

Me: My name is Amy Reetz and I am interviewing Mr. Ruesing today at his home in Ishpeming Michigan. Today's date is November 7, 1996. Our interview will focus on Mr. Ruesing's memories as a teacher and a principle at National Mine School.

Me: Give me your full name.

Mr. R: My name is Francis John Ruesing

Me: When and where were you born

Mr. R: 2-18-32 in Negaunee.

me: Do you have any brothers or sisters

Mr. R: I have two sisters

me: What are their names

MR. R: Barbara and Margean

me: Who are your parents

Mr. R: Marion and John

Me: When did you begin teaching and where.

Mr. R: I think it was in 58 or 59 and I started teaching in Chatam, Eben, & then I taught there about two years, a year and a half something like that. & then I came to National Mine in 1960 & I taught there until I left in 1987.

me: How long did you have to go to school to be a teacher.

Mr. R: 4 years, yeah 4 yrs

me: Where did you attend school.

Mr. R: Northern Michigan

me: What kind of certification do you hold

Mr. R: Secondary, secondary teaching & elementary teaching certificates
two certificate I hold

me: Who are the people you remember most your first years as a teacher

mr.R: My first years as a teacher on Walter Bath, my first years as a teacher at National Mine I remember Walter Bath he was our principal or our superindentant rather. Kenneth Lindberg was our principal & ken went on to become after Walter left ken became the superindentant then of National Mine School & ken was very instrumental in developing the NICE Community Schools at district. He was one of the drive in forces for that consolidation of the Ashpeming township, National Mine, Ely Township & Champion & that ~~part~~ ^{formed} into the Nice Community school district, That's where you get the NICE from.

me: Do you remember any students?

mr.R: Do I remember any students. I remember quite a few students. It would be kind of hard to I'd have to name them all.

me: Any in particular.

mr.R: Any particular one, no because if I did give you a particular student I'd be showing favoritism & I liked them all.

me: What was a typical day like when you were teaching

mr.R: a typical day when I was teaching I knew we started around eight o'clock & it would end about 5:00 if I was just teaching & when I became coach then it would end sometimes around nine-ten o'clock, eleven o'clock at night & usually in the mornings when I first started teaching we also had to drive the bus, so we'd have to get to school around six o'clock in the morning to get the buses out & go out & pick up the kids. otherwise there wouldn't be no body to teach

You may need to get more detail about this

impt quote part

me: Did you have any other duties than being a teacher.

mr.R: I just got through telling you the others, yes other than the bus driving, the coaching, I did chaperoning & you worked on projects with the kids.

me: were there any restrictions to women being married as teachers.

mr.R: Teachers being married, ah no that was before my time.

me: How did students change from the beginning you started teaching to the end of your teaching career.

mr.R: I don't know if they really did, in the beginnings I guess when

it was just National Mine we were kind of like a family group & then when the school district consolidated?

in to the VICE District & ^{or} for the New High School was built National Mine & Champion had to take on a lot of extra kids

& at that time also there was a lot of construction going on

in our area, the Hilden Mine was being built, the Empire Mine was being built, so we had a lot of ^{construction} ~~trackers~~ people coming into

our district who were there for just a year or two & they came in & they brought in a lot of different values, different

ideas that we had to deal with.

me: How did teaching methods change?

mr.R: Well, I'm not so sure that the methods that they're using today haven't been used back when I was teaching. ~~they~~ maybe we called them something different, but I think the methods are pretty much the same.

include
+ guide

me: what subjects or grades did you teach?

MR.R: I taught sixth grade, I taught ninth grade, tenth, eleventh + twelfth grade. + subjects I taught were history + economics + government + geography + science.

me: Do you remember students with polio or other diseases?

MR.R: No, polio was pretty much under control at this time

me: Did they miss a lot of school from any other diseases?

MR.R: No, very few kids had a disease that would keep them out of school real long period of time.

me: ~~was~~ school called off more often + did you have to make them up?

MR.R: No, school wasn't called off to often + snow days were usually the reason for calling off school + no we didn't have to make them up.

me: What kind of testing was done by the school or state?

MR.R: Well, I think it's about the same testing the state evaluations that they are giving today had their beginning back when I was in school + they're about the same. (18⁺ true)

me: How did you handle discipline in the classroom or out of the classroom?

MR.R: Well I usually handled it when I was teaching, I usually handled my discipline problems myself. When I first started

What was the advice → Follow-up question
I took the advice of some of the older teachers, the administrators + then I just handled my own discipline problems in a way that I felt was good for the student + good for the class. Page 4

me: How did other teachers handle it?

MR.R: How did other teachers handle their discipline, I think that the good teachers took care of their own discipline problems unless they were really a severe problem ~~then~~ but the good teachers handled their own & the others consequently sent them to the office.

me: what are your most vivid memories of teaching?

MR.R: Ah.. the kids & their enthusiasm, & I remember when we were just the National Mine school we used to have a kind of an evening that the kids during, ^{just before} ~~toward~~ the end of the school year when the kids were able to display their work & they always showed a lot of enthusiasm to get their best job done so that it could be, or their best work done so that they could put it on display for their parents & the community to see during that parent night.

include
+
quote

me: what kind of support did you get from the parents & the public & how has it changed?

MR.R: Well, I think we had ah, in National mine I think we had real good support of the people in the district, the people in the community, & I don't know if it has changed, I think they still support the school from what I've been reading.

me: How did the public opinion change since you began teaching till the end of your teaching career?

MR.R: Well, I think I answered that on the previous question, I think we had wonderful support, I mean that's just evident in the Red Dust Project where we involved not only the students, but the student body, but the parents as well & the other teachers in the buildings everybody became involved in the project ^{it} would be flipping pancakes or making pasties so that the kids could be taking that trip ^{down} to D.C., Washington

me: What advice would you give to teachers & students today

MR.R. Flip over that one.

me: What did National Mine look like when you began?

MR.R. National Mine was, the community was pretty much like you see it today except many of the buildings that look old & rundown were not as old & were ~~more~~ more well kept. The school was just the main building, the additions, the addition to the garage, the addition to the school itself were added later.

me: Do you remember Mrs. Gleason's programs? if so describe them.

MR.R. Yes, I remember Mrs. Gleason's programs. They were regular extravaganzas. They would begin right after labor day & they would culminate in the big Christmas program that was held for the students during the day & the parents at night & all the students in the first sixth grades participated in the programs & the kids in, the other students in the High School, in the music, part of the music program the band, they participated in it also. There was great deal of student participation there & it was something that was looked forward to by both the students & the public. National Mine public & the greater National Mine area.

follow-up question - Can you describe one in greater detail?
Page 6.

me: How did students + teachers celebrate Holidays? in school?

MR.R. Pretty much the same way as I think they celebrate them today. If it was a special Holiday like, maybe like Christmas, they'd have their little Christmas parties + Halloween parties go around with their little masks on. They had initiations? in high school + freshman class was coming in. There was always something that the Seniors looked forward to + the freshman dreaded. *you may need more details on this*

me: Did the students ever receive gifts from the teachers?

MR.R. Gifts of education I guess is about all I can say.

me: What areas attend the school? what were the boundaries?

MR.R. What areas attended the National Mine school. The students from Elden township, + the students that lived in part of Ely township, that was a joining Elden township along 581. Then you had students that came from areas out by the fire tower, that was on the Elden road + then ^{the} National Mine proper, the area called Fin Farm + out on 581

me: How has the building changed since you were a teacher?

MR.R. How has the building changed? Well there's been additions to it. We moved because of the impact of students that we received during ~~the~~ the early part of the ~~consolidation~~ ^{foundation} consolidation. We found it necessary to make room for the middle school + therefore we had to find a new building in which to put the elementary students in, so the K-3 students were housed into the new sections of the ~~new~~ ^{our} building + then we took the answers of the questions, then we took the auditorium which was always special to the people of the community + we found it necessary to take that section

MR.R (continued) of the building + make the cafeteria out of it, so that we could serve the, - increase the enrollment of the students that we received. Before that they used to feed the students on the stage with folding tables or in Mrs. Amen's art room. That used to be the art room at one time. Then the 1st - 4th grades ate their lunches in their classrooms.

me: Can you give me details + specifics on how the addition was completed? *include + quote*

MR.R. well, I don't remember the construction company, but in the beginning the building was designed to extend right across the front of the National Mine school + because of short comings in fundings we had to curtail that ~~is~~ + just make half of our original plan to the school building so that's why you only have one section, that it was originally designed to go right across the whole front of the school. *include + quote*

me: How did the community use the building?

MR.R. They'd have homemakers they'd have their meetings up there, P.T.A would have their meetings up there. Community basketball would use the gyms at night + *include*

me: What was the basketball + baseball team like?

MR.R. Well, it was just like you have basketball + baseball today we had the whole program in National Mine, we'd have 6th, 7th + 8th grade games just like we have them today, + then we had our junior varsity squad + then we had our varsity squad + that was the basketball.

mr. R. Then ~~base~~ baseball we had a high school baseball team which was made up of students out of the ninth, tenth, eleventh & ~~the~~ twelfth grades & I started that program at National Mine & we built that diamond, that baseball diamond which is located of to the south east end of the playground area. there, I don't know if you've ever walked back in there, but myself & the team during one summer we built that field, & cleared the field & of all of the things that were back there, & got rid of all the big boulders, & rocks & did our best and put up a backstop & had a baseball field, ^{include}

me. what were the uniforms like?

mr. R. Just like the New York Yankees. (Laughing)

me. what was the mascot like?

mr. R. The mascot back in those days was, when we had our high school it was called a nat, nats & the nat was a mosquito & that was our mascot. Then when we lost the high school & we became kind of a new entity to junior high we developed a new mascot we called a cougar & that's what you have today.

me. where there any other sports?

mr. R. There was crosscountry & there was track.

me. what was the conflict like with the Ashpeming schools?

mr. R. I don't think we had so much of a conflict with the schools as we did with the town, I guess, in the establishment of boundaries & the city of Ashpeming, school districts of Ashpeming wanting to annex the National Mine after it was, they realized that they wouldn't, ^{own} a large body of ~~land~~ iron ore.

Mr. R. in the Tilden Township area that was going to be mined
(continued) & of course that was going to bring a lot of revenue into the
district, revenue

me: What makes National Mine special to you?

Mr. R. It was, it was a bit of choice where I spent many years of
my life & the wonderful people that I came associated
with up there & the teachers I worked with, the many
students that I came across all that made it special
include & growth

me: Did you go on field trips with your class.

Mr. R. Yes, we went on field trips, ~~we~~.

me: Was there a National Mine Yearbook?

Mr. R. There was a National Mine Yearbook, yes & that was always
fun to put together when I was working on that & it was kind
of like a small town, small school yearbook.

me: What were the classrooms like?

Mr. R. They were just about like you see them today but
hardly, when I ^{first} started we didn't have the numbers
of students that you see in a classroom today & but
by the time I left it was starting to get a little
crowded & I'm sure today ^{that} you are really crowded,

me: When did you begin as a principal?

Mr. R. ~~1961~~, ~~1962~~ ^{I don't know} probably in the sixties sometime, I don't remember
exactly when.

me: Where was your first principal career?

Mr. R. It was at National Mine.

me: How long were you a principal?

Mr. R. Until, '86 I think or '87 something like that.

me: What did you enjoy most about being a principal?

Mr. R. I guess, I enjoyed most of everything, I think I became associated with as a principal, the different of coach to ~~dealing~~ dealing with the students, the different of coach dealing with the teachers. It was something that I really enjoyed.

me: As the principal how did you punish kids?

Mr. R. Pretty much the same way I did as a teacher, I even tried to reason with them, & try to get them to understand that what they were doing ^{was wrong} ^{when they were doing it} & try to get them to understand the right way ^{was going to be the easier way to put it.} ^{include quote}

me: How did you aid the teachers?

Mr. R. I guess by being there for them.

me: What was your most difficult part about being a principal?

Mr. R. I rate parents (laughing)

me: How did the Red Dust project start?

Mr. R. I think the Red Dust started when several of us teachers got together and started showing ideas around about ways we could involve students in a district program, in an English program, in an Art program. It was a little bit different than the conventional & this project of Red Dust, ^{this} Oral History. We felt it was a way to go. Sharon, Mrs. Richenolds, had a chance to do a seminar with a group of people that were associated with box fire ^{Foxfire}?, but box fire was an oral history program in the Kentucky, Tennessee region.

me: what are your memories of the Washington D.C. competitions

mr.R: my memories, they were all good memories, the hot days, the noisy auditoriums, the students running around, the pizza parties, + the competition. we competed with students across the United States, students from New York, students from Texas, students from California + the funny thing about it is we did as well as or if not better than those students, so I guess it wouldn't make much difference where you came from it's just the dedication of the teachers + the students. I think we did real well in our competition, ~~we~~ we were always up there in the top three, I think except for our first year + then we felt we should've won.

include + quote

me: In your opinion, why is the Red Dust project so important?

mr.R: I think it was important because it brought the students into contact with the community we had kind of a hands on type thing, it ~~was~~ got students, just like what you're doing now, so that they could get out + talk to people who were, who made the district that they were studying about, who had lived during the periods of the depression, the Korean war, WWI + II, those particular times, things that you read about in books, like sometimes you lose sight of who the people were that were involved in these things + they were the people like your Grandfathers, + Grandmothers, your mothers + fathers. Those are the people

include + quote

me: as National Mine is closing what are your thoughts and feelings?

mr.R: kind of a mixed bag, here I guess. The nostalgia thing you'd hate to see it go because it was always someplace to be at, it was the center of our community of National Mine, but then I guess it changes it ever going we can't stand in the way of progress.

me: Over the years of being a principal & a teacher who are the people you remember most & why?

Mr. R: Well, Ken Lindberg. I remember Ken, he was the principal & superintendent when I first started & him & I had a lot of long talks about the school & about National Mine, about the NICE community schools & I remember. The teachers that were involved in the Red Dust project, were kind of special to me, Mrs. Richards, Mrs. Ameen, Mr. Johnson, Peter Johnson, Mrs. Honkala, her & I had a lot of long chats on Red Dust & what we should do that we didn't do the previous year. What we should do to make our chances at winning better, how many pancakes we should flip, ~~to~~ parties we should make. *include & quote*

me: What was the lasting impact the National Mine school had on the community?

Mr. R: I think it was a source of pride for the community. I think they, at least back in the period of time when I was there, most of the people that lived in the community had gone to National Mine school, so that they had kind of roots there. *impt*

me: Is there anything you would like to say that I forgot to ask?

Mr. R: Oh after fifty-six questions I don't think so.

me: Who were the people you think we should've interviewed?

Mr. R: Who are the people you should interview, I think let's start with ~~Maxine~~ Maxine, do Mrs. Ameen, Mrs. Richards, Mr. Tasson & go right down the line. I think Ken Lindberg, if possible,