

me: My name is Chris Remien. Today's date is February 21, 1997. We will talk about Mrs. Milakovich's life in school and teaching career.
What is your full name and birthdate?

Mrs. M: Michelle JoAnn Milakovich Are you writing or just recording it?

Me: I'm going to do a little of each.

Mrs. M: Okay, and my birthdate is 1941. May 8th, 1941.

Me: Where were you born?

Mrs. M: In Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Me: Tell me about your family as a child.

Mrs. M: Well there was my brother who is two years younger than me, and we lived in Milwaukee until I was through kindergarten and then we came up here.

Me: Where did you attend grade school?

Mrs. M: At Ely, I did two years in kindergarten and I went through eighth grade at Ely.

Me: That's a lot.

Mrs. M: That's a lot.

Me: Describe a typical day for you at Ely.

Mrs. M: When I'm teaching?

Me: No, when you were a student.

Mrs. M: When I was going to school? Well I would say every grade you know I don't remember kindergarten particularly. I think we had tables, but every other grade you had desks. And the desks were in rows. And you sat in your desk all day long, and you worked.

Me: What time did you wake up?

Mrs. M: Oh dear. I don't remember that either.

Me: No.

Mrs. M: No, I have no idea.

me: Do you know what time you went to school?

Mrs. M: I must have been 9 o'clock, Chris, I mean of course you had to take the bus.

me: What classes did you have?

Mrs. M: At Ely?

me: mmhmm (yes)

Mrs. M: they did all the, all the regular subjects, I should have my report card, Math and science and social studies and English and

me: What did you do for lunch?

Mrs. M: They had a cook.

me: a cook?

Mrs. M: yea

me: What kinds of food did you have?

Mrs. M: Well, actually when I first started they had a lot of, what I remember the most, is surplus food from the government and the thing I hated particularly were scrambled eggs. The surplus powdered egg ~~is~~ kinds, you probably have never tasted it.

me: no, what did you do after school?

Mrs. M: I studied. I used to read and read and read. ~~and~~

There was a library at school and I'd take home books and I'd read, and read and read.

me: So was reading mostly what you had for homework?

Mrs. M: I don't remember too much official homework, you know like, but I do remember reading a lot. I used to take a library book home every night and read one a night.

me: Did you have chores at home?

Mrs. M: Dishes, which I still hate.

me: lots of dishes?

Mrs. M: mhmhm

me: What kind of punishments did unruly children receive?

Mrs. M: Oh that's fun, Chris. That was really fun. There were closets in some of the upper grade rooms. Big closets! And if the teacher got mad at you he put you in this closet.

me: Oh jeeze,

Mrs. M: But then when the kids were in the closet they used to do terrible things to the teacher's clothes and things in the closet. There are just great stories about ~~things~~ being put in that closet.

me: Do you have any stories about it? or?

Mrs. M: Well one teacher was a bachelor. And he had just legend has it that he had the lining of his coat pinned in so when these kids were stuck in the closet (laughing) they took these pins ~~out~~ out of the lining of his coat. Then there are other stories which I can not repeat.

Both: (laughing)

Mrs. M: Then I can remember you could get put under the teacher's desk. And they put you under the desk. I ended up there once.

me: What did you do to

Mrs. M: Talking I talked to somebody

me: were jackets kept in that room? Was that where you kept your jackets? ^{things}

Mrs. M: There were, they're still there, little hooks and ~~hooks~~ little nooks and you hung your jacket up there

me: How were you taught to read?

Mrs. M: I can remember sounding out signs downtown so they must have taught Phonics. *phonics* page 3

because I can remember sounding something out

Me: You got to school on a bus how long was your bus ride?

Mrs M: Mine wasn't too bad, I don't know half an hour maybe
I don't have a good memory, Chris,

Me: What was the bus ride like? Do you remember?

Mrs. M: Oh. It was awful, my brother beat me up every day.

Both: (laughing)

Me: What were holiday celebrations like at school?

Mrs: I only, I can remember valentines day. They had a ~~box~~
beautifully decorated box, a valentine box, and you put your
valentines in and on that day you'd pass your valentines
out. That was about the only one I can remember.

Me: What programs were put on at school?

Mrs. M: We did. We did Christmas programs, we used to call
them operettas, with the sing going on and a play, and I
was a poinsetta in the only one I remember.

Me: Who was your favorite teacher and why?

Mrs. M: I think my kindergarten teacher was my favorite
because she had red, red hair and I thought she was
really glamorous

Me: Do you remember her name?

Mrs M: Mrs. Reed

Me: Was that your favorite grade?

Mrs. M: umm

Me: What was your favorite grade?

Mrs. M: It sounds terrible, but they were all pretty much
the same, you know the same rows of desks, and the
same rules, and so maybe kindergarten was my
favorite.

Me: Did you ever change classes?

Mrs M: No

Me: Did you just sit in the same room?

Mrs M: yea. In fact most of the time we spent two years in one room because you had first and second in the same room.

Me: Did you learn the same stuff along with the ~~7th~~ ~~8th~~ graders or ~~2nd~~ graders so you had to do one thing twice in a row or did they teach one and then teach the other?

Mrs. M: Chris I really don't, I don't think so.

Me: No

Mrs. M: I don't think so, but I actually don't remember.

Me: Did you have any field trips?

Mrs. M: Oh no. (hahaha) no, I had one in Milwaukee when I went to school in Milwaukee we went to a farm, but I don't remember any field trips in, not at Bly.

Me: How many people were in each class?

Mrs. M: There might be fifteen, small classes

Me: Was there a dress code?

Mrs. M: Oh, I don't think, I mean you have to remember everybody pretty much dressed the same, and that there weren't any flamboyant outfits - not even dreamed about you know —

Me: Would women ever wear things other than a dress?

Mrs. M: I used to wear slacks a bit, mostly just because it was so cold.

Me: What kind of activities did you have during class?

Mrs. M: As far as I can remember we just sat there and looked at the book or wrote on the paper.

Me: Did you have any drills like a fire drill? page 5

Mrs. M: Oh the fire drills were great! They were terrifying to me because we had - I don't know if you remember - those big chutes that went down. So we had to go down a chute. That's when it was dangerous if you are wearing a dress! And then the teacher would catch you at the bottom, but someone would always tick you all the way down the chute, too. You know so that was a ~~very~~ (laughing) terrifying drill. Some kids enjoyed it, but I never did.

Me: How old were you when you started school?

Mrs. M: Must have been 5 in Milwaukee

Me: Was school spirit big back then?

Mrs. M: Well, the sports were very big - basketball - my brother was involved in basketball. They ~~do~~ have quite a few pictures of all the teams.

Me: Do you still have them?

Mrs. M: They're at school. They're still at school, and that was really important to the community.

Me: ~~Were~~ Were there any other sports besides basketball?

Mrs. M: Not that I can remember

Me: Were you involved in any sports?

Mrs. M: There weren't any for girls.

Me: Were there cheerleaders?

Mrs. M: They had cheer well when I was in school. When I went to teach there we had cheerleaders. You're going to think I don't remember much of anything. I cannot remember if there were cheerleaders while my brother was playing

Me: What sports were boys allowed to be in, were there any besides basketball?

Mrs. M: I only remember basketball.

Me: What games did you play?

Mrs. M: On the playground.

Me: After school on the playground.

Mrs. M: nothing organized. We used to play a lot of baseball, but there was nothing organized. We didn't have little league or you know the school didn't sponsor anything after school other than the basketball that I remember.

Me: What did you do on weekends?

Mrs. M: Well we didn't go very far. Going to a movie was a treat because we lived - we didn't live in town of course we lived near the golf course so we pretty much just did things with your friends on the weekends.

Me: Did you attend church?

Mrs. M: mmhmm

Me: What was church like?

Mrs. M: You know I pretty much sat there and listened

Me: Was it more strict than it is now?

Mrs. M: I think so.

Me: Did you eat a big Sunday dinner?

Mrs. M: mmhmm We always had a big dinner

Me: What did you have? What kinds of foods?

Mrs. M: We were pretty much a meat and potatoes family.

Me: What was your relationship with your family like?

Mrs. M: Oh, I think we were very close. Everything you did you did with your family. We took Sunday rides together which I hated. You know, you didn't get to far away from your family.

Me: Do you remember any family vacations?

Mrs M: We went to Wisconsin a lot. We went to Florida.

Anywhere you had relatives, Chris, ~~the~~

Me: Did you take the train to Florida?

Mrs. M: No, we drove. We always drove. Anywhere you had a relative, Chris, we used to go to New York, we went to Wisconsin. We went to lower MI. If you had a relative there you went to visit that was pretty much our vacations.

Me: What else did you do with your family?

Mrs. M: We went to movies!

Me: Do you remember any particular movies?

Mrs. M: "The Quiet Man" with John Wayne (laughing) that's the only one. It was an event to go to a movie. There was a great big theatre - two of them in Ishpeming. One of them has been torn down. The Ishpeming Theatre was a huge theatre.

Me: How many screens did it have? just 1?

Mrs M: Oh, they all only had one. Just one screen, and a stage.

Me: Were there any drive ins?

Mrs. M: Oh, the drive in's came, I think it was high school, and that was also a big event. was to go to the drive in.

Me: Where did you shop for groceries?

Mrs M: Once a week we went to town. We went to the A and P in Ishpeming.

Me: Did you have any hobbies?

Mrs. M: tried knitting

Me: Did you like it?

Mrs. M: I didn't like it very much. (laughing)

Me: Did you ever sew?

Mrs. M: In school we used to have. On Fridays they used to send the younger children home early, and in the afternoon the boys would do woodworking or shop and girls would sew. We did that every Friday in school.

Me: Where exactly did you live, I know you said near the golf course?

Mrs. M: Do you know where Fyr's Party Store is?

Me: yea

Mrs. M: that's where I used to live.

Me: Right on that location?

Mrs. M: My dad built that house. Right where Fyr's Party Store is, and he built one in town, too. We didn't have that big porch around it. And then where the trailer park is we had a garden, a huge, huge beautiful garden. And behind our house it was a, my dad had a huge beautiful garden. It was a nice place to grow up.

Me: Did you get an allowance?

Mrs. M: Isn't that - I have no idea. I don't remember. I used to earn money.

Me: How did you earn money?

Mrs. M: I'm not sure (ha ha ha haha ha ha ha) if I can tell you all the stuff, Chris. My dad grew potatoes, and we had to pick the potatoes ~~bugs~~ off the leaves. off page 9

cont.)

Me: I've done that.

Mrs. M: You've done that, too?

Me: In a summer camp in Maine I went to.

Mrs. M: Did you? Well that's one way I used to earn money, pick potatoes bags. There was a big potato farmer, and we used to as kids in the neighborhood we'd go pick the potatoes when they were ready. I used to pick raspberries for my dad and I used to sell raspberries and then have you ever heard of arbutis?

Me: I don't think so.

Mrs. M: Mayflowers

Me: Oh, yea.

Mrs. M: Now it's illegal to pick them, but we used to pick them, and stand out on the ~~side~~ highway and yell ^{arbutis} arbutis or mayflowers or something and cars would stop. Can you imagine doing this now? I mean you'd be dead within ten minutes (laughing) so that was another ~~way~~ way we used to earn money. So I don't remember a allowance, but I remember you know doing, or earning money.

Me: Did you have a favorite toy?

Mrs. M: I liked the dolls that I had. I had some beautiful dolls.

Me: What kind of dolls were they?

Mrs. M: We didn't have. I, you know, we didn't have porcelain dolls or anything. They were it must have been some kind of plastic.

Me: What are some of the best memories you have of growing up?

Mrs. M: I think just playing outside near where I lived. We had little forts and we had all kinds of places to play. My dad built us a swimming pool. page 10

cont

and we used to skate on it. Like I said nothing organised. We just played together.

Me: What chores did you have after school?

Mrs. M: My mother really wanted us to study it was more in the older grades. So about the only thing I did was dishes, but in the summer that's when I got involved with the garden and raspberries and cutting the grass and all that stuff. It was a lot,

Me: What are some of your most vivid memories as a student or as a teacher?

Mrs. M: Oh, I think as a student it was just being frightened (laughing) you know we had a very strict principal, the teachers were very strict - absolutely no sense of humor that they ever showed you. For me it was a pretty frightening time. (laughing) As a teacher just the kids. I have so many great memories of so many kids.

Me: Did you have any pets as a student?

Mrs. M: We always had dogs and cats

Me: What was the best thing about attending Ely?

Mrs. M: I guess just because it was a small school and a beautiful setting with the lake, and the trees and things like that. But it wasn't a particularly enjoyable time for me.

Me: Describe any role models you had.

Mrs. M: Not, well, I said I really thought that kindergarten teacher was a classy lady was a classy lady with her red hair and stuff, but other than that

cont.

they weren't role models until I got to high school!

Me: Did you fight with your siblings?

Mrs. M: constantly! (laughing)

Me: What do you remember about polio?

Mrs. M: My brother had polio. We didn't know then. I think my mother - and he was younger than I was, but he definitely had the upper hand. I'm not sure my mother knew right away what was wrong, but whatever she did for him - she acted instinctually - I can't remember, Chris, what she did for him, but I think she saved him from being paralyzed. It was a really frightening time. I remember he was in the hospital, and it was scary.

Me: Where was the hospital?

Mrs. M: the one - there was one in Ishpeming, and there was one in Marquette. If you had a real serious thing then you went to Marquette.

Me: What was considered a rare treat?

Mrs. M: Well, I remember ~~the~~ Easter getting chocolate so that couldn't have been a common thing. I can still remember the big hollow chocolate Easter rabbit. (laughing)

(laughing)

Me: Where did you attend high school?

Mrs. M: In Ishpeming

Me: How many were there in your graduating class

Mrs. M: I think there was 120.

Me: What year was it.

Mrs. M: 1959

Me: Did you win any awards?

Mrs M: I won - I was Valadictorian. And I had a National Merrit Scholarship that I used to go to the University of Michigan

Me: How many dropouts were there?

Mrs M: I have no idea.

Me: Where did you attend college?

Mrs M: University of Michigan

Me: What did you do after college?

Mrs M: I went to California to teach and I taught seventh grade English

Me: Besides Ely and that one did you teach at any other schools?

Mrs. M: No, well, actually yes I did I spent 2 years at West Ishpeming, ~~and~~ and that I think, although I really like Ely - there were 4 grades in West Ishpeming 2 firsts and 2 second's when I taught there. And it was just wonderful. It was like being in - It was just wonderful. We had a gym, and we used to do little plays and it was very cozy, ^{intimate} intimate atmosphere.

Me: Did you have any other jobs?

Mrs. M: When I was in high school and in college I had various jobs.

Me: What were they

Mrs M: My worst job ever was waitressing page 13

which I did several times.

Me: You didn't like that?

Mrs. M: Hated it! Never did very well at that. (laughing) ~~that's~~ It's a lucky thing I became a teacher because I wouldn't have been a terrible waitress.

Me: When did you begin teaching at Ely?

Mrs. M: In 1966, I spent two years in California, then I came to Ely in 1966.

Me: What was a woman's salary when you started?

Mrs. M: \$4500

Me: What was amnis? Were they the same?

Mrs. M: No, they weren't. I think the men had 5000, and that was just because they were a man.

Me: What kind certificate do you have?

Mrs. M: I have both an Elementary and a Secondary certificate.

Me: Were married women teachers permitted when you started?

Mrs. M: A couple of years before I came to Ely they released all married women. On only grounds they had for terminating their employment was that they were married. So that isn't, well for you, that long ago. It was in the '60's when they could do that.

Me: What grades have you taught?

Mrs. M: Just 9th grade and 1st grade.

Me: Which was your favorite?

Mrs. M: Actually I really liked them both. I really did.

Me: Did you teach all subjects in each of them?

Mrs. M: No, I just taught language arts in 7th and, of course, all subjects in first. When I started I taught the music, the art, and the gym, too.

Me: You did?

Mrs. M: Ohh, yes you did, because there wasn't anyone else to do it. It was a lot.

Me: What kind of activities did you teach in class?

Mrs. M: We did it all, when I first started, and we did our own Christmas plays. I did a memorable one "Twas The Night Before Christmas." We did that poem one year, but you had to do everything. It was fun.

Me: How many students were in an average classroom?

Mrs. M: When I was in California I had 42 kids in a class, and when I went to Ely I had 28 and I don't know if I ever had ~~28~~ 28 again until this year. This year I have 28 again.

Me: Describe an average day for you, at Ely, while you were teaching.

Mrs. M: Well, if I described one when I first started, it would be so much different than it is now.

Me: You could do the differences.

Mrs. M: While when I first started, like I said, you did it all. You did the art and the gym and the plays and everything. So if you had five grades, there would be five teachers. Now, if you have five grades you would have the teacher but then you'd have the counselor, and the art, music, and gym, and the learning disabilities teacher.

cont.

just goes on and on and on. There are many more

adults now.

Me: How many hours did you teach?

Mrs. M.: The hours were about the same, About 6 hours a day.

Me: What was lunch like?

Mrs. M.: When I first started we had ~~the~~ cooks in the school.

Me: What kinds of ~~of~~ foods did they cook?

Mrs. M.: They got away from all that surplus stuff when I was a kid and we had delicious meals. Home baked bread, you could gain 30 lbs. in a month there. They made every thing from scratch and it was delicious. Now, there isn't anything that even resembles anything homemade. There just isn't.

Me: What were your clothes like?

Mrs. M.: When I first started teaching?

Me: Mhmm.

Mrs. M.: Other than the period of miniskirts, I'd say pretty much the same.

Me: Are students attitudes different now?

Mrs. M.: I think everyone's attitude is different now.

Me: How has it changed?

Mrs. M.: Well, I think and I sure you've heard this, when I first started parents didn't question what did. I mean if you disciplined their child, they disciplined their child even worse. It's changed incredibly, and the teachers I think were, there really was dedication. But I think teachers were as well prepared as they are now. They might have been dedicated, but they weren't as well trained as they are now. page 16

Me: How many men taught in an average elementary school?
Mrs. M: Well, you always seem to find the men say from
the 6th grade up.

Me: What grade did elementary go to?

Mrs. M: Our school went to eighth grade.

Me: How did you handle unruly children?

Mrs. M: There weren't that many to tell you the truth.

Me: I guess in first grade.

Mrs. M: Well, they can _____ (laughing) But there really
weren't that many. It really wasn't that big
of a problem.

Me: Were you involved in a teachers union?

Mrs. M: 2 years after I started teaching, when we
decided that men and women should be paid
equally, we started the teachers union.

Me: How did you start it? What steps did you have to go
through?

Mrs. M: I wasn't involved in the actual starting. A friend
of mine, 2 friends of mine.

Me: Do you remember their names?

Mrs. M: Pat Jones, her daughter teaches where she taught.

Do you remember Jamie Jones, Jamie Herrington.

Her mom. And then Gary ~~B~~ ^{Catlin} Catlin who retired.

Me: What was your favorite student at Ely and why?

Mrs. M: There are just so many. You know. Just so

Mary

cont.

Mrs. M: I think there's a time during the year when you have a relationship that's special with each one. There's at least a moment when every child is special.

Me: ~~The~~ Tell me about the best thing about teaching at Ely.

Mrs. M: I think the best thing. First it was the people, the teachers and the kids of course. Then the other is the setting, with the lake, and the bluff, and the trees, and the field, and the tiny little village. It's a beautiful place to be.

Me: Tell me something else about teaching at Ely.

Mrs. M: Like anything else?

Me: Anything.

Mrs. M: I like my room. I'm afraid I'm never going to have a room like that again. The room was designed for little kids. It's been a very, very pleasant place to be.

Me: Do you have a special quote of saying you can leave me with?

Mrs. M: Nothing comes to my mind, Chris, other than I'm a collector of quotes, but I can't think of anything right now.

Me: In first grade I remember going to the different stations, when did you start this?

Mrs. M: Let's see

Me: Was that a new teaching style?

Mrs. M: Yes, it was. I was ~~off~~ trying to remember the workshop. page 18

cont.

It had to be 1975 or something, I learned in a workshop.

Me: When did it start catching on?

Mrs M: The stations?

Me: mmmhmm to other teachers

Mrs. M: It became almost a universal ~~stage~~ thing. Practically everyone in the district used that kind of thing for a while. They all had it.

Me: What skills did you try to teach the children?

Mrs. M: Well, when I was in California, I had a little boy named Johnny Buzzbee. He was in seventh grade, but could not read a word and I had no idea how to teach him to read. So guess reading has always been my real really, really important thing. I mean I always think of Johnny Buzzbee (ha ha). Poor Johnny Buzzbee. Except he kind of became - Do you know Steve McQueen at all?

Me: No, I don't think so.

Mrs. M: He was quite a movie star. He really was successful. I always kind of thought that in spite of the fact he could not read. So reading is it, Chris.

Me: Do you have anything else to add?

Mrs M: No I think that's it.

Me: About either teaching or being a student?

Mrs M: Well I think that for me teaching and being a student, ~~are~~ I've always enjoyed being a student, and I think that's why

Mrs M^{Cont}: I enjoy teaching, because they're almost-to me the same thing.

Me: Do you have any photos or memorabilia I can borrow? It will be returned.

Mrs M: I can look for some. My most favorite memorabilia is the great big school bell, but I don't know what you'd do with that (laughing) Well, IF I can find anything I'll do that. IF I can find some things, IF I can find some things, I can give them to you.

Me: You can look now.

THE END

total years at Ely?