

Amber Farley Interview
with

Mr. Ken Lindberg

Me: My name is Amber Farley, the date is December sixth nineteen-ninety. I am interviewing Mr. Ken Lindberg. The purpose of this interview, is to gather Mr. Lindberg's thoughts of being a superintendent at National Mine. I am interviewing Mr. Lindberg at his house in Ishpeming.

Me: When and where were you born?

Mr. L: Born in Ishpeming, December 20th 1926.

Me: (ha) Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. L: I had two brothers and two sisters.

Me: Okay, what are their names?

Mr. L: One... Austin is the oldest brother he died. I have a brother Walter in Battle Creek. And I have a sister, Edna lives in Kalamazoo. Then I have a younger sister, who died about a year ago. No maybe about three years ago now. Time goes by so fast. (smile)

Me: (Ha Ha)

Mr. L: She died about three years ago. So I just have a living sister and a brother and myself.

Me: Do you know when and where your parents were born?

Mr. L: Yes, I don't recall the dates, but...

Me: Yeah

Mr. L: Both parents were born in the city of Ishpeming. My father died when he was 90, he died back in 1979. And my mother died back in 1964, at the age of 64.

Me: Okay um in much detail as possible, could you describe your job at National Mine?

Mr. L: well, I started teaching at National Mine in a... what some dates or....

Me: Yeah, that would be okay.

Mr. L: Started teaching at National Mine in 1954 and I was there till 1972. When I worked, first went to National Mine, I was hired as the principle and teacher. And a... I taught seven classes and I was principle, it was a eight period day. I was expected to teach seven classes, plus be the principle

② Mr. S. So I had one free period, to prepare and do all the principles work, which was impossible, so I used to go to work early in the morning and stay late at night, in order to do it all. And then as time went by, it changed a little but and my schedule was lightened and I ended with a three class, no five classes to teach and three periods off. And that's so, I had even more time to be the principle of the school. But really the superintendent was a principle of the elementary school, plus superintendent, and I was the principle of the high school which was 7th through 12th. The classes at that time were running about, oh 20 to 30 kids in each grade level. You graduated anywhere from 19 to 27 kids, depending upon how many stayed in and what drop out age you had and so forth.

Me: What was the most rewarding part of your career do you think?

Mr. S. Oh, I would say when I taught superintendent of National Mine. I became superintendent out there... that was in 1964 and I was a superintendent out there, until we reorganized in 72. Then I went in with the N.S.C.E. School District as curriculum coordinator and I was with them until I retired in 1988. Ya... Right. 1986.

Me: Okay, what did you think was the most difficult part of your job?

Mr. S. Well, I enjoyed teaching and I enjoyed administering. I enjoyed my job, so really nothing was difficult because when you enjoy what you do, it isn't hard to do it, I mean, I wasn't one of these fellows who get up in the morning and hated to go to work. I looked forward to every day and I enjoyed working and there was I don't think anything would fall under my classification.

Me: Okay, um... How did you choose your career?

Mr. S. Well, I was in high school, I just decided that I wanted to be a teacher.

Me: Did you like working with kids and that?

Mr. S. Oh yeah! I enjoyed working with kids and a some-

3) that I thought I could would like to do. and you could help people. And a... after I went in the service and I came and persuade an education. a college education.

Me: Now have you seen the duties of your job change over the years? Do you think they are good changes or bad or...?

Mr. S: Well, education is constantly changing. And you always think you've got something better, then something new comes along and changes that. So I think it will always be changing. And a... we'll never reach the ideal situation. It's like the things you read now, where they want to voucher ~~situation~~ and pick so you can pick your school. And the cities you go to and the school that you ~~wanna~~ want. That you think would give you the best education. So these types of changes, are going to constantly come. So I don't think we will ever reach the ideal situation.

Me: Doing your career we you involved in any special projects or programs?

Mr. S: Right, we were involved with the reorganization of the Rice School District, National Mine, Ishpeming Township, Champion, and so forth. So that was the biggest project I was involved with. It took a lot of time and lots of study before it actually happened. A.... I would say maybe the....

Me: The biggest thing.

Mr. S: the biggest. Cause we study that for many years, before we actually decided to go that route. And before we thought it was best for the kids, the several districts.

Me: Did you receive any ~~special~~ special training for your job?

Mr. S: Right. I attended Northern for four years, then I went to the University of Michigan, Michigan State for an additional year to get my masters degree. Then I continuously went to school beyond that. And I picked up 41 additional hours which would be the equivalent

4) of a doctors degree. If it ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{is} a degree. But my feeling was, to improve myself and my job, I would take these various courses. So I didn't go into the doctors program, I went in to just... an educational program, that would make me better as a teacher as an administrator and as curriculum comator.

Me: How long did that take?

Mr. S: Well, this I take over a life time. The last course I took was back in 1975. In the latter years I didn't take any courses, I just did a lot of reading. Rather than going to college, I took professional magazines and read. But education is a educational thing. You just never know it all. You have to keep reading otherwise you fall behind.

Me: Did any interesting or humorous things happen when you were at getting your teaching career or superintendent?

Mr. S: Many things happened that were interesting and humorous, but nothing really stands out in my mind. Except that it was ~~not~~ a depressing job, a very cheerful job because there were eventful things happening every day. Other words in the classroom teaching. Teachers would tell me things about certain things that happened there. Or incidents that happened in my classroom that were joyful. So it was really a.... a I think its one of the... some teachers look at it as a kind of depressing situation teaching. I look at it as a enlightening happy situation. Because theres always good things going on. I mean you can look for the bad, its there, but you get to look for the good. And praise the good things the children and the teachers would do good things. And it makes life more enjoyable for yourself too.

Me: What were your co. workers like?

Mr. S: Well, they were all... you know when you are an administrator, you have the opportunity to hire the...

5) teachers. So you pick people who you think will be the... do the job for you. And I figure over the years, of all the teachers I was responsible for hiring, which would be over a hundred and some odd over a period of time. A... they were all people that did things for children and loved kids. And therefore I think my association with them was a joyful experience, because they were doing things that I felt were good for children. And that made me feel good. To think that I had a responsibility of hiring them and they were doing a good job for me.

Me: Do any special teachers stand out at all?

Mr. S: I would say that... none really stand out anymore than any others. Because I think they were all... good teachers. And many of them are still in the National Mine School. Teachers that I was responsible for hiring plus up at the high school and Westwood. And I think they are still doing a fine job. A... so there's none that really stand out. I could name teachers I hired, but I mean, saying that they stood out I wouldn't really say that. Because they were all good teachers.

Me: Okay. Now did the community feel about National Mine School, when you were there?

Mr. S: National Mine School was the center of all activity at that time. And a... they loved their school. They hated to see it go into re-organization, but they felt that was the best thing for the children. But they didn't like the idea of giving up their own program, but a... with the educational program, with educating the public and showing them the pros and cons. What would happen if we didn't reorganize.

So I think... I would say we went that route, hated to see that happen. Of course, of course when that happens, then the center of activity now is Westwood High School. It just changed over. So the association with →

Q National Mine, is I don't think would be as great today as it was at that time. Except I think there is still a lot of admiration towards National Mine School. Because the projects and things that have been happening out there.

me: just a little while ago we got an award for being the best school up in...

Mr. S. Right

me: Yeah

Mr. S: And then, you have been involved in this Red dust program for quite a few years and been winning national honors. As long as things like that happen, the school will maintain a very high spot in the community's life. So I hope it continues to... foster this relationship with the community. Because it is really great.

me: About... About how many kids attended National Mine do you think?

Mr. S: Over the years?

me: Um...

Mr. S: Well, when I first got out there, there were about 277 students. In the whole district. That's K-12. And by 1972 the classes were running to be about 308 or so. So there was an increase in the size of the school district during that period of time. A... class size was running around, when we first got there 20 per class and by the end of the time before I when National Mine ~~was out~~ ^{into} of ~~registance~~, I think they were running around 30 students per class. So there be... the school was actually increasing in enrollment, with the area out there. But there was a lot of growth. why I mention that that's been the ~~idea~~ ^{idea} of growth. and that was the cause, of the increase of population out there and the school district growing

⑦ Because so many people were moving out that way.

Me: Did any of your family members or relatives work for National Mine?

Mr. S.: My older brother taught typing out there for about oh... maybe 2 or 3 years. After he got out of service. And I have a sister that taught out there during the war years for 1 year because they were short of teachers and she was available and in the area. So a... two members of my family had been teaching there before I went out there and...

Me: Did they like it as much as you did?

Mr. S.: Right. They enjoyed it because, it was a small school was nice because its much comradship between teachers and staff and the children. You get to know everyone. And that's the advantage of a small school. That's the disadvantage of a school being too large. You don't know every one.

Me: How has the building itself changed over the years?

Mr. S.: Well basically, the structures still. It was... it was still there when I was there, in good condition, and the people that had been there since the Castrodell staff plus the administration have been doing a fine job of keeping it up and added onto it. I would say it was in good shape when I was there, and its still I think it looks in good shape. a... so there as been good maintenance by the staff there. And the school board has seen fit to spend money on it to keep it up.

Me: Have you maintained any contact with any of your co-workers or students?

Q: Well, constantly you bumped into students. And co-workers. You no as you go threw life. Many of them I hate to say I don't recognize as students. For example, if I were to see you two years from now or... you'd change so much, your hair would be different and ? and I wouldn't recognize you, but many students recognize me, because older people don't change as much as younger people, and we tend to look much the same 20 or 30 years later. So when they talk to me, I usually have to say well I'm sorry I don't recall who you are, could you give me a hint. So if they give me some hints, I can figure it out. But otherwise I'm kind of stumped.

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

Mr. S: Ah yes! I would go into teaching. I enjoyed teaching and I hated to retire. I didn't retire because I ~~was~~ disliked work. But I just figured that I was working for Uncle Sam and not gaining myself. And a... why work when you can get the bird and enjoy life. A person never knows how many years they have left. So I decided to retire and from teaching, but I didn't retire because I disliked ~~the~~ teaching, I retired so I could do other things and get some other enjoyments out of life.

Me: Okay. What were your biggest responsibilities?

Mr. S: Well, I think the biggest responsibility is making sure you have a educational program that's comparable to the rest of the area.

9 and that your students are able to, have a program to make them succeed in life. So it's a constant study and a... work towards it to make sure that this would happen. And the teachers you hire and the programs you plan, everything gaining in that direction. Because the reason I was in education, was to benefit kids not to benefit myself. So everything you did was directed in that... towards that end.

Me: Did you ever win any special awards and or been recognized for anything?

Mr. L: Oh yes. I was outstanding administrator back in 1969-70. At the Michigan Education Association gave me that honor. For being the superintendent of the Upper Peninsula that did the most at that time for kids and... the program at school.

Me: I bet you were pretty proud?

Mr. L: Oh yes. I was.

Me: How do you think the students have changed since you've been at National Mine?

Mr. L: Well, really. You know people say kids aren't... aren't as good today as they were... ya know years ago. And that they don't have the discipline, and my feeling is, it's not the children it's the teacher. If you want discipline you can have it. I went back into the classroom... in a 1972. No lets see it wasn't 72 it was 79. And after not have been in the classroom for maybe a 20 year span and then in between. And I was told that you're never going to have the discipline you had before. It's not true. I had discipline I had before.

(10)

The thing is, the kids have to know who's boss in the classroom. And they have to not be your buddy. In other words, no won, children and students were not buddy-buddy with me. I was a teacher, I was an administrator, they were students. And we were never on a first name basis. I was Mr., because I was the superintendent and teacher. And it had to be that way and back in the classroom. It was the same way. When they talked about the janitor, it was Mr. So-and-so. The cook was Mrs. So-and-so. If they didn't show any respect for us, I won't pay any attention to what they were trying to tell me. And then they get to realize, that if we're going to talk to him, we're going to have to use the proper name. So they would do it. But if you let children do things and get away with things, they're going to get away with them. Before long, you don't have no discipline at all. A... I used to give them a lecture the first day of school who was the boss of the room. And I meant it!! And it was that way. If I talked they listened. If they wanted to talk, they had the floor. But we weren't both going to be talking at once. And that's the way I first taught, and that's how I taught in my last years of teaching, and I had no trouble with discipline. Not what so ever. So I think, kids today are the same as they were before. It's the teachers who have changed. When Spock came along and said let kids decide what they want to do and should do, he made a big error. Kids are too young to decide for themselves. Adults have to make the decision, until children become adults, then they make the decisions. I think that's the reason I succeeded in the classroom. Because that was my philosophy.

① Me: ~~Do you think~~ you think the parents help the students as much as when you were in National Mine? Like back then up as much...

Mrs. S: I think they feel ^{like} there are doing it. But today life is so busy. There are so many respons-
ibilities, many women are working, and the husbands are working. You need two jobs to succeed in life and as a result, you can't do everything that your parents did. For example, what mother did for me, when she was not working. What your mother cannot do today for a child because she has all those responsibilities. So I don't think it's intentional but I think there not getting quite as much attention as they got... got in the past. But I'm not criticizing parents because they need to work. You need that extra money and a... if you gonna put a grand tenures kid. That's costing you \$70 to \$80 dollars. And a... you have to have two jobs. In most cases.

Me: What were your fondest memories of National Mine?

Mrs. S: (Thinking) The a... music programs that Dorothy Gleason used to put on.

Me: Yes, I heard a lot about her.

Mrs. S: They were terrific and when I think of the school, I think of those because everyone was involved. All the kids were involved in it. And they were great... production works, musical productions. And a... she was a unifying teacher and really worked hard to do it. And a... it helped build the relationship between the community and the National Mine School. A feeling of its... its there's because, so many kids were involved and a lot of kids were in it.

(B) So you can see what it would do. So it was really an enjoyment to look forward to these several programs that she put on a year, and go there with everyone and wanting to be at the school. Having to turn away people because they couldn't get seats, was really really something. Have you a good feeling inside to think that the parents love the school as much as their kids do.

Me: Did they... what kind of sports did they have when you were there?

Mr. S: Well, they had basketball and had a really good team. National Mine has had really good teams over the years. Patrick Gleason was the coach when I ~~went~~ first went there, and a... Gordi Chern who is now at Westwood was a teacher. He was one of the coaches in the later years there.

Me: Did you win any championships?

Mr. S: Yes, over the years we won championships and they finally got the track program in the last years. So they had basketball and track. Baseball for a few years too.

Me: Oh really?

Mr. S: They were baseball teams in the Marquette County area. So that last for about 10 years they had baseball teams. Then that faded away, and then track came into being...

Me: A bad

Mr. S: Right. Because they could compete better with track, then you could at baseball. It was very expensive, needing a baseball

⑬ diamond and a place to practice and all the equipment you needed. Were with track, it isn't quite as bad. ~~to~~ track became the thing, cross country.

Me: Did they have girls basketball at all?

Mrs. S: Not competitively. Not until later. I think by the time I was going to Westwood, they were starting to get into girls basketball and girls track.

Me: Is there anything you'd like to add or say about National thing?

Mr. S: (Thinking) Well a... I can say that I spent many good years and many good years up there at National Mine school. And a... I enjoyed the students there. I enjoyed the people that I've met there, and a... as I look back to it, I... they were the better years of my teaching life. I... because a... small school and close relationships between people and students, like I say, even though I knew the students well there was still respect. I respected them and I think they respected me. Because when I see them today, I have an eye that always wants to keep watering. He took off his glasses, they are always. You... you know sometimes teachers and everyone else has nicknames. But the kids never call by a nickname. I knew I had a nickname, (la. ha), ~~once~~ once and a while you would hear it, you know they would quietly say it but a... I felt as though they respected me, because they would never call it to my face, and today when I see these stu

(14) dents downtown, I can see many of them I don't recognize. But many of them come up to me and talk to me, and tell me what they doing in life and it really makes me feel good to think that what I did, was a part of getting them where they are. I played a little bit of a role in their life. So are those are the happy... it makes you really feel good. That you didn't waste... all those years of your life working and not accomplishing anything. ² Getting much was accomplished. And at the time you wonder, whether you are getting to these kids or not. But 20 years later, when they come back and tell you what has happened, and let you know that you had a little influence on their life, it really makes you feel good. So I really looked to the years at National Min as ha.. good years, happy years.

Me: Okay, Do you visit National Min off and on now?

M.D.: I haven't been up to the school for quite some time, a... I feel as though that you go there. They think your nosing around.

Me: Yeah.

M.D.: And I really wouldn't be going there for that reason, I hate to make people feel that way, that I'm just nosy and... it's easier to go to a program there and see that then it is just to go up and visit the school and see and walk around

15) and talk to the teachers on things its, its... ya know they think "what's he doing here" so, I stay away, and I read the papers and find out what's happening there, with great interest. I... ya know... interested in these basketball teams and whether Champion wins the big Jr. High Championship or whether National High does. Because I was associated with Champion in my last years of teaching. I was up there for the... 79' threw 88' so I... got... established a relationship with that community as well. So I kind of follow both teams... and ^{sports} activities.

Me: The girls 7th grade basketball were undefeated for the whole year and they got the trophy.

Mr. S: Oh great!

Me: So we got two new trophies in our trophy case at school.

Mr. S: Mr. Quessing was up there at the time that... a he was high school principle in the latter years there, &

Me: Mrs. Honkala is the principle now.

Mr. S: I don't know if Mr. Quessing was there when you were there. Did you go to grade school?

Me: Um, I went to 5th grade there and he was there.

Mr. S: In is latter years then. He was... There's still a quite a few teachers I know up there, I visit and see them around town.

(16) But I don't go up to the school. I still find out what's happening. Like I said reading and talking to them. And I had a good relationship with the non-teaching employees there too. We had some good bus drivers and some nice cooks. In fact we had the best cooks in the Upper Peninsula.

Me: Yeah, I heard that.

Mr. S: ~~There~~ ^{Andrea} Anderson was up there. She was cooking for the senior citizens and National Mine. ~~She~~ last I heard, I think she finally gave that up. But she was an excellent cook.

Me: Wish we had her now!

Mr. S: We had super meals!

Me: The food wasn't

Mr. S: Yeah, see the transport it in now. Once you start anything big and commercial, you lose something. You used to have... Oh things used to be on surplus. Such as prunes. We had prune pie with whip cream on the top.

Me: Oh wow!

Mr. S: You'd have shepherd's pie made with mashed potatoes and corn and ground meat. Everything was so delicious. Because they were prepared right there. Not prepared in quantity, they weren't giving us pyzza. But you know, I like pyzza but, well they give you those kinds of things to eat. We used to have substachel meals ~~and~~ food. And we had it because we had good cooks. Like I said Andrea Anderson was a super woman and super

(17)

cook, and we had good bus drivers out there. Al? Celestino was there for years driving bus. Eino Lippala. So you think back to the days I was there, we had some nice some good people there. And the kids liked these employees as well. So it was kind of a small school. Good home relationship. Good feeling amongst everyone. At least I felt it was that way. — That everyone felt at ease.

Me: Okay. Well thanks you very much, that was very enjoying and interesting.

M.S.: I hope I talked loud enough for your recorder.

Me: Oh I'm sure you did.

* Later on after tape was off, he added that he had 8 years as curriculum coordinator and he had 18 years at National Mine. He also believes that some kids don't recognize their potential early on and waste many years trying to find themselves.