

Jamil Koski
Interview
with
Gene Aho.

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Me: I am Jamil Koski. Today's date is December 12, 1990. I am interviewing Mr. Gene Aho. The purpose of the interview is to see how the National Mine School has changed from the past to the present. The location of the interview is at my house 1730 Glendora Lane Ishpeming, Michigan. Biographical sketch. O.K. when and where were you born?

Gene: I was born on December 1, 1949 in Marquette, Michigan.

Me: O.K. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Gene: I have one sister, her name is Carol Coy.

Me: How many of them went to National Mine School?

Gene: She did attend National Mine School.

Me: When and who did you marry?

Gene: I married Ann Nancy Paris from Negaunee, December 7, 1974.

(2)

me: do you have any children?

Gene: yes, I have two children.

me: ahh could you please tell me their names and ages?

Gene: I have a boy named Cory and his age is 14 and I have a daughter named Kami and her age is 12.

me: Did they go to National Mine School?

Gene: No they do not.

me: What years did you attend National Mine School?

Gene: I attended National Mine School from ahh kindergarten which ahh started in 1955 through my senior year which ended in 1968.

me: Do you remember some of your teachers from grade school and what they were like?

Gene: yes I do.

me: Could you explain that?

Gene: Well in grade school it seemed like we had a big turnover of teachers. alot of

young teachers came in. (3)
a couple of the grades we
had some well established
teachers who were very,
very strict they came from
the old school and they
liked using rulers to
reinforce things.

me: Do you remember any humorous
or interesting stories about
your teachers?

Gene: Yes I do I remember one time
when a bird flew in the
window, in one of the
classrooms and there was
a panic, and the teacher
tried to get the bird with
the ruler she used for
discipline.

me: Do you remember any of your
junior high or high school
teachers and what they
were like?

Gene: Oh yes, I remember all of them.
There again you had a
combination of younger teachers
along with older teachers, and

it was a good combination. ④

me: Do you remember any humorous or interesting stories about your junior high or high school teachers?

Gene: No, nothing that I could relate to at this point in time.

me: How long was the school day?

Gene: Um I believe it was around six and three quarters hours. It started at quarter to nine and ended at three thirty in the afternoon.

me: What time did you start school each day?

Gene: eight forty-five.

me: How far was it to school and how did you get there?

Gene: I was very fortunate I lived about two hundred yards from the school so I could walk back and forth and go home for lunch any time I wanted. So I was very fortunate.

Me: What were some of the subjects you had? (5)

Gene: The basic subjects: Math, science, biology, English, history, geography, course gym and shop.

Me: What was your favorite subject?

Gene: I liked science. I thought science was very interesting and we always seemed to do something new in there so it kept your attention.

Me: What was the hardest subject?

Gene: Mathematics. We had a math teacher who kept plugging along. If didn't quite grasp something he would just keep going on through the maze.

Me: How did the kids dress?

Gene: Ahh at that time they dressed fashionable. Bell bottom pants were in at the time.

Me: Was there any dress code?

Gene: Yes there was, there was a dress code.

One of the things you ⑥

could not wear was blue jeans, blue jeans were out.

Me: How were kids expected to behave? Did most kids obey the rules?

Gene: We did have a student hand book which outlined what you could do and what you couldn't do. Of course we did have people who did not obey the rules all the time and in return they were punished for their doings.

Me: Do you remember some of the punishments that were given?

Gene: yes, we had a detention study hall and we had a demerit system where if you did something wrong in a classroom you would

get so many demerits (7)
and if you accumulated ~~an~~
an x number of points
you'd have to serve time in
study hall or do this or that.

Me: What were some of the
extra curricular activities?

Gene: We had band, we had sports
activities, basketball, baseball,
track, cross country, just
named a few.

Me: Which extra curricular
activities did you participate
in?

Gene: I participated in everything
I could. I was a band
member up until my
senior year. I participated
in all sports.

Me: What instrument did
you play in band?

Gene: I played the saxophone. The
alto saxophone.

Me: Did any teams win a trophy while you were on the teams? (8)

Gene: Yes, when I was a senior in high school we had a very good basketball team which won a trophy. We won the district tournament.

Me: Did it have any affects on the school?

Gene: Oh yes it did. I think that it brought the school to be much closer, a much closer group.

Me: How did the team travel to other schools?

Gene: We traveled, well in a school bus. In fact all of our trips were by school bus.

Me: What was the farthest or how far did you have to travel?

Gene: Our farthest trip I believe would have been to Doley high school. We also went to Chastle which is not that far from Doley. It was about one hundred miles each way. (9)

Me: Do you remember any special cheers for the team?

Gene: Yes, I remember the fight song quite clearly. It was the fight song that Notre Dame presently uses for their cheering section. Although we changed the words of course.

Me: How would you describe your academic performance?

Gene: Fair to good. I certainly could have done better in school, if I had applied myself much stronger.

Me: Was there like an honor? (10)

Gene: Oh yes, ya. I wasn't an active member on the honor roll.

Me: Well what was lunch time like?

Gene: ah lunch time had to be taken according to grades. Being that the cafeteria was as small as it was. We had to start with kindergarten and go right on up through the grades and eleventh and twelfth grade took their lunch last. So it was kinda a platoon arrangement.

Me: Was there a hot lunch program?

Gene: Oh yes. In fact I remember the lunch tickets we used to have to buy we would buy a ticket for two dollars and we would get ten punches on a ticket. So basically it was

twenty cents a day to
eat there. ②

me: Do you remember where the
cafeteria was located?

Gene: Oh sure. Ya I remember very
clearly where it was located.

me: Who was the principal and
could you please describe him/
her?

Gene: I had two principals in my
time at National Mine.
One was Kenneth Lindberg
that was when I was in
grade school and junior
high he was the principal.
Mr. Millman, William
Millman was the principal
in high school. Both were
discipline areas they were
kind of intimidating men.
Walked around like they
owned the place, I suppose
they did! (ha ha ha)

me: Did the school have any special picnics or outings? (12)

Gene: Nothing other than organized things such as your senior class trip. For our senior class trip we went to Mackinac Island and spent the entire day, we left in the morning and got back late at night.

We had of course biology trips.

me: when you were in grade school did you have any field trips that you went on?

Gene: yes we did. Nothing I can elaborate on. I remember going to the planetarium down in Marquette and I also remember going to Trudell's farm for a day.

me: Did any of your teachers have an effect on your life?

Gene: yes. I can name one person who did, infact he is still an active teacher. He was a person that was very, very well organized. He taught me alot about organization and that is Mr. Jordan Chinn. (13)

me: what was your graduation like?

Gene: well, it was small we had a ceremony at the school in the auditorium. I had eighteen people graduate with me. It was just a normal sequence of events.

me: what special memories of your graduation do you have?

Gene: I remember our graduation party. I don't know if I should say anything like this though.

I remember a graduation party where we had planned on going out to a persons camp his name is Larry Tonge. There was just going to be a few people out there and it was organized about a week before graduation. Word had gotten around that there was going to a party out at this particular camp. Before you know it we had all of Stephens senior class coming and it ended up to be a band playing out there. It got out of control.

me: Did you have a prom?

Gene: yes we did. It started out as a prom and ~~was~~ as my years went by it ended up to be a dinner dance affair, but the proms out there with the number of students in the senior and junior classes were open to

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all grade so, for instance
when I was in ninth
grade I had my first date
at this prom in which I
took an eighth grader. So
an eighth grader attended the
prom.

Me: Did any tragedies happen ~~and~~
while you were in school?
Could you please explain that?

Gene: yes. I cannot remember what
year it was, but during the
changing of classes we had
a person drop dead in the
hallway. We didn't know
exactly what happened but
this person fell down and
there was a big commotion
and we ended up going to
our next class and we found
out a short time afterward

that this person had died and if I can remember correctly she died from an aneurysm. We were pretty upset about that.

Me: were you able to maintain contact with your childhood friends?

Gene: yes. In fact I still see them around and about quite often and I talk to them, and we have close associations.

Me: what do you think is the biggest change in the school since you have been there?

Gene: I think the schools have changed drastically. The classrooms have become much more elaborate. I think they have gotten away from one on one instructions.

of course with finances coming into play and all of the money problems that school districts are having, you never heard of anything like that back when I was in school. It's changed!

Me: What are your fondest memories of National Mine school?

Gene: For some reason I can think of the stage as being a fond memory. I was very saddened when they eliminated the stage out there. For some reason I can always picture the stage very vividly. I remember basketball games quite clearly and there is many, many things I have fond memories of out there.

Me: If you could give a message to the students today what would it be?

Gene: Oh if I were one message I think that I would tell the students to define goals in life and just go after them really hard.

me: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Gene: No. not now.

me: O.K. Thank you very much