers, a lot more home cooked meals like mashed potatoes and gravy, and sliced roast beef. Around Christmas time they would be real turkey coming out of this big roaster, and the cook would cut it off the turkey just like you do at home. I remember sliced ham off of a big ham they would cut it right in front of you as you came through the lunch line. We always had bread and butter on the table in big bowls they were cut in half for you. Bread and butter sandwiches to go with your meal. But it was more home cooked meals than you see today. We never had tacos or things like that. Never heard of tacos.

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Mrs. H. Did students in your school get to go on field trips and if so, where would they be?

Mr. K. Rarely, the school buses were owned by private people, not by the school. Our bus driver owned his own bus at the time when I was a little boy. That changed when I was in high school. But in the fifties the bus drivers owned their own buses so we didn't go very far. I remember going to the Humboldt Mine when it was brand new for a field trip. That was in about 1955 or so. I remember going to the county airport when it was at K.I. Sawyer Air Base. That was the County Airport before it was... and now it's going back to where it was. I remember going there and I remember going to Bancroft Dairy...

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Mr. K. in and you probably don't know where that is was right by K-mart, It was, what's there now? Is there a house or business there? Anyway Barcroft dairy was just to the west of Taco Bell. By Super One Foods and we toured that and I remember the smell of warm, spoiled milk, I don't think I could drink milk for a week after that. But not many visits, over the years.

Mrs. H. How old were you when your family got their first television set and what do you remember being your favorite programs?

Mr. K. I was ten years old, 1955, it was a Lesting House and we were about the fifth family in town to get a TV set. And we watched the test pattern on channel 6 for six hours a day because it was so clear and then channel 6 would come on at about two in the afternoon till about midnight and show movies but I remember watching the Big Top circus from Green Bay on channel two. It was so slow you could ~~just~~ barely see it but every Saturday morning it was the Big Top Circus, Captain Video. I remember that as a kid.

You would put this plastic thing on your screen and you would trace the clues. We had to wait a whole week for the next clue and draw in the next line and you could guess what it was. But there wasn't much TV. We had two channels, channel 2 and channel 6 and channel 2 was out of Green Bay and it was very slow.

Mrs. H. Where did your family do their shopping?

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Mr. K. Mostly in Ishpeming on payday, every other Thursday, my mother would pick up my dad's check at the Blueberry mine by Diorite and we would go into town and that was our one treat we were allowed to go to the American Cafe and have any sandwich as long as it was under twenty-five cents. And we had to split a pop, my brother and I. A really big trip was to Marquette about once every other month we'd get to take a ride to Marquette and I can remember seeing the Montgomery Ward store thinking wow! Can there be a store bigger than this in the whole world? But mostly Ishpeming every other week we'd get in to Ishpeming, once a week.

quote parts

Mrs. H. Speaking about traveling with your family on a long trip, do you ever remember taking a family vacation and if so, where?

Mr. K. Once. Once in my whole life we went to the dedication of the Mackinac Bridge in 1957.

I remember each county had a county queer riding in a convertible out to the center of the bridge and governor Williams gave a speech. And we were camping at the campground at Mackinac Straits and it was because we had so many kids in our family. My dad worked during his vacation to make double pay at the mine His two weeks a year instead of taking it off, he would work and get his vacation pay and his regular pay. So we took one trip in my... 19

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Mr. K. ... whole life as a family to the Straits of Mackinac.

Mrs. H. You mentioned, previously, stopping at the American Cafe. Do you remember as a family ever going out for dinner?

Mr. K. Never. We never went to a restaurant as a family. We couldn't afford it. I remember going to the first restaurant to have a steak. I was sixteen years old at the midway supper club because our basketball ~~the~~ team had won and we were down in the state semifinals. As a treat they stopped at the Midway and bought us a steak on the way home. I didn't even know what ~~it was~~ it was. I asked the coach, "what is a fillet?" And he explained what a fillet mignon was. So I had it and I said I'm going to eat steak every day the rest of my life when I get big. It was so great.

Mrs. H. Mr. Kulie what special holidays or events did your family celebrate

Mr. K. Christmas was the big one. We really went out for Christmas. We did the best we could and it was a big thing I remember I was the oldest of 36 grandchildren and they were all there for Christmas. We would open presents and it would be waist deep in wrapping paper because there would be over forty-five people in my grandmother's house.

Mr. K. ... We had a big thing Christmas Eve where we went to church and then we came back and ate till dawn probably and then slept a couple hours and met at the other grandma's house for the rest of the day. Birthdays were big. We always made, whoever's birthday it was a really big deal like a family potluck thing with a gift. Fourth of July we always had a major family picnic at Lake Michigamme. We did a lot of picnics because we could afford that. Almost every Sunday we took a little ride locally to a beach and had a picnic.

Mrs. H. As a child do you remember having any special toys or treasures?

Mr. K. I remember my first Al Kaline baseball glove
Note (I thought I was definitely going to be a Major League Baseball player when I got that glove cause I couldn't miss a ball with that glove. I remember a steel tractor a little pedal farm tractor I got when I was about six years old. That thing lasted through several generations. It was a Huffy farm tractor it looked like a real tractor. And I remember my first bike I mean who can't remember their first bike, We bought it in Negaunee for eighteen dollars and it was the brightest red thing with a headlight on it and I was the talk of the town for a whole week till my buddy got one. page 21

1 mpt

Mr. K. ... then it was his bike.

Mrs. H. Moving on to your later years in school, could you explain to us how the school was arranged following elementary.

Mr. K. Sure. The seventh and eighth graders just like at National Mine at one time was like a miniature high school. The bell rang you left your class moved on to the next class amongst high schoolers. You were the seventh through twelfth grades were all on the same floor at Champion up on the third floor and you went to geography then you went to math then to English kinda like today but it was high school teachers teaching us. It wasn't middle school teachers. Same person who taught say twelfth grade history taught seventh grade history and the same person who taught you math in seventh grade also took care of the eleventh graders. I remember going to shop it was the same shop the high schoolers had so you were kind of intimidated you were amongst older kids and they were a little rough on you. A little mean you know.

include & grade

Mrs. H. Did you participate in any extra curriculars in the middle school or junior high level as well as high school and if so could you tell us about them?

Mr. K. Sure. I could start by saying I was an athlete but I'll save that for later because I'm most proud of the fact that despite the fact that I was a very active and visible athlete, I was the lead in the junior and senior plays and I was very hard learning all those parts. I was in forensics it was just starting out then. Forensics was just getting going ...

impt & pride

Mr. K. ... in the early 60's around here. I did that
I was president of the student council and class
president two out of four years and I was in every
athletic event Champion high school ever had.
I was in track and basketball and baseball
we had a high school baseball team. We used
to play Negaunee and National Mine and Ishpeming
but we were very good in basketball. We were number
one in the state two years in a row and I was a
starter on those teams. Class B very small school. We
beat Marquette high school when I was a senior. They
were class A with 1200 kids. We had eighty-six
kids in high school and we beat them in basketball.

Mrs. H. What was probably your greatest moment in basket-
ball that you remember?

Mr. K. One would be winning the Holiday tournament at
Northern Michigan University. Champion was the
smallest school. Ishpeming, Negaunee, Marquette were
all there and we won that tournament. I would say
just being on a championship team. I was named
all U.P. in basketball which is a very great honor
for me I was very proud of that. But I should
tell you in this gym when I was a senior my last
day as a senior before the tournaments, my friend
my good friend Bill Koski was struggling to win
the U.P. scoring title. And he needed 50 points that
night to win it. So we were way ahead of National
Mine by thirty or forty or something, really killing them
and the coach put me back in and said get the ball
to Bill he said he needs, he's got 46 points he needs four
more points to win the U.P. scoring ~~title~~ title. I get
the rebound get the ball out to Bill he'd slap it right
back into me and I'd put it in and he said get the
ball to bill

emphasize well - rounded

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Mr. K. ... Well that night Bill got his 50 points and I had 26 and I didn't even get my name in the paper because he had 50 points. I mean that's what a big deal that was. That's a big memory that I remember well. Right here in this building.

Mrs. H. who were your greatest rivals in basketball at that time?

Mr. K. Negaunee St. Paul, Mr. Jacobetti. I used to guard him. He was a year or so younger than me but they were tough. Republic was very good too. In fact that year I'm talking about we were number one in the state, Negaunee St. Paul was number five and Republic was number seven. Three little schools in the county were in the top ten in the state. But they were the top ~~ones~~ ones.

Mrs. H. Speaking of extra curriculums in school, did you play an instrument and were you by any chance part of the band?

Mr. K. I was the meanest drummer you ever saw in the Champion high school band. I started out playing trombone for a couple of years but I started developing really serious headaches and after going to several doctors, one doctor said do you play a wind instrument in the band? I said yes I play the trombone. He said why don't you not play it for a week. The headaches went away and it was just fun. Puffing up and blowing so hard and trying to be the best trombone player I could be. So I switched to drums and finished my band career there. I could see my wife better playing the clarinet winking at me over there. She was in the same class as me.

include and quote

Mrs. H. What rock group was popular when you were in high school?

Mr. K. I wonder if they would ever know. The Beatles were really big when I was in high school. The Dave Clubs, the Beach Boys were just getting going when I was in high school. Hard to believe but they were there.

Mrs. H. What is probably your fondest memory of high school or probably the thing that stands out in your mind?

Mr. K. Wow. I had so many good memories in high school, I remember the dances were fun. I remember dating was really neat being able to drive a car and just being so involved in everything. My father said and I quote if he were alive today he would admit this he said, "Ron, if Champion had a burping team I think you'd go out for it," whatever they had I just went out for it, I just thought well there's something to do. I never could do enough, so I was busy, I loved it.

Mrs. H. You were an involved student. Is there anything as you look back over those years that you would change now if you had a chance to do it?

Mr. K. Broke X Yes. I would have studied harder. I was so busy having fun. I had good grades but not as good you know if I could get a B without working hard, I took it. And there were these other kids just banging their brains out for A's and I thought why do that? But as I got into college I started to realize the importance. Not that I wasn't well prepared but I could've been better prepared. I didn't have good study habits and boy I got a rude ~~awakening~~ awakening my freshman year in college. page 25

Mr. K. ... But I would've studied harder.

Mrs. H. You mentioned already about Mrs. Honkala now Mrs. Copas being probably your most influential educator would you also say that she was the deciding factor in you thinking about becoming a teacher?

Mr. K. Probably. I had a few people who made a big difference in my life in high school, a gentleman named Stanley Lund who is now deceased, he was a Social Studies teacher who really got me geared up into history and Social Studies. And John Eskela who is still living, he lives in Ishpeming was a great math teacher with a sense of humor and I really came to appreciate what a sense of humor can do for a teacher. How you can appreciate a funny moment even though it's nothing to do with what's happening in your class. But definitely Ms. Honkala, Mrs. Copas as I got older and headed for college wondering what am I going to do. I thought, boy there's a way you can make a difference for kids. So I decided to be a teacher.

Mrs. H. where did you go to college?

Mr. K. I went to Northern Michigan University, I should say I started at Lake Superior State University in the Soo. I had a basketball scholarship and I played for one year. We played schools like Ferris State and Central Michigan and I enjoyed it but at the end of my freshman year the basketball scholarships were cut from eight to six and I was one of the guys. My coach told me I could come back but there would be no scholarship for me. So I couldn't afford to stay there. So I finished my years at Northern and I got three degrees from Northern. Bachelors, Science, and education and then I got two Masters degrees after that. So I got about 18 college credits beyond my bachelors degree.

Mrs. H. Where was your first teaching position and what subjects did you teach?

Mr. K. That's a little ironic too. When I was graduating in January of 68 I went an extra semester because I was a speech therapist and decided to go into elementary education so it took me an extra semester. I signed a contract with Racine Wisconsin. At that time you could pick any of five jobs. They were just recruiting you and then Green Bay came on campus and a gentleman named Mr. Olds from Ishpeming was there Superintendent and I went for an interview just for the heck of it even though a friend of mine from National Mine, Kenny Keskel and I were going to go to Racine. Mr. Olds convinced me that if I would sign and go to Green Bay to teach, he could tell the Superintendent from Racine, who was a friend, he would rip up the contract. So I did. Signed with Green Bay. And I was married. We had been married about six months and my wife thought that was neat to go to Green Bay and we were packed up and ready to go and Mr. Uito who was the Superintendent of Champion called me and said Ron, your old fourth grade teacher just told me she's leaving, could you come to work next Monday. Wa. I didn't know what to do so I called Green Bay and they said they understood so I'm ~~at~~ here teaching at my old school fourth grade at Champion

Mrs. H. How long did you hold that position?

Mr. K. I taught the fourth grade for four years and then Westwood was being built. The nice community schools was formed so I was transferred to the Ely school for 2 years because Champion became a bigger high school while Westwood was being built then I went back to Champion as a middle school teacher from 1974 to 1980 and then I became the principal in 1980

Mrs. H. Could you describe for us what was probably one of the most humorous things that happened to you when you were a teacher?

Mr. K. Oh I have great memories of things that happened. But I can tell you one thing. The first day I taught in the fourth grade. All official business with my surt on - I was gonna be the best teacher in the whole world. I stepped outside to fill out an attendance thing and Mr. Johnson, Roy Johnson who had just retired from Westwood high school was my next door neighbor in the fifth grade took my whole class across the hall while I was down the hall and stuffed them in a closet. I came back - 19 kids are missing. I looked around and thought what in the world has happened. I went out and I said has anyone seen my class. And the principle said what you don't know where your class is. They were giggling in this closet. It was a big closet about 12 feet by 12 feet. And the next day he came in when I was teaching spelling he jumped up on a desk and ran up and down each aisle on every desk and ran out. I thought this man is crazy. But he was just trying to get me going you know rattle my cage. But I have a lot of good memories of kids I could tell you stories till dawn

include x grade

Mrs. H. what would you say are the most important jobs a principal does?

Mr. K. A principal's job is very difficult your caught in between. Your not only trying to be a supervisor of the employees but your trying to get kids to follow the rules and know how important it is to be a good citizen, be a good person. It's a busy job. It's not fun. It's very difficult because you have to maintain rules and order and yet be a leader for the kids and teachers and it's hard wearing all those hats.

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~~Mrs. H.~~

Mrs. H. Speaking of Students and your role as a principal, how would say students differ today from when you started teaching?

Mr. K. Except these students? Kids are tougher today life is tougher. The thing that bothers me most is that the rules have changed in the way you can discipline a child. I never had to wack a kid but there were certain eighth grade boys I could pick up by the shirt and put against the wall and say hey, you not going to do that any more. Well you can't do that any more and it's the disrespect that really bothers me. I see students who disrespect teachers and principals and bus drivers and don't even care about it. It really bothers me. That's the biggest change I've seen in kids. Kids are just as smart or smarter than before. But it's that one thing that really bothers me.

Mrs. H. How long were you a principal Mr. Kulie?

Mr. K. From 1980 to 1995, 15 years

Mrs. H. And at that time, how did your position change?

Mr. K. I was a principal in Kingsford with 1275 kids in my building. Think of that. The opening occurred at N.I.C.E. when Mr. Hyry retired. And I applied so I came back here in May of 1995 as Superintendent. I had been here 22 years prior to that

Mrs. H. We have a number of other questions that we would like to ask you concerning the Champion school specifically and I know that there are probably some things that you could answer but we have certainly run out of time for today's interview but one of the things I would like to ask you in closing is that maybe you could tell us... page?

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Mrs. H. ... just a little bit, How many children do you have and where are they today?

Mr. K. I have two boys, Jeff and Mark who both went through the National Mine School and graduated at Westwood in fact, Mrs. Ameen knows them and Mrs. Richards had them. Jeff is a Pillsbury Corporation Representative in Florida. He lives in Fort Myers, Florida. Mark is a happily married graduate student who just got his masters degree from North Carolina State University and now is living near Washington D.C. His wife is going to medical school and I don't know what Mark is doing. He's taking care of his dog. He's looking for a job and just got out of school.

Mrs. H. Mr. Kulie if you could in closing give a word of advice for the students here today observing this interview what would that be

Mr. K. Well it would be simple. Be the best person you can be. Don't perform for your friends. Show some courage and hard work but always respect other people. Treat someone nicely and ~~ninety~~ ninety percent of them will treat you nice too. It's the best thing I could ever tell you.

Mrs. H. Mr. Kulie, thank you very much. This concludes our interview for today it has covered from the birth of Mr. Kulie to ~~the present day~~ his present position as superintendant of the N.I.C.E community school district as he has shared his reflections with students of the eighth grade classes of the red dust class. Thank you very much.

Check with Mrs. Honkala regarding question about Champion such as
- what made Champion special?
- Feelings about its closing

ok

Kurt Prond

Me: This is Kurt Prond from National Mine School here to get additional information on the topics from the interview with Mr. Kulie and Mrs. Honkala.

Could you tell me about your basketball years at Champion?

Mr. k. Sure, I played basketball at Champion High School in the sixties, actually I was on the varsity for three years from 1959-60 thru 62-63 and we had some really good teams. We were number one in the state two years in a row which I'm very proud of and I was an all U.P. all conference team member and one of my teammates, Bill Koski, who lives in ~~the state~~ Humboldt today was an all state first team player on our team. So we were good we were undefeated two years in a row. Forty-four and zero.

Me: Who was your coach?

Mr. k. Our coach was a gentleman named Fred Body who later taught in Gladstone and is retired now.

Me: Who were your teammates?

Mr. K. Well, Bill Koski of course was one of the best players in the U.P. and the state, another good friend, Tim Mitchell who still lives in Humboldt and Kenny Beon? who ~~was~~ lives in Champion, Sam Watters who was the other big guy besides me on the team he lives over in Ishpeming Township, Leonard Bawlio?, good player he died of cancer a couple years ago. Those are some of the more memorable teammates.

Me: Did you have any good plays?

Mr. K. We had lots of good plays. Our coach at the time was a real young exciting coach right out of college and we had a lot of clever plays that he dreamed up himself.

Me. What position did you play?

Mr. K. As a junior and sophomore I was a forward, and as a senior I was a center because the other bigger guys had all graduated.

Me. Could you tell me about the games leading up to the state championship?

Mr. K. Well, we didn't win the State Championship we were undefeated during the season but we got beat during the tournaments. As a junior we got beat in the state quarter-finals by a team called Brimley... page 2

Mr. K. ... over on the east end of the U.P. We had beaten them twice during the year. As my senior year, we went into the tournaments 20 and 0 and lost to Negaunee St. Paul. Mr. Jacobetti was on that team he beat us at the buzzer in double overtime at ~~the~~ Northern's Field House and we had beaten twice during the year so both teams that defeated us were beaten twice during the year and both of those teams went right to the state finals. So we could've gone but we didn't get to the finals.

Me. Other than the basketball games what are your fondest memories of the trip?

Mr. K. My fondest memories are just being with my friends, I can remember back in the sixties when we went down state I saw my first fast food restaurants, there were none in the U.P. we stop at things like Burger Kings and Big Boys and I thought it was just great. I remember I saw my first K-mart back in 1963 there were none in the U.P. Things like that just weren't up here at the time. My first experience with interstate highways was that trip. And the thing I remember most about it was, we left here and there was two, three feet of snow on the ground. We got to Lansing; bare ground, fifty degrees, it was springtime.

Me. Could you tell me about the Holiday Tournament at Northern? page 3

Mr. K. That was an interesting tournament. We were there as a class ^{D₁ school} we had eighty-six in our whole high school which is less than you have in the eighth grade. Our whole high school. We beat two class "B" schools, Gwinn and Marquette ^{Bishop}-Baraga which was a catholic high school. In the finals we beat Marquette High School which was class "A" 1200 kids a big team and we beat them. Little Champion beat Marquette.

Me. What did you gain from being on a basketball team?

Mr. K. Well, I learned a lot about self-discipline, about what it takes to succeed, about hard work paying off and I learned a lot about friendship. These guys I mentioned before are still my friends today, thirty-seven years later.

Me. What Middle school or high school teachers or experiences do you remember most?

Mr. K. Middle School I remember some great teachers that I had that I really respected. I had a math teacher named Mr. ^{Escola} Escola who still lives in Ishpeming today he's been retired for some years. Just a great, great person. I had a principal named Mr. Koski. Bill Koski's dad who was tough but fair. I liked him and respected him because he was fair

Mr. K... ~~the~~ You knew what he expected you to do.

I had a ~~history~~ history teacher named Mr. Lund, Stanley Lund who is now deceased but he was a great influence in my life.

Me. You talked about your first day of teaching in the other interview. Could you tell me more about that?

Mr. K. Sure. I can tell you the date. It was January twenty-sixth 1968. I walked into the fourth grade classroom at the Champion School. I knew what I wanted to do but the kids were so excited when I walked in there we spent the first hour just talking about ourselves. In fact I just talked to one of my first students, Matt Davidson who lives in Humboldt and I just talked to him at the basketball game last night. I reminded him that it was twenty-nine years ago that we met. It was a great day it was exciting and I thought this is great it was fun.

Me, what years were you principal at Champion?

Mr. K. I was principal at Champion from 1981 to 1990. Then I moved ~~to~~ Kingsford in 1990, stayed there for five years, came back here in 1995.

Me. What improvements were made to the building while you were principal?

Mr. K. We did a lot of remodeling. In classrooms we added some spaces. We changed ceilings stuff like that we added a portable classroom that became the bundroom it used to be a kindergarten

Mr. K... We redid the library added a lot of books. Got a lot of equipment over the years when I was there. VCR's TV's Computers. We put in a computer Lab, first one they ever had there, Mr. Bucan was the teacher. That was really a neat deal.

Me. Were there any changes in curriculum?

Mr. K. yes. We, like I mentioned the computer program was put into effect for the first time. We also changed some courses a little bit in science and social studies. We changed the way that they were taught. Went on steady with our math curriculum. Found out that it was very accurate so we didn't change anything there. But we made a lot of changes.

Me. Could you describe the problems of handling discipline as a principal?

Mr. K. It is a problem only because if you like it there's something wrong with you. If you like doing that because you want the kids to trust you and respect you but when you need discipline you have to give it to them. So my kind of problems were certain kids who just didn't get it. Who didn't understand that they were being bad or being punished and they'd do it again. Those kind of kids eventually got kicked right out of school for long periods of time. That was my most frustrating thing about discipline in kids.

Me. K. ... Good kids you tell them they understand. They don't do it anymore

Me. ~~What~~ what were your duties at Kingsford?

Mr. K. I was principal at a school with 1225 kids in it.

We had more kids in that school than N.I.C.E. has in almost the whole district. I had 68 teachers and eighty employees. And I was also the district's transportation director, special ed. coordinator, gifted and talented coordinator, Michigan Assessment Test coordinator, and a few other things that I'm forgetting right now. It was a very busy job.

Me. What are your duties as Superintendent?

Mr. K. One of my main duties is carrying out the wishes of the board of education. They are my bosses so to speak. My duties here are financial management, curriculum direction, overseeing the general operation of the district. Anything from buses to how you spend money to hiring teachers to what happens from day to day.

Me. The closing of Champion came while you were Superintendent. could you explain that decision?

Mr. K. The decision had already ~~been~~ started to be made when I got here... page 7

Mr. K... and I just happened to be here when it was being wrapped up. It was a money saving decision ~~and~~ and partly based on the fact that even though the building was not in bad shape there are so few kids on that end of the district. We were busing a lot of kids up there and we needed to save money, so we saved the district probably \$300,000 a year by not running that way.

Me. What made Champion so special?

Mr. K. Well, to me it was the place I grew up. I had been there as a teacher and a student for forty years and it's just a place you got to know and love but it was like a family. The teachers knew all the kids, the kids knew all the teachers and we kind of supported each other and took care of each other.

Me. Moving to a different topic, what is your wife's name and the year you were married?

Mr. K. My wife's name is Darlene and we were married in 1966 she was my high school girlfriend.

Me. What years did Jeff and Mark graduate from Westwood?

Mr. K. Jeffrey graduated in 1987 and Mark graduated in 1989.

Me. What colleges did they attend?

Mr. k. Jeff got his degree from Northern Michigan University in communication and personal and Mark got two degrees. He got his first degree from the University of Michigan in atmospheric engineering and then he got a Masters degree from North Carolina State and now he works for the Goddard Space Center in Washington D.C. real exciting job.

Me. What do you see happening in the district as the new school is being opened?

Mr. k. Well, It's an exciting time, I wish you could be there when it opens but you'll be moving on. I see some big things happening. There will be four computer labs in the building, just the most modern science labs that we can possibly have. I see some really positive things happening in curriculum and I think it's gonna be a positive thing for teachers and students. A brand new building, a ~~beautiful~~ beautiful library, a big gymnasium, all the things you would've wished for as a student I'm sure you would've been happy going there.

Me. Thank you for your time.