

Jim Gray

Intro: I'm Fran Sevegney. Today's date is Dec 12, 1990
I'm interviewing Jim Gray for the Red Dust
Program at National Mine School.

Fran: Could you give us a brief biographical sketch of
your self

Jim: Certainly. I was born in Marquette on Nov 3, 1947
and I lived there until the age of three and
my parents then moved to Munising. I went
to Munising Public Schools for K-10 grade and
one of the highlights at Munising was we
used to get a lot of snow, when I was in
the fifth grade it started to snow in the
morning and they decided to send us
home, by the time they decided to send us
home there was so much snow, we
ended up spending the night at school
so ah we used to get a lot of snow at
munising.

At the end of my 10th grade my parents
~~we~~ left munising. My father got a job in
clapping, so we moved up here to the
N.M. area and we moved out south of
N.M., my parents bought the old Kempainen
farm. We had horses at the time and everything
in town was restricted they couldn't have
horses. So we ended up moving way out
in the boon-docks and as I said that was
the summer between my 10th and 11th grade
period in high school. ah when my dad moved
out there I thought he was crazy because
there was no electricity out there. we had
our own bottle gas driven light plant

Fran: So it was kind of like a camp.

Jim: It was like a camp, except it was a home

Fran: MMM. HMM

Jim: And there was no telephone out there, and it was kind of roughing it, not exactly what we were used to.

Fran: How many brothers and sisters did you have

Jim: I have one brother five years younger than me.

Fran: What was his name.

Jim: Jeff

Fran: And how old was he during this time.

Jim: He was in the fifth grade.

Fran: Did both of you go to N.M.S.

Jim: Yes we did!

Fran: Who? and when? did you marry

Jim: I married a Judith Messnick. She is a physician assistant, and we we were married in 1980

Fran: MMM! ~~Do~~ you have any children?

Jim: Yes! we have six

Fran: Six?

Jim: Five girls

Fran: Five girls.

Jim: Yeah! Five girls and one boy.

Fran: We have Stacy, Tanya, ah, Rebekah, Sara, Stephanie, and James.

Fran: Have any of them gone to N.M.S. yet?

Jim: No! we live in Lehppoming so they go to the ~~the~~ Lehppoming middle school

Fran: Oh! okay.

Fran: What years did you attend N.M.S.?

Jim: 1965, and I graduated in 1966

Fran: Okay! Do you remember some of your teachers from school?

Jim: I remember Mr. Kuesing was here at the time, you remember Mr. Kuesing?

Fran: Yeah.

Jim: Okay! Mr. Kito was my, who I am working with now was my shop or my a one of my teachers here at N.M. ~~He~~ He was a coach he was a fifth grade teacher at the time and I think he was in fifth I'll have to check on that. He was an elementary teacher.

Fran: Any other teachers or anything you can remember?

Jim: I can't think of any right now but if I remember any later I'll tell ya.

Fran: Was Mr. Kito like he is now or is he the same?

Jim: Basically yeah pretty much the same. yeah!

Fran: Okay

Fran: Do you remember any humorous stories of anything from when you were attending N.M.S.

Jim: I wonder one time in a chemistry class we were doing

an experiment and one of the thea experiments needed a lot of apparatus and I was pulling out the drawer in the chemistry room which is now the science room it had the drawers that slide out and I pulled it out too far and the drawer fell on the ground. hmmm well! we had to pay for a few a test tubes and a few other things that that got broken

Fran: Yeah! okay well, do you remember any other of the teachers like is there anything you could tell about Mr. Wito. At the time while he was your track coach.

Jim: Nooo! He was aa! I cant really think of any a humorous stories.

Fran: Okay! about how long was the day? what time did you start and what time did school get over with.

Jim: I think we started around 8 to 830 and we were done by 3 or something like that

Fran: so about the same as now

Fran: okay ummm? how did you get to school. did you take a bus or.

Jim: well I had my drivers license and some days I rode the bus but when I had B. Ball games and things like that my parents would let me take the car.

Fran: okay ummm? What subjects did you have and what was your favorite one

Jim: oh! I had a, ummm, college prep courses you know like. I wanted to go to northern so I took chemistry, algebra, and things like that, um geometry, and physics and just preparing for college aahh! I liked the math, I liked the science classes

Fran: cause of the teachers or you just liked the subject?

Jim: I just liked the subject.

Fran: yeah! ummm lets see. Did any of your teachers have an impact on your life

Jim: I think the person that had the most impact on my life was, well it was when I was a senior. Uhh Bill Millman the principal here at the time. He was a very nice man and Uhh I was talking to him one day and he said you know! You know I want to go to Northern I want to go to college I want to go to Northern but I don't ~~know~~ ~~to~~! I just don't know what I want to do and I was very active in sports all the way through school and he told me. He said, why don't you think about Physical education! and that was really the first time I ever even thought about being a gym teacher.

Jim: So I thought about it and I thought it was a good choice and I pursued that career.

Fran: Okay: When you graduated. You did graduate from here?

Jim: from N.M.S. Yes

Fran: What ~~was~~ your graduation ceremony like.

Jim: Well it was it was very nice it was a when I went to nursing school I had a hundred kids in my class and when I came to N.M.S. I believe our graduation class had 16 people in it. So it was a lot different you know ya got to know every body.

Fran: Yeah!

Jim: It was nice we marched up on to the stage. Lack then they had the stage in the auditorium, ammm. that's where the lunet room and the band room is now and a we walked up there and we received our diplomas and it was very nice.

Fran: Did you have any special memories of your graduation

Jim: ~~was~~ No! No! I don't nothing really special No! it was just real nice

Fran: Did you have a prom?

Jim: I can't remember if there was a prom or not. Ahh!, not important

Fran: Did any ~~tragedy~~ occur while you were here.

Jim: We had one girl. I can't remember her name she was an Astoria girl that died when I was in school. She was a. She passed out in the hall and had something happen to her. I don't know if you would want to put that in the book though the parents and stuff might feel bad about it.

Fran: ~~Are~~ you able to maintain any ^{all} contacts from when you were attending this school.

Jim: I see some of my friends occasionally yes ah!, I have a couple good buddies I see once in a while. Not as much as I would like to. These times are busy my life's busy. You know

Fran: What do you think is the biggest change in the school since you were a student? Or your a teacher know

Jim: No Ya!, Being on the other side of the. Being a teacher instead of a student? Ya Ya! Well when I went to school here the place where the lunch room and the band room used to be a sunken auditorium, and where the bleachers are where we sit and watch the basket ball games that was a stage.

75: What was was the basket ball floor then?

Jim: The basket ball floor is right where it was, but when people came to watch the B. Ball games they sat in the auditorium type chairs and watched the basket ball games.

Fran: And wasn't there a fence or a net there.

Jim: Yeah there used to be a net there to keep the B. Ball players from steding right into the crowd! yeah, and another thing was the new addition or the four classrooms, those were added on ~~to~~ a few years ago, those weren't there when I went to school here; and the two portable classrooms they put outside

Fran: Is there any other big changes that you can remember?

Jim: No; those were the mainly the biggest change in the school building

Fran: Is there any other big changes that you can remember.

Jim: Ahh No those were kind of the biggest changes is the school building itself

Fran: ~~Is~~ anything in the students?

Jim: Whoooo, as far as now and then

Fran: Yeah!
Jim: Kids now days have to be entertained. They dont seem to know how to entertain themselves. I blame a lot of this on T.V. and Video games. It is important for children to use their imagination. Also kids today seem to rebel against authority more than they used to

Added
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Jim: I spend ~~me~~ a lot more time disciplining than I did before.

Tram: what are your fondest memories as a student at N.M.S.?

Jim: I think some of the fondest memories I have are from when I was in athletics we had a lot of good, are you gonna ask anything about athletics in here

Tram: I think so

Jim: Oh, okay

Jim: Some of the fondest memories I have, well, I have a lot of friends I met from when I moved here. Um, a lot of good memories from being successful in athletics what we will talk about later.

Tram: I don't know the part of this is mainly about your teaching

Jim: Okay when I moved up into the national mine area uh as I said my junior year there was ~~no~~ track. They had a track team a couple of years before I came but the year before I came they didn't and I had been very active in sports at Munnising. I was on the varsity track team as a freshman and I ran the half mile. I was on the varsity team at a Daphnoma at Munnising and I practiced very hard when I moved to N.M. I found out there wasn't a track team I was very disappointed. So I talked to

Jim: I'd put on my sweats and run out to 5/8' and back, take another quick shower go to class then after school we had track practice.

Tom: You were warmed up then.

Jim: Yeah! I guess so.

Tom: any thing ~~else~~ about sports here?

Jim: My senior year then we had much more interest. A lot more kids come out and ah! my senior year I was undefeated on the half mile. I have the trophy at home that I won. I still have the trophy at home that I won at Northern at the indoor meet and I had a gold medal my ~~first~~ first time in the U.S. finals which is ~~one of~~ one of my proudest memories.

Tom: Ahh!

Jim: Another good memory, well I don't know if it is a good memory or not, but another memory that I have about H.H. Sports is when I moved up here I had played center at Manning now I am a small center I was only 5'10" at the time and when I come up to M.M. Mr. Ruesing was my basket ball coach and he found out that I was a center so he put me at the center spot. We went down and played against Trout Creek.

You ever had a boy who would
 went on to play for Mich. State
 who was six five. He was there
 center and I was M.M. center. I
 knew it was in trouble when
 he held the ball over his head and
 I jumped and I couldn't hit the
 ball and he was just standing
 there. I held him to 40 points
 that night. He was a good
 ball player.

Fran: I guess so

Jim: That night after the game I remember
 saying to Mr. Kueing "pretty good
 defense. My coach I held him to only
 40 points."

Fran: Is there was any message
 that you could say to the
 students now?

Jim: Study hard while your in
 school just listen to your
 teachers work hard aah!, just
 try to get ahead, try to do
 the best you can because
 if you start goofing around now
 that habit could continue the
 rest of your life. Work hard

now a goal know what you want start looking for it and working toward it okay!

Fran: Do you have anything else to add about being a student here? ~~no I think~~

Jim: No I think that pretty well covers it.

Fran: Okay I guess we can go into your teaching career.

Jim: How many people do both?

Fran: I don't know

Jim: Oh! I suppose mister Keto

Fran: Yeah I suppose. Okay ummm what years have you worked at N.M. school?

Jim: I started teaching at N.M. school in 1972 or no 1975 my first I graduated. Do you want to know when I graduated?

Fran: I suppose what year did you graduate from college.

Jim: I graduated from Northern in 1972 with a Bachelor in science I have a major ~~in~~ in Physical education and I have a minor in biology

I got a teaching job at St. Paul school at Neenah, in 1972. The fall after I graduated, and I taught there for three years. until the school closed. I didn't want to leave the area so I didn't put out many interviews. That as luck would have it there was a job opening here at N.M. so I applied. I got the job and started the job in 1975.

From: And to 1990 right now or almost 1991.

Jim: Right!

From: That's quite a few years.

okay ummm, I as much detail as possible describe your job.

Jim: Well! right now I am strictly a Physical education teacher. When I first started teaching at N.M. I had all of the 7th grade classes. which was 7th grade health at the time it wasn't science that has changed drastically over the years. we have many more students now and the a, the time just doesn't allow me any science classes so I am strictly Physical ed. I have 6th, 7th, and 8th grade P.E.D. and I have one section of 4th grade Phy. Ed at the present time.

F.S.: What is the most rewarding part of your career?

Jim: I think what one of the most ~~rewarding part of my~~ rewarding parts ~~is~~ is seeing kids develop skills go on to be successful as they grow older and when they come back and say thanks for helping them or for say having an influence on their life or a sort of impact or things like that.

Tram: What is the most difficult part of your job? Yelling at us?

Jim: That's probably ~~the~~ when the students are uncooperative, it's gotta be one of the most difficult parts. You know we always find things that we don't like. Mmm, let's see, when people just give you static about an activity that you're doing or they don't want to be cooperative it's very difficult. To sum it up to handle those situations but it makes the job not easy.

Tram: How or why did you choose your career, because of the principal or

Jim: yeah probably Mr. Millman, his influence is what really caused me to start working towards Physical education as a possible job. and I enjoy working with people, I enjoy working with kids. I always love and I think he steered me in that direction I wouldn't have gone into Phy. ed.

Wren: Did you ever go back and tell him?

Jim: shortly after I graduated Mr. Millman passed away I think it was the next year or so after word do I never did get a chance to go back and tell him

Wren: You have you seen the duties of your job change over the years?

Jim: When I first started teaching it was all co educational the boys were in one class the boys were in another and they were treated separately.

Wren: Like home and gym. Jim:

No, the girls had gym and the boys had gym except at different times.

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Fran: During your career were you involved in any extra-curricular activities

Jim: When I first started teaching I was coaching. I coached 7th and 8th grade B. Ball I coached 5th and 6th boys basket ball I coached girls 5th and 6th grade B. Ball I coached 5th and 8th grade B. Ball and " " Jr. high football program at Nequaunee then I moved to N.M.S I had children and I didn't have time for that with all of that responsibility I had to dedicate my time to my children and the basketball players so I had to make a choice and I just had to give it up because I just didn't have the time any more but coaching does take a lot of time

Fran: Would you still be coaching if you didn't have all of that responsibility?

Jim: Oh, I'm sure I would

Fran: Did you receive any special training for your job.

Jim: Well going to Northern was basically it.

Fran: How long did that take?

Jim: Well I worked my way through school until I started at Northern in 1966 and I worked part time so it wouldn't cost my parents anything

To put me through Northern and
I graduated in 1972. I worked at the
Coca-Cola company ~~the~~ delivering pop. Pg. 19

Fran: did you drive a truck?

Jim: yes. I was delivery man, I worked
in the plant whenever I had some
free time, I could deliver or from
the plant or bottle it.

Fran: How long did you do that

Jim: I worked there from 1966 to the
time I graduated till oh about
1975. because I still worked in
the summer time

Fran: Was it around here

Jim: I was in Marquette and I remember
it was Elton's Coca-Cola they had
a bottling plant in Ash. and in Marq.

Fran: Can you describe any humorous events
that took place here while you were
a teacher?

Jim: When I first came here it
was the gym. the stage then the
auditorium. we had a lot of
kids here it was before they
had the edition on the kids used
to set up the lunch tables on the
stage and it would have a gym
class going on while one of
the things that happened was we
were playing volleyball and someone
hit the ball too hard the ball went over the

net between the stage and the gym Page 20
and the ball went over the net
and right into a plate of mashed potato
and there were potatoes all over on the
kids and everywhere it was a little
try just like now the ball just landed
splat right in the potatoes and they
went everywhere and all the kids
were splattered with mash potatoes.

From: anything else?

Jim: there was another time when one
of the kids threw a ball in the glass and
I fell over for her she, they had
and it hurt and the glasses were
bent and we were over crowded
at the time.

From: can you describe your co-workers
and what they are like?

Jim: Well, when I first started teaching
here the school was like a big family
and every body got along and we
had a good time, a lot of that
is going on today except there is
more students here now and you
kind of lose contact with everyone
personally I go out on the playground
in the morning and I have noon duty
and then with an extra gym class a
(Court). I just don't see many of the
Faculty members they come passing through

the gym and I talk to them ^{Fig. 21.} ~~them~~
briefly ~~say~~ hi and that but as
Bill Emblem calls the path across the
side of the gym he calls it the
Nouchy man trail because it is
the only way to get from the
elementary side to the lunchroom
without going upstairs and around
I don't have a lot of contact
with people any more but when
I do you know the relationships
is very friendly

Fran: did you ever feel like changing
careers?

Jim: No, but I really enjoy working
with wood, I think I would
if I ever did change I would do
something of that matter.

Fran: How is the community in N. M.

Jim: The community is very supportive
back when I was in school here
I know there was an active parents
group and now as today there
is an active parents group again
for a while it kind of slacked off
but now they are showing an interest

Fran: did any of your family members
work or attend here while you were
_(was) here.

Jim: No!

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Fran: What is the biggest change in the building that you have seen?

Jim: well when they did all of that construction work and the gym and band and auditorium it turned my gym into a big box with no acoustics and finally this summer they installed the ah, acoustical tile and I think you can notice the difference yourself it's much quieter in there than it was last year.

Fran: were you here when that fire came about?

Jim: No, that was long before I was here.

Fran: If you had to do it all over again ~~would~~ you choose the same career?

Jim: Yes I would, I enjoy working with kids and I enjoy what I am doing. We've got kind of a unique program here at O.M. where we get out doors a lot. we go hiking test wild apples and we go out on the nature trail go ~~skiing~~ skiing and sometimes we take out the snow shoes.

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and I love the out doors. I love to hunt and things like that and I love to go out and see what we can find. One year we were skiing and I saw some tracks of a ~~partridge~~ partridge and they just disappeared. Then all of a sudden a partridge exploded out of the snow and it scared the tar out of me. One of my students was behind me and he said now! Mr. Gray did you see ~~that~~ that. I said see it I almost stepped on it. and those kinds of things are what make this area and ~~this school~~ of this school being kind of rural area we can do these things.

Fran: Unlike in the city's

Jim: Yeah!

Fran: What were the greatest challenges you faced during your career

Jim: getting acoustical tile in my ceiling and also getting cross country skis. A lot of people didn't see the use but me and Mr. Reusing bought for cross country skis and we got em. after a couple of years.

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Fran: What are your biggest responsibilities as a teacher.

Jim: Just making sure all the rules are followed and the goals are met, and seeing that no-one gets injured in my class.

Fran: That's a big one.

Jim: Yeah! That's a big one.

Fran: Did you win any special awards for your job performance.

Jim: No!

Fran: Well I think you should have!

Jim: Well thank you.

Fran: What are your fondest memories of teaching here.

Jim: I guess when I turned 40 with ~~me~~ 3 years ago and everybody had a good time on my birthday I think except me. All of the teachers and all of the students were ~~black~~. There were black balloons all over the building there had signs that had been printed that said Mr. Gray is forty today. Mr. Kulling gave me an award it was an off color, ~~was~~ one I can't hang it on my wall I use one of those humorous ~~things~~ ~~things~~

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and I went out to my truck
and some one put vasoline on my
door handle and on my steering
wheel and my gear shift lever
then when I drove off someone
had put about ten soup cans tied
to my bumper, as I was driving
away. But I think it came very
deservantly, because I made a
little mischief in the days that
I was here.

Fran: Well that sums it up, any
thing else you would like to add

Jim: I want to thank you very
much for interviewing me
you did a fine job.

Fran: my pleasure, and hopefully
we will get in the book.

Jim: well try.

Fran: Well we came up with some-
thing else too add.

Jim: I was a senior, we were down
in the english room and we decided
to scratch our name in on the
black board with a pin just as I
showed you from 1966

Fran: Yeh! Jim, 6. okay well if you come
up with something else we'll have
to come back