

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Public Education Project

Teaching and Administrative Experience

O. H. 517

WILLIAM MACKIN

Interviewed

by

Mary Belloto

on

May 27, 1981

## WILLIAM MACKIN

William E. Mackin of Sharon, Pennsylvania was born in Youngstown, Ohio, a son of William and Jennie Mackin. He received his bachelor's degree from Youngstown and his master's from Westminster College in 1961. He began his teaching career in the Struthers school system in 1950 and continued as the principal of Struthers High School from 1962 to 1967. He moved to the Penn State Shenango Valley Campus in 1967 for a two-year period and in 1969 accepted an administrative position with the Brookfield Board of Education.

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INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM MACKIN

INTERVIEWER: Mary Belloto

SUBJECT: Innovations, Federal Aid, Discipline,  
Pupil motivation

DATE: May 27, 1981

B: This is an interview with Mr. William Machin for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on public education, at 158 Euclid Avenue in Sharon who is currently on the faculty at Brookfield Junior High School, on May 27, 1981.

To start this interview Mr. Mackin, we would like to have a little information about your background, where you were born and your own initial experiences in education.

M: I was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1921 and spent most of my life in Struthers, Ohio. I graduated from Struthers High School in 1939, Youngstown State University in 1950, and Westminster College in 1961. In 1950 upon graduating from Youngstown State I accepted a teaching position at Struthers High School. I was the ninth grade mathematics teacher, teaching algebra I, general math, and business math at that time. I taught for twelve years. In 1962 I was appointed principal at Struthers High School. I was the principal there from 1962 until 1967. In 1967 I was employed by Penn State University at the Shenango Valley campus as Dean of Student Affairs. I spent two years in that position. In 1967 I became principal of Brookfield High School, and I remained there until 1968. In 1968 I became fed up with administration and requested reassignment to a teaching position in the junior high school. That is my present position now.

B: Okay, I think you said 1968; don't you mean 1978?

M: Yes, 1978.

B: How would you describe your earliest years in education to begin with the teaching methods that were used?

M: Well, mathematics, which I have been associated with since 1950, hasn't changed that much. Basic mathematics remains the same and has remained the same most of the time. I teach the basic fundamentals. You use practical tools which you can see around your house or around your school such as the yardstick, ruler, and some other things of that nature which really hasn't changed. Basic mathematics itself hasn't changed. It is true that we have computers and calculators now, but all they do is the mechanical process of mathematics at a faster speed than we can do it. To me it hasn't changed the teaching of math that much. Now a few years ago they did come out with what they call modern mathematics. It has been tried in high schools throughout the country. The opinion throughout the country now is that it didn't do the job it was supposed to do. Many schools now are returning to the old ways of teaching mathematics, especially algebra I and algebra II. They wanted to take the modern math courses out and put them into the first year of college.

B: How about the teaching environment itself?

M: What do you mean by teaching environment? Do you mean the classroom, the attitude of the kids, the attitude of the parents or all of these things?

B: Right.

M: The classroom has not changed. I think we have tried to change by bringing in teaching machines, but we have found that you cannot do better than have a teacher in the classroom of twenty to thirty students and the interplay that goes on between the teacher and the student cannot be replaced by a mechanical device which we call a tutor so to speak. Immediately after the war I felt that the attitude of the parents and the attitude of the students was good. The parents at that time still felt that the school was in charge; they wanted it to be in charge. Most of the time they did back the teachers up. Today the teaching profession is generally ground down and is low in relative rank when compared to other professions. I would attribute this to that fact that since World War II we have been a very highly economic society. Incomes have increased; benefits due to labor unions have increased to the point where education doesn't have the meaning in the minds of many people as it had in the 1950's and in the 1960's.

B: How about the environment as to the buildings and the school itself?

- M: Basically the school buildings have not changed that much. You still need a classroom well lighted, well heated, air conditioned if you can. I haven't seen too much of a change now. They did come through with the open classroom concept a number of years ago. I was opposed to it at the time; I am still opposed to the open classroom concept. I don't think that the youngsters can learn under those kinds of conditions. What has happened to the student then is since roughly the 1960's they have been given a lot more freedom by their parents than they used to be given. They have been permitted to talk out more. I feel there has been a lack of discipline in the home. I feel the students have been given too much money. In an open classroom situation you don't have the discipline that is necessary for a good educational climate.
- B: You are talking about self-discipline on the part of the students?
- M: Right. I know that there have been a few studies taken where a group of thirty students have been in two types of situations, one in an open classroom situation where they can do as they please and another where it is a closed situation where the teacher sets the boundaries in which the students are to participate. After the experiment was completed it was found that the students who had boundaries set for them, who had rules and regulations given to them, turned out to be well-adjusted, better behaved, and they were just better all around than the people who had too much freedom.
- B: In regard to the instructional tools which were used in the classroom do you feel that mostly things like audio-visual affect how you explain things?
- M: Yes, we have access to record players, tape players, film strip machines, overhead projectors. They are teaching tools that can be used. I think if you substitute them in place of directive teaching that they can be overused and their value is therefore decreased. We now have channel 45 out of Akron and Canton and Youngstown in which you can record some good educational programs and show that to the students. But you cannot substitute that for the overall teaching by a teacher in relation to his class. I feel that these tools of education are to be used at the proper time and at the proper place, and when they are used that way, then they are a good teaching tool and do the job. If they are overused, then their value decreases.
- B: You touched a little upon the discipline factor. Could you comment any more on that as far as the earlier years as compared to now?

M: Well, let me go back to when I went to high school. The discipline was there. The idea was that if you got in trouble in school or if you got a licking in school, then you could expect one when you got home because your parents felt that the school was there for your benefit and that the teachers were there to teach you. Therefore if they said that you got out of line, then obviously you got out of line. Today parents don't have that type of an appreciation for the teachers and the teaching profession. The student comes home, makes a comment about what went on in class; the parents are more inclined to believe that student than they are the teacher or the administrator. Today a teacher going into a classroom situation must have liability insurance in case something happens in his/her classroom. The general public in a great many cases would like to sue the teacher or sue the principal or the administration of the school if anything should happen to their youngster and they feel that they (the school personnel) are negligent in some way in the school. This didn't happen when I was going to school. I feel that many parents today believe that you don't need to have homework. They feel that you go to school to learn and that in the forty-five minute to an hour period five days a week you should learn all you need to learn. In my estimation this is a very poor attitude on the part of the parents. We teach them the basic fundamentals. Let's take mathematics. I could teach them the basic fundamentals of math while they are in my classroom. But they need to take these fundamentals and they need to practice them on problems that are assigned for homework. Now you can do this in a study hall, or you can do it at home, but it has to be done. There are parents who feel that they shouldn't get homework. I like to compare that to a young man who goes out for football.

You just don't go and play a football game on a Friday night. That student has gone to practice in August probably for two sessions a day for four weeks; he has a notebook of plays from his particular coach. He has to study those; he has to learn them; he has to practice them so that he can do a good job on a Friday night. The same thing has to apply whether it be mathematics, English, civics, government, science, foreign language. It is more important because everybody isn't going to play football as a profession for their entire life. So I feel that in this way our attitude has declined. This attitude has gotten into the students to the point where they don't even want to read the book any more. That is one of the ways that I fear we are in trouble in education today.

B: Do you foresee any changes in the near future with respect to this factor?

M: Yes, I do. I believe that this thing is in a cycle. As I mentioned before since World War II we have prospered. We have more money available than we have ever had before. We have more things that we can see. For instance, within a two to two and a half hour drive of the Youngstown-Warren-Sharon area you can see any professional athletic contest that you would like. You can see operas, orchestras, jazz bands. You can see all of these things that we didn't have when we were going to school in the 1930's and 1940's. You can turn your television on at night and can be well entertained. So the school as the center of life in a community is no longer the center of the community. It is more or less adjunct now. I can recall that in my days as an administrator, ~~W h e n~~ we went to school, everybody wanted to go to the football game or the basketball game or a band concert, and if you were putting on a school play, the town turned up for these activities. Now about the only people who really care are the parents of the youngsters, and in many cases they don't even come out because they are too involved in extracurricular activities outside of their home. So we cannot compete with the professional products that appear on television or that appear in the Youngstown Playhouse, the coliseum in Cleveland, or the arena in Pittsburgh. So school does not have the same meaning today as it had before. As far as the discipline within the school I believe that the country has seen what happens when the students are too free, when they are not made to shape up and are not disciplined either in the home or in the school, and they go out into society undisciplined there. So I see that the cycle is changing back now. In fact people are demanding today that we reinstitute disciplinary procedures in our schools. The past twenty years that wasn't necessarily so. As long as things went along and things didn't get too far out of hand they were satisfied, but now they found out that the freedom that was given to the students is not working. They are demanding discipline to be placed back in the school situation.

B: What about people motivation then as opposed to now?

M: Prior to World War II the attitude of the parents was that you needed an education in order to go to college to improve your station in life. Since World War II prosperity has been with us; money has flowed in; working hours have gotten shorter; the work week has gotten shorter; there is more free time to do your own thing. This has had an effect on the attitude of everybody. When you have a lot of money and it comes easy, then you don't put as much emphasis on education as the people who came here from the old country who didn't have anything and who didn't have access to an education; it wasn't free, and in many cases they couldn't get it even if they had the money for it. In our country we offer education to everybody. It is free. All you have

to do is go there and take what you want from it. But the students today aren't willing to put out the effort that they were in the older times. I believe that they want something for nothing; that is their attitude, something for nothing. There is no way that you can get something for nothing in this world. Somewhere somebody pays!

B: If it is free, then it is not any good.

M: Right, it is not free; it is never free as I said before. Well, it is there for the students. The parents of my generation and my grandparents paid for my education. I am paying taxes for the kids going through school today, and my children are going to pay for education of the children who go to school in the future. So it really isn't free; somebody pays for it somewhere along the line.

B: I have a question here on the innovation of education, and you touched a little on the open classroom concept. I would like for you to elaborate a little bit more on it if you can, or if not do you have any comments on the expanded curriculum programs?

M: As far as the open classroom concept is concerned I have talked to many people, meaning, teachers who have been involved in this type of situation and many of them have finally agreed that you don't get much accomplished because you have thirty people going in thirty individual, different directions. Basically it is chaos, and it is just not doing the job that everybody thought it would do. They are finding out that you must have discipline; you must have classroom control; you have to present certain materials in a certain way to everybody. Then after it has been presented and they have learned the basics, then they can be permitted to go on to their own way. The open classroom concept in my estimation will vanish in the future. They will go back to the regular classroom where you can close your students in and discuss the real subject matter and exclude the noise from another section. You may be discussing something that is not on your agenda for the day.

Some of the innovations that have occurred as I see it . . . One is the closed lunchroom situation. When I first started teaching in 1950 at Struthers High School, we had an open lunch period. The students were coming to school in cars. They were going out at noontime in cars. They were creating traffic problems in the community. Many of them were going to business establishments and creating problems within the establishment during the noon hour. They were going and sitting on neighbors' porches and throwing their lunch papers and things in their neighbors' yards which created a problem. Now the biggest problem we had was the control of the students



driving cars to school at noontime. We couldn't control that. What made the change at the time was the fact that a few cars got into an accident. Some of the students were almost killed in a noontime accident. After that the board of education accepted a closed lunchroom plan. Other schools have found the same thing occurring. They have found that if you give them an hour to an hour and a half in the middle of the day that you create a lot of problems within the community, create a lot of driving problems which are uncontrollable. The first thing to do was to have a closed lunch and keep the students there all day. So naturally creating a closed lunchroom situation also brought up the idea of giving students a hot lunch. This meant that you had to get into the cafeteria business. When you get into the cafeteria business, it is going to cost you money. The state gave money; the federal government gave money. It wasn't until inflation hit the American city here a few years ago that we found out that we were going to have to retrench some of our programs. We found out just how expensive a closed lunchroom situation could be especially when you offer meals to students at reduced prices.

Another innovation that I see is vocational education. We used to have some vocational education in high schools although we didn't call it that. We called it industrial arts or home economics. We offered certain types of things in those particular courses. It got to the point where so many different courses were offered to students that we just didn't have room in our high schools. So the state government has been pushed into vocational education, which they have gone into. We now have vocational high schools within the various communities. When you put in vocational education and you take students from their own high schools and transport them to their vocational high school, you have created another problem, that is transportation. You have created a problem where you have another high school building that you have to finance and maintain and stuff. So here is another expense the board of education and the people of the community have to accept and have to pay for.

Another innovation that we didn't have was driver education. I personally feel that driver education has been forced into the public schools by the insurance companies. It is possible it has also been partly due to parent-teacher organizations. The basic thing was that the insurance companies said that the schools are equipped to do this kind of job because they have the students there during the daytime; they have the teachers who could be certified in driver education. So they should be able to do it. When you put in driver education, this means that certain teachers have to be qualified; they have to put the course into the curriculum; you have to get yourself a number of

driver education and training cars. Once again you have another expense. Now the insurance companies offer the parents of high school students who had driver education a ten or fifteen percent rebate on their insurance policy. Whether they still do that or not I don't know; I haven't checked on that recently, but they use that as incentive to get them to take driver education in a high school. This has created a number of other problems. Number one, we now have sixteen, and seventeen, and eighteen year old students driving to school. When students drive to school, they create problems at dismissal time. In recent study the national scene has found out that the students who have had driver education do not have a better accident rate than the students who didn't have driver education in high school. So the concensus of the opinion is now that it did not do what everybdoy thought it was going to do and that was to improve the safety of all the people who drive automobiles. So now they are talking that maybe it is not doing the job it was supposed to do.

I think I mentioned something else that I could mention right here. School today, although we offer all of these things like driver education, vocational education and all the other courses, is not the center of the student's life. When a student gets to be sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen years old, he is able to get a part-time job. The first thing he does is to buy an automobile. Now we have created another problem. If many of these students who want to work part-time can get released from school in the afternoons, they can get a part-time job. Their argument is that they can get a job and can earn money, can buy their car, and can pay for their gas; so why can't we let them do it. So now we have created another problem, one that we will have to cope with and I don't know how manageable it is. That brings up the point that the high school is not the center of the student's life as it once was. I mentioned before that you have all these professional athletic contests, live productions, stage productions, band music at Blossom Center, all of the these modern things, and we in high school cannot compete with that.

Another thing I would like to touch upon is transportation. I don't know whether that is an innovation or not, but it is a problem. I can remember one time when everybody walked to school. Everybody walked home at noontime for lunch, came back in the afternoon for afternoon classes, and walked home at night. Today there are very few school systems in the country who do not have bus transportation. If you do, you are in the transportation business. You now need a transportation supervisor; you need a fleet of buses; you need a place to store those buses; you need someone to maintain those buses; you need to take the students back and forth to school. Once again you get another monster

in education and it is an expensive monster. People say it has to be done for the safety for the students. Perhaps it does because of the increase in the number of automobiles in every city in the United States. But it does create problems.

B: What about expanded curriculum programs? There are so many different subjects that are offered.

M: Yes. In education we have approximately 180 school days in which the students are available and the teachers are available plus a few extra days in which the teachers are in service. During that time you have about a seven and a half to an eight hour day. The thing is that we have continued to put in programs not only in a high school but the junior high, the elementary, and yet we haven't lengthened the school day. We haven't really lengthened the school year either. Here we are trying to fit all of these programs in the same amount of time or in the same time period that we did before when we didn't have all of these class offerings or course offers. I can remember when I went to school that I had two classes in the morning and three classes in the afternoon. I took English, math, science, foreign language. I was in the band. I had gym and physical education, and that left maybe one study hall a day if I was lucky. Today we have art classes. We have our physical educational classes. In many high schools you have gymnastics; you have swimming, and you have all of the athletic events. Plus you have the different music programs. You have band and chorus and glee club. You have the different offerings in the vocational section of your high school if you don't have a vocational education high school that you can send your students to. We have in many schools French, Latin, German, and Spanish. So we have continued to add programs such as driver education to our curriculum. There are many, many more that we could think about.

Then the colleges and universities say that we ought to be doing certain things in the elementary school. We ought to be teaching them more than science. Maybe we ought to be teaching an earth science. You ought to be having musical programs down there. You should have art programs; you should have this and that and some other programs. But the elementary program since they are tied in with the busing with the junior and senior high school means that the elementary program may be even shorter than the junior or senior high school day. So how do you get all of these programs in and do a good job with the basics in education that you should be doing? So that creates a problem there.

B: Do you feel that any of these innovations increased a

following of education?

M: There are a number of things that they tried to do. Let me give you just one. In many instances they wanted to put in a science program in the elementary school. I have seen many school systems do this. Well, this is fine if the science program you want to put in the elementary school is coordinated with what you do all the way up through your junior and senior high school. But if it is not coordinated throughout from the elementary up to the high school, if it is placed in there--and then you repeat the same courses when you get into the junior high and perhaps you would repeat the same course when you get into senior high--then I don't think you have done the school system and the children much good. I think there are many programs that they have put into the elementary school and said that was good, but they lacked the coordination to change the whole program. If you are going to make a change in science, I think it should be a coordinated program. If you are going to offer it in the fifth or sixth grade, it should be coordinated with the seventh, eighth grades and all the way through to the twelfth grade, so that you have science taught in a progression from the basics all to the more difficult areas of science. You just don't put it in the elementary schools to say, "Well, I've got a science program there."

It is the same thing with the art program or any other program. My feeling is that in the elementary schools you need a good basic reading, writing, and arithmetic and a few other things. But if you don't have these basics when you get to my grade, ninth grade, you are in trouble. If I have students in my class, which I have right now, who cannot read a math book, then somewhere in the first eight grades we failed to do what we should have done. I think that in the first eight grades if a youngster needs reading, that is where we need the reading specialist. That is where we need to put the kids in a reading program to make sure that they can read. We don't want to wait until they get to the ninth grade or the tenth or eleventh or twelfth grade then try to bring the reading up to the level they should be at. That would be one thing.

It is the same thing with English today. In fact in Sunday's newspaper in the Youngstown Vindicator there have been articles about the decline in the type of English students use when they get into college. There has been a decline in the scores on the English section on the pre-college testing program. If this is true, and it has to be true, then there are two things wrong. First of all, we have got people who are not learning to read where they should read or learning their English during the years they should have learned it. And in addition to that we are permitting

these people to go to college and take these tests when they really are not qualified to take the test or to be in college. The English score is one indication that they are not qualified to be there.

B: Do you feel that the quality of education--by education here I mean the quality of the teaching--is somewhat lower in the last decade or fifteen years or so? Do you suppose that has contributed to this decline?

M: There are a lot of people who want to blame the teachers and say that the quality of the teaching is not what it used to be. A percentage of that comment would be true. We do have some people who are teachers who probably shouldn't be teachers. But you can find that in any profession. There are some people who should not be doctors, and there are some who should not be lawyers. One of the reasons is that after World War II we had a tremendous increase in student population in the schools. We needed the teachers and so people got into the education profession who really didn't belong there. They probably got into a lot of professions that they didn't belong in. But the overall basic quality of teaching is still good. The people I have come in contact with in the past twenty years are dedicated people willing, wanting, and able to do a good job. But when you tie your hands by saying that you can't discipline children and the parents won't let you discipline them or control your class or take away your control, when you take them out of the classroom situation, often to go on a field trip, when you destroy the continuity of the educational process by too many interruptions, that hurts. I still think it is not the quality of the teaching which is high; it is the attitude of the people toward education. Since World War II the public has placed education in a bad light. Instead of permitting we the educators to do the job we are qualified to do, people try to tell us how to do our job. Well, I have always felt that when you hire a man as a professional person to do a job, you don't hire him unless you really feel that he has the ability to do the job. Then once you hire him, you let him do the job that he is qualified to do. I don't believe that we are being permitted to do that.

B: Do you feel the education associations have had a significant impact on education?

M: Definitely I do.

B: In what ways?

M: The teaching profession for many years definitely said that we were interested in improving the quality of education. When the labor unions were on strike in the general public areas, we stayed out of it. We said that we were education

associations and that our job was to educate people, that we weren't going to do what labor unions did. But the public instead of recognizing the fact that we were dedicated to education looked down on us and failed to provide the financing that was necessary to pay decent wages, thereby forcing us to become more militant so that we could get our wages up to a standard that would give us a living that would be suitable with our profession. So I definitely feel that the education associations not only helped the teacher it helped the student; it helped the community. Now recently because of strikes, of course, they tend to think that all we are interested in is our own welfare. But we have found out as others have found out that unless you wield some power through a united effort you are not going to get the financial remuneration that your profession deserves, and that is one way that we have to get it.

- B: You mentioned a little bit about innovations in education when you talked about busing and vocational education. Another subject that could be added is federal aid to education.
- M: Yes, we have had federal aid to education. They have helped us in many ways financially. But the thing that I feel is wrong with financial aid to education is that when the federal government gives you money they also tell you how to spend it, and they also keep checking on you. Sometimes their checks and balances don't operate correctly. Then too, once they give you money, if there is a cutback in the federal budget, then they want to reduce the amount of money that comes into a school system. Yet the people in the community say, "Well, we have always had this program." You tell them that the federal government is going to cut your funds in half, but they want you to continue with it; so then that money has to come out of your budget. So there has been good and bad in this respect.
- B: In other words, it is good to have the aid to education but it is good not to rely on it completely.
- M: Right, you should not rely on the federal government for that.
- B: To use it as a reserve.
- M: Right. Federal and state aid to education always has in the background the specter of state and federal control. If that is what you want, then that is what you are going to get.
- B: You brought up very briefly the situation of the SAT scores that the individuals take on entering college.

M: Yes.

B: Would you comment a little more on that?

M: The SAT scores, that is one of them, that has fallen; it is true. As I read the papers and magazines everybody is wailing and wanting to know why. We still have a certain percentage of the students who come to school who are in class who have good minds who want to be educated who do learn and who do make good scores on the SAT test and other tests of similar nature. But the state has also said in state institutions that anyone who graduates from a school that is certified by the state to give a diploma has the right to apply and be admitted to the state college. Many of these students have taken advantage of this state rule. They have applied for college, but they really didn't have the background in high school. These students who did not have the basic background in the various subject areas are taking the SAT and who have not scored high on them because they lacked the basic knowledge to do good on the test have their scores thrown in with the scores of the better students, and as a result there has been a general decline in the overall average test scores. I contribute this to this one factor alone. You not only get the top ten or fifteen or twenty percent of the students taking the test, but you are going to get the top two-thirds and sometimes some of the bottom one-third who really didn't learn enough in high school to give them the background to make good scores; so as a result when you mix all of these scores together, the overall result is the lowering of the scores. In the past they used to take the top third of the class, and sometimes they might even go down to the top half, but that is not true anymore. Almost anybody, two-thirds of the graduating class, may take these tests and many of these students are just not prepared to do good on those tests. It is not that they don't have the ability, but they didn't bother to learn the material in high school.

B: That makes a great deal of sense. There is one other topic I would like your comments on and that is sex education in schools.

M: Here we go again. If you remember, I said something before about putting all of these courses of study into the schools and then we don't take anything out. This is another, sex education. From my point of view, sex education is a responsibility of the parents. This might be in opposition to many people throughout the United States in educational service. It seems to me that it is the parents' responsibility to provide that type of education in the home. Now that we talk about sex education, we know too that we are going to talk about classes in it. I would say this that we

have had a minimum of sex education in our high school health classes: The high school health teachers, male and female, have discussed sex education in their health classes because it was important that they, the students,, should know a few basic things about sex before they graduate. The idea being that if the parents didn't have any conversation with their children then the health education teachers in high school would give them some of these ideas in the class. We have always done that.

We have always had programs on drugs. We have had programs on smoking, why we shouldn't smoke, what are the dangers of smoking. In the past we have had programs on health in which people who have kids where they had to have their voice box removed had to learn to speak into a mechanical gadget to amplify their voice. We have had these in our high schools. So really sex education isn't that new.

How far they want us to go in sex education is another matter. But in the last five to ten years while I was an administrator I know that our health teachers did attend some seminars, and they did take extra courses in colleges that were offering ways to teach sex education in high school to high school students. They did put this into the health program, not as a separate course of study but as part of the overall health of the individual. So we have had this. Although the way it comes out of the newspapers and magazines and on the radio and the television you would think that we had never even touched the thing in the last twenty years.

- B: You briefly mentioned drugs. How serious of a problem do you feel the drug situation is in the schools in both the secondary and elementary schools today?
- M: The drug problem is serious. It is serious in the high school and serious now in the junior high schools, and it is beginning to be a serious problem in the upper elementary grades. I feel that this problem is serious because of parents and adults in the community, and I have to lay the blame on the parents. If parents do not teach their youngsters what can happen with drugs, if they kind of pass it off, if they go along with the ideas that are presented on television or in the newspapers or in magazines or other people in the community, if they see people doing drugs and they let their youngster know that they accept this type of activity in the community, then this is what the youngster accepts at home. He accepts this from his peer groups. Because he wants to be a part of his class and he wants to be liked by his class, he may be forced into doing some of these things even though he doesn't want to do it because of the peer pressure. The peer approval is more important to him than for unapproval. It is a serious problem. There is big money to be made peddling drugs. I personally know right now that if I wanted some students in one of my classes to get me some



marijuana, joints, or whatever you want to call it, all I would have to do is tell them, and I would get whatever I wanted. It is also acceptable by the public. It is acceptable from the standpoint that when it comes on television, the more it is presented as an idea that there really is nothing bad about it, well you can look around and see the results of it. The general public seems to accept. I personally will never accept it. I think it is a nasty, bad habit. I think it is one of the worse things that is thrust upon the teenage population today.

B: What effect do you feel that centralization of the school system has had on education? By that I mean the non-existence of the neighborhood school.

M: My opinion is that for elementary students the neighborhood school concept is the best concept. I still feel that a youngster under the age of fourteen who is going to an elementary school should go to that school in his neighborhood. It ought to be there where the students can walk to school together. They can go home together. In a community where the parents know each other and they see the kids going to school there is a kind of parental attitude of all the parents who have school kids going to school to watch over them. You watch over somebody else's youngster as well as your own going to and from school. Now when you get into junior and senior high school this is not necessarily true. A consolidation of junior and senior high or a middle school concept and a high school concept would be better because as we talked about this once before we have all these courses we could offer them to maybe more people. We have all of the teachers there. A youngster could be channeled into basic education, and he could try his wings out on some of the other things that maybe he wouldn't get a chance to if the high school and junior high were too small. So that would be an advantage to a consolidated middle school or a consolidated high school concept. There would be more advantages to those students at that time. Now I feel that you can get too big in a school where a student loses their identity in the school. They don't know all the teachers; all the teachers don't know the students. When you walk down a hall, it would be like walking in the middle of New York City not knowing anybody, whereas in a small school that is not true. You walk down a hall; you can almost call every student by name. So that has an advantage in that way, but in the consolidated school there are more offerings. Every student may not like the same thing so you offer him other things beside the basic education subjects.

B: If I were to ask you if you could give me a percentage of what you felt the number of students involved with drugs in the Brookfield District were, would you be able to give me a

percentage?

M: I couldn't give you one, and I wouldn't want to guess at that figure right now.

B: Do you feel that it would be somewhat smaller than the percentage would be at an open high school in another community?

M: Well, in dealing with percentages I feel you have to be very careful because if I take ten percent of 200 students, that is twenty, but if I take ten percent of 2,000 students, that is 200. So I don't like percentages from that point of view because they don't really tell you the true picture. You should know the total number. Right now although I know there are students who use drugs, I can get the names of quite a few who do. I wouldn't want to give you a percentage at this time because it wouldn't be accurate.

B: If you could elaborate on any of your personal experiences over the years, for instance, what do you consider your worst experience in education?

M: When I look back after hearing that question, I don't really think I could pick out any one thing as a worst experience. I have had a number of experiences that were bad. For instance, when you clash with a parent over a decision you have made in school, you are bound to have those as an administrator. There have been a number of instances where I have clashed with parents because of discipline of their student or they want me to stop other students from harassing their student when they have to learn to get along in life. You have to learn to accept the good with the bad and the bad with the good. It would be the conflict with parents over certain things that happened in school that I would consider my worst experiences.

One of my pleasant experiences I can remember . . . there have been a number of them. I remember that as a junior class sponsor in high school I had a fellow by the name of Zolton Spitznagel who was in charge of the junior class prom, and he would come to see me every day. I would tell him what I wanted done, and that young man did it. He took the responsibility of the junior class for the junior-senior prom, and I still remember this young man today. He and I see each other on a regular basis, and this all started when he was a junior in high school.

Another experience I had was prepping students for the state scholarship test in the state of Ohio. I had at least three students I can remember; one was Sarah Simon; one was Mary Jo Burns, and the other one was Ted Metzger. Out of those three, Sarah Simon I believe scored second in the

entire state of Ohio in ninth grade algebra. Mary Jo Burns scored somewhere ninth in the state, and Ted Metzger after being prompted to go into algebra decided at the last minute he was going to take science. So he went and took the science exam, part of the state scholarship tests. Those are the kind of experiences that I like to remember.

B: Do you feel that any changes should be made in the structure of education to improve the quality, or do you feel that some of these changes will occur as a cyclical thing?

M: Well, you know, there are a lot of people who say that we should change certain things, but we have changed things in the past, and now all of a sudden we have turned around to going back and doing the things now that we used to do when people said they were wrong. For instance, I thought when modern math came out that this was the wrong concept to be pushed into the high school. I didn't think it would be successful at that time. As far as I'm concerned, it has not been successful. I'm not particularly pleased with it. I think you don't change the concepts of mathematics that much. Even though there may be some things that we might change and probably will change because of technology that is coming along, basically the classroom with a teacher isn't going to change. I feel that you need a teacher in front of a group of students. Students have to know that individual. They have to be able to react with that individual, good or bad and that you need the personal touch in the classroom in order to get some students to do their job. You are not going to do it with mechanical teachers; you are not going to do it with robots. We are going to change some things definitely because of the electronic age if you want to call it that, the age of the computer, the age of the calculator, but these are mechanical things that just help students do their work faster. You still need somebody to use their brain. You still need the student who thinks. You have to think through the problem. You have to know what you are putting into this calculator. You have to know what you are putting into the computer and why it is going in there. After you learn this and you get out into society, then you can be taught how to operate any mechanical gadget where you just punch the buttons and out comes the answers that you want or need to know. As far as I'm concerned you need that reaction within a classroom. You have got to have it. If you try to do without it, it won't work. It won't work in college. I know they have used 100 to 200 people in an auditorium listening to a professor lecture, and that to me is just avoiding the issue. You have got a lot of bodies in there; and what have they learned after they have gone out of there? They probably sat down in a study group and probably learned more that way than what they learned from

the professor. I still consider the interaction that takes place between a teacher and a student in the classroom, before and after class, in the hallway, in extracurricular activities and when you see them in the community as most important. For instance, one Memorial Day my wife and I went out for lunch and we just happened to run into a student who had graduated the same time as my oldest daughter. My wife said to me, "That individual is from Struthers. He graduated with our daughter Janet; what is his name?" I sat there for a few minutes, and out of the clear blue sky the name Tony Lariccia came up. Now I have been in education for twenty-eight years, and I have seen a lot of students come and go and why his name came out, I don't know. It was the right name. We went over and talked to him. We had noticed his progress in newspaper articles and so forth. These are the kinds of experiences that make education worthwhile.

B: What kind of advice would you give to a college student planning to teach secondary education at this point in time?

M: Well, there are a lot of my colleagues who would tell me to tell the students to go into some other profession because at the present time almost all schools are reducing their teaching staffs because of the declining school population. But for a person who really enjoys working with youngsters, who can stand up to the rebellious students today, who perhaps has a way of getting along with even the unruly ones, it is not a bad profession. You have to like kids. The kids today aren't any different than when you and I went to school. They are just faced with bigger problems than we had.

For instance, when I went to school, I never had a car until I graduated. In fact I never had a bike. We didn't drive to school; we walked to school. My parents had a radio, but we didn't have television. We had a car, but it only came out of the garage on weekends. It stayed in the garage the rest of the week. So we are exposing our youngsters to all of the modern things that we never had before, and we are wondering why they can't cope with it. Well, they just can't cope; they are still kids; they are still teenagers; they still have to develop physically and mentally; they have to learn to solve these problems, and I believe that the parents and a lot of times the general public has put these students in the position where they have to make decisions that they are not capable of making. I don't think you should force a youngster to make these kinds of decisions. They shouldn't have to make a decision of whether they have a car or don't have a car until they are eighteen. They should be told; they should

be told about dating; they should be told about whether they are going to have sex or not, what you feel is right, or what you feel is wrong. All of these things are being thrown at them. Are you going to use drugs, or are you not going to use drugs? Are you going to smoke, or aren't you going to smoke? Are you going out to a party or aren't you going to a party? We force them to make decisions that they are not ready to make, and then we wonder why they make mistakes. I just heard a young lady in ninth grade tell another teacher in front of me that she was having problems with a couple of the boys. They were having a dance on a Friday night, and she was hoping that her parents would tell her that she couldn't go. She told this other teacher and I was there listening to her. She said, "I wish my parents would tell me I can't go," because she didn't want to face the problem that was going to come up with this boyfriend who was pestering her. We've noticed, my wife and I, the same thing in our own family. There have been times where our kids have given us clues when they have wanted us to say, "No, you can't do that." This "no" gets the kid off the hook. He doesn't have to say, "Well, that is my decision." He can put the blame on mom and dad even though he or she didn't want to make that decision anyway. So they are not any different than we were. They have just been exposed to more things.

B: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

M: I don't think so.

B: Well, I would like to thank you very much for a pleasant interview.

END OF INTERVIEW