

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Visiting Teachers Program

Coordinator of Visiting Teachers Program

O. H. 325

HAROLD KENNEDY

Interviewed

by

Bernice Mercer

on

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: HAROLD KENNEDY
INTERVIEWER: Bernice Mercer
SUBJECT: South High School, Social Programs, Teachers,
Youngstown College
DATE: November 8, 1975

M: This is an interview with Mr. Harold Kennedy, the Visiting Teacher Services coordinator of the Youngstown Public Schools, by Bernice Mercer for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on November 3, 1975, at ten o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Kennedy, we're interested in you, your family, your schooling, and so on before you go into your life-long service in Youngstown.

K: I'm a Youngstown resident, went all the way through Youngstown schools. I started at Shehy School under Miss McGowan, who was principal. From Shehy I went to Lincoln under Mr. Smith, J. W. Smith, who was over there. Then from there I went to East High School with the same Mr. Smith, entered East High School in the first class when the building opened in 1926, September 26th, I believe it was. I graduated from East High School in 1930. From there on I went on to Youngstown State University, graduating in 1937. I continued on to the University of Pittsburgh where I received my master's degree in 1939.

M: Was there something about this that steered you into your present, lifelong facet of education?

K: No. Really, I didn't make my mind up until I was in about my second year of college when I became interested in some educational courses and became quite interested and turned over from my science major--I was majoring in biology at the time--to education.

- M: Was there anything that you can remember about your school life that might have made you especially interested or feel that you had some kind of built-in expertise in the field that you chose?
- K: No, I don't think so. I just had a very friendly feeling towards school. I came up under a very kind school administration. I recall back in Shehy Street School the old custodian, for example, who in the morning during the winter would get there early. In those days no one had proper shoes or clothing as we have today. We would get there cold and wet and he would take us in to the boiler room and keep us warm and dry us off and then send us on to class. I think it was essentially that I had a very happy school experience.
- M: Your family, was your father a steel worker?
- K: No, my father was a policeman. They are Youngstown people on both sides of the family for many, many years, both my father and mother. I guess it goes back to the days of the potato famine in Ireland when they landed in Youngstown.
- M: Your father being a policeman might have helped? You had a feeling about work perhaps?
- K: No, I really didn't know my father that well. My father died when I was seven, so I really had no concept of the police. He was private police anyway, he wasn't a city policeman. He was a member of the security force for the Republic Iron and Steel.
- M: About your second year of college you began to think about this angle of work?
- K: Yes. I took a course by chance, as many people do in college. I needed a course and there was a time spot available, and some of my friends were taking it. As a matter of fact, Dr. George Schoenhart was one of my friends at the time. We both took the course and both found out that this was opening a new field which we really hadn't considered before.
- M: This teacher must have been pretty . . .
- K: It was Dr. Wilcox, who is the dean of the School of Education in Youngstown. Yes, he was Dean Wilcox in those days. Maybe he was a good salesman. He turned out a lot of young teachers in Youngstown.
- M: From then on, the courses you chose . . .

K: From that day on I stayed with my original majors and minors; of course, I also started to prepare to teach. I stayed with my biology major, my history major, and my English major, plus my social science.

M: Social science was the angle specifically that got you into your visiting teacher job?

K: No, as a matter of fact, I backed into the visiting teacher job. I was asked in by Mr. David Laymen, who was the head of the department. It wasn't until years later that I found out how I was even asked. It seems that at a hearing or some kind of a meeting at the Youngstown Board of Education, there was a young lad who was having a series of difficulties in all of his schools. As they were going over his record, they found it was just one of these horrible school records. This kid couldn't get along with anybody, he had been in trouble, and he had been bounced in and out of school and in and out of the courts. In the interview someone made the statement, "Well, after looking your record over young man, I have come to one conclusion, that you are never able to get along with anybody in the school system." The young man, whose name I never learned, said, "No, that's not true. I had one good year with one teacher." I think he said it was Covington School. Naturally, they were a little bit surprised and asked, "Who was the teacher?" He said, "Well, that was Mr. Kennedy. That was my only good school experience." Evidently, Mr. Laymen remembered that, and some time later when he had an opening he, out of the clear blue sky, dropped in one day and asked me if I would like to go to work for him. I told him I wasn't sure. I was very happy where I was teaching. He said he needed someone so I agreed to take it for one year with the understanding that if I didn't like it I could go back to my regular classroom work.

M: What did you understand, when you made the change, your work would be like?

K: I really didn't know. I had no idea how detailed it was going to be. Like many people I just thought it meant just strictly attendance. Then I found out all the attendance work was just the peak of the iceberg sticking out of the water. As soon as you went in to checking why Johnny didn't come to school, or why Johnny was doing that, then you came up with a whole new ball game, a whole myriad of facts that enter into a kid and his problems in school. I liked it so well that I've been at it ever since.

M: That first year, can you remember some details about

what happened?

- K: No. I can recall hundreds of people that I worked with and continued to work with, but the first year they all blended together in one long year.
- M: These people that you worked with, were they agencies in the town?
- K: No, I'm referring to the people, basically. The parents and the children I remember better than the agencies, even though as a visiting teacher you do get to know the Children's Service Board, the Mahoning County Court, the Protestant Family Bureau, and the Jewish Family Bureau. I got to know Judge Beckenball really well and made some acquaintances with some of the other probation officers down through the court. I got to know law school personnel that I wouldn't have known otherwise. Basically, I got to know the people, the children, and their parents on the south side of Youngstown. I always worked the south side. As a visiting teacher I spent approximately twenty-five years on the south side of Youngstown, always in the same South High area. I watched them grow up, I watched them come through school, I watched them get married, and I went back and visited them in their homes when their children were having problems, all in the same area.
- M: How many visiting teachers were there when you started?
- K: I believe there were six and then in an economy move we got cut back to five.
- M: I imagine that was no economy. You had no idea at all what you were going to be doing the first year? Would you enumerate some of the things that you started doing and that you've been doing ever since?
- K: Basically, as a visiting teacher you start off the first year in September and you work the first month rounding up the lost sheep that didn't come back to school. This is your introduction. You're looking for them, they've moved and they've left no trace. Others have gone on to other school systems and you weren't notified. This is the introduction, and then you, basically, start checking attendance of those who are there. Of course, as soon as you start working with the attendance then you get into the other things that are causing the youngster to be out of school. This takes you afield into the area of service agencies. Sometimes you get the kid help. Maybe the kid wasn't coming to school because he didn't have any shoes, maybe he didn't have any clothing. Poverty in the home, sometimes it also got you a little bit of family counseling with the youngsters and with the parents in order to solve some

of his problems.

I can recall one little girl who was missing school over what seemed to me to be a foolish thing, but the more I thought about it it was a real thing to the girl. She wouldn't go to school because her mother was insisting that she wear silk stockings; all the other girls were wearing bobby socks. This created quite a family argument. It took me two or three days to straighten this up, to convince the mother to let the girl be the same as the other kids in class and wear bobby socks instead of the silk stockings that she insisted she wear. This was a sixth grade girl in an elementary school.

M: The ordinary person has no inkling of what your job really involves because it isn't advertised. There is very little said about it. As the years progressed, did you add things that you didn't do at first?

K: Yes, the longer you're in a field the more people got to know you. As you were known you got involved in many, many disputes. You were asked to solve a lot of problems, which a stranger wouldn't have done, because the people simply had confidence in you and your ability to sit down and listen to their problems and try to understand it and come up with some decision which would help them as well as the people they might have been in trouble with. The longer you worked with the agency the better known you became. You just got to know your people better and better and better. You worked with the same families year after year. You knew who was marrying who, all the way down the line. It makes you much more effective in the job.

M: Your relationship with agencies, they knew you so well that when you came and said this family needs a certain thing, they didn't go into it, they just took your word for it?

K: We were very fortunate too in the early days because there was more immediate help for the individual family that did not qualify for welfare than there is now. A pair of shoes was no problem. A coat, a winter coat, some of these things were available to them. For example, Salvation Army, I could always get shoes out of the Salvation Army. I could get some shoes out of most of the service agencies and a little bit of money for emergencies. The person who was eligible and who could qualify for welfare, even in those days, they had procedures through which they could use in order to get materials. The person who is down on their luck temporarily, who can't apply for welfare, this is the person I always felt very, very sorry for. They needed help, but they didn't need welfare. They only needed a temporary

handout, sometimes on a loan basis and sometimes on a gift basis.

M: This isn't available now?

K: No. There was a reorganization I don't know how many years ago when the so-called Community Chest, I think it was called in those days, became the United Appeal in which they took most of the welfare away from the social agencies and put all of the welfare directly with the welfare. In the overall picture they may have helped more people, but there were a lot of other people that got sort of shortchanged on the switch. This was a long time ago.

M: In 1918, I came across a microfilm of the Vindicator that said that the flu epidemic in Youngstown was so severe that all the schools were closed. South High was used as a hospital. Would you have any recollection of that?

K: In 1918 I was going to school, grade school, probably in the first grade on Shehy Street. I can recall the flu days and everybody would be talking about it, but I was a kid in those days.

M: I thought you might have reached back in time like I do.

K: No, I can recall Mr. Laymen, my former boss, saying that there was a time during the Depression that he was in charge of giving shoes out. He gave shoe vouchers. Evidently someone had made the school somewhat of a quasi-welfare agency for school children. If there was a need he had certain vouchers. He could issue a voucher for a parent to buy a kid a pair of shoes.

Basically, we are the only people who really know, perhaps, a kid and whether or not he needs shoes to go to school. We're in the homes, we're checking, we're working with them, whereas if the family comes into an office downtown and says we've got a kid who needs a pair of shoes and they request money for those shoes or something, you really don't know whether or not they're going out and using the money for some other purpose or whether they're really telling the truth. Whoever set it up in those days felt at least the school would know if they needed shoes.

M: The matter of glasses, too . . .

K: There again, we used to get our glasses through the Society for the Blind. I believe some of that service is still available. The welfare people are on the ADC [Aid to Dependent Children] and the General Relief. Their

medical benefits have been increased somewhat so they can get medical attention. I believe they can also get glasses.

M: I know the situation is pretty well taken care of now, in one way or another.

K: We don't have the problem we used to have, that children are not getting medical attention and not getting glasses. We don't have that, except in the beginning of the school year, when the welfare allowances for clothing and such has not been given. Sometimes we get in trouble.

M: After the first year, when you realized what your work in school was going to require, during the next ten years, how did it develop? Do you remember what your working day was like, your hours?

K: Several things happened. Naturally, the working day extended longer and longer because you found yourself making certain phone calls at night when people needed help. Since people knew me, I received a great many calls at home asking advice and so on and so forth. Also, I found myself going back to school. I spent five years in the Youngstown School of Law. I was working with the court, working with attorneys, and I didn't understand their language so I felt I better find out what they were talking about. Then after I left there I spent an additional two years doing a special kind of guidance work at Westminster College in New Wilmington.

M: This then was about what decade?

K: This would be in the 1950's.

M: Have things changed tremendously since the 1950's, for your job?

K: It became highly, highly complex. There are more problems and we have a lot of things on the streets today that we didn't have; more freedom, the automobile. When I first started, it was most unusual for a young person to have an automobile, most unusual. Now, at sixteen, it seems everybody gets a car. We have a degree of mobility which is taking the kids out of their local neighborhood. Now they can roam as far as they want to go.

There are social problems, social conflicts, that have come up that cause a reaction in our schools. We had a changing population on our side of town, which created some problems and solved some others. We had an arterial highway disrupt many, many homes in the South High area. When they built the new highways, all of these things

caused troubles in schools. New social morals, social standards, all of these things were changed. We had a seemingly, generation gap, if you wish to call it, between the parents and their kids, where the kids were not listening to their parents. They were listening to people on the streets somehow, or their friends, rather than their parents. We saw an era where the parents and the kids were drifting apart, especially in family discipline. All of these things back right into the schools.

M: Has this altered now since the 1960's?

K: I've been out of the field for a couple of years. I'm down here in the central office, but I still have my finger on the pulse. Seemingly, in the last couple of years, especially the last two years, there has been a general stabilization in the schools in Youngstown. We don't seem to have the violent conflicts we had. We don't have the neighborhood trouble between the schools and the certain neighborhood agencies; all of those things seem to have . . . maybe they've come to a better understanding or their problems have disappeared, I don't know.

M: You have how many visiting teachers now?

K: Ten, there are ten visiting teachers now.

M: Of course, there is another agency now, it's called Home, School, Business Agency.

K: Yes, that's an offshoot of our division.

M: I remember you meet together all the time so that you're . . .

K: Our two staffs, they service only Title I areas.

M: Yes, whereas you service the entire state?

K: We serve the entire city and they have a limited case load. They will have anywhere from twenty to twenty-five youngsters. They work with them on a case-work basis. They stay with them all year, all the way through. We take the rest of the students we handle. For certain purposes we move in and out of their caseload. For example, if one of their cases had to go to court, we take it in. They do not do court work. They are strictly a social type agency funded through state and federal funds.

M: Now, I would like to hear what feelings you have about this entire project, what you would like to see happen. What would you like the most to see come about, something that the school might do or the city might do that

you think would help matters?

K: Which project are you talking about?

M: Your visiting teacher project.

K: I would like to see the schools somehow add, alter curriculum to a point that school could maybe be more meaningful to a lot of kids. The kid who is unmotivated, the kid who is only thinking of getting out of school, quitting, and going to work, I'd like to see some programs which would keep that kid interested, keep him in school.

It's a terrific thing. Look what the schools are competing with; they're competing with booze; they're competing with drugs; they're competing with all kinds of entertainment available any place, any street corner in Youngstown. Trying, on the other hand, to keep the kids in school by offering them a standard academic program, sometime we lose out on our share of the kids.

Basically, in Youngstown, we have a fairly good retention rate for youngsters. I think it is something like eighty percent or better, the youngsters who stay. But I'm still worried about that group that gets away from us because they're the ones that are going to continue to be on a certain kind of a cycle. They're going to continue to take more and more energy from everybody who is working with them. Each year the standards on the outside for work and success become higher and higher, and these dropouts don't fit into that picture so they are back on welfare, self-perpetuating again. If you take a couple of dropouts, they get married with nothing, no job prospects, no anything; about the only thing they can do for a living is they can both go down and apply for welfare. Basically, without any education there is no way to get out of that and just the same old thing goes on and on and on.

M: You taught successfully, what is it that you would like to see done? What would these courses be that might keep the teachers from losing these kids? You must have some ideas on this.

K: I think we've made some starts with some of our job-oriented programs, those need to be expanded. Our program at Choffin Vocational School, that type of thing, needs to be brought down, that starts at the eleventh grade. By the eleventh grade I have lost a lot of these kids. We need work-study programs, we need job-oriented programs, and we need a change. This doesn't apply to all of our teachers, but I think there is something that I spoke about that I remember so fondly as a place that I

wanted, a place where I was respected, and a place that I felt safe in being there. Sometimes, maybe, just maybe, we've lost some of that.

M: Do you have a feeling as to why this might have happened? For instance, this occasion with the young man, there was only the one place where he felt wanted. Was that true when you began all over the city?

K: I really don't know how this came about, I guess maybe just the difference in the lure of the outside. Maybe, also, some of the social conflicts, where we had a youngster for one reason or another being very antagonistic in school; that was brought on by something happening on the outside which started to build a barrier between maybe him and his teacher, or the school system. We had a lot of people making some wild claims about what the schools were and what they were doing. They were very critical of us to a point where I think they turned a lot of youngsters away from school, but without ever having offered them any alternative.

M: They came in to the school feeling antagonistic?

K: It's the old story: What's the use of getting an education, you're not going to get hired because you're such and such anyway. You're wasting your time there. This was a very prevalent thing a few years ago; I heard it many, many times.

M: But there is not so much of it now?

K: No, the last couple of years I haven't been hearing that. Yet, most of the responsible leaders who have been talking and writing have been urging the youngsters to stay in the school, stay within the system and get your education first, then try to change things; don't try to change them before you have the equipment to do it.

M: Has Choffin always, from the beginning, required a "C" average?

K: I couldn't tell you that. There is a mistake in the concept about vocational education. The old saying that he can't work with his head isn't necessarily true. A long time ago the people in the vocational education came up with a realization that the brighter the individual they have, the better graduate they turned out in the field of vocational education. True, certain types of occupations, perhaps, didn't require the skill that a brain surgeon did, but the smarter the youngster, the more intelligent the youngster, the more he would see opportunity in a field which the average youngster might not see. He would be able to apply from his own

imagination shortcuts and new techniques. For example, some trade and craft unions are not interested in anyone who doesn't have normal or above normal intelligence. They find out that the shop work end of it, the math work, that type of thing, if the youngster can't do that he just can't function on the job.

A carpenter who has to be figuring stresses and strains and spans and joints and beams and all of that stuff, if he does not have the good technical background, he can't go back to the books on estimating costs and materials and needs and be up on new projects. He's going to be lost; he's going to go bankrupt. He might be able to function under somebody who does all these things for him, but if he ever intends to come to the top in his field, he never can without that good technical background.

M: You said that as you remember your school life it was a friendly thing.

K: Very friendly. I remember it with a warm glow when I think of my schooling.

M: You mentioned Mr. Smith, and I'm interested in him because he has been mentioned a good many times.

K: Old J. W., J. W. Smith.

M: He must have had an immense impact.

K: He was. I guess he played professional baseball at one time. He had another habit most people didn't know, he was a tobacco chewer. He was just a wonderful kind of guy that everybody just loved. The office wasn't a place that you lived in fear of being sent to. He could be stern, but he did it in such a nice way that you didn't realize it was happening to you.

I don't remember all of my teachers; I remember a few of them. Strangely enough, you only remember the tough ones, you never remember the easy teachers. This is very true today. When youngsters come in and ask me what ever happened to so and so teacher, they always ask about the teacher that made them tow the line.

M: Discipline is really the key to a great part of it?

K: It's the thing that kids respect. Of course, the tough part is the technique of the teacher who can be tough and still be kind, and compassionate, and understanding, but make the kids tow the line at least as far as academic excellence to the best of their ability. This is a trick, and not all people have it.

- M: The progress of the city and the way it survived the 1960's, do you feel that there was a reason why, perhaps, that Youngstown got along through the 1960's where other cities went into serious troubles?
- K: I think that maybe the size of town might have had something to do with it. Also, we had a stable population. We did not have a great turnover in our population. For example, many of the families that I worked with on the south side, their parents and grandparents have even gone to South High School. The population was quite stable; we didn't have a forage of people moving in here from other places. We had a few, but nothing like the big cities did. We never got so big that we weren't able to keep open-line communication all the way up and down the channel.
- M: Also, I want to bring in a little more about the work that Mr. Laymen did and the effects that the college had on your work, as you remember it.
- K: Mr. Laymen was one man who worked in the school system for probably forty years or better. He retired, I think, when he was over 71. I've never heard anyone say an unkind word about him, never. He was a very compassionate, understanding kind of a man who probably went to work in the school system back in about the 1920's when the state attendance law went into effect. He sort of grew up with it. As the supervisor of Child Accounting, he naturally had a lot to do with many of those things like school boundary lines, school discipline, school assignments, handling of school discipline problems, and all that type of thing. He just had a natural knack for the work. Everybody liked him, yet he had that same characteristic; he was very firm when he had to be, but he never did it in a very officious way, always friendly, understanding, but he ended up getting his point across just as easily as some of the desk stompers.
- M: He taught the very first colleges here for a long time?
- K: Youngstown had two colleges here for a long time. You wouldn't remember, but a lot of people do. Don't forget, the University of Pittsburgh was here for years. Yes, they were here; they had an extension course in the old second floor of the present administration building. They were here for years. The professors came up on the P&LE Railroad. It was strictly night school. I don't know how many hundreds of Youngstown teachers in that area got work on their graduate work through the University of Pittsburgh. I know Mr. Laymen was in those classes, and so was I.
- M: That's important.

K: Yes. Dr. Shoenhart was here. I remember Professor Yeager from Pitt. I don't remember why I remember Yeager. He wrote a lot of textbooks, maybe that's why I remember his name. There were quite a few of them here.

M: Those would be master courses?

K: They were all master's, graduate courses.

M: In education, or other things?

K: Basically, they were education courses. They were here because of a need at that time. Youngstown, you remember, was started back in 1916 or 1917. It started off as a small YMCA college and later on became Youngstown College. It didn't give graduate courses, so anybody who wanted graduate courses had to go to Kent. That was just getting started. I think in those days a lot of people turned their nose down at Kent, too. You really didn't have too much choice, you either had to go to Akron or Cleveland or Pittsburgh in order to get work. So Pitt used to come in here.

Then others, a great many of us, would pile into the train on early Saturday mornings and go down and take a day on the campus down there. We would take Saturday, work, and come back, or else form a car pool and drive.

Then, of course, we would go down there during the summer and get our residency work in. Some people even drove back and forth all summer long; others of us stayed there. I happened to have stayed there for the summer and enjoyed it very much. Pitt was a beautiful place to go to school. That new building, the Cathedral of Learning, was there and it was just conducive to going to school there. It was a beautiful place.

M: The law courses that you got into, were they tailored more or less to your needs?

K: No, that was general law. You see, you don't specialize in law until you get up quite a way along. The basic beauty of law, of course, is the training and thinking and logic it gives you, the ability to look at certain problems in a certain way. It has been very helpful to me because now the schools are very, very legalistic. We're under so many rules and regulations from the federal government to the state, the various agencies like the Health, Education, and Welfare, the Students Rights Laws, and all those. If you don't understand a lot of that you better not be in the school then. As a matter of fact, most of the school systems are now starting to hire a full-time attorney just to advise the personnel on procedures. Things you could do in the old days, now you

do it and you end up with a lawsuit. We've had lawsuits in anything you can imagine in the last couple of years in the Youngstown School system.

M: That has only been recent?

K: Yes, I'd say the last ten years. But you do need law in our business. For example, we are one of the functions of the Visiting Teacher's Service, a law enforcement agency. As such, you have to know the law you're enforcing. We enforce child labor laws. All work certificates are issued out of our office.

M: As you look back was there a visiting teacher when you went to school?

K: Truant officers.

M: What were they like?

K: Being a good kid I never met any of them. (Laughter) I only heard about them. However, we have an old ledger laying around here that went back to 1890 or something, which was a recording of a truant officer. It showed the schools he visited and the homes he had visited and his court cases. Even before compulsory education there must have been some kind of law or he wouldn't have had any authority. They were from the court, they did not work out of the school. This was all part of a court enforcement procedure. It wasn't until after the present attendance law--I think it is called the Bing Law, in about 1920--that we had the compulsory attendance law as we know it today, where all youngsters between the age of six and eighteen must attend school.

M: Is it six?

K: Between the ages of six and eighteen. Education in Ohio, of course, is free until they're twenty-one. A youngster may attend school free of charge until his twenty-first birthday. This year for the first time kindergarten is mandatory for schools; all school systems in Ohio have to put in kindergartens starting in 1975.

Back in the old days the court people, I know, were working, but I didn't know what the law was. I've never done any research on that.

M: That document, that record, is very valuable?

K: Yes. Well, the old record shows that this man had . . . I remember the one page where he had to force somebody to court and some girl had been sent to girl's industrial school. Of course, he didn't state anything in his

ledger why. This was just his own accounting of where he had been. This was his time sheet.

M: That would be an interesting thing to know about. How do you feel about the present attendance law?

K: I think it's basically good because if we didn't have it, what would the alternative be? There has been a lot of agitation to do away with it, to only fill our schools up with those who want to go. I think that is sort of a utopian ideal that maybe if the kids who were not good learners, the kids who were not disciplined, if they would just go away we could probably do a very, very fine job in the school system with the few we have left. What's going on outside though? What's happening to the bulk of our kids, who especially in the secondary school system wouldn't be showing up? I think most of the elementary kids would go anyway; most elementary kids seem to like school. It's only after they hit junior high that they start to look around and see that there are some other things in the world besides school. I think that might cause some of our problems.

M: The details of the law affect your job and I'm not sure that most people know they must be in school, that is, for a certain number of days a year.

K: They must be in school during the period of time in which school is in session. Now the law does allow them to be off sick under certain stringent requirements. Anything else from that is one or two things, it's either parental neglect or truancy.

M: There is not very much absenteeism in the grade school?

K: Well, there is a lot of sickness. Let's say there is absenteeism in the grade school, but basically there is not much truancy in grade schools. There is more parental neglect or illness than there is truancy. Illness is a great thing in the elementary because this is the period in which you get your measles and chicken pox and all these other things, which, fortunately, we are eradicating them with our shot policies and things, or immunizations. They still get some of these childhood diseases, and with these they can run up quite a few days. You can remember the old measles signs and chicken pox signs and the scarlet fever signs and the quarantine signs on the houses. We just don't see these anymore.

Furthermore, even a lot of the medical exclusions are a lot different than they used to be. They found out that incubation periods, for example, are different than they

used to think they were. If a youngster doesn't come down with a disease very shortly, why, he's safe to come into school. We found out that there are other diseases where we used to put the whole families out, where only the person affected would have to be put out.

M: I remember that very well.

K: You couldn't ever go to the store.

M: It was a crisis.

K: I remember as a boy having food handed in the window at our house while somebody had the measles because no one was even allowed out of the house to go to the store. That was a long time ago.

M: The purpose of our interview, of course, was to get back into the feelings that people had about things and the times that you remember first. I wonder if there is something that you would like to add that we haven't touched on?

K: I think schools have come under the general feeling of the public a little bit in the general distrust of everything. Nobody believes anybody anymore; it happened long before Watergate, the feeling that all politicians lie and that type of thing. I think, maybe, that it kept working down, and working down, and working down till maybe a lot of people think that the schools, part of the system, is not what it really says it is. By that we may have lost some of the loyalties that we had in the old days, those certain organizations like the P.T.A., and people who are in and out of the school and understand them. They are still staunch backers and know what's going on. If you heard some of this talk on the levy renewal, you would hear some of the wild rumors that go around, that everybody thinks we've got a huge pile of cash stored in the back room somewhere that any time we need it we can run back there and get it, and that type of thing. That's probably hurting us.

Also, there is a lack of respect today that has come about. The teacher and the preacher used to be two sacred persons; nobody ever questioned their rights; nobody ever questioned anything they did. As far as the backlash and the general feeling that anything to do with an institution is not necessarily right, I think that also has hurt us a bit. I think that is one of the reasons today that we have so much trouble convincing people that we're still doing a good job. We can't be doing too badly. If we can take and put a man on the moon as we did, it surely took an awful lot of well-trained people to do some of these things that we do. Maybe we haven't

solved some of the social problems, but the technical problems, which required a very high degree of skill, somebody taught those people.

Take the city of Youngstown, it runs very smoothly being run by a group of well-educated, intelligent people. Often I'll see a letter to the editor, a very well written letter, by someone condemning the educational system. Well, if the dumb bunny hasn't received a good education he wouldn't be able to write the letter. I think maybe if people really take a look at what they got in the way of an education that they might think a little bit differently.

M: The very people who are doing this complaining . . .

K: We gave them the tools to do this complaining, and even encouraged them, perhaps, to have self-expression. The school business is funny, I always said this; it's the only profession in the world where all the experts are on the outside of the field, and none on the inside. Any bum on the street corner always knows more about running the school system than the superintendent of the schools or the teachers.

M: There is the matter of the free lunch project, Mr. Kennedy, will you go into this?

K: A little better than one out of every three youngsters in the Youngstown school system receives a free lunch. We approved around eight thousand youngsters, and just the paper work and getting those applications down here and approved and back to the schools and filed, because it's state money and it all has to be accounted for, is a tremendous work. We also do the enumeration; we count all the kids and make the state reports on that. We issue all the working certificates.

M: Working certificates?

K: For the youngsters who are in school, the part-time, the summer vacation certificates, and all those who are leaving school. Of course, another thing we do, we check the children's rights to attend school in Youngstown. Are they Youngstown residents? If they're not, we will help the families process the legal requirements, the custody, and that matter. We make investigations as to the age of the kids to make certain they fall within the legal requirements. We work with the juvenile police. We work with all the agencies. We take cases to court involving youngsters who are breaking our state attendance laws. We take parents to court who are not sending their kids to school. We make investigations and try to collect and do collect vandalism, where the youngsters

have done damage to our schools, broken windows and that type of thing. This office recently participated with the prosecutor in suing a family after the judgement against a family for setting fire to one of our schools.

Also, in the high schools and in the junior highs where we have regular attendance offices, we issue all the bus passes. We make the determination of who rides and who doesn't, depending upon the distance from the school. We study the school boundary lines; we are the ones who decide which areas belong in which schools. Any changes that are made, this office makes, after the superintendent of the schools directs us to it.

I, personally, and a lot of our visiting teachers, hold hearings, board of education hearings, on all youngsters who have grown afoul of the school regulations, the school attendance law. This is the last step before going into court and we turn back probably seventy-five percent of them. In other words, this is the end of the line; the kids come in here and we have a talk with them and their parents; we have a mutual understanding and they go back to school. This is the last of it. The other twenty-five percent, if they continue, we might make an agency referral. If it was entirely nothing to do with what we thought it did in the first place, we would make other kinds of referrals, or in continued violations we would send it on to court.

We investigate all the nonresident students and we do collect quite a few tuitions for the city of Youngstown from people who don't belong in Youngstown and are attending school here. We also check to make certain that everybody who should be in a certain school is in there and they're not just living at a phoney address or something of that nature.

Any parent who has a school complaint can come in to this office and get a fair listening to. Any adjustment we can make with them or the school we will do. That's a big job.

We make the investigation to work with the young ladies in case of pregnancy. We have a night school program for them for the months that they are incapable of attending school. This is free, incidentally. This is a free service, our night school is free to them. Then they come back in to our regular school program. It's another one of the functions of this office. Then, if they wish, due to family matters, they can stay in night school and get a night high school diploma. They can do that free of charge.

Naturally, this office handles all parochial transfers

back and forth to parochial and public schools. The transfer policy, for example, our open transfer policy to achieve racial balance, that is handled by this office. We handle the other regular transfer policies for working parents who wish to have their child go to school in another district because they're not home and somebody else can take care of them in another neighborhood. Our medical transfers, educational benefits transfers, something they can't get in their own school, court placement, and things of that nature, all this is through our office. Of course, we keep the census; we count the noses and keep a card of every youngster in the Youngstown school system, which is updated every year. We furnish material to people, for example, who are retiring and have no proof of age.

M: From the old school records?

K: From the old school records. We furnish the clearing-house for outside agencies that want information about Youngstown people. For example, these parole authorities run a probation check. Those come into this office for clearing and making certain we have the proper release of information forms signed by the individuals so we can get the record out. All of these things take time.

M: Would you say that fifty percent of this type of responsibility was yours when you first started? Did this belong to the visiting teacher when you first began work?

K: No, when I first started we had no free lunch program. We had no transfer policy.

M: So it would not have probably been even one fourth of what it is?

K: If you're talking about the chair in which I'm occupied or the visiting teacher in the field, his job is different than mine, though I direct him. On this particular job, I would say over half of it is new, things which we did not do when we first started or it was not the time-consuming thing that it is now.

Free lunches, we help write up the program, get the blanks printed, distribute the blanks to all the schools, then, when they come in here, I sometimes work until two o'clock or three o'clock in the morning at home every night. Every lunch application that comes in here if it is filled out correctly, is ready to usually go out the next day. We used a tear-off sheet application and once that application is approved they put the names of the kids on or the names of the schools. Of course, that

means special handling, then that bogs down. An application coming in correctly filled out, it goes back out the next day. That is a good month's work; that takes September right there.

M: I'm glad that we took the time to detail the work of this office because I think that was necessary too.

END OF INTERVIEW