BLACK RIVER FALLS HIGH SCHOOL 1952

FALLS HISTORY PROJECT 2004

THE FALLS HISTORY PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

How do we actively engage students in the study of history? This is the ongoing challenge that history teachers must face at the secondary level. Historian David Blight of Yale University suggests that "all historical experience . . . must be imagined before it can be understood." One way to engage students and their imaginations more fully is to connect them to the actual process of "doing" history and relate that process to an increased understanding of their local environment. Indeed, the story of Black River Falls and the surrounding area provides a rich and diverse landscape for historical research.

OVERVIEW

The Falls History Project was initiated during the 2001-02 school year with the intention of promoting history education at BRFHS and connecting our students more authentically to the history of our region. As a symbolic beginning for the project, we established a permanent display related to Corporal Mitchell RedCloud, Jr., a BRFHS graduate who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for heroism in the Korean War. His life story offers a compelling example of the power of memory in our community. Our intention is that the project will be ongoing and that it will involve a number of teachers and students. 2004 marked our third full year.

COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT

INTERNSHIP

An advanced senior history student serves as a department intern and helps develop the project each year. This is designed for a student that has completed AP US History and has a particular interest in history.

ORAL HISTORY WORK

The central component of the project involves the gathering of oral history. The focus of the interviews depends on the particular aspect of local history that we are dealing with at the time. We have had a different focus each year. The intern first researches the topic under consideration and then conducts four interviews. The interviews are taped, transcribed, and ultimately compiled in a publication that is made available to the public.

RESEARCHING LOCAL DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Each intern is introduced to the sources of history available at the "Jackson County History Room" of the BRF Public Library, particularly the microfilm archives of local newspapers. Preliminary research is conducted in the History Room.

THE FALLS HISTORY PROJECT ARCHIVE

In the fall of 2003 we established an archive to house the materials that are being gathered in our research. The archive is located in the high school LMC and the materials are made available for our younger history students for primary research. Over time, we expect the archive to become a rich source of local history for future generations of students.

THE FALLS HISTORY PROJECT WEB SITE

We have developed a FHP web site to document our work with the project. The web site includes numerous photographs and brief summaries. It can be accessed at the Social Studies Department homepage, accessed from the high school page.

PAST AND PRESENT EDITIONS

2001-02 PROJECT

Andi Jo Cloud was our first intern. Her work focused on World War II. She interviewed local veterans, including Bob Teeples, Elmo Johnson, Vilas Johnson, and Floyd Pratt.

2002-03 PROJECT

Kristen Boehm was our second intern. The focus of the project in 2003 was on Black River Falls in the 1930s. Kristen interviewed Ozzy Moe, Bob Pratt, Lillian McManners, and George Brudos.

2003-04 EDITION: BLACK RIVER FALLS IN 1952

In recent years, the early 1950s have become an increasingly popular landscape for American historians. Once overlooked as a "sleepy and uneventful" slice of our past, the 50s now loom as a politically and culturally important moment in modern history. This year we set out to find the early 1950s Black River story. We especially focused on the lives of young people in 1952 by interviewing three residents who were juniors or seniors in that year, and one teacher and coach who was in the early years of a long tenure at Black River Falls high school. As you will learn in reading the transcripts of the interviews, we found an incredibly interesting story. We are deeply thankful to those that were involved in our project this year!

Our 2003-04 intern was senior Jill Janke. Jill established herself as an outstanding social studies student throughout her four years at BRFHS. She completed AP US History as a junior and completed the internship for the Falls History Project during the second half of her senior year. She will be attending UW-Eau Claire in the fall of 2004.

THIS YEAR'S INTERVIEWEES

BASIL HOLDER: INTERVIEWED NOVEMBER 25, 2003
GENE AND JANET KROHN: INTERVIEWED DECEMBER 8, 2003
SAM YOUNG: INTERVIEWED DECEMBER 15, 2003
RICHARD FALDET: INTERVIEWED DECEMBER 16, 2003

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you wish to have further information concerning the Falls History Project, contact Paul Rykken at Black River Falls High School.

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Basil Holder

H: Basil Holder, born in Black River Falls, Wisconsin on April 4, 1934. The ice went out of the river that night.

R: [laughs] ok.

H: And I guess that was the only two significant events of the day.

R: Where did you go to public school?

H: Black River Falls

R: What building did you start out in?

H: Well, we started in what is now the union building, was our grade school, through sixth grade. Seventh and eight grade we attended the middle school, attended what is now the administration building, went to school there and then senior high school, of course, in about two thirds of what is now the Third Street Elementary, was our senior high.

R: Ok, there was an addition put on there, but that wasn't until 1957.

H: No, that was when we were out of there.

R: But the gym that's there.

H: Yeah, we were there, that was our gym. Yeah, it was an interesting, um, that whole building complex is kind of interesting. I don't know for sure when Union place was built, um '85, 1885, I think. Then in 18- the 1890s, there was across the nation a huge depression, worse than in the '30s as I understand it and um, Black River, it affected all states, and Wisconsin was totally affected and Black River was totally affected of any town in Wisconsin because the lumber industry had gone done the river, so to speak, no pun intended, and our next claim to making a living was going to be out of the iron ore. And a mine was opened and the mine went out of business the second night after it opened due to a fellows having a party and not keeping the logs burning under the um—German money was involved and they didn't make a nickel. But anyway, our industry was down the drain. But the whole country was in this depression and um, what happened, and by the way cholera and measles and scarlet fever these and things were rampant but in Black River Falls we had a newspaper editor, George Cooper, and his son, wonderful writers, and also happened to have a wonderful photographer named Vance Quake

University of Wisconsin gave the address. The president of Stevens Point normal came over, the president of River Falls normal came down, the Secretary of Education of the University of Wisconsin came up and when you think those days were horse and buggy days you can imagine—I mean, the state really took a look at Black River Falls and their commitment to education and I think its been pretty much that way, historically.

R: What year did you graduate from high school?

H: 1952

R: And can you give us just a really quick capsule of what you did after graduation? So we can get a sense of who you are.

H: Yep, um let's see, after graduation, um, I went to La Crosse, to college, and we had a football team were lucky enough to play in a bowl game, I thought that was wonderful, I would never get back to Florida, and so um, I read in the La Crosse paper that the Stout Symphonic singers were going to Florida to I transferred to Stout, you can see I was a pretty serious student at the time, and graduated from Stout and then was in the Army, we were all drafted in those days and in the army, um-- stationed in Washington D.C. and took a teaching job across the river in Arlington County, so I taught in Arlington, got mixed up in um, things with the school district and enjoyed it very much working with the teaching associations and one thing led to another and I got into industry—, got working with a annuity company in Washington and then pretty much went into business for myself and spent the next thirty years, or whatever it is, teaching and financial planning around the country, so that's kinda what I've done.

R: And when did you come back to Black River?

H: Well, I don't think I ever left, you know, in my heart of hearts. But we came back, I wish my wife were here to tell me. Um, I think when oh, thirty, thirty years ago, thirty-two ago.

R: The sixties?

H: Yeah.

R: Ok.

H: Yeah, came back

R: Well, were going to go back and talk a little bit about growing up in Black River.

H: Oh, ok.

R: And I guess my first thing that I want to ask you is what your first political or historical memory is? What's the first thing that just stands out?

H: In my mind, about something that happened?

R: Yeah kind of a bigger thing.

H: That really attacked me?

R: Yeah.

H: Ok. The biggest thing that happened to me in my mind that I remember and I can tell you where I was at the time, I was riding my bicycle by the Catholic Church and my brother came up and said Uncle Sam had declared war upon Japan. And I remember and see being born in '33,'34 as most of us in the class of '52 were, remembering little of seven or eight years, boom.

R: Right. So that would have been December 8th, '41?

H: Yeah, 1941.

R: Seven years old.

H: Yeah.

R: Ok, and so you were really, the forties is really your time of growing up in Black River Falls?

H: Yeah. Time of memory and imagination.

R: Yeah, now what, if you could describe it in a few sentences, what was it like as a kid in Black River Falls in the 1940s? What was your life like?

H: It was safe that's for sure. If you were out and it was cold, go to the first porch and they'll take you in and call your mom. It was that kind of—and you were safe, and your peers, and there wasn't anything organized. We didn't have Little League or these things. And when I say nothing was organized, nothing was organized like that, there were no uniforms but everything was organized. Well, take Little League, take baseball for example. Every single Saturday, the kids met at 8:30 at the Fairgrounds, which was the only diamond in town and Charlie Siefert, good athlete, and Bob Ibinger, good athlete, always chose, they were the best two ballplayers. Throw a bat and chose. And every single kid got chosen. We played um, they had a--deep short and shallow center and in other words, there would be sixteen, seventeen—everyone that showed up played. Kids that had gloves left them on the base or left them on the field when they came in. The bigger kids had three strikes you're out, four balls you walk and the younger kids; the youngest kids got to swing until they hit it. And there weren't fights and there weren't rivalries and it just seemed to me—and there weren't parents and maybe that was a blessing. Maybe that was a blessing. There wasn't the rivalry. That's what it was growing up.

R: So did you—let's just talk about that for a minute with baseball, did you follow professional baseball or--?

H: Oh sure we did. Everybody had on the radio.

R: Ok.

H: And we were all—everyone was a Cub fan, there were no Brewers and there were no and the Sox, for heaven's sakes, were on the South side.

R: So you were listening to WGN Radio?

H: WGN Radio and the Cubs went the World Series in 1945, haven't been back. They lost in four-straight games to Detroit. But I do remember the idol Stan Hack, probably shoulda been in a wheel chair, he

was their third baseman, Phil Cavarretta out there. They—I remember that I begged my mom and dad and they finally bought me some Andy Lockjaw Liniment. Andy Lockjaw was the trainer of the Cubs and I rubbed that on everything that hurt and a lot of things that didn't.

R: [laughs] Now did you get the chance to ever go to a game in person as a kid.

H: No. Never did.

R: So this was all on the radio, kinda distant.

H: Yeah, it was all radio.

R: Did you follow them also in the newspapers?

H: Sure.

R: In the box scores?

H: Yeah, well I had a friend John Hoagenson, two doors down, who would read to me early on and then I got to read for myself, but, no we-- when I got to high school, I think junior high actually, I did get to see a lot of Wisconsin games and saw a few Packer games. But as a child growing up, no.

R: Ok. What else in the forties, then from that period, did kids do in town? I know you mentioned baseball.

H: We played war. Young kids played war and I was the youngest in my group so I was always the Japanese prisoner, not good. Chinese water torture and things like that but we did follow the war, we did take a lot about the men in service, we did lose—one of the fellows we lost, a Hagen boy who had been a lifeguard who the Miles Hagen Post is named, one of the fellows, named for. He was killed in a submarine. And he could swim three times across the pool back and forth underwater so all of us kids did not believe for a minute that he was dead, we knew he would be coming back, we knew he could hold his breath—and get to an island. Yeah and we talked about it. Those--that's where our imaginations--I'll tell you something. These kids that saw 9/11 on TV, I don't know where they are in their head or what because I just think we didn't see a thing. But nips bombers, krauts, grenades, amputees--that was our vocabulary and we played these games and where are these--what an impact that had.

R: I was going to—that was going to be my next question for you.

H: Oh.

R: And that's the memories of World War II. And especially--

H: Vivid, very vivid.

R: And how it was impacting the town.

H: Ok, in town it was neat. We, the adults, I think, felt relatively safe, there were no um, you know the box factory being, probably the, [laugh]—not a target of any bombers. We were convinced that they would want to bomb our dam because we sent electricity we understood to La Crosse. We had defense stamps, the ah, and so you know—the ladies didn't get nylons, the men didn't get gas for their cars, there was no lard as I recall. There was no—there were no rubber products. People had ration books, A, B, and C as I recall. Ands the defense—the

people who—the ration board, set up shop in the back of the old fire hall, which was where First Federal is today. And as you walked into the fire hall, on the right hand side, Chris—Chris somebody, a German fellow, had—fixed shoes there. The fire trucks were back here and they were kinda, they were moved to the front so they could get out in a hurry, but that's where the ration board was.

R: So there was a sense of sacrifice…

H: Oh, there was—my father was a fellow that we would have an alarm, air raid alarm, and my dad would go out and I can't remember what his title was, but he would go out to make sure that everyone had turned their lights out or at least had their shades pulled. And a lot of woman in town, I can remember mother, made sweaters; I don't know how many hundreds of sweaters she made during the war. There was a big Red Cross [inaudible] that would try to bring home boys if they could if somebody died or something. I had a cousin who was a—quite trapper, Jim Spreaster (?) who went to high school here, his dad, who had been a mailman for years, and my uncle, they trapped beaver and there was no limit on beaver, and I can, we have pictures of the Spreaster house being covered with beaver pelts three, three times that one winter, I think it was '42, they used the beaver pelts for the lining of aviators' caps. So yeah, and when somebody would die, a gold star would be put in the window. And you had a star in your window if you had a boy in service and then you had a star, a gold star and little flag if they were missing or if they were killed. I remember those things vividly.

R: Sure. And they were having an effect on you as a kid and I mean it's even affecting you probably even today.

H: Oh, yeah.

R: And when—I guess another question that comes to my mind is somebody in Black River today, if you took them back to Black River in the forties, what would be, physically, really different about the town?

H: The town stopped—the town stopped where now the town starts. The town stopped just across the bridge, the town stopped. The town stopped at Eighth Street, there was nothing by the Golf Course, we camped there. Well that's basically, the physical boundaries were just totally different. This was a field, and um, where we're sitting today was just fields then and I think that the, what we called in those days a poor farm, I think that they worked this field, I'm not sure. There was no going over the bluff; Spaulding's Ridge was [inaudible]. So the first thing that everybody would notice was—well where the Lunda Trail is, is a lot of it, was out-of-town in those days.

R: Ok. And how about the businesses, how about the downtown?

H: Well, the downtown, I'm sure it just changed drastically after the war when the boys came home. We all—their all called 'the boys'. But when, in the forties, during the war when I was growing up, I remember that, what I remember most about downtown is you shopped—the grocery shopping was done with the butcher, and Mr. Pratt, and his grocery store with Mr. Hard in their grocery store with whatever it was.

R: People obviously wouldn't go drive to go shopping.

H: Oh no, no.

R: People would shop here.

H: Yeah, yeah.

R: So the businesses were thriving?

H: Oh I don't know. I was too young to know if they were thriving, they were certainly um…

R: Like, for example, could you remember how many shoe stores there were?

H: Well, let's see, there was Larkin's was the big one, I think and um and ah…

R: Was Ozzie Moe's…

H: Ozzie Moe's shoe store was—came in after the war and he kinda took over—that's what I say, when the fellas came back from the war there were five or six merchants that came to town, like Louie Gardipee, for example, that kinda turned the place upside down. Before that it was more a village. After that we thought we were a city.

R: Ok, then that's when you were just getting into junior high school…

H: And high school. Yeah. And that's when you kind drop out of what's going on.

R: Sure.

H: That's when the—you don't kinda—you're not a part of the world. I think the world kinda revolves around you, you know, and I think it's still that way.

R: [laughs] Well let's, well let's… you've had a little chance to look some of the pictures at the annual.

H: The Breeze, yeah.

R: And what were trying to do partly in our project this year is to get a sense of the place that we would call Black River Falls High School from the vantage point of fifty years later.

H: Ok.

R: So I am going to run down kind of a list of things here just to see what you can—first of all, what's your impression or your memory of kinda the general attitude of students at the time, about school?

H: Well…

R: Anything you can generalize?

H: Yeah, I can generalize is that we were in school to learn and the teachers were absolutely king and queen. And if you were in trouble at school the news would get home and you would really be in trouble at home. I don't mean certain families, I mean universally. So there was that huge difference. Another huge difference is, I think that, I can't remember who we might have had. I know my brother was in '48, I think he was the only fella that drove a car in '48 and that's 'cause he worked in the country. But there were so few cars and now by the end of the fifties I think that had changed a lot, but early fifties, very few people—a lot of the farm kids came in, in trucks but an awful lot of the… Sam Young came to town and he had things…I think he talked to Rotary or Lions Club whoever it was, and got them to institute this program where we could go

out and get these big lineman and have them and Rotary Club gave them a ride home after, after football practice so that's what I mean, kids didn't have cars. So those are—that's, that's big. Those are the biggest differences.

R: Do you have a favorite teacher from high school that stands out [inaudible]?

H: No, I've got…

R: Too many?

H: Well catch me five minutes from now, and I'll have another one. But some of the absolutely standout teachers were choral teacher Verna Keefe, just fantastic. Robert Gruetzman, our band teacher was just, just unbelievable.

R: What made these people so good.

H: They were so interested in what they were doing and they absolutely demanded they you do at well as they wanted it done. Sam Young…Sam Young, I'll mention him again, in football, we didn't do much in football as for as I know forever, Sam Young came to town and all of a sudden we were expected to win in football. And I don't mean you just you win, it's the way you carried yourself, it's the way you acted, the pride you took. R: Do you think that was just because of who he was, his person, the person of this coach or was he doing something specifically to make that happen? Can you remember that? H: Well, yeah, I can remember that and it's both of those things and it's everything else you get out of being… doing well at something.

R: Ok.

H: But Bob Gruetzman did the—now I was lucky enough to play for Sam and I was lucky enough to play in the band. And quite frankly, in my book, I didn't grow any more from catching a pass or being, you know, some kind of a…outstanding— having a good game, as, I didn't gain any more from that than playing a baritone duet with Tommy Jones at the State. I mean, but it's the, it's what these people could take you to.

R: Right.

H: I think that's so exciting.

R: That's interesting. Kids of the fifties, and I know we generalize and of course there's always a danger in that, but they are often viewed as being kind of between the lines, you know, not very rebellious, conforming, sometimes called the silent generation, have you heard that expression?

H: Yeah, I think that's true.

R: Does that square with what you…

H: Oh yeah, I think so and I think there are valid reasons for that our parents were products of the Depression, and so we were indeed, too. We were Depression babies, you might say, '33, '34, wasn't until the war turned things around and then it was the war that shaped our—and both of those events pulled the community and the nation, I assume, together more than anything, except I saw it after 9/11 again, I saw it for a few weeks but people were really together on stuff and that shaped us all. And then, in the fifties, a lot of things happened after the war, got the chemical industry, what are we going to do? Well, we'll make plastic and we'll make lawn

fertilizer, and we'll do all that stuff that Rachel Carson had to tackle, you know, in the sixties. But we just conformed and we were—our parents were so happy not to be starving and not to be killing that we were just kinda, go get 'em tiger. Just enjoy.

R: Do you see…

H: We enjoyed the youth they never had and we excelled in it, I think that's what it was. And we were safe and we were coddled and we were quiet because, what the hell, it's going our way.

R: Sure. What did kids do when you were in high school, now we're going to focus on that, what did they do for entertainment in Black River? What kinds of things?

H: Movies were the big things. We didn't have television.

R: Do you remember any of the movies from that period?

H: Oh, all of them. And if we had a girlfriend, lucky enough to have that and lucky enough to drive our parents' car once in a while, we would really step out and go to the Rose Theater in Melrose. Even if there was a rotten movie we would go there because there was a chance to drive the car. I think the kids almost all kids double dated. There were a lot of things that went on at people's houses.

R: Was the movie—what was the theater was called?

H: Well, there was two in town, in Black River, we were the big time. We had the Falls, where it still is today, that's the second one. Over on Main Street we had the Avalon (?) and if you go down and look at the right hand side of Main Street going towards the bridge you will see the facade of Main Street it was on that first block between Water Street and First Street on the right hand side. And um…

R: Had that originally been an opera house?

H: No.

R: Oh.

H: In the next block up, where now the building is vacant, I think. That's in there now, but that's where the opera house was. But I do recall the opera house.

R: Oh, because I've seen that in literature.

H: Yeah, it had steps going up.

R: And they used to have graduation there.

H: Yeah.

R: How about any other local hot spots? Or did, what about Hatfield? Was that in the picture?

H: Well Hatfield was, for a few, who liked roller-skating and Hatfield was where we talked about the Neillsville guys.

R: Ok [laugh].

H: And I'm sure they talked about the Black River guys. But Hatfield was a—in the later fifties, more of what you would call a hot spot. But remember hotspots in our day was, mostly like, you know, like cokes and stuff. It was not like a…

R: So was there much…

H: And beer, I think like maybe for some.

R: Now I was going to ask that was there much alcohol use among kids?

H: I understand, my class—as a matter of fact, at my fiftieth reunion, I found out that my class had a beer party. And I was the only one, evidently, in my whole class that wasn't told about it and I know that I wasn't told about it because they know that I would have ratted. It would not have taken—I was very, [laughs] anti-beer.

R: [laughs] Ok, can you… I asked you this a minute back, but can you remember any particular movies that stand out?

H: Well, just about everything with Humphrey Bogart and just about—well of course all the westerns. As a youngster, we were really big with, back to the forties, but really big through the forties with um, the Bowery Boys and Tom Mix and of course the big cowboy fight between whether it be Roy Rogers or Gene Auker would be king of the cowboys. And then we got into the fifties and it was Casablanca, and it was more war movies and a lot of them propaganda value. But…

R: Can you remember who had the first TVs in town? Can you remember when you first started to see TV?

H: Well, the first time I saw television was at Tom Mills' house I'm sure. And it was mostly snow. But the TVs did come in and play a big part in our lives because of the McCarthy hearings and all that were there and also because of the first, in '52, being the first presidential campaign that was on television.

R: And do you remember, like when did your family get a TV?

H: Oh, I don't know, sometime in the sixties, I suppose.

R: Oh, so later than this.

H: Yeah, we were mostly still with the thirty-three and a thirds and classical music.

R: And did, I want to go back and kinda focus a little bit more in on 1952.

H: Ok, right on 1952. I'll…

R: and as you look back on your senior year of high school,

H: Senior year.

R: What were the most exciting experiences in you had.

H: Well I was in love.

R: Ok.

H: So every experience it was good, bad or indifferent evolved around Judy Gardipee. And we, she was a wonderful majorette, and so she led the band and that's why, kinda why Gruetzman let me back into the band because the majorettes had to carry string bases and I think he knew that if I was in band I could carry Judy's string base. But there were a lot of kids that did go, you know, we called it going steady and that was my date. So everything that was exciting or not exciting, she was involved in it. But we had a football team that was good my junior and senior year and we had a basketball team that was good my junior and senior year we had—and it went on to grow and be much better. We had a band and an orchestra and a choral group that was great. When I got to college—when I got to high school they were already great because of tradition that those people had established.

R: I saw the picture in there of the orchestra and that was really amazing.

H: Yeah, it's astounding. A hundred piece.

R: Huge, huge size.

H: Yeah. Well, in those days, Wisconsin, athletically, and on the music and on the drama, and the speaking, public speaking side, they were not categorized there wasn't a division one, two three, four. Everybody was the same, same division. On the sports side, and maybe on the other side too perhaps, the Milwaukee, the Milwaukee city schools, didn't partake in our state tournaments.

R: Ok.

H: But in Black River now, sports wise and music, drama or whatever, would end up usually going to Eau Claire for our tournaments. Eau Claire had one high school; well they had Regis, catholic high school which was not that big and then one high school Memorial which was a big school because there was no North, the only other big school in our territory was Superior. And so if there was anybody that would go to head to head in competition it was those two, far as size wise. But we pushed Eau Claire for first in the, first place in marching and in music each any every year I was in high school, as a matter of fact walked away with the trophy, I think, three of the four years I was in high school against Eau Claire Memorial, that's how good we were. And the community supported music and supported the band, the orchestra and the choral groups. We didn't have Madrigal, we didn't have that, but we, or excuse me, they may have had that. We didn't—I was trying thinking of the theater groups. We didn't have the theater like they do now, musical theater.

R: Do you remember how you felt about the time of graduation? Were you excited, sad were you…?

H: I was ready to graduate. But I, again, going back to Judy Gardipee, I didn't want to go very far away. That's why La Crosse was it. I wanted to be a suitcase student.

R: Ok, and then just if you could give us just a couple of things about the class of 1952, what's notable about that group? Did they stand out in any way?

H: Well, I think we, in our own minds, we stand out in every way. Now did we stand out anywhere and have we, yeah looking at this annual, I think the thing that stands out that most about our class is that almost every five years or I believe every five years, we have gotten together. And there's huge turnout.

R: And it has continued?

H: It continues. We had our fiftieth get-together last year and the only excuse really for not showing up is having died. And that's even only accepted after reluctance but we do honor that. But we show up, we get back together. And the people who come as husbands and wives are astounded. Wow, what's going on here? We have a real close, we have a real friendship I think.

R: and that apparently was fostered when you were in school.

H: Oh, of course, yeah.

R: Ok, I'm going to—let's broaden just a little bit here. 1952 was an election year.

H: Yes.

R: So I would like to know, in your memory now, what your impression was of Dwight Eisenhower.

H: I thought he was, he was a hero. He was a hero. Eisenhower was, McArthur and Eisenhower and Patton, anybody, Bradley, except I didn't know how he got to be a general because he was so short but, Omar Bradley. And then of course they didn't just have to be, I mean, Monty was a hero, I mean, you know, the English general, every general on our side. And Rommel was a healthy adversary and respected by most, except, it was kinda interesting I think, except the Japanese now. The Japanese for whatever reason, and I sure this came through the national media, we did not respect the Japanese, I'm sorry.

R: What about Adlai Stevenson? Does he stand out?

H: Adlai Stevenson does not stand out in my mind from that era. He's stands out much more, in my mind from later on when I got to know more about the man.

R: Were kids in high school, were they into politics at all?

H: No.

R: Nothing.

H: Not that I know of.

R: Did you kinda go through the election in the fall, did you talk about it, did you have a mock election did you do anything…

H: Yeah I think we had a mock, you know, in maybe a history class or Civics class with somebody and then it got as far as, you know, somebody probably told the principal who won but I mean, we didn't get into it a lot. I wish we had.

R: Can you recall in your history classes, did you talk much about current events?

H: It depended of course on what teacher you happened to have. I noticed that we didn't an awful lot in high school. And we should have, boy we should have.

R: Yeah. What was the general attitude, again, in your memory now, of students toward the Korean War? How did that play?

H: Oh boy, things get so run together back here and so complicated it's hard to give you any kind of a really good answer here. When I say that we didn't discuss the war much in high school, we did discuss the war; but we just, it was just these generalized things and here's what's going on. But that, at home, in our home it was discussed and at the supper table; it was discussed and in those days everybody had supper together. And so it was covered a lot but just in a different form of school. School was reading, writing and arithmetic.

R: Sure. Was there a different feeling about Korea, though, than World War II?

H: Without any question. And I think that this whole, that everything started to fall apart somewhere our heroes started to have freedom fighting with the Korean battle and certainly McCarthy did as we got a little older, McArthur I should say. McCarthy was not. When I grew up we absolutely trusted the government. And our senators, like Stevenson, were statesmen, and Humphrey and whoever. If you were in Congress you were an honest fellow. Lester Johnson from our town and Merlin Hall before him. If you were in the Senate you were honest. The president of the United States from FDR, who the only one I ever really knew, to Truman who was the next one I ever, these people were totally above board. There was no skullduggery anywhere in politics. Well by time we had gotten, after the war and got into the Korean Conflict, we found out about this whole McCarthy thing and Red [inaudible], this whole Red Scare, we started to kind of question institutions.

R: What do you remember about Harry Truman as a kid? You would have been a high school kid when he was president. Was he making any kind of impression?

H: I remember Mr. Truman, I remember that we were all, Mr. Truman was a sentence at the presidency was a real bomb, it was not going to work because God had died, FDR had been everything to everybody and he was such a, and here comes this guy Truman, but Harry who went out for his walk and he talked to reporters, and the buck stops here, gained everybody's respect so fast. And he drops two atomic bombs, which I think most people would have talked about, and didn't blink an eye, he gained every—so fast, I think Mr. Truman became our president, and he was certainly was going to be defeated in the next election. But he was not and that shows you how quickly he came on, Thomas Dewey couldn't whip him.

R: And jumping ahead a little bit from that, do you remember how people reacted when he fired McArthur?

H: Yes I do.

R: What kind of reaction was going on?

H: It was two, it had two phases. Number one, our worst fears had been realized; this guy should not be in Washington D.C.

R: Truman.

H: Truman. Two strong breaths later, it was, he did exactly the right thing. Nobody had the right to challenge the President of the United States.

R: Now do you remember adults talking about that?

H: Yes I do.

R: And was it, were they generally supportive of Truman or were there people that were really, really angry at Truman over this?

H: I think there were people, I think almost all of the vets were angry at Truman but then I think that was, you know, a one beer night. And then people said no. We fought wars for this, we fought this war for this reason, exactly reason. And then Truman, too, there were some papers that were courageous enough to spell out the whole deal, I mean, here's why.

R: Ok. What about, and this one I know, this gets clouded in a lot of layers of memory that come after, but what can you remember from that period of time about the Red Scare and how you were reacting to it? How did kids react to that?

H: First of all, I think the first thing, we were kind of nervous about, I mean we heard the talk was at the dinner table again. And of course, you know, in those days you elected your senators no matter what and of course Mr. McCarthy was our senator, an Appleton boy, so he must be all right. There were so many crosscurrents that made us think that there really were Communists.

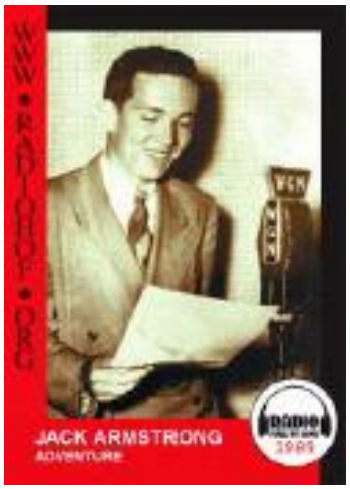
R: Do you remember any specific things in Black River? Were there evidence of the Red Scare?

H: I knew a lot about it as a kid so that means there was a lot of evidence. There were Commies everywhere.

R: Do you recall, now I'm going to raise something that I have seen in the papers from that period, that up where the water tower is now, they had an observation post. Does this ring any bells? They had a group that would watch the skies for Soviet aircraft?

H: Yes.

R: Do you remember this?



H: Yes I do. And we had, as a matter of fact, we had a little, you know, like a racing shield, like in woodwork, we had this racing shield and you would hold this racing shield and you could hold it up and it had circles and if the plane fit in this circle you could say, oh, it's at thirty-five thousand feet and this is at forty thousand feet. And I remember that. As a matter of fact we were ready for that because during the forties when the war was on, we listened to the radio programs from five to six, Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy Tom Mix, Captain Midnight, and who was to from five forty-five to six, I

can't remember right now, [inaudible] anyway they would
have these things that you could get like, you know for
ten cents in Ovaltine and you could get a secret decoder ring and one things was it had mirrors on it so you could flag planes. I mean, everyone was cashing in on the war.

R: Do you remember…

H: So we were ready. The Red Scare came up and we were ready.

R: Do you remember, were you a comic book reader?

H: Yes.

R: And I've seen old comic books from that period that have a lot of Red Scare themes in them. How about, we can't do this interview without talking a little bit about Joe McCarthy. And you brought him up already. For example, I look at election statistics from 1952, he won Jackson County in that year.

H: Yeah.

R: What a, we have such a weird picture of him today and I guess I am more interested kinda to get what your sense of him as a young man.

H: Well, I thought he was totally [inaudible]. I knew myself that this guy was a crusader and for the right.

R: So even a good thing.

H: Oh he was wonderful. Because remember now we had the atom bomb and the Russians had it and we had some scientists that were Communists. As a matter of fact there were a lot of Communists. They admitted it, I'm a Communist. But they were Communists in the thirties, they weren't fifties. But Mr. McCarthy came along with the atom bomb and the Soviet Union just getting it and Soviet Union just developing the hydrogen bomb and the Soviet Union and the Cold War redeveloping, I mean, there was a real conflict of personalities here, of national personalities and it was coming back and here comes McCarthy and he just a really big liar, a huge liar, two hundred and five, whatever, he's waving this laundry list, Communists in the state department but we believed him. Fifty-two, with television just coming into its own, he would have won in '50 and '51 but I don't know if it was '52 or '53, probably, maybe it was '53, that the army hearing McCarthy started and now this man was exposed for the world and the wise and for a just a wild journey he was. He wouldn't have won in '54. As a matter of fact he was out of the business, by you know. He wasn't the reason for the Red Scare. He wasn't the Red Scare. He was the guy that thought, he was guy, well, if you don't mind my saying, he was the Rush Limbaugh of the period. He was a guy who capitalized on what people believed and what he thought.

R: Exploited?

H: Exploited, yeah.

R: Interesting. Did you have an opportunity in that, in the fifties, to see anyone that we think of today as being kind of famous, that you saw in person?

H: Yeah, Elvis.

R: Really. Where did you see Elvis?

H: Oh yes. Well my psychology class at Stout went up to Minneapolis to see Elvis.

R: Oh my goodness.

H: My whole class went up.

R: Psychology, now why your psychology class?

H: Well we hadn't been down there but there was a lot of psychology going on [laughs]. Whole lot of shakin' going on.

R: And what year would that have been.

H: That would have been fifty, fifty-five probably.

R: My goodness, so that's early then.

H: It was early on, but he had been on the Ed Sullivan Show, I think yes, he had that year he had been on the Ed Sullivan Show who else famous had I seen? Yes, at the county fair I saw the world's fattest woman, now this was going back to the forties the world's skinniest man. We saw quite a few heroes right in '52 because of the people who had run for president, I think of [inaudible] especially on the Democratic side, came to town to campaign for a member of Congress, Lester Johnson was running for Congress so we saw the first heroes of television. We had a wrestler in this town, Jack Guy, who was world famous in my book because he was a world heavy weight wrestling champ. He had wrestled on TV from Minneapolis and I believe he threw Brock Lagerski (?) out of the ring, you know television just coming into its own. And so they were going to have the KSTP wrestling champ and they invited Jack Guy up, not Jack Guy, yeah Jack Guy, I think it was Jack Guy.

R: And then he ended up staying in Black River, or, he was from here, ok.

H: Yeah, he grew up here. And then he had the supper club, Cherokee Club. That was his wife, was an Indian. Beautiful lady.

R: Now what about, your interaction with or in the school, I guess that's another topic I want to bring about, with Native American or Indian kids. Were there Native American kids in the school?

H: There sure were. There were.

R: So you kinda grew up, like kids are today in Black River.

H: Well, I think it's a lot different. And I can't really tell you why it was so much, except the Native Americans were kind of a quiet bunch and I remember them, the ones who wanted to be, were outstanding students. Especially in art some in music, of course my heroes were in athletics. Billy Blackdeer was my, one of my absolute heroes. I think he was probably the best natural athlete I ever saw. But I remember surely, after [inaudible] well I can't remember their names now and I wish I could, that a little older than me that were just wonderful students.

R: So the relationship between…

H: Real close.

R: Was good.

H: Yeah it was a wonderful relationship but a lot of times after the season they would go back and we called them back to the blanket, but they wouldn't come back until they sport they were interested in. But Sam Young kinda changed that and Norm Krenz kinda changed that, Mr. Schmallenberg kinda changed that and I suppose the state of Wisconsin kinda changed that, to be honest with you, they said you got to stick around and they did and they did and they did. But there was a, I think, I never sensed any hostility now maybe that's maybe I'm way off base on that but, I never sensed any between the Native Americans and the whites.

R: What about, I guess, just maybe as a final thought or two, what should young people today know about the 1950s? I know that's a tough question in some ways but…

H: No.

R: What should history classes teach about the fifties?

H: That we are the reason, study us to understand where your problems started. If you want to know where the problems started in the environment, study the fifties. If you want to know where the problems started, if you are dealing with the Civil Rights issue, study the fifties. If you want to know where your problems with government started, study the fifties. That's where, that's when we started to lie. That's when started to develop chemicals that kill birds that Rachel Carlson had to, that's what DDT did. It's these industries. If you want to study the problems, well, Eisenhower told us beware of the complex, the military industrial complex but nobody paid any—you want to understand the genesis of your problems today, start with the fifties. And if it's music, start with the fifties. If your grandparents, if somebody has a problem with a, it started with rock and roll or it started with B-bop or it started with jazz, we were quiet. They were the ten quiet years. But during those ten quiet years the problems started and then the next guys, the beginning of the baby boom, the sixties, these were the people that said wow, we got some—you want to study one of your problems, the birth control pill came, the oral contraceptive for women came and appeared. And that just loosened up [inaudible]. If you want examine the problems we've got today, don't go back to the forties, we were busy fighting a wars, don't go back to the thirties, we were busy fighting dust storms, don't go back to the twenties, busy with bathtub gin and we didn't, you know, whatever. But go back to the fifties and those problems, the Cold War, whatever.

R: It's really interesting…

H: It's a crooked road, excuse me. It's a crooked road but that's where you'll end up.

R: Yeah and it's interesting because the fifties are often overlooked.

H: Yeah, historically.

R: Because of their perceived quietness.

H: They should be. Should be overlooked. It's like you plant a field of corn, well there's nothing the first week and a half. Get a warm rain and a couple warm nights and there's corn here. That's what the fifties were. The fifties were the seeds but they were not incubated. They were in incubation, I should say.

Gene and Janet Krohn




J: Could you please just state your name, where and when you were born, where you went to public school what year you graduated and briefly what you did after graduation?

JK: I am Janet Hoffman-Krohn, I was born June 7, 1935, I attended the public schools here and Black River Falls, from kindergarten and I graduated high school in 1953. Then I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with an undergraduate degree and went back later and received my master's. And we've lived in Black River since 1962 and my husband and I have four children and after I completed my master's I worked as a social worker at Pine View Care Center and otherwise I have been a homemaker.

GK: I'm Gene Krohn, I'm Janet's husband. I was, went to school here in Black River from kindergarten through high school also. I graduated in 1952 and then I went to Lawrence College and University of Wisconsin for undergraduate and then I went to medical school at the University of Wisconsin and graduated in 1959. Then I was a year in Denver, or we were, when I interned, two years in the Air Force and then back here in 1962 and practiced family medicine until 1997. I've been retired since then.

J: So when did you two get married?

JK: In 1956.

J: What is your first political or historical memory?

JK: Is that from '52 or just…?

J: From the very first one that you can remember.

R: Anything you can remember about any president early in your life or something that happened that was just sort of historical that stands out in any way.

JK: I remember Roosevelt during World War II, my father was a staunch Republican and he disagreed with many of his policies [laughs].

R: Ok.

GK: And I can remember very clearly the outbreak of World War II, December 7, 1941. I was seven years old, that's my birthday, and so it was a memorable day. I remember everyone was paying more attention to the war than to my birthday [laughs]. That's was, I think, that was the earliest of my memories of that kind.

JK: And Dewey, you, didn't you…

GK: Oh yeah, Dewey was running for president, in '48 I think that would have been, against Truman and they were on a train, a campaign train, that came into Black River and he was on the back platform and my grandpa took me over there, my grandpa Mills, and I shook his hand. I still see that. So I would have been a little bit older.

R: And that picture that we have up here is sort of a famous picture.

GK: Oh yes.

JK: Yes.

R: From that campaign where they called it wrong.

GK: He was heavily favored when he was here in Black River, Dewey was [laughs].

R: Interesting.

J: What was it like growing up as a kid during the forties?

JK: I loved the freedom that I had. I just enjoyed being able to go anywhere in Black River Falls and just do what I wanted to do, be with my friends. We played a lot. We lived very close to the Third Street Schools at the top of that bank and I remember playing in the woods there. I enjoyed that a lot. I always had pony, riding my pony through town. We always had a dog that I liked. And it was just, I was outdoors a lot and I really liked that. But I did like the freedom. I never remember being warned about being careful or not talking to strangers, you couldn't go around certain parts of town, I just don't remember that at all. And I don't think they were conscious of that. Our doors were always open, the keys left in the cars, it was just, it was just, I really enjoyed our childhood. I think we had a lot of freedom.

GK: I would echo that I guess. You only grow up once [laughs]. So it's hard to compare that to other times. But it seemed like a simple time. I know there were, there was poverty then. There were the same things that there are today but it didn't seem like in the same degree, particularly like crime and that kind of thing, it seemed less then. Like Janet said, we weren't very concerned with safety in terms of crime. We actually had a car stolen later on when we left the keys in it so [laughs]. But that was in the sixties [laughs]. So we've started taking out the keys of our car since then. Definitely that was, it was a good, seemed like a good time to grow up. It seemed that we were free to come and go; and lots of outdoor things and it was a time before television so we did other things. We weren't watching television, but we couldn't, we didn't have it. We listened to the radio, had certain favorite radio shows that we listened to. I was thinking, looking back a little bit today and thinking about the television programs today where they have the top twenty and same kind of top fifty and we had the Hip Parade on Saturday night. They played the top ten songs and we'd sit and listen to that and it was a big deal which song was going to be number one this week. Then they had what was called Lucky Strike Extras because Lucky Strike cigarettes sponsored it and they would bring on a tune that they thought was going to be coming, kinda like today. It's not that different [laughs].

R: What station would you listen to? Do you remember? Was it out of Chicago?

GK: We definitely listened to Chicago and Milwaukee. [To Mrs. Krohn] Do you remember where the Parade came from?

JK: [No].

GK: It was clear.

R: Those are those clear channel radios, right?

JK: Yes.

R: Those were those after sundown that you could get Detroit and…

GK: And I think FM radio was there, beginning probably in the, I don't know when exactly it started but I don't remember the reception being a problem, particularly.

JK: No. And we had, Sunday evening was a family evening where we would, we would usually sit around having supper, Sunday supper and listening to Jack Benny and Amos and Andy. And when Gene and I were married in '56, we rented a small apartment from one of, a former teacher, a great teacher, Philippa Herd (?), and she had this big console radio and I remember in the evening we could get foreign countries [laughs]. [Inaudible].

R: Wow. Short wave on that.

GK: Yes.

J: What memories do you have of World War II and how did it impact Black River?

GK: Oh my. Huge ways. It was the main thing that was happening in our lives. I remember scrap iron drives and we gathered scrap iron brought it to school and put it in the school yard and they weighed I think and you got credit for how many pounds you brought. We brought, we'd find old parts of cars or whatever we could find that was metal and brought it in. I remember my folks being upset about the Japanese and we sending, I remember seeing railroad cars loaded with scrap iron and they were being sent to Japan in probably the late thirties, or before the war started and they were upset because the Japanese were acting war-like already. While we as kids, we listened to the war news on the radio every night. It was kinda, it isn't as different as now, except it was kinda on a different scale. Because we were afraid of being attacked whereas now in Iran and those places that's far away and not really much of a threat but we were afraid of being attacked. And there was tremendous really hatred, you know, that was fostered as a child. I remember hating the Japanese and the Germans. But it was the biggest thing in our lives all the time it went on. It was, it was huge.

JK: And I felt that way too. I remember mom because of the, we were, shoes were rationed, meat was rationed, sugar was rationed, so I remember with the cooking and the purchasing of clothing and she couldn't get silk stockings. They didn't have nylon at that time. So you were just conscious of it all the time and we were worried. I remembered dreaming that, I was in grade school, I was in first grade at the time, and I remember dreaming that—I still remember that, that the Japanese were coming and attacking the school in planes so it was very terrifying. And then we just began, and I heard this on the radio of what was actually happening in the prison camps in Germany and I remember how scary that was when they talked about that and what they were doing to these, to these prisoners. And were especially worried because we thought that my dad, who was in his late thirties, would have to go to war. He was a road contractor and so he was an officer in ROTC when he graduated from the University of Wisconsin and so as an officer and with that ability he was all set to go and he would have to build air strips on the islands of the south Pacific. And we were really concerned about that. And my younger brother was only three years old and then he got the job to build what is now

Camp McCoy. It was there, but it was much, much larger so that then he didn't have to go to war but he did spend the war years building camp McCoy, the roads there.

R: Do you, was there, I am just going to add a little bit too, I'm sorry to, I hope I'm not pulling off your questions here but, was there a regular time that you listened to news? GK: Every night at suppertime. Six o' clock, I suppose.

R: Ok, was that, obviously that was radio news. Do you remember, was the news coverage critical in any way of the United States or was it always pretty…?

GK: As I remember it, it was always critical of the other, our enemies.

R: So there was always some patriotism that even came through...

GK: Tremendous patriotism.

R: Ok, one other quick thing on the sacrifices that were being made in terms of rationing, do you remember as a child, I know this is a tough question but, do you remember that that helped you understand that war meant sacrifice?

GK: No, I think, no question about it.

R: That was a part of the whole…

GK: You thought about when your next pair of shoes was due and the speed limit was 30 miles an hour to save on gasoline. And we also, we were impacted by the casualties, I mean, we knew the people who were killed and families who lost sons in World War II.

R: Do you remember people hanging stars in the windows?

GK: Oh yes. And we had Clean Up Your, Clean Your Plate Clubs, and so we kids, and I think it was partly parents, ways to get you to eat [laughs] but, we'd have to get, and we would get stars and we'd hang those up in the window, the Clean Plate Club. One other thing that I remember is during the war there was a, one of the men from here was in a B-24 and they came up Main Street at about 200 feet in one of those bombers that came, kinda came over the Catholic Church and we were in school and it just rattled everything. And they dropped a note saying, you know, whoever it was and hello in Black River and it just you know [laughs].

JK: Yeah, [inaudible].

GK: Was that his father?

JK: I thought so. I wonder if it was the Olson.

R: Oh, ok. A son of someone.

R: That's interesting.

JK: Yes, it was. My father would always listen to, it was around six o' clock on the radio, and he sat in a certain chair in the living room and the radio that radio was right beside it. And I thought HV Kaltenborn, Kaltenborn, and so we would never have our evening meal until my father was through with that. And then in the Keefe building, which is now the Torgerson building, they had a large, a large map of, I remember it Japan, but it may have been Germany too, but then it

R: So people would stop in and sort of check it out.

JK: Yes, you could see it, actually as you walked by or drove by, you'd see it there and you could easily see the progress of the war.

R: One other question and then I'll refer back to Jill here with the '52 stuff but, about the war; did you, were you in a home that was getting a daily newspaper also?

JK: Yes.

R: And do you remember what it, was it La Crosse or Milwaukee or…?

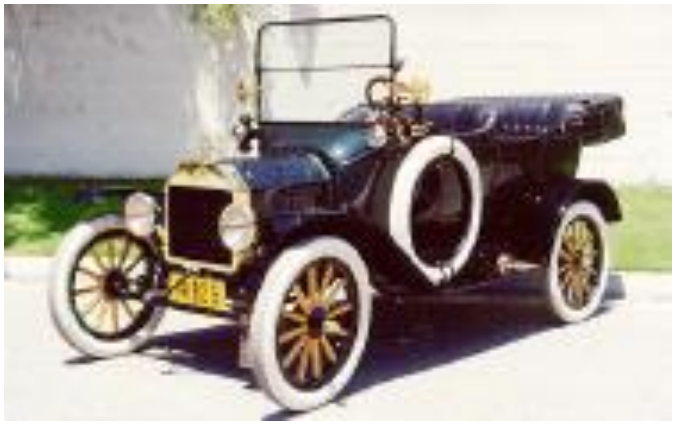
GK: I think it was the Milwaukee Journal that we got.

R: I bring that up only because that is a changing part of our culture right now too, that a lot of, your generation would be much more accustomed to that than the other kids are today about the newspapers and…anyway.

J: What was life like as a teenager, like what was high school like?

JK: Well, I think it was just more of the same kind of innocent, as my brother said to me, you knew what we were supposed to do and we just did it. It wasn't a lot of questioning and a lot of rebellion. There was some of it but you know, we were just, it was the same thing. We were busy with activities, I was in music and I enjoyed that and there was band and orchestra and there was an all-girl's dance band. At the time I went to high school there was a man that was, Mr. Gruetzman, that was very, I shouldn't say interested, very…he was strict and we were all afraid of him [laughs]. But he did get very good results and we respected him for that. But he believed in music and if you wanted to be in music that was it and if you wanted to be athletic then you went that path. So, I just, I remember not studying a lot, if I studied it would be I'd just go to my room and I remembered a few times doing that. But from, it seems like the now students have a lot more homework more to do than we did. It just didn't seem like it was that… So, it was childhood, it was…and I enjoyed it. The students didn't have cars, very few had cars and they were often old, old Model Ts.

GK: A couple of, I remember a couple of seniors when I was in middle school driving big motorcycles.



JK: Yes.

GK: We were really impressed they had Harleys way back then. I remember going into, because you had to decide when you got to be a freshman you had to decide whether you were going in band or athletics, you couldn't be in both. And I remember going to tell Mr. Gruetzman that I was going to go into athletics and I was so afraid, really. And he was very

nice to me. He said, you know, I thought you'd be coming [laughs]. So, that was so, I remember still the relief I felt and how very, very glad I was honest and came in and told him so…

J: Did you have a favorite teacher, anyone that stood out in your mind?

GK: I'd, we had a teacher named Mr., well for one thing, a lot of our teachers were veterans and they finished, they were in the war, and then came back and finished college on the G.I. Bill and then they came back and taught us so they were a little bit older. And certainly had had a lot of living. I liked and we liked a teacher named Mr. Linder who was our chemistry and physics teacher and went on to be the chancellor at the University in La Crosse and had quite, you know a career in education. But he was, he made things fun for us. But we really learned and wanted to, you know learn what he was teaching us.

JK: And I remember a, in fact some of, one of his daughters still lives in town, it was a Mr. Skarda. And he was a young veteran with a young family and I remember him and it was a little different because he was working on values and that I wasn't used to. But looking back now I am very thankful of it. He did make us aware of different values and different things that people have and made us think about that. And the other teacher that I liked was our Latin and English teacher. She was an older woman; her name was Mrs. Whittet. And she would, she was a good teacher and she really introduced us to literature and poetry and would always, always would read a book continually so part of the class she would be reading a good novel.

R: Interesting.

J: Mr. Krohn, what kind of memories do you have of Sam Young?

GK: Well, good memories really. He, when I was a freshman in high school, he wasn't here and he came when I was a sophomore. It was an interesting time in athletics because we didn't have, we didn't have training facilities of any kind. We practiced and played football when I was a freshman down at the, what's now the Veteran's Park, or Swimming Pool Park. And we had, when I was a freshman, we didn't have, we didn't have a very good record. I remember playing Arcadia when we, I was a freshman. I think they beat us like, 54 to nothing and I can remember not wanting to get put in the game [laughs]. And I don't think I did. But when Sam came, he immediately, you know, improved the athletics, the performances I guess. So that by the time I was a senior, we were winning a lot in all sports, really. So he had a huge impact on our high school lives. And he was demanding and I think he had a real knack for knowing what the other team was going to do and what would work against, you know, in whatever sport it was. He just always seemed be kind of a step ahead of the other coaches. I appreciated that more later on rather than when I was actually playing but, so he was…of course I've known Sam and been a friend of his since then and that's been kind of a lifetime kind of contact. It started back then. And he was a veteran; and Sam was a little older and had a good career himself in athletics himself in Eau Claire then he came here.

JK: And he was my, the first year he came, he was my teacher for a class, maybe it was social studies, I'm not sure, and he was a good teacher and he always, he didn't have any discipline problems and he was, he was, a very good teacher. But that's one thing in the fifties I'm sorry for, they didn't have any women's athletics. And we would just have, we would just have the gym classes, the Phy. Ed. classes, no athletics of any kind. So, of course we didn't expect to have so I didn't miss it. But now I am so pleased that the women have athletics.

R: Do you remember, did them have something called GAA, Girls Athletic Association? Or maybe they didn't have that yet either?

JK: I don't remember. I don't think they had that.

R: That comes, I've seen that in yearbooks I think in the sixties. I know they were starting that.

JK: They started that.

R: Which I think that meant that one night a week they got together in the gym and kinda ran around. I mean, it was pretty informal but anyway…

JK: Yes.

GK: One story I liked, or told about Sam a lot is we used to go, our farthest game was Durand. We played in the Mississippi Valley Conference and that was like 90 miles and we would go on the school bus and it would just take forever it seemed, especially home, always like three hours. And the bus would go some thirty, thirty-five miles an hour so when I was, later in high school, Sam started, and I don't think Sam will like that very well either [laughs]. So he and one of the other teachers would drive their cars and take, for basketball games, where there weren't many kids. And it was when cars were first getting where they could turn their dash lights off, before that they were always just on, so when [laughs] when we'd go he would turn the dash lights off and we would make wonderful time [laughs], going, coming, especially coming home in the dark. And Dick Faldet was a great one to tune the radio. I mean he tuned the radio all the time on the way back and forth. Ask him about that [laughs].

R: I'll bring that up to him.

J: Mrs. Krohn, what kind of things could girls participate then in school?

JK: It was music for myself and for a lot of it, a lot of young women. We did. We had, I mentioned that before, there was the band and the orchestra and there was the singing, the mixed chorus and the Glee Club. We didn't have the musical plays like you have now and we didn't have anything like the Variety Show. And there just aren't, there weren't the opportunities back then that there are now, and especially for the young women. I remember that we, there was the dress code and that we always wore a skirt, except on Friday. You could wear jeans on Friday. And I remember as a second grader, I had an aunt that was really with it, and so that's when women were beginning to wear, it was during the Second World War and women were beginning to wear slacks and she sent me this neat slack outfit and I was so pleased. And I wore it to second grade and the teacher sent home a note to my mother saying please dress Janet in dresses [laughs]. So, it was…

R: It was probably a very nice outfit.

JK: Oh, it was! It wasn't jeans or any play outfit it was just a really nice, you know, because she always got me very nice, more or less dress clothes, so to speak. And so, it was, I think times are different and it's a good thing in that area.

J: Did girls have to take like, certain classes like home ec.? Was that required?

JK: No. Not that I remember because I didn't—there was, I think there was maybe a freshmen home ec. that was required and an industrial arts, manual arts for the young men, but other than

that, I didn't continue it. And you could kind of go on that path or you could go on, you know, the more or less the college path. But I didn't, I don't remember the home economics classes after that one either in eighth grade or as a freshmen.

GK: [To Mrs. Krohn] Did you have to take that one?

JK: I think we did.

GK: I think so too.

JK: I think we had to because you had to take…

GK: Manual arts.

JK: Manual arts [yes]. Do you remember if that was as a freshman or eighth grade? GK: I don't. Freshman, I think.

JK: I think so too.

J: What kind of career choices did women have when you came out of high school?

JK: Well, I think of it mainly as teaching, secretary and as a nurse. There' re just…I

…and I—a lot of the young women, and the men also, didn't go on to further education. There weren't the technical schools, the two-year colleges, there just weren't—it's wonderful how that has increased. But there, there just weren't a lot of choices that way. That's how I remember it.

J: So do you know, do you remember what most girls did after graduation?

JK: You know, I was thinking of that this morning and a lot of them married, you know, right out of high school and some of them went to secretarial schools, like for six months, or something like that. Or probably they had on the job training of some kind. But there just weren't the choices that there are now.

J: What kind of things did you do for fun in the early fifties? What kind of places did you hang out at?

GK: Well, we went to, we went to restaurants and listened to jukeboxes. Drove around in cars. That's probably not too much different [laughs]. We did a lot of that. We had dances, more than maybe now. We used to have a lot of dances at the Fair Grounds. They had a ball there most every week. They had a dance during the summertime. They would open the windows and Elmo Johnson played, he is still playing. Those were, we listened to the radio—we didn't have television. We did lots of outdoor things—swimming in the summertime and skiing and sliding in the wintertime.

R: Can you give us an example of, you said you listened to Hip Parade, cause this is still, when you are still in high school, it's still pre-rock and roll.

JK: Yes.

GK: Right.

R: So could you give us a song title or two that would have been on Hip Parade just to give us an idea?

GK: Right. There were, you know, the really good songs were then, like the Tennessee Waltz and Goodnight Irene and…

JK: How High the Moon by Les Paul and Mary Ford, I thought was just wonderful.

R: So these were, this is big band music.

JK: Yes.

R: Kind of early fifties.

JK: It was just, yes. It was just, it was still big band music but it was still…

GK: It kind of put you into pop—popular music.

R: Kay Kyser? Does that name ring a bell?

JK: Yes.

GK: Yes.

JK: Patty Paige, Teresa Brewer…

GK: And there was country western then, also.

R: I mean the rock and roll, that's, I think it's an important part of our story in this, this year. We're probably going to do one on the later fifties, but that rock and roll change hadn't hit yet.

JK: No.

GK: That kind of came in the late fifties and I remember when I was, when we were in school in Madison and they called from a radio station and they said to me, can you tell me, tell me, tell us who recorded Heartbreak Hotel, or some question, and I just blurted out Elvis Presley—I was so pleased. And it was kinda like you could, you know, they could sell you some groceries or something if you got the right answer. But I remember not really liking rock and roll very well. It was kind of a new, new thing. A new sound that was real different from what we grew up with. And I never really got to appreciate it probably like other people—a little bit later.

J: Do you remember if, was there a lot of alcohol use among teenagers at that time? GK: I think so. I don't think it was as widespread, probably as it is now, from what I hear. But there certainly was, there certainly was alcohol use. We had senior parties that have been a problem over the years.

R: Go ahead.

GK: So it was part of our culture then, also. No question about it. There weren't any drugs. There wasn't any marijuana or anything like that.

GK: Not that I remember at all.

JK: I don't think there was any of that.

GK: It was pre-marijuana. [To Mrs. Krohn] Do you remember differently?

JK: No that's what I remember too. But I do remember in my class and I'm sure it wasn't unique, we would have house parties and I have a few photos of that, but it. We would dress up

more and the fellows would dress up and we wouldn't have beer and there wouldn't be smoking but it was just kind of an orderly, early fifties house party [laughs]. And my parents were always there and well we expected that too. But I remember doing that. And then also we would, rather spontaneously, have dances after games. We'd, oh I remember on Fridays just begging Mr. Krenz to let us have a dance that night. We'd get a group together and often it would just be records and but that was always a big thing. And then if you were dating a basketball or football player you'd wait for them to come out of the shower and their hair would be all wet and would be cleaned up [laughs] and I remembered that and that was fun. I always thought that was fun.

R: Were the dances would be in what now is the Third Street gym?

JK: Yes.

R: Which was the high school gym at the time?

JK: Right, because there wasn't, the school complex that's here now, there wasn't any of that. This was just fields. And the high school was there.

GK: The gymnasium was there. We've got a photo of prom where it's all decorated with string in that room. But we weren't certainly saints [laughs].

JK: No [laughs].

J: Do you remember the first thing you saw on television?

GK: I do. We, my dad got a TV before we really should have had one because the closest station was Minneapolis and you could occasionally get a picture that you could recognize but we got mostly snow, it was black and white. And we tried to watch a football game, I think it was, like a Rose Bowl game in like about 1950 or 1951, probably. And I can remember being at my grandmother's house, where we had the television and trying to watch it and not being able to really see anything. I think Eau Claire is having their Fiftieth Anniversary from when their TV station opened and that's really when we started getting it, about 1953 or 4.

R: Ok.

GK: We had one before [to Mrs. Krohn] but I don't know if you…

JK: No, we didn't. I remember going—one of the neighbors had gotten a television so I remember several of us had went and you just stood around and looked and I thought, well, you know, this isn't worth it. I mean you couldn't tell, you couldn't see the people [laughs] and you couldn't and they would—and it wouldn't the shows wouldn't be very good. And the tunes—and you tried to tune it all the time.

GK: You'd try to tune it to make it a little bit better and you would go behind it and try to look with a mirror [laughs]…

JK: So all the time I lived with my parents there wasn't television. Until, I remember them telling me when I was away at school well, your younger brother is over at the neighbors all the time so we've got to buy a television set to keep him home because it was quite a novelty and by then,

I'm sure, he's seven years younger than I am, so by then I am sure the television was much improved.

J: Do you remember any of the shows from that time?

JK: We didn't, we didn't watch television and I know there was one comedian that was very popular, was it Jonathan Winters?

GK: [yes].

JK: And he had, you know what everyone thought was a good show. So this was after Gene and I were married; we were in school in Madison. And it was probably in '57, '58, so we used to go down to the Union, and it was just be packed with people, like ourselves who didn't have televisions who were watching this particular show. And then after a year or so my dad finally said well, you should have a television. So he bought us a small television and I remember watching, probably the regular one, I don't remember watching news, but I remember we would watch Wagon Train. We wouldn't miss Wagon Train [laughs]. But that was probably in the later fifties. Mid to late fifties, uh huh.

GK: We went away to college and we really didn't really have a television of our own. We didn't watch much television until the sixties, I'd say. We came back here and started living here.

JK: And I have never, and I think because I didn't grow up with it but I never really cared much for television and I still, I still don't watch it.

GK: We're still battling [laughs].

JK: Right. But then I do miss, I do miss things because I don't, I just don't watch it very much.

J: I'd like to focus a little more on 1952. Mr. Krohn, you were a senior in '52, what were the most exciting experiences you had at the time?

GK: Well I guess for me athletics, you know, was the most exciting well, exciting thing. Most of my memories, you know, things that stick in your memory that you can remember now like you were there, were mostly athletic things. Football, track, and remembering those kind of events and remembering specific plays in football that I can still remember, both good and bad. I can remember a play where we stopped, I think it was Mondovi, way down in our territory and they all just kind of relaxed and we got the ball and on the first play, got through the line and there, just, nobody was there, the whole field was open, it was up at the Fair Grounds, in the outfield of the ball field, and one of the guys in the picture was fast and he was out ahead of me and I can remember there was a Mondovi guy and he blocked him and then it was a long run for a touchdown. And I can remember being in Arcadia, and they had good teams. They had some athletes who went on and played in college, several really. And we were in good shape, kinda, to defeat them and I was going around end and one of their good athletes came up behind me and I, can still remember just, striped the ball from him and they got the ball and that ended the rally and we ended up losing by a few points. I remember track meets. We only had like two track meets. We had, we practiced down at the, I think at the swimming pool and up at the field at the Fair Grounds—we didn't have a track. And the distance men would run on the roads around town. And being a sprinter, we'd run on the football field but we'd go to Eau Claire for meets, the conference meet and then the sectional. I remember being up there running.

R: And you ran in the State meet?

GK: Right.

R: And where was that?

GK: The state meet was at, where the football stadium is still. They had a track on the inside in the football stadium.

JK: In Madison.

GK: They've taken that out now.

R: At Madison?

GK: In Madison, right. That was a good memory for me.

R: Now were there, was there one class?

GK: There was one class, right.

R: Weren't you…

GK: There weren't--I'm wrong about that. There were three classes.

R: And were we B?

GK: We were B.

R: And weren't you second in the 100?

GK: Right. When I was a junior.

R: Ok.

GK: There was a really fast runner from Greenwood and his name was Carl (?) and his brother Harlan Carl (?) was a famous football player at the University back in the fifties and he was very good. And his name was Dewey and when we were at the sectional he was faster than I was and he beat me by a couple of yards in the 100 and when we went to the state he false started twice so he was disqualified. And then I won one of the preliminaries. And the fellow that got second to me then in the final beat me and I can still remember by about that far at the end so I was second but it was close. But the main thing was that that Dewey Carl (?) would have beaten us both [laughs].

R: That's the way track is.

GK: Right.

J: How did you feel about graduation?

GK: Well, I was ok with it I guess. I don't remember, I don't think it was as big as it is now. It didn't seem like it was as big of event. I remember coming back from college for Janet's graduation and one of the, at Lawrence College, one of the deans came and spoke and brought, there were two of us in school, he brought us back and kinda asked us about Black River and I remember him giving a really good address. The address was kind of a big part of the graduation. But there weren't as many events around it. There weren't all these, we didn't

have parties, you know, before and after for two weeks surrounding, you know [laughs]. I don't think we had any parties.

JK: [No].

GK: It wasn't as big of event, but it was a milestone, certainly.

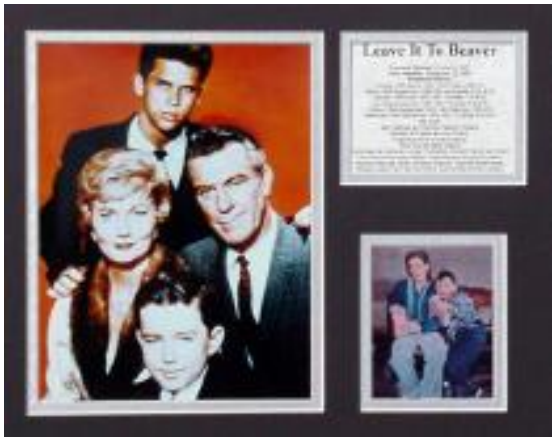
J: What would you say was notable about your senior class?

GK: Gosh, that's a hard question, I think it was, for me it was, you know, you had certain impressions of people in high school and then it was slanted by your being a teenager and kind of what the fads of the time were and it's probably still kind of like that. And then coming back to reunions and realizing that some of the kids that you thought were kind of nerdy, maybe in those days, had gone on to various successful careers, adult lives. Many of my classmates, not that they were nerds, many went on to very successful adult lives. I'm not sure I know what was particularly notable about my class, [to Mrs. Krohn] I don't know, what do you feel about your class?

JK: I think we were just an average, just an average class of that era, I think we were just the same, which I think was true for a lot of them, a lot of the fifties.

R: Do you think, just picking up on that a little bit, do you think the, I guess for lack of a better way to describe it, Leave It To Beaver kind of stereotype from television—the mom at home, dad, goes to work and comes home, you know, smokes a pipe, would kind of hang around the house together, kids were well-behaved, this kind of model family thing. Do you think, is that overplayed, a caricature of the fifties that's a little off?

JK: I think it is. I think it is because we grew up in a small community and I think it was more varied, although I feel it is being like I mentioned earlier when my brother said, well we just knew what we were supposed to do and we did it. But there was, there was a variety. The home in the sitcoms was too much alike, I think in Black River it wouldn't be that way. To some degree, but I just don't think quite that. I don't even remember any of my friends' mothers being dressed like that—in heels and [laughs] and that type of thing. I don't remember that, no.



J: 1952 was an election year, what did you think of Dwight Eisenhower?

GK: I thought he was just it, no question about that. He was a, you know, famous general, he was the main general in World War II, in the European Theater anyway. And you know, there was in a musical there was a line that said they liked Ike because Ike was good on a mike and he made a good impression. He seemed real reliable, honest. I guess we were, I was kind of raised Republican and he was a Republican so…I thought he was the man for me. That was the first year… did we vote then? No, you had to be 21 I think. You had to be 21 so we voted in '56, the first year. [To Mrs. Krohn] What'd you think about Eisenhower?

JK: [Yes] That was very, after all that Democratic ruling, my household was very happy [laughs] for that. But I do remember, I think it was in the fourth grade, that we did, we often would have mock elections and I remember it was tied, it was it must have been either Roosevelt, I don't know who would have been running, it must have been Truman, no it was Roosevelt and someone else, whoever ran as a Republican the last time Roosevelt won and it was tied and one boy came in late. I won't say his name [laughs]. And of course everyone was cheering, the Republicans or Democrats and he voted for Roosevelt [laughs].

J: So kids were pretty into politics then?

GK: I think so.

JK: Well yes. It was, I think it was just that we weren't independent thinkers. It was just, anyway for me, it was just what I heard at home. And I think in the grade school it was just that too for the others.

GK: It seemed pretty black and white.

JK: Yes.

GK: Either Republican or Democrat. People went in and voted, you know there was that one circle at the top where you could vote for the whole slate and a lot of people did that. It was one or the other, it wasn't much choosing back and forth.

J: So let's look at some things going on in the nation and the world, what was the general attitude about the Korean War among the students?

GK: It seemed like kind of a smaller war because we were in the mode of World War II so it was called a police action at the time and we were really afraid about the Communists and the Cold War was starting. And it had started and so it was part of that whole thing, the Cold War and the Communist threat. It was on our minds. I think more on our minds was the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb. People were building bomb shelters, a few people built bomb shelters, and I remember, you know we got into the war kind of sideways and then, I don't remember being as invested in it and as interested in it as in World War II. It was, it didn't have a clear ending. I mean, they're still there. [To Mrs. Krohn] How do you remember it?

JK: And I remember thinking it was unfair because I just remember the news reports of these, hundreds and thousands of Communists soldiers coming over and we had to stop, from China, and we had to stop and kind of the unfairness of that. And there was, I remember a controversy about that in this country. And I know it was very sad for us, I was in student council and that was through junior and senior years and when Mitchell Red Cloud was killed and then awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, I remember we took some action on that, either had a program, is there, in the high school now, is there a bust of him?

R: Not in the school. We have a display in the south central door when you come in.

JK: Ok.

R: In the old, in the original high school in 1954 high school addition over there, there is a plaque.

JK: That's what then. Because I thought we worked on that—to get a plaque. So that was, we were definitely aware of that and aware of the casualties. And for me, the main thing that stands out is I remember somehow, the unfairness, what we seemed to think unfair were these Chinese could just come, soldiers, and we would have to stop because we couldn't cross into China.

GK: And we couldn't cross into China, we had to stop at the Yalu River. And there were people from here, you know there were casualties from here and prisoners. I remember, there were a couple of men who were prisoners that we worried about.

J: You did mention the Red Scare. How did it really impact Black River? Was that talked about a lot in town?

GK: I think it was and it was just a kind of something hanging over your head that you were worried about. I remember thinking, I always felt that it wouldn't happen, that there wouldn't be a nuclear war but I don't know why, maybe that was denial or whatever. But it was a really big factor in our lives.

JK: It was. It was very scary.

GK: Very scary.

JK: I remember Gene's mother telling us, this was, we were married in '56 so this would have been just right after we were married, this is in more of the later fifties, but she told us we always should keep our car filled with gas so that if a strike comes at any time we could just drive to Black River. But she did, and we should always keep gas in our car.

R: Do you recall, when doing this research, I don't know if you were going to ask anything about this or not, but we found that there was a, up where the water tower is today, [to Jill] were you going to bring that up or?

J: Yeah, that picture from AP.

R: Yeah. Well anyway there was an observation building there that was manned around the clock for a while and this was in the papers, people that were…do you remember that?

JK: Oh yes. I remember people volunteering and going up there. And I remember being up there and I don't know if I volunteered or just went to visit someone that was that was up there. But it was a very serious thing, taken very seriously.

R: And basically looking for planes.

JK: Looking for planes.

R: And it seems almost bizarre but at the time…

JK: Oh it was serious.

R: Very serious.

JK: It was very serious. And I know my mother was involved so I'm wondering if maybe some of the women's clubs in town were involved and different groups. And some people were very enthused about that and they would get the volunteers and they'd go up to that little…

R: Do you remember who was kind of the head of that? I have the picture and I can't remember his name.

JK: As soon as you said that the name that came to mind was Lawrence Jones.

R: Yes, that's it.

JK: And he was a veteran of World War I and he was always interested in that. He wasn't militaristic at all but he was just very patriotic and interested and so he was, he was the one who spearheaded that.

J: What did you guys think about McCarthy?

GK: Oh, we were, I was distressed by him at the time because that we watched some, I remember some of that was on television. He just browbeat the witnesses and I mean, they couldn't really say a word. They couldn't, he put them down; it was really unequal, kind of questioning. And then I remember being glad when he finally was called and really the whole thing ended, I remember.

JK: When I look back at it now I am just amazed that he was able to continue the way he did. It was just ranting and raving and damaging so many people. And I just am, I am amazed at that.

R: Do you remember, did he ever come to Black River? Do you recall that? Like campaigning?

JK: I don't remember that but I remember when we were in Madison going to school there were two young men that lived in an apartment on our floor and they just idolized him. Just really idolized him and I just thought it was quite disgusting [laughs]. [To Mr. Krohn] Do you remember that?

GK: I do. And I remember I know we thought that Eisenhower should step in and curtail, you know, stop him, but he didn't. Hard to understand still why that was allowed to happen, but we were both upset about it I guess.

JK: But there are still people at the anniversary of his death I think that hold services. And I wouldn't be surprised if one of them was our former neighbor [laughs].

J: So what do you think people today should know about the 1950s and what should history classes teach about this time?

JK: I think they should teach the events just the way they were. And yet, to me, to me because I grew up then, it was a special time. It was an innocent time. It was a time when people were very patriotic. They worked together with the war efforts, they really do. And there's part of it that's almost a heartache when I think about, really I think of the innocence of the people and how hard they worked and their patriotism. It's very different now.

GK: I think there was another side of the fifties too that doesn't get acknowledged and there was, there were the same things as now. There were alcoholism, and there was poverty, there was mephilimus (?) that was, I think many things are better today in the treatment of mental illness at that time was really primitive and poverty, there weren't social services like there are now, that was dealt with in a much lesser way I'd say. And I think your point about Leave it to Beaver, that kind of idea was really oversimplified and it was a simpler time but there were certainly problems. And it wasn't anything like utopia for sure.

R: If somebody, I just kind of have a final thought or just a question that came to mind here, just the physical appearance of Black River. If someone from the fifties and hadn't seen any of the development, if they came now and saw Black River, what would they notice right away, that was just so different from the physical layout of the town?

JK: The fill. The fill isn't, the fill wasn't there. That's didn't come in until '61. That's, Jill, how you get to German Hill, you know just on that curving, that wasn't there so that made a difference.

R: How did you get from…

GK: You went downtown.

JK: You went downtown, uh huh.

GK: But you could come, you could come by the pump house and there was some sand roads that would get you there too.

JK: But the thing that I think has impacted our community the most has been the interstate going through. And everything that's east of the river now wasn't there at all. And then it's also sprawled on all sides because this complex and the building, the home development in the northwest, and it's just, it's just really, I think it's changed a lot.

R: Was your connection to, was Brockway really more separate as an entity at that time or not?

GK: [To Mrs. Krohn] Do you think so?

JK: I think so.

R: I mean just, you know you always hear about, when you are talking to older people up in Black River and they'll even use the expression Hard Scrabble a term for it.

JK: Oh yes.

R: Now that term wouldn't have been used?

JK: Oh yes.

GK: Definitely.

R: It was used.

GK: It was definitely used when we were kids.

JK: And I remember when I was at the swimming pool, the old swimming pool, I was probably ten and I was playing there. It was, probably a cooler day, I went to the swimming pool a lot and there were a small group of children playing and I was with that group and pretty soon I was aware, they were talking about the Price Hill brats [laughs] and I was really careful because they were from Hard Scrabble. And there was a definite feeling. I was careful [laughs].

GK: When we were probably in eighth or ninth grade, eighth grade, there were teams like, the was a Price Hill team and there was a team from Brockway and they had a fullback named Arlen (?) Potter who's in these pictures, and we just couldn't tackle him [laughs]. We didn't score any points and they scored every time they got the ball and that was very humbling

[laughs]. The other thing that was, one of the things that, the whole Main Street on, up above town the downtown area was covered with Elm tree lines. So it was just a canopy of leaves when you drove in and it was narrower and it was a real different...

R: A different look.

JK: Yes.

GK: And the town kind of ended where, before you got to Wal-Mart. The railroad station was there and railroad tracks and right about where Pearson's Hardware used to be was kind of the end of town at that end.

JK: And then it was all farmland.

Dick Faldet

R: Ok, could you just start off by giving us your name and when and where you were born?

F: My name is Dick Faldet. I was born in Hixton in 1934. We moved to Black River when I was like four or five years old. We lived on Third Street all during my school years, right across from the Third Street School.

R: Which house did you live in there?

F: You know where Basil lives now?

R: Yeah.

F: It's the empty lot just north of him.

R: Oh, ok. Right there. So you were, you walked about thirty feet to go to school.

F: [Laughs] Right. And right behind us was Janet Krohn, or Janet Hoffman and Peter and David.

R: So that's kind of the neighborhood. Was that, who lived in that really big house on the corner? The one that's, would have been north of where you lived.

F: That's Verna Keefe. She was a music teacher at that time.

R: And she was living there.

F: Yep. She was my music teacher.

R: Ok. Can you, so you were born in 1934 and can you tell us what your first political memory is or historical memory?

F: Political memory was 1941, Pearl Harbor. I can remember that on a Sunday afternoon.

R: You were…

F: Listening to the radio. I think I was.

R: You would have been about seven?

F: Seven years old.

R: You were listening to the radio and it got interrupted or…

F: Yep. I'm sure it was a Sunday afternoon.

R: Now, did your, do you remember, you were really young when that happened, but do you remember the reaction that your parents had to that or…

F: I can't remember that part of it.

R: Ok. But you do remember the...

F: But I do remember the announcement that the war…

R: So you were growing up in Black River in the forties, mostly, I mean that's when your first memories started.

F: Yeah, forties.

R: Can you just give us just kind of an idea of what it was like to live in Black River in the forties as a kid?

F: I think it was a great time. We had pretty much our own group in own neighborhood it was like the, it was the Hoffmans and Chuck Siefert was one and…

R: Now where did Chuck live?

F: Chuck lived just south of where Basil lives now, on the corner. And then there were the Bigger boys, I don't know if you know Kirk Bigger (?), the architect now?

R: No.

F: They lived just north of us. Al Lahmeyer and his family lived right next door to us for a number of years, with Ruthie and Mark and Bruce.

R: Now Al would have been a very young man at that point.

F: Mm hm. He was young then. He came, I think he went to work at the clinic to start with and then he broke away and formed his own eye clinic. And Homstads were involved in the, in that neighborhood, Dave Mills, Basil, and Moes, the Moes, I don't know if there was the Moe clothing store.

R: Yeah, where did they live?

F: They lived on the other side of the catholic church, right across from where Mark Hoffman lives now.

R: Ok. So your, this neighborhood was pretty active.

F: Active, yeah. We played, you might say we played basketball at Hoffman's and at Dave Mills', outside, they had lights and then we played football on the, on the Hoffman's lawn there, and we were right above the swimming pool there. So we were down there swimming a lot.

R: And the swimming pool had been built in the thirties?

F: In the thirties.

R: Is that right?

F: Mm hm.

R: So it was pretty new.

F: Yeah it was new. It was, it was a good pool and right below us was the town creek and there was the, that was to end up in that water, went into the swimming pool. And we swam down there too.

R: Really?

F: Yep.

R: Did you, was there a path—

F: Yeah, there was a path.

R: that you could walk down?

F: Right. Right. And we, in the winter we took sleds down that.

R: Oh, ok. What was the, did they have a name for that path? It seems like when I was… I can't remember that.

F: I can't remember any name to it, no.

R: Did you venture out of your neighborhood very much?

F: Not very much, no.

R: Ok, so it was pretty much…

F: Dave Mills' was the about the farthest we got. [Laughs]

R: When we interviewed some other people last year, they talked about, this was especially Ozzie Moe, growing up in Black River in the twenties, we talked about certain parts of Black River actually would have teams that would play other parts.

F: Oh yeah, it did then, too. There was a…the tough ones were the ones across the river, which they called the Hard Scrabble.

R: Ok.

F: They were, they were the tough ones. [Laughs] And we were Price Hill, that was named over after the big Price house where the Lutheran Church sits now.

R: Now was the Price house there when you were growing up?

F: Yes, in fact I was in it a number of times.

R: And who was living there then?

F: I remember my folks, and I went with them we'd visit…they had rented it out, they were made into various apartments. And the Tinglems (?) were living there at the time. There's some…you know Lisa Kesler?

R: I've heard the name.

F: Her husband's the superintendent?

R: Oh, ok.

F: She was a Tinglem (?). She was a daughter.

R: And they lived there.

F: Yeah. Every, just about every like living room in that had a fireplace in it and it was full of stained glass. It must be, I don't know—it's too bad they ever tore it down.

R: Isn't that something? You must remember when they tore it down then.

F: Yeah, I did. It was, like in, right around 1950 then. And getting back to the different areas, the Grove was another area. That was down the river.

R: Kind of the original part of town.

F: Right, yeah.

R: And then, how about German Hill?

F: Yeah, German Hill was another because there was no bridge across the, there was no bridge across the fill like this is now, so that was the fourth one, yeah.

R: So the fill, before the fill you must of had to go downtown and up to get over to, or how did you do that?

F: We could go down the bank and up, yeah but…

R: But that was all kind of a steep valley there.

F: A steep valley, yeah. And like you said you interviewed Ozzie well he had a brother Price, Pymo, that's one of his sons, that was part of our neighborhood. And he had a clothing store right next to Ozzie's down there. One thing that I remember as a kid, I was trying to compare to now, is that just about every store was filled then. There was like two soda fountains, which are what drugstore was in, and then there had to be like three or four grocery stores on main street, there were two theaters, and about four or five hardware stores.

R: Now as a kid growing up, do you remember did go downtown much? Was that kind of a big deal or?

F: Yeah, quite a bit, yeah. And then…

R: Was Friday night a big thing for downtown or was there a certain day of the week?

F: No, not necessarily for kids, but yeah, it was a big town, I mean a big time for people to go downtown was Friday night. And then there was a root beer stand across the river like when we would play basketball over at Dave's, afterwards we would take our bikes or hike up there.

R: Was that A&W?

F: A&W, yeah. That was owned by Virginia Higgin.

R: And how early did that go in there I wonder?

F: I can remember it all my life, so…

F: Oh, it was probably back in the forties it started up.

R: Wow. What memories do you have of World War II and kind of the effect that it might have been having in Black River? Do you remember much about that?

F: I don't really, no I don't remember.

R: Ok. Do you remember anything related to like…?

F: I remember more about the Korean War. I remember a number of people from here went into the service that got killed or injured in the war. So that was more, more familiar than the World War.

R: I was wondering if you had any memories of rationing or stamps or any of that.

F: I remember the stamps, but I mean it didn't hurt anybody really. Like I said, Black River was a booming town, you know, in comparison to now really.

R: Right. Why do you think that is? Because others have made that same kinda point.

F: Well, I think that people didn't go to Eau Claire or La Crosse. There weren't Wal-Marts and you know, they stayed home and did their shopping. That's the big thing.

R: So the downtown business community was just kind of thriving.

F: Thriving, yeah.

R: I know when we talked with Gene Krohn he made the comment, or maybe it was Basil, that after World War II it seemed like there was really a big upsurge right then from, in the late forties, and especially in the comment about the downtown.

F: There wasn't that much industry around here, but I think it was more of a farmer—farming community, really. There was Jackson's Box Factory, that was one and Nelson Muffler, that started up about then. That was about the extent of the industry.

R: Do you remember, one other thing about the forties, I guess just as a young kid, like do you remember listening to the radio much?

F: I listened to it all the time. And I remember I listened, especially sports, you know baseball or basketball. The only basketball games I could get on the radio were Kentucky.

R: Really?

F: So Kentucky was my favorite team. [Laughs]

R: Where were you getting them from, I wonder what station?

F: They were on AM, they were coming through, not FM. They were coming that strong, they were from Kentucky.

R: Ok. This was the days of clear channel radio.

F: Right. And then you had like Batman and all those cereal shows.

R: And did you listen to them pretty regularly?

F: Oh yeah, sure.

R: And did you have a radio in your bedroom?

F: Yeah. But mainly it was a big one in the living room.

R: Ok.

F: There was no TV.

R: No. Did your family listen to the radio much?

F: Oh, I would say yes. But my dad was an accountant, an auditor, so he was on the road all during the week. So he wasn't around so we had full control over the radio during the week.

R: How about, were you a Cubs fan?

F: Dodger fan.

R: Ok. Basil indicated to me that he was a Cubs fan.

F: Oh yeah, right.

R: Were you able to listen to the Dodgers?

F: Oh yeah. They were on the radio too.

R: Regularly?

F: Right.

R: I wondered. So you were getting a radio station there from, somewhere.

F: New York, right.

R: Isn't that something?

F: It's remarkable how those stations were coming in.

R: It's kinda, I kinda miss that. It would be kinda fun. I remember that a little bit from when I was growing up in the sixties, but not to that extent.

F: Of course, we didn't have any, we didn't have t.v. or anything so.

R: So radio was much more dominant.

F: Right, yeah.

R: Well, I was going to, one of the things we are trying to focus on in this year is a little bit about the years you were in high school. You know the early fifties. And you've had a chance to look at some pictures and we're kinda trying to get a little sense of the place at that time from fifty years later, that's a long time to remember back, but I'm just going to ask you a few questions about, you know, the high school. Can you remember the general attitude of the students at the time?

F: I think it was good.

R: Was it,

F: There was no…

R: Do you think it's a lot different than now?

F: From what I hear it is now, I'd say it's much different. Yeah, it, there were very little problems.

R: Would you describe the students as being quiet?

F: Quiet, I'd say.

R: Generally?

F: Yeah.

R: Was there, I'm assuming students still liked to get into some mischief and have some fun. What kinds of things did students do to have some fun in that day and age? I mean, what would their, what would their, let's say there was a basketball game, what would you do after the game, or that kind of thing?

F: That I can't answer. There weren't too many yet that even had cars at that time.

R: So driving wasn't…

F: Driving was not a…

R: So you were right away limited on that.

F: Yeah, you were limited on what you did. There was normally, normally there were dances after the football games.

R: Where would they have dances.

F: In the high school gym, in the basketball, in the gym.

R: I want to ask you about that gym, Sam mentioned to us yesterday that he felt that at that time, that gym and Mondovi were the two finest gyms in the area.

F: They were, yeah.

R: Is that your impression?

F: That's right.

R: It's so interesting because you go in there now and it looks so small.

F: And there were, I still remember in the practices, sometimes when we were playing certain teams, Sam would put up chairs in the gym floor to reduce the size of our gym floor. So we were accustomed to such a small gym. [Laughs]

R: He told us that there was no standard gym floor at that time.

F: No. Like I say, Mondovi had a good gym. Neilsville, we played up there, non-conference games, and we played, I think the building is still there now it is an armory or something, we

would dress upstairs in a.... It was an armory or a theater or something; we would dress upstairs in the projection room. And then take showers in the basement; let's see…

R: When you had a …let me, let me talk a little bit more about the gym, when you had a game, let's say you were going to play Tomah, would it just be packed in there?

F: Yeah. It would be packed.

R: I can't imagine there would be no enough for...

F: Yeah, there wouldn't be a seat to spare, no, right.

R: So did people sit on the stage? Who would they have on the stage?

F: Normally, if the band was playing, they would be on the stage.

R: So then that was even more. But, you know, when you go in there now it's…they couldn't get very many people in there, I would think.

F: No. It was small, but it would be full to the brim. Arcadia had like a community center, that was a very small gym. We played, I think this was when we were juniors, at the Eau Claire Memorial, they had a fairly big gym.

R: Ok. Yeah, he talked about that too.

F: And Tomah had a bigger, nicer gym than ours. They build one while we were in high school. Far as I know most of them were pretty small.

R: Now, Did you have a…did you have a, you know, kind of a favorite teacher that stands out in your memory as being somebody that was really a good teacher?

F: Kenny Linder.

R: Kenny Linder?

F: Yep, I could go through them here, yeah.

R: Now this was a science teacher?

F: He was, he was physics/chemistry. Howard Kinney was our typing teacher, he was excellent. Verna Keefe, like I said, she was our music teacher.

R: What do you remember about her? What stands out in your mind?

F: You might say she almost kicked me out because I couldn't sing a note. [Laughs] But I still, I still liked her.

R: Was she… let me go back to Kenny Linder for a minute. What was it about this teacher that stood out?

F: He had humor and he knew what he was talking about. And he had experiments, you know, that made the courses…

R: Labs?

F: Labs, [yes].

R: Made the classes fun?

F: Yep.

R: And now Verna Keefe, we have heard her name mentioned a couple of times too, was she—how did she get kids to perform as they did; because apparently at the time the music was really good.

F: It was good. Like I said, I wasn't really involved so…[laughs].

R: How about, were you in the band?

F: No. I was never in the band.

R: Ok because that was—Gene mentioned to us that it was pretty clear at the time if you were either in music or sports.

F: Sam didn't bring any of that up did he? Did he?

R: Not really. No. He talked about Howard Gruetzman being a really outstanding…

F: Gruetzman, yeah. He and Sam did not get along together.

R: Ok, but he spoke very highly of him. Interesting.

F: Oh, yeah.

R: He really respected him.

F: Sure, right.

R: But I suppose they really sparing.

F: Yeah they were.

R: Over kids, I suppose. I suppose everybody was…

F: I was just talking to Sam not too long ago and he brought that up again. Like our senior year we were playing Tomah in the regionals, at a, in basketball and my brother Miley was starting, he was a year younger than I was, a good basketball player, and we got down there and he never got off the bench. He and Sam had gotten into an argument, over Miley. And we got beat by, I think, two points and Tomah went on to state and the next Monday we took a team down there to scrimmage them, and we, you know, so they could have practice for the next team they were playing and we womped 'em. [Laughs] But Sam, I know he mentioned that about Gil Homstad and [inaudible].

R: So there is kind of an issue of kids…

F: Either in…In fact, he told about this one Johnson boy, he would play basketball, at halftime and things like that. And again, he was an excellent band teacher. Let's see, Phillip Meyer, he was….

R: I noticed that one guy is in his uniform here one of the teachers.

F: That was one—I didn't know him, no.

R: Ok.

F: Marianne Moe, that's Ozzie's.

R: She was a Phy. Ed. teacher.

F: Phy. Ed. teacher, yeah. Jim Skarda…

R: How were they at that time, Dick, from what you can remember, how were the kids during class, were they pretty…?

F: I would say well mannered, all the classes I was in anyway.

R: Yeah, was there a lot of respected toward those teachers?

F: I would say so, yeah.

R: Do you think the kids of the fifties, we talk about this a little bit, they are thought as being kind of between the lines, not very rebellious, and do you think that's fairly accurate?

F: I would say so, yeah.

R: And that we're getting a clear impression? How about, can you remember any like hotspots for teenagers, places they would go?

F: Like I said there was, the early years there were those two called soda fountains downtown. It was where, one was where Waarvik's is now and the other one was about right next to; Moe's Hardware is there now.

R: Do you remember who operated those?

F: Yeah, Sam Dahl's was the one and Torvils.

R: And I lot of kids would go there?

F: Oh yeah, right.

R: And kinda just—was there a jukebox?

F: Yeah, there were jukeboxes I think. And there was, I was never there much, but there was a pool hall above where Moe's ex-Hardware Store is, where the, where Shirley Austin is there, I think. There was a pool hall up there, 'course I didn't go there much.

R: Was that a little more of a shady deal there?

F: No, it wasn't shady, no.

R: But I mean, would, did high school kids go there or was it mostly young…

F: Yeah. Like then, I would, if I remember right, the theaters did a good business.

R: What kind of music did you listen to in high school, do you remember?

F: Jazz, I'd say.

R: And this was before rock and roll, were still in a different era there. Do you remember any of the movies you went to, or can you remember any movies from that period of time?

F: There were James Bond ones back then, I know. But otherwise, I can't remember.

R: Nothing stands out.

F: Sometimes, if somebody had a car, we would to the Rose Theater in Tomah, not in Tomah, in Melrose.

R: In Melrose?

F: It's where the Rose Café is now. That was a theater.

R: Oh really.

F: Yeah.

R: So that would be kind of a night out then maybe.

F: Night out, yeah.

R: You would be a little further then. Did you go, as a high school kid, did you go to La Crosse and Eau Claire very much?

F: [no].

R: Only if family went or…

F: 'Bout the only time—to an athletic event, that's about all, going to someone else's game, that was about all.

R: Do you think, how far would a, how far did you travel? Like did you go to, at that time in your life, where had you been that was further away than Black River? Just out of curiosity, I'm just…

F: I remember once we went to a basketball game that was down in Viola, that's down by Richland Center. That was a long ways away at the time.

R: Minneapolis or Madison?

F: Madison. Usually, we would go for the State Tournaments; they would take the team down there.

R: That must have been fun.

F: That was fun. I remember the last year we took a bus down there and at half they announced that there, that a snowstorm had come up and that you better plan on staying somewhere in town and Hump Homstad, Gil's father, had gotten us rooms at the [inaudible] Hotel, they were these big salesmen's rooms. And that was quite a deal to us. And then we rode back to Black River on the bus the next day so.

R: [Laughs] that must have been great. When you think about your senior year, and I know that's a long time ago, but was there anything stand out that was especially exciting about that year? Because you graduated in '52 right?

F: '52, yeah.

R: So ’51, ’52, what kind of stands out as something you really remember from that year? Something in athletics or…

F: We were really good in basketball that year. Say losing by two points to Tomah was kind of disappointing.

R: This was in, would this have been in a regional final game?

F: Regional final, yeah. We had beat Adams-Friendship the night before.

R: And I think Sam talked about that game. There was a shot at the end that could have gone in and didn’t.

F: Well that was his team the next year.

R: Oh, ok.

F: But they had a good team too, I think they were like 22 and 2. That was Gil Homstad and my brother and a…

R: The next year, ok. And how many brothers did you have?

F: Three.

R: Ok. And were you the oldest?

F: Yeah.

R: And they were all…

F: One is ten years younger than I am, I’m the oldest, and Milan is a year behind me.

R: Ok. Let me go back to the athletics thing, just a little bit on that too, did you play football too?

F: I didn’t go out when I was a freshman, and let’s see I think, I did go out the sophomore year because Sam had said if you want to play basketball, you’ll play football. [laughs] And I started like the junior and senior years.

R: Ok. And you were somewhat taller than a lot of the guys?

F: I was the same height and size I am right now.

R: And how tall are you?

F: 6’1’’

R: 6’1’’, so you were, there weren’t a lot of guys, at that time, that were 6’5’’.

F: Oh, I can remember senior year, an athletic event, Osseo came down here and they were like 12 and 0 and their smallest guys were six foot two. They ran from 6’2’’ to 6’7’’ or so.

R: Wow. Powerful.

F: Yeah, they were big.

R: How did you do against them?

F: Sam used Gene Krohn to jump center. Can you imagine that? [Laughs] We ended up beating them 32 to 30. That was one of the things that I could remember.

R: And how did you manage to do that?

F: Slowed it down.

R: Just slowed it down.

F: Gene Krohn was a started and Basil and myself.

R: Who were the other two?

F: Well, like I say, my brother, well my brother and Gil played a lot, but those were the two, three main seniors.

R: Now when you think back on that period of time, why do you think your teams were successful? Was it, I mean what did you, what changes did Sam kind of bring in to the picture?

F: Discipline and organized. They didn't even have like sixth, seventh and eighth grade teams.

R: Before he got there.

F: Before he got there.

R: Was he, was he pretty demanding?

F: He was very demanding, some kids, some guys couldn't get along with him. He was tough.

R: Very tough.

F: Right.

R: I'm thinking, I'm trying to picture, because I knew him later in his life, when he was, but this would have been when he was very young.

F: He was very tough, yeah.

R: Did he, did he still, do you remember him even playing himself still at that point, or did he not do that?

F: Yeah, he played city team ball and he was a good ballplayer too.

R: Ok. Because played up at Eau Claire.

F: They had a good city team, and I am quite sure he played, he played on a Navy team, pretty much full time when he was in the Navy.

R: So he played a lot of basketball prior to coming here.

F: He didn't seem like he was much older than us either, really, when he came in down there.

R: Right. So for…

F: And, like I say, we practiced a lot, year round, really.

R: Yeah, where did you practice like, off, in the off season, where you practiced outside, shooting around and…

F: That would be another thing. It was awful hard to get into the Black River, other than the regular practices. We'd find ways to get into Merrillian, Alma Center…

R: Oh really?

F: Or other schools even. And in the summertime, we had a regular court over at Dave Mills' house here. We would play 'til twelve o' clock or so.

R: Just played, played a lot. And was that a lot of guys or just a few?

F: There were like ten of them, the regulars. Chuck was one of them.

R: Yeah, tell me a little about Chuck Siefert. What can you tell me about him? Because you must of known him pretty well.

F: Yeah I did. He was like, when he graduated from high school he was like 6' no, like 5'10'', Sam was telling about this, and he went down to Madison and he was, his coach or somebody, had told him, I think Norm Krenz who told him he should go out for track and they was registering at the Red Gym down there and he saw this deal where they were signing up basketball players so he went to that instead of track.

R: Isn't that something?

F: And he eventually grew to like 6' 2 or 3''. And again he was a really dedicated player.

R: He ended up being really a very good player.

F: He was a good football player, too, you know, in high school. He was captain of his team.

R: Do you remember, go ahead.

F: I went to Madison too in '52.

R: Oh you did.

R: I played as a freshman and it's pretty hard to switch from a center to a guard. [Laughs] No use for a 6'2'' center.

R: Were you able to play there one year?

F: I got my numerals down there, yeah.

R: Good for you. And how long did you play?

F: A year, the freshman year.

R: And then any beyond that?

F: I didn't play anymore after that, intramural and that. And Gil Homstad was the same way; he played his freshman year. And Dave Mills, he went, do you know Dave at all or?

R: I have heard of him.

F: He was like, he was a freshman when I was a senior. Anyway, he went down there and he was on the team all four years. He ended up playing. So quite a few of us out of that…

R: So actually it was a talented group, sounds like.

F: Yep.

R: Now were you involved in track or baseball or…?

F: Just football.

R: Just football and basketball.

F: Gene Krohn was track.

R: Yeah, he was apparently very good in track.

F: He was a very good sprinter. Oh, and Donny McCormick was another one that was a starter. He was a track man and a football player.

R: Ok. Are many of the kids from that, kids, I call them kids, many of those classmates still around Black River?

F: Around here? No, not here, not anymore. [inaudible] Course Basil… I'll go through the list here. Donald Anderson, he was a janitor, right?

R: Yep.

F: He's still around here. Jean Bahnub, she's dead, Caroline she's here… Bue… Vick Byrns, he's still living, his brother Mike Byrns, he died…John Fry, he was roommate of mine at Madison; he ended up a doctor he's in Asheville, North Carolina now…Tom Haugstad, he's up here quite often. He owns, he owns, you know where Fred Sty lives? He moving out of there, Tom owns that. He owns some property up by Hatfield there… Basil…there aren't…

R: When you get to…

F: Jone Johnson, that's Peter's wife. And her twin sister was Jane, was married to Chuck.

R: Oh, ok. Sure. Is she still living?

F: Yep.

R: Now, when you get together in reunions, have you gone to reunions?

F: Yeah, I've gone to a few of them.

R: Are they, what do you talk about, from high school days, what still kinda stands out?

F: Football I suppose, basketball. Yeah, yeah.

R: That's kinda interesting.

F: There aren't too many of them left around here.

R: No, no. Well Dick, I want to ask you, I've got a couple other questions here.

R: I'm going to be, I also need to take a picture or two if you don't mind so if you could just kind of ignore…

F: Ok. Carroll Zillmer, he was in our, you know Carroll don't you?

R: Yeah.

R: He was in our class. But he was not involved in any sports. He was a farm boy.

R: Let me ask you just a couple other things; I'll kinda take you out in different direction in a little bit, 1952 was an election year, and what can you, what's your impression when I just say Dwight Eisenhower?

F: Eisenhower.

R: What's your impression?

F: He was my man. [Laughs]

R: Ok, you liked him.

F: Yeah.

R: Do you think he was…

F: I was brought up in a Democratic family but I somehow or another I was Republican.

R: Do you think he was popular even with young people?

F: I would say so.

R: Why do you think he was so popular? What was it about Eisenhower that made him that popular?

F: I guess he had the charisma from the war. I guess that's been the main thing. Everybody knew him, I think that's the main thing.

R: Ok. Do you have any impressions of Adlai Stevenson? Does that stand out at all?

F: No.

R: Because he ran against Eisenhower twice.

F: Yeah, I remember him, yeah.

R: Do you remember, did kids in high school at that time, were there any classes where you even talked about politics at all?

F: I would say no.

R: Not much.

F: No.

R: But you must of taken history, and do you remember much about that, or like do you remember who your history teacher was?

F: I think it was Gerald Van Sickle. Yep, it was. He was a good teacher too. I remember that.

R: But you don't really remember that you talked much about current…?

F: It seems to me we did but I can't remember.

R: Not a lot. Do you remember, did you live in a house that got a newspaper? Did you get a daily paper? Do you remember that?

F: I don't think we did.

R: Do you, when you, we talked a little earlier but, do you remember did you listen to news on the radio?

F: Oh yeah.

R: Quite a bit.

F: I remember listening to the political conventions all during, through the night, on the radio.

R: You sound like you were a pretty good radio guy, really enjoyed the radio. How about, I want to ask you about this one, do you remember when you got the first TV in your house?

F: Oh, it had to be the mid-fifties.

R: Ok, and do you remember what your first impressions were of TV or were you first…?

F: I remember the first time I saw a TV is I think, my dad was involved with the co-ops, and we went to the big co-op in Eau Claire for the I think the Badgers were playing in the Rose Bowl. So we saw that game, I remember, on TV. It was awful snowy, but that's the first impression I remember of TV.

R: Do you remember watching any other programs at first with the TV?

F: No. I can remember the radio programs more so than I can remember the TV programs.

R: And I always wonder about the, I always hear about people talk about boxing on TV on the TV at that time. Boxing and professional wrestling, those are two things they kind of mention but…

F: I don't think I really watched TV that much.

R: Now, you are of an age where you were, TV just wasn't around yet, but do you remember, ok, so when you went off to college, let's say, do you remember ever watching TV in college?

F: Not really, no.

R: So TV didn't really come into your life until you were in…

F: College boxing was a big deal then. We'd go to see those. They would get more for the college boxing matches then the basketball team. They would fill up that field house. R: So these were prizefights type or?

F: These were the University ones. They would wrestle three rounds, box three rounds. I remember they had the NCAA championships there at Madison. That was quite a sport.

R: That must have been something.

F: Then it was a couple years after I graduated where that kid got killed down there. That was the end of it. Then it was college basketball and football.

R: Where did they have the boxing down there?

F: It was at the field house.

R: Ok. That must have been kind of a spectacle.

F: It was. They really went at it for three rounds.

R: Now you were kind of a young kid from a small town, you must of, what were your impressions of Madison?

F: It was big. 'Course it's small now compared to what...but I got along good.

R: Were you, what did you study there?

F: Business administration.

R: Ok, I'm just, it must have been quite a, did other kids from your class go to Madison?

F: Yeah, like I said, John Fry did, he was there. Roger Hynek was, do you know Roger, a dentist at Neilsville? He was my roommate as a freshman, and then he transferred to Marquette in the dentistry.

R: When you went to Madison, did you come home very often? Or was it pretty…

F: Maybe once a month or so, hitchhiked though. Most of us who were down there hitchhiked.

R: No problem hitchhiking?

F: Never a problem.

R: Isn't that interesting? That would be very different today.

F: Yeah I know it. [laughs] Sometimes there would be two of us, you know, at a time, like you said.

R: But you never had a problem getting a ride that way?

F: No, never, we got in with, you might say, some drunken hillbillies once up around the Dells but [laughs] and there were two of us, no problems. No, it, wasn't any problems at all.

R: That's interesting. How about, I've got a couple other things, this is time, you were in high school at a time of what we call in history the Red Scare. You know the McCarthy…

F: McCarthy, yeah.

R: McCarthyism and, do you have any impressions of that from that time?

F: I remember a lot, there was a lot of publicity at the time, I didn't really pay attention. You know I figured it didn't really affect me.

R: Do you remember…

F: McCarthy? Yeah.

R: Do you remember that up on Tenth Street at the water tower they actually at one time had an observation area?

F: I hadn't heard that, [laughs] no.

R: Well they actually did and I bring this up only because I've, in the researching in the Banner Journal from that period they would actually have people go up there and, like Lawrence Jones was the head of this.

F: I never heard of that, [laughs] no.

R: That's interesting. Sam mentioned to us that he actually had been involved in that. Bob Teeples, and some of these guys.

F: I remember there being a UFO scare one time in Black River.

R: Yeah, can you remember that? Or when that was?

F: It was during that period, the fifties or so.

R: Do you remember anything about it?

F: There was this one guy from, oh, it was a Hanson, I think, I can remember his last name. He claimed he found parts of it or something.

R: Did it turn out to be a big hoax [laughs]?

F: It was just a big joke. But there was lots of publicity about it at the time, yeah, right, so...

R: I've heard of that, of that happening. How about, can you remember much about the Korean War?

F: Oh, quite a bit, 'cause, like I say, there were a number of men that I knew at that time that went in and served and some got killed and…

R: Do you remember, this is a, one that's been bothering me for a little bit, when I was a little kid, I remember Chris Olson. Do you remember Chris Olson? He was an old man that lived right on Main Street?

F: Oh. Yeah.

R: I think he'd been a, might have been a businessman at one time.

F: Yeah, Chris owned the café down...

R: Did his son get killed in Korea? Do you remember that?

F: I don't remember that. But there were a number of

men that got killed.

R: Do you remember Mitchell Red Cloud at all?

F: I remember, I didn't know him, but I remember yeah.

R: Can you remember when that happened, his death?

F: I remember when that happened, right, yeah.

R: How about, what was your impression of, I'm just going to ask you a couple of other ones, do you remember anything about Harry Truman?

F: Yeah.

R: What's your impression of him? As a kid, you know, you would have been a junior high, high school kid.

F: I can remember a lot of him but I can't really describe what I…

R: Ok, how about General McArthur? Do you remember that whole story?

F: Oh yeah.

R: Do you remember how you thought about that or what people thought about the fact that he got fired?

F: Well I think, I thought it was a bad deal, really.

R: So kind of you admired him?

F: I stuck up for him, I admired McArthur, yeah. McArthur, yeah.

R: Now what about McCarthy? Joe McCarthy? What's your impression of him? As a kid, now he would have been, I'm just, in 1952 he would have been running for Senate.

F: Right. And the McCarthy hearings. There was an awful lot.

R: What are your…

F: I kind of ignored it I guess.

R: Ok, so you didn't see it as…

F: As a threat to anybody.

R: Ok, well here's, here's a kind of a last question for you, I'm kind of interested on your thoughts on this unless you want to, well, maybe I'll ask you one other one too before I get to the last one, if somebody today went back to Black River in 1952, how would it just look different to them, physically? What would they just see that would just look different right away from what it is today?

F: Well the schools and the churches and the downtown, actually, is so much different. There are so many unoccupied…well the park out here.

R: Nothing there?

F: Nothing, we didn't have anything like that.

R: Nothing even would have been right where we are.

F: No. When we were young, we would go out in the hills out here and ski, we'd skate on the creek or make our own hockey rink on the streets over by, over there, and it has really changed—for the better, I'd say. There's more for people to do. And the golf course was not here when we were, that came later, after, I think that was in the late fifties.

R: How about, did you go, as a kid, were you very often over in Brockway?

F: Not much.

R: Was that kind of…?

F: About as far as we ever got was the A & W Root Beer Stand.

R: Ok.

F: But I had a lot of friends that lived over, yeah, I had a lot if friends that lived over there. Actually, Brockway and the Grove were combined, like I said on the…this football team-wise. Castle Mound, we might have gone over there sometimes.

R: Were you very aware of Native American people or kids? Did you go, were there kids there as students?

F: Oh yeah. There were kids there. They were tolerated, and we got along good with them, really.

R: And some of those kids were involved in sports?

F: Yep.

R: Sam told us a little bit about setting up a program where kids would get rides home from Rotary members, do you remember that?

F: Yeah, I was involved in, later on I was involved in hauling.

R: You got involved in that too.

F: Oh yeah.

R: Ok, the other way.

F: We enjoyed that, but I guess the problem was insurance…why it ended I guess that was the problem—insurance, liability, or something.

R: Kind of too bad. Probably a neat idea.

F: Getting back to high school, after Sam got here, I remember, probably our junior year, we took a bus to Chippewa Falls and it was so cold that we had football parkas on to keep warm. So you can imagine how cold... Anyway, those last two years, for basketball games, we had private cars haul us to the games. Like Sam would take a load and Howard Kinney and Kenny Linder and…

R: You know I will tell you an interesting anecdote about that, Gene Krohn mentioned to us that same story and he mentioned that you would often sit in the front and fumble around with the radio [laughs].

F: Oh right [laughs]. Well I had to keep Sam awake, see [laughs].

R: Isn't that interesting. So your radio interest even—was going on during that.

F: So we were—you might say we were a well-knit group.

R: And had a lot of fun it seems.

F: Had a lot of fun, really, with Sam around.

R: Do you remember, was Homecoming a big deal?

F: It was, yeah.

R: And what would happen on Homecoming Day?

F: Well, I mean, we—decorating the floats and all that was…

R: Was big. And then they have the parade.

F: Had parade, yeah.

R: Did they call it at that time, were they using the expression Hobo Day?

F: Hobo Day, yeah.

R: And did high school kids dress up for Hobo Day?

F: Yep.

R: Everybody did.

F: Yep. And Homecoming was always the last home game of the year. It never, I bet it never changed for thirty years 'til you know, these later years.

R: Kind of a special game.

F: A special game, yeah.

R: I guess, my one other question I had too was, what… I work with young people and I try to teach them history, you know, I try to tell them about past times and... What do you think that young people should know today about the fifties? Like what would be something that you think is important for them to know about that period of time?

F: That's a difficult one.

R: Yeah that's a tough question.

F: A difficult one to say.

R: Is it a time that we should pay attention to? Is it a time that we should, you know…?

F: I would say it was more of a time where everybody was friends and there was no bitter feelings amongst any of the students, really. That's one of the things anyway.

R: That what stands out to you?

F: Yeah.

R: Do you think kids had fun in school?

F: I would say so.

R: In the fifties? You had a good time in school and the sports were important.

F: And sports were a main thing, really. And basically I think most of the teachers were well liked and the kids got along well with them.

R: Do you remember, was this feeling of being kind of close also a feeling in the community, do you think?

F: I would say so. Like all the sports events, even football, was well attended.

R: You know, one comment that I think Janet Krohn made to us was that she thinks of that time period as being simpler.

F: Yeah that could be it. I would say so.

R: Does that kind of ring a bell with you too?

F: Yeah.

R: And I'm thinking that sometimes we all think that a little about our youth, that it was a simpler time. But when I study this period of the fifties, it does seem like it was probably simpler. It was less complicated. Do you remember, I am just going to translate, go up to one other thing; do you remember your reaction to John Kennedy being killed? Now you would have been an older man.

F: We were shocked. I was, we were... I remember I was working at the bank, Jackson County Bank, and a number of us guys had made arrangements to go to Minneapolis to see the, I think the Badgers and Minnesota were playing and the Vikings and the Packers that same weekend. And we had reservations and everything and it was four o'clock in the afternoon and it just came over the radio so that ended our weekend.

R: Sure.

F: I remember that very clearly.

R: I bring that up to you because some people have said that they felt like that was kind of a turning point in some ways for the country.

F: That could very well be.

R: Things kind of changed after that, kind of interesting. Were you, you mentioned the Packers, were you a Packers fan in the fifties?

F: Oh yeah.

R: Even back then?

F: Back then, yeah.

R: Now this would have been pre- Vince Lombardi days and they were kind of a struggling team.

F: Struggling team then, yeah.

R: Were they on the radio?

F: Yep.

R: And did you ever get to Lambeau Field?

F: Well, not during those years, no. It was after, I would say, the late fifties before I went there.

R: Were you aware, or when you were in high school, did you ever get to see college games at all? Did you ever get to a…?

F: Just the state colleges.

R: And once in a while you would get to Eau Claire or La Crosse?

F: La Crosse, yeah. I don't think I saw any college until I got down there my freshman, yeah.

R: Were you ever, did you ever consider going to a different school because of basketball?

F: Not really.

R: You were kinda determined to go to Madison.

F: I was determined to go to Madison, I wanted to go there for the education, mainly.

R: Sure, that's great.

F: My brother, my brother Miley, that's a year younger, he started out at Eau Claire and played up there and then came to Madison. He was there a year and then he went back to Eau Claire.

R: Well that's about all the questions I had.

F: I don't know how good I did.

R: Oh you did just great. Just great.

Sam Young


J: So then can you just state your name, where and when you were born and where you grew up and went to school and when you graduated.

Y: I was born in 1927 in Augusta, Wisconsin I attended Augusta High School and participated in activities in the Augusta High School and after graduating from Augusta High School I enrolled in what was River Falls Teachers College, was the name of it at that time, in 1944 and 1945. I entered the service in 1945 and was discharged in 1946 and I was in the Navy for one year. And after one year's time I—the Navy came, all the services came out with a point system and I had enough points, qualified for my rank, that I was discharged in the fall of 1946. And then enrolled at Eau Claire's Teachers College.

R: And just one second, where were you at when you were in the Navy?

Y: I was in Great Lakes. From Great Lakes I was transferred to Washington and in Seattle, Washington I was assigned to the ship, a destroyer, the USSDD 517 USS Walker and I served the remainder of my service stretch on the USS Walker.

R: Ok, that was a period when everyone was, that was the end of the war and the year after the war.

Y: The war ended when I was in boot camp.

R: Ok, interesting.

Y: At Great Lakes. Everyone at that time went on leave, anyone with any rank, but all of the recruits that were in boot camp at that time remained for about four or five days. Things came to a stand still at that time.

J: So how did you get to Black River?

Y: After, like I stated, I enrolled at Eau Claire's Teachers College after being discharged in 1946. I graduated in the spring of '49. And it was kind of a unusual story. I never applied for a job at Black River Falls, but at that time there was sort of a shortage of teachers and the superintendent from Cadott came to the school and he was looking for a science and math instructor and a coach. And so I was interviewed by the superintendent from Cadott. After being interviewed on campus, he asked if I would come to Cadott and interview with the board and which I did. And at the conclusion of the interview with the board, we went back to his office and discussed the teaching positions and coaching assignments and he asked what I thought I would have to have for a salary. That kind of struck me, he didn't offer a salary, but [laughs] he asked what I thought I would have to have. And I told him that I thought that job would be worth at least $3200. He sat back in his chair [laughs] and says—his first reaction was, "wow." And

[laughs] he said, “I’ll have to take that back to the board.” [Laughs] At that time there were others that were going out and entering the teaching field and were being offered from $2600-2800. And about three days later he came back on campus and we lived in dormitories, temporary dormitories that were constructed behind the main building in Eau Claire and he was knocking on our door at eight’o’clock and he had a contract in his hand for $3200. Well that was the first interview that I had ever had and I really didn’t know how to handle it. And so I went over to Mr. Zorn, the Dean and then our basketball coach at the time, and I explained the situation to him and the contract that I had offered and his reaction was, “you know that’s an excellent contract.” And I said, “but look at the teaching assignments.” I had, my teaching assignments would have been advanced math, physics, chemistry, three classes of Phy. Ed. and coaching. And I said I don’t know whether I want to accept—I don’t know how a person would prepare to teach with a load like that and how you would have time to coach. And he said, “just a minute,” he said, “do you recall the day that you were invited to come down to Rotary Club and speak at the Rotary Club?” I said, “yes, I remember that.” And he said that, “there were a couple of gentlemen from Black River Falls that were there and they heard your speech and afterward they asked me and inquired if I planned on going out in the teaching field and they told me that there was an opening in Black River Falls for a coach and science teacher.” And that was the year that Mr. Krenz, who had that position, had been elevated to the principal of the high school. So, I—he asked if I would be willing to come down, Mr. Zorn called him on the phone, and in their conversation, apparently they asked if I would be willing to come to Black River Falls and interview with the board. I didn’t have a car at the time, very few did in college and I told him if I could find an automobile to come down that I would. And it happened there was a fellow from Black River Falls, by the name of Gene Upton, that was in school at the time and I talked to him and he said, “well I’d like to go down and see my parents too, so I will take you down.” And so he came down and I interviewed with the board. They met, at the time, at the old Freeman Hotel.

R: Is that there?

Y: Pardon?

R: Is that there anymore?

Y: No.

R: No.

Y: The bank is now located there.

R: Sure

Y: But that was the Freeman Hotel.

R: Jeepers.

Y: And a well, there, why, it was a very short interview, less than five minutes, I would say, and at the conclusion, why, Mr. Halmstad, who was the superintendent at the time, said would you step out into the hall for a minute and we went out and he handed me a contract for $3200.

R: So they matched it.

Y: Yep. So he said, “I would like an answer,” he said, “within the next two or three weeks if at all possible, and we would like to know because we would like to complete our faculties for the next year.” So, I went back and I talked to Coach Zorn again and asked him his opinion, well he said at least it’s a good school, there only, there’s one thing wrong with Black River Falls, they haven’t been very successful in the last few years and there’s been a rapid turnover as far as coaches are concerned and he said I know that you are interested in coaching and I said yeah. Well he said that the last three football coaches that they’ve had only lasted for one year and the basketball coach has only been there for two years. So he said I think you will be expected to win. And I said that is the type of challenge that I would like to try and meet.

R: Wow.

Y: And so I didn’t interview anywhere else. I thought well, that would be a good start, I would go there, and if I was released after two years, nothing would be lost. [Laughs] And I’ve been here ever since.

R: Isn’t that something. Now I want to ask you a couple of follow-ups on that, Zorn is the Zorn for Zorn Arena, right?

Y: Yes.

R: And you had played, did you play both football and basketball at Eau Claire?

Y: Football, basketball and baseball.

R: And baseball. And did Zorn, was Eau Claire at that time, was it a successful school, athletically?

Y: Yes, we won the, the reason that I got called down to the Rotary Club to speak was because in ’48 we won the state college championship in football. In basketball we never won a championship. We wound up second or third every—at that time, all the schools were in a, the same division, UW-Milwaukee was also in there, there were ten schools. You didn’t play all of the schools, but you played the schools that were in your northern division, which included Stout, River Falls, La Crosse, Superior and Eau Claire; they were the northern division. And then you played one or two schools in the southern division.

R: What was your better sport, as an athlete? Which one did you…

Y: I wasn’t very good in any [laughs]. No, I was captain of our championship football team and I was also the captain, my senior year, in basketball. So, we had good teams in basketball, we never won a championship. But River Falls had a fellow by the name of Nate Delong, and he was about 6’6’’ or 6’7’’ and he was a giant in those days. If you had someone on your squad that was 6’3’’, why, that was a big man, but 6—Delong sort of dominated the conference. So River Falls won the championship the last three years and we were either runner-up or in third, third place, every year.

R: That’s interesting.

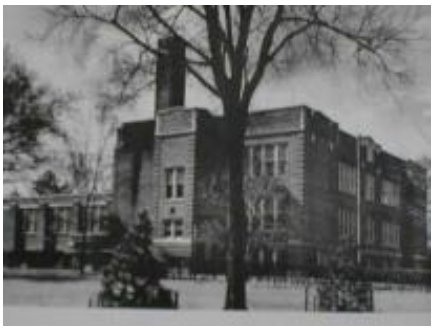
J: So when you first came to Black River, what did you think of the town?

Y: I liked the community, course, I was a little reluctant to come. School was delayed for a week in 1949, there was an outbreak of polio and Black River Falls had a rather large percentage of

cases and there were several people that were paralyzed permanently of that, as a result of polio and that was quite a, that was more so of scare than cancer is today.

R: That was before there was a vaccine even.

Y: That was before the vaccine. And it was in the minor stages in developing something. And as soon as there was a vaccine developed, and that, that had to be three or four years after. In fact, the first year that I came to Black River Falls I was assigned the football and baseball—assigned to be the football and baseball coach. And football, the opening practice of football, was delayed for one week when the school was also delayed for a week. That was kind of a scary time.



R: Yeah, really.

Y: with polio.

J: So what did you think of the high school here?

Y: Well, the high school is what is now the Third Street Grade School. There was also the Annex building, and what are now apartments, was the grade school. And the high school had good facilities. The gymnasium, along with Mondovi, were the two best gymnasiums in our conference. There were, let's see, Durand had a small gymnasium, the wall was out-of-bounds on one complete side, Augusta had a small gymnasium that had a balcony around it which—difficult to take a shot from the sides, Arcadia and Osseo played in the city halls.

R: So this was before the days of any spaciousness in gyms.

Y: There was no standard, regulation gymnasium floor at the time and the Third Street School was probably one of the better schools, one of the better gymnasiums, I should say in the area. And as the school grew, why, an addition was put on. On what would have been the north side, and an addition was added, and I can't recall, I think that was in the sixties, early sixties.

R: I think actually I think it was in 1954.

Y: '54?

R: Yeah, I remember that from one of the other interviews we had done. Someone has mentioned that.

Y: Oh, I couldn't recall just what year it was. I know we moved into this present high school in 1962 or three.

R: Forty years ago now. Interesting.

J: So what was the atmosphere as coming in as a newcomer? What was the faculty like?

Y: The faculty? Probably more on the faculty now in the middle than there was in the high school. I was looking, I think we sixteen or seventeen people on the high school faculty at that time. We had one special education room and one special ed. teacher. If you were a math

geometry and what they called at that time an advanced math class. Probably Paul, you were in on one of those weren't you? You left in what year?

R: I left here in 1972, so I'm…

Y: You attended here as a freshman.

R: I was here as a freshman and part of my sophomore year. Yep.

Y: I had you in mind as a promising basketball player.

R: I think so.

Y: At that time.

R: And I went on and played elsewhere.

Y: I hated—and you left and went to North Dakota didn't you. I hated to see you leave.

R: Yeah. Well I was—I loved basketball that's for sure, but that was partly due to you, I think too. Because we had, we had…I had gone around with you during, when I was a younger kid to some of the clinics you used to do. I don't know if you remember that or not, probably don't but, we used to, you used to go out to like Taylor and other small schools and you would take a few of us around with you and we'd demonstrate. [laughs].

Y: To demonstrate yeah [laughs].

R: So that was kinda my introduction to that.

Y: But we also, at that time, or maybe before, I think before that, we introduced a junior varsity program and a varsity reserve program to give everyone an opportunity to play and that helped. Course, we didn't have the girls for competition at that time. The girls would have probably two or three, what they called play dates. And they, when they were going to be held here in Black River Falls, they would invite two or three other schools to come. And the girls only, would be in the gymnasium. They would close the gymnasium and they didn't want anyone to see them in those blue bloomer, gym-type suits that they…[laughs].

R: Yes, I remember that.

J: Did you ever think that you would stay here this long?

Y: No, when I first took the job here, why, I thought I would be here two, maximum three years. That was my goal, two or three years. And I had many opportunities to leave, but somehow or another a family started to grow and they liked the community and they would discourage me from going. In fact, at one time I even signed a contract to leave and then, I think the board called me and they offered me I think two, I think two or three hundred more dollars on my contract to stay. And I took a look at that, of course at the time, two or three hundred dollars was…

R: And where would that have been to, where were you…

Y: I signed the contract at Kaukauna, as a football coach.

R: [inaudible]

Y: But I had other opportunities to Stevens Point, Eau Claire, Wausau, Oconomowac, Wauwatosa, a few others…

R: Did you ever entertain the notion of college coaching?

Y: At one time, yes.

R: Was that early in your career?

Y: Early in my career I would have—I had hoped to eventually get into a college, but that was difficult at that time. Most of them were…and in order to get into college, you had to have a background of three or four or five different positions, high school positions or assistant college coaches whatever it may be. And one time, why, I considered very seriously to going to a school in Nebraska as a football coach. But, I lost that…while attending graduate school, in Colorado, I had a couple of opportunities to go there maybe one was a big mistake, one was Aurora, Colorado, and that's a suburb of Denver, and I had the superintendent of schools in Aurora, as an instructor in a class and he had called me up last week of the class and he was curious as to why my friend and I had traveled from Wisconsin to Colorado. Do you like Colorado? And I said yes, I really enjoy it. And he said we have an opening in our school system in Aurora, and I was wondering if you would be interested in coming to Aurora. And I said it would depend upon my family and my wife, I would have to check with them. And I had to—that was kind of a dark day when I called back and told them—to withdraw my candidacy. And that was in Aurora and I also had a chance I had the superintendent from Fort Collins.

R: Oh sure. That's a neat area.

Y: Yeah.

R: What year would that have been?

Y: It was in the early sixties. I attended graduate school in '58,'59, '61 and '62. We had made that decision before we started. We knew it would take four summers to get the required credits. And we said we'll go two years then take a year off and see if we could build some finances for the last two years.

R: Yeah, interesting.

Y: And so that's how we got to Colorado, mainly because at that time, my friend and I were both avid trout fishermen. And we had met late in the year, school year, and thought we would pick some school other than Wisconsin because in the late fifties, the temperature down in Madison was in the high nineties and the hundreds and those that were attending had told about if you are going be sure you take an air conditioner and be sure you take this and that and we said why don't we go west and find a place we can… [laughs]

R: Survive.

Y: Yeah.

R: Oh boy.

J: So what classes did you teach here then?

Y: When I started I had all the phy. ed., junior and senior high school phy. ed. classes and I had a general science and a general math class. So I had three science—or, three phy. ed. classes a day and a general science and a general math. And after we moved up here to the high school, why, for five or six years, I don't recall now, I also taught algebra, a general science, or general math was left at the middle school and so I taught algebra and physical education. And the last fifteen years, from '72 to a, I wanted to stay in the classroom because I always enjoyed the classroom teaching and I wanted to stay in the classroom, and in '72, when I gave up football coaching, why, the asked if I would like to become the assistant principal. And I said only if I can keep basketball and a math class. And so I had the math class and kept basketball. I had two math classes.

J: So when did you become the basketball coach?

Y: The first year that I was here, I think I said it was '49, and I was the head football and baseball coach. And when we started basketball I wasn't to have anything to do with it but I was still interested in it. So I asked Mr. Krenz, do you mind if a come down and watch and observe and… no he says, that's fine, he says, in fact you can take the B squad, so I took the B squad and also was there for the varsity but I didn't have much input into it, and later on, after a couple—two, three weeks into the season I asked, when does the junior high school team practice? And he said we don't have a junior high school team. He said, we've never had one. And I said, do you mind if I start one, we've gotta have a feeder program. No, he said, but I don't know when you are going to do it, but go ahead if you want to. So usually they ended practice between 5 and 5:15 and I started out with having—tell the seventh and eighth grade boys come in at 5'o'clock and soon as the quit, we'll start practice. So we did that and on Saturday mornings we would also practice, and we were pretty successful with our junior high program. And the senior high school went 0 for 18, didn't win a game, and at the end of the year, why, Mr. Halmstad called me into his office and he said would you be interested in taking the basketball job next year? Well, I said, I've got kind of a heavy schedule and he said we'll give you a hundred-dollar raise. [laughs]. And I said well, for that, why, I would probably consider it. So I got a hundred-dollar raise to take the head basketball job and that was in 1950.

J: So, you were saying before that, they weren't very successful. How did you turn things around?

Y: Just with some good talent and hard work and dedication and we had…the first year that I took the basketball job, I think we went 15 and 8 on the season. We got to the tournament in Mondovi and we beat, I think Durand the first game in a, overtime and we beat Mondovi by one point, but I think that was a mistake that we made because then we had to go to Eau Claire. We won that portion of the regional tournament and we went to Eau Claire and Eau Claire had, they had been to the State Tournament practically every year. And they had a young guy there that a—by the name of Charlie Menson and I had had met him in some of my practice classes when I was a practice teacher at Eau Claire High School. And they also had two players that were around 6'5'' and they just had an outstanding team. And we had, Basil Holder, who was about 5'11—6'', Dick Faldet was our tallest man. I think he was probably 6'1''.

R: We are going to be interviewing him tomorrow. So…

Y: We had Gene Krohn, who was 5'9 and Allen Upton who was 5'9'' and Don McCormick who was about 5'9 or 5'10''. And the boys were…boys, we've got a real challenge. And all the tournaments then were played on the Eau Claire floor, and that was the largest floor around in

the area. And [laughs] we had the opening tip, Basil got the opening tip and he drove down the left side of the floor and he shot a right-handed shot and it swished right through. [Laughs] and we were ahead two to nothing. And the next time that we got a chance to look at up at the score I think it was 25 to 2 after the end of the first quarter. [Laughs] So, we got indoctrinated right there and some of the boys realized that if they were going to be competitive, that they had to spent time and practice and they put a lot of time in and they worked a lot, hard, on fundamentals and we had some good young talent coming up. And the Mills boys, Dave and Dan and Sam and Jim Grinde and we some of these, Don McCormick was a carryover and the Faldet boys, so they had some good young talent that really worked hard.

R: Where did Chuck Siefert fit into that?

Y: Chuck Siefert graduated the year before I came here.

R: Ok. Because he was, he's the one who went on and became MVP down at Madison.

Y: He was instrumental in helping these boys. He was a good friend of Dave Mills, Pete Moe, Dick Faldet, and Basil Holder, and he would come back weekends and I could count on, every Saturday and Sunday getting a phone call and they would want to know if I would come over and open the gym.

R: Because couldn't—didn't he grow like six inches or something after high school?

Y: Yeah he was about 5'10'', I think, when he was in high school and when he finished at the university, between his freshman and sophomore year I think he grew to about 6'4'' and he went on to become the captain at the University of Wisconsin team.

R: Kind of an amazing story.

Y: Yeah. He was a real gentleman. He was the type that would fit into any program, any program. He was a fine young man.

J: I think it was Mr. Krohn who was talking about the football program got the Rotary involved so other kids could stay longer for practices. And could you explain that?

Y: Well, like I say, every student didn't have an automobile like they do today. If they live two blocks away now most of them have a car, don't they?

R: Yeah, a block away. [Laughs]

Y: And at that time I don't think there were, well I would say, half a dozen students that had cars if there was half a dozen, there may have been a couple one way or another from that but they didn't have any rides home and there were rural schools I think we had fourteen rural schools and most of these students went through the first eight grades in rural school and when they came to high school that was a brand new experience for them and we had buses, but I think there were only two or three buses, at that time. And there were, some of them that would have liked to go out for sports but they didn't have any way home. Mr. Kinney and I after games, sometime would, if they didn't have a way home, we would transport them ourselves and take them home. In the wintertime, especially when it was cold, we felt sorry for them. So we went to the Rotary Club. There were some boys that wanted to come out for football and I would contact them and talk to them about it and they said well, we don't have any way home. So I went to

the Rotary Club and there was some active, young Rotarians at that time. And I presented this problem to them about rides home and I asked if there was any way they could form some car pools and transport the boys home after practice so they said what time would you finish, and I said, well it would have to be 6'o'clock by the time that we finish practice and they take a shower, it would have to be 6'o'clock. And how many cars would you need? And I said let me get a list of the boys and we had a list where probably there was four or five cars that were needed and they went to different areas. So they came up with a list of volunteers that would transport the boys home. And they met after practice and we kinda got it organized so that the boys would have a ride home. And they really appreciated it and a lot of times Rotarians were disappointed because someone would have a ride home and they wouldn't tell us. And they would take off, you know, like a high school student would do. And so…

R: Who were some of the Rotarians, just out of curiosity? Can you remember any names? Any of these guys that would still around or not?

Y: Tom Mills, Homstad, Pymo, Jones, Dick Horn…

R: And that got them kind of connected in with the team too.

Y: Right, and they told me that they really enjoyed that because they got to know some of the young people. They didn't have any other contacts, you know, to get to know any of these other young people. Trying to think if they ever, I was a Lion at that time. And the program grew so that the Rotarians didn't really have enough to continue it so they presented that problem to us and so I asked the Lions Club members would you be willing to cooperate along with the Rotarians because we don't want to discontinue it but... and so we got Lions Club members to, most of them are deceased now.

R: Did this involve also, you may have this in your questions, but did this involve some Native American kids?

Y: Oh yes, yes.

R: And had they participated much prior to that or was this kind of new for them to be involved?

Y: I'm trying to think we had one Native American on the football team. When he could get a ride home, this was prior to the car pool, and then in basketball, we only had one Native American and that was Kirk Blackdeer. But they lived in Brockway and after getting this car pool going and all, at one time on my football team I had five Native American boys starting.

R: Ok, this would have been the early fifties… or middle fifties?

Y: It would have been the late fifties and early, well in the sixties. We had, we had five boys that started on the...

R: Some of those kids were, as today, some of those kids are big kids, body type I mean just…

Y: Well, they weren't that big at that time, we didn't... the Snowball boys were probably as big as they… Frank Snowball was one of the first ones that played and his and then after that one of the Rave boys came along. The Raves boys lived on a, the east side too. But the Snowballs lived out in the mission. David Harrison, Whiterabbits…

R: Was there any, do you remember that, was there any negative reaction to that in town at all?

Y: To…?

R: To those kids playing?

Y: Oh no.

R: No. So it was readily accepted.

Y: Oh yes, yes. The townspeople enjoyed seeing them participate. But they had some real fine skills too. Frank Snowball was an All-Conference tackle, David Harrison was a All-Conference end, Ron Whiterabbit was our captain, he was a halfback, I think he was a Second Team All-Conference back, Phillip Snowball was an All-Conference tackle, there were some, Boy Ladd…

R: That's a name that I remember.

Y: Yes, he's one of the leaders in the Native American Society now. And he was just an outstanding young boy. He related a lot of experiences that he had to go through to play when he went back with their group, he related to some of the hardships he had in staying in the program and being part of the program. And but I kept encouraging him and told him that he would also be a leader someday and its great to see him whenever. I usually go out to the pow wows when they have the pow wows and he conducts a lot of the activities out there and I always, whenever he sees me he always comes over and relates a lot of the experiences to… fine young man.

J: Do you remember, to get to games you guys would take a bus normally…

Y: Yes.

J: And then Mr. Krohn was saying sometimes you would drive players places. [Laughs] Y: Well, we did that too, well like I say, we only had a couple of buses. The Cleares had the bus route and the buses weren't the most comfortable to ride on then, I wanted to tell you that. In fact, Mr. Kinney would, was in charge of getting the blankets and all of the, we had some heavy parkas that we they had picked up down at Camp McCoy that they had gotten on surplus. I don't know if any, I don't think any of them are left around here anymore. But we would take those, and in the main door on the bus there was a crack about that wide. And there was one heater in the bus and that was about two thirds of the way back. And the kids used to fight to get those seats there in those. [Laughs] They wanted to be the first ones on the bus. They knew where that heater was. [Laughs] And we used to stack blankets and those parkas up in the door; it would be illegal today. I think if Cleare would have ever got caught [laughs] doing it he would have

been…[laughs] But we had to try to stay as warm as we could. But when you got off the bus, I'll tell you, now, it was cold in the wintertime.

J: And then he also mentioned also that the buses didn't go very fast either.

Y: We never paid much attention to that. We just hoped we'd get there. [Laughs]

R: Can we ask you a couple, we've got about, we got maybe, about that amount of time left. 1952, does anything stand out for you from that year? And I know we have a picture of the basketball team down in the history case down here. Basil Holder, Dick Faldet, Gene Krohn, maybe Homstad, Gil Homstad would have been on that team as a junior? Does anything stand out about that team, at all in your memory?

Y: Yeah, that was, that was an excellent basketball team. I guess what, the outstanding part of that season was when we got invited to go over to Winona and play Winona High School. Winona High School and Winona Cotter always conducted a holiday tournament. We were undefeated and Winona was also undefeated. And Winona High School would invite an outstanding team from the area to come over and play against them and Winona Cotter would invite and outstanding team from Minnesota to come over and play. And we got over to that tournament and the rules, Minnesota rules were different than Wisconsin's, they did, they had a three-second rule violation and in basketball you didn't have that three-second rule in Wisconsin, you could camp right under the basket and stay there. And we got caught on that for, I don't know how many times. Because our plays and patterns were set up, you know, where you set screens in there. And I think they had an outstanding basketball player named Sweningson or Sveningson, or whatever it was, he went on to play at the University of Minnesota, he was a good fine player. And they beat us by one or two points in that game, but. At that same time we had a band instructor here by the name of Mr. Gruetzman.

R: We've heard his name.

Y: And he was an outstanding, demanding instructor. And the kids respected him 100% and they performed. He would win every tournament he got in and he had the sharpest looking band and all and he came to me after he found out that we were invited over there. And he said, do you think they would like to have a halftime performance, oh, I said, I'm sure they would, but I can't approve that you call over there or have Mr. Halmstad or someone call over there and find out if they would. So he had his majorettes, and they used to perform at halftime here, and when they would, the gym would fill up—packed. It would be packed. [Laughs] And so the majorettes wore white boots and they had heel clips on them. And when they came out you could here them over anything else. So at halftime, we got over there, and he brought his majorettes up on the floor, and it was a beautiful floor. And they come clicking- on the floor, CLIP, CLIP, CLIP! You know, and it [Laughs] didn't take long before the tournament manager or whoever was in charge came out and halted the show.

R: That's too bad.

Y: And Mr. Gruetzman went that high off the floor. And wondered what was wrong; they did that in Black River Falls, never got any objection or anything else. And they finally rearranged it where, they put them down in front, it was sort of like a big stage, auditorium area over there and they put them down in the front where he could carry on and finish his performance. But… but that was, but boy, he put on some excellent performances, halftime at football games, basketball games, he just had an outstanding, he was, Black River was noted for their outstanding bands.

R: Yeah, we heard that from both the Krohns when they were here. Do you have a couple of questions that you want to make sure you get in?

J: Yeah, do you want me to be more broad?

R: Sure.

J: 1952 was an election year, what do you remember about Dwight Eisenhower?

Y: That he was a veteran and that he was a leader of European troops. And outside of that, why, he was general and Patton was a general, and they led troops in World War II and he was a very popular candidate. [Inaudible] Who did he run against?

J: Stevenson, wasn't it?

Y: Was it Stevenson?

R: Yeah, Adlai. Adlai Stevenson, sure.

Y: And he swept the election. His popularity did that. But he was also, I thought, an excellent president. A Democrat probably wouldn't think the same, I thought that Eisenhower did a commendable job as far as running the country was concerned.

J: Then um, in the fifties they had people at the water tower and would watch for planes, during the Red Scare, did you remember that at all?

Y: Mm hm [yes], volunteered as one of those. And they had a booth up there and of course they were concerned with an attack or something, there was, after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, why, everyone was cautious. And so I forgot what the name of what that was called.

R: I think it was Civil Defense.

Y: Civil Defense, look-out…

R: Lawrence Jones was…

Y: Lawrence Jones was in charge of it. And they contacted individuals if they would volunteer to come up and be a lookout. And I had several outlooks up there, after awhile I thought, this war is over. Where I don't think that if we would see any attacks in Black River that it would in any way affect the country so I withdrew after three or four. [Laughs] I would usually get the midnight shift [laughs] else from eight until midnight or midnight to four a.m. but that was, that was manned 24 hours a day.

R: Twenty-four hours. Pretty serious business, really.

Y: Yes it was. It was, but, I lost all seriousness after being there for half a dozen times I thought, I've got other things to do.

R: How would you describe the kids that you were working with at that time, generally? You were in this thing a long time and, I mean, your going way, we are taking you way back, but what were they like, were they…

Y: Kids are kids.

R: Kids are kids, they weren't that different from kids now?

Y: I don't think so. All kids have got a little mischievous activities in them… experimental activities… we didn't have any drugs to contend with and that was a big thing, I think. That's the big difference between kids today. And I, a good, solid, level-headed student, young person today I don't think would have any involvement in, with drugs, I don't think that they do, unless peer pressure forces them to do it. But I think that if they are concerned with themselves and they have parents that are concerned and parents give them good advice, why, I don't think that, they will get involved, I would hope that they wouldn't. But we didn't have that then. What

we did have, though, in school was dress codes. And the dress codes applied to teachers as well as students. A teacher was required to wear a tie and a suit coat. The only ones that were exempt from that were the shop men, but they had their tie, but if they didn't have their coat, they had to have their shop apron on. And phy. ed. personnel could have a more leisure outfit but they must have their whistle to replace the tie. So, students, girls were all required to wear dresses. There were no blue jeans and if boys came to school with blue jeans they were sent home to change them. It was a…

R: Different period.

Y: It was a different period. I don't think that you could get away with that today, however private schools do have dress codes. And teachers, I think, students showed more respect to teachers at that time because of, I think dress had something to do with it.

R: Sure. Anything else?

J: No, not really.

R: You were just, refresh our memory that you, your last year coaching at the high school was…

Y: 1988.

R: '88. So you really had completed thirty-nine years?

Y: Thirty-nine years.

R: Thirty-nine years, and you never thought when you came that you would be here for thirty-nine years. Isn't that something? The years go fast though.

Y: Time goes fast. And as you get older, they go twice as fast.

R: Isn't that true. We really want to thank you for coming in we appreciate it and we'll make sure that you get a copy of this and we'll keep you posted on what we do with all this information and we appreciate it very much.

Y: I don't know if I have given you much information.

R: Oh, I think it's been great. Thank you much.

J: Thank you.