

SOHP Series: Long Civil Rights Movement**Transcript – Ken Rosenbaum**

Interviewee: Ken Rosenbaum
Interviewer: Elizabeth Gritter
Interview Date: December 7, 2004
Location: Louisville, Kentucky
Length: 2 cassettes, approx. 1 hour and 45 min.
Notes on Transcript: Future researchers should review parts of this transcript against the tape. I was not able to do so because of time constraints. – Elizabeth Gritter, editor of this transcript.

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

ELIZABETH GRITTER: Elizabeth Gritter interviewing Ken Rosenbaum in Louisville, Kentucky on December 7, 2004.

KEN ROSENBAUM: I started teaching in January of 1966 at Highland but I need to really probably go back a little further than that for you. I'm a native Louvillian, born and raised here. My mom was the president of fifteenth district PTA, which is the PTA organization here. (). Mom was sort of a person born before her time. She was very liberal. She was very outspoken. The superintendent of the school system, of the Louisville public school system, was a man named Omar Carmichael and he and Mom plotted together to try to do something about the huge disparity between what was happening in the black community and what was happening in the white community.

EG: When was this that they collaborated?

KR: Oh, gee. When? Let's see. You're going to ask me all of those horrible things. Well, let's see. I was in school. I graduated in 61 so this would be, I graduated from junior high school, so this would be in the 50s, 53, 52, 53.

EG: Oh, so before Brown vs. Board of Education?

KR: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. As I say, before her time. And so, you know, of course, we saw no black children at all in our neighbor schools in the white area and in the black area there were no white children. So segregation was truth. And fact is then as the public school system grew we actually built Central High School for black kids. As you probably surely know, this community had such a huge federal court order simply because we had past history of actually busing children in order to keep segregation going. So we would bus children from all over the community to the black high school and the black elementary school. So if a black family did live some place other than in the West End, which was traditionally black, then we would bus them into that school. So the school systems at that time were guilty of actually perpetuating segregation by busing children. So then when the whole anti busing came around it was so funny because we were guilty of busing before we were forced to bus and then when we were forced to bus the community went, you know, went bezerk. So that was interesting as well.

EG: So your mother you were talking about, she worked with?

KR: She was the president of the PTA, of the district PTA, not the school but district PTA. And she was one of the people who early on said, you know, we need to do something about this disparity.

EG: And what did she do?

KR: Well, they began to do community meetings, looking at faculties, looking at teacher assignments, that kind of thing. At that point it was more of a promotion of good will. There was nothing, probably not political feasible or able financially, to do much about it back then. I guess you know that probably and I was pretty naïve coming into the whole thing because part of my Pollyanna positive attitude was the fact that this community could do what it had to do as far as doing what was right by the whole desegregation thing. I was proven wrong in many situations and that was one because I didn't realize we would have the trauma that there was, you know. The demonstrations that became violent I would have never ever predicted that and even during the time I was sort of like in denial of it. This can't be happening in our community. As the president of the, and what happened is as white flight began to occur from the city to the county, the county school system began to get huge in population, so huge that they couldn't build fast enough to accommodate the student population. So the county school system began double sessions. There would be a morning session and an evening session, so kids would go to school in the evening instead of during the day. There were huge classes. Some of the subjects were taught by television in classes. So you'd sit in a room and there would be a TV and there'd be some monitors and it would be a hundred and fifty kids learning math or whatever.

EG: Because there wasn't enough staff so they used televisions?

KR: Exactly, not enough staff and not enough space because of white flight running to the county, okay. At the same time the city system got smaller and smaller, poorer and poorer, blacker and blacker. And that only perpetuated the white flight. In my view, fortunately enough, in some views that wouldn't have been at the time,

there's a state law that says that if a city school system declares itself out of business the county in which it resides must take responsibility and take over that. And, of course, that all went through the courts. I'll talk about that in a minute. But that's what happened. So along with desegregation we had this huge merger of the white county school system and the black Louisville public school system, which in itself brought great problems. We had two administrations, two superintendents, two school boards, two of everything, and yet the way the law was written the county simply couldn't just take over with their governments. They had to actually do a merger. That's what all went to the courts. Then when the law came around and we came under the federal law all that occurred at the same time. So the turmoil was not just busing and desegregation. The turmoil was different philosophies, different personnel situations, different people, and our situation, two different teacher's organizations. And so merger, for those of us who lived through it if you talk about desegregating the school system, I don't call it that, I call it merger desegregation because it was just so entwined and caused probably multiple problems. At that time the NEA was a great help to me.

EG: The National Education Association?

KR: Exactly, as far as legal advice, etc., because as we merged the two teachers organizations that ran into all kinds of legal ramifications as well.

EG: You merged the city and the county teachers associations?

KR: Un-huh, as well as the city and county public school systems. And as I say, the superintendent was Milburn Maupin.

EG: It was?

KR: Milburn Maupin.

EG: Okay.

KR: The last superintendent of the Louisville schools. He immediately became the assistant superintendent in the public school system and thereafter retired. His wife was a counselor who came to Highland, which was prior to that a predominately white city school. That's where I was on the faculty. And so our school, along with many others, had to go through the trauma of, you know, we're bringing kids in, we're busing black children in from the West End. But we're also busing children from the county into the city. So more than just the racial tension that we had to deal with, we had kids who were being bused away from a county school system into a city school system. Those of us in the city were labeled as the, you know, we declared ourselves out of business so I'll never forget confronting the county superintendent as the president of the teachers organization when he said, I know we come across as being negative, we're not. We will be more than happy to have all your certified and qualified people join us. And those trigger words and I responded back in my most obstreperous manner. Our teachers went to college just as your teachers went to college. Our teachers sat next to your teachers in classrooms. Our teachers are just as qualified and certified as your teachers. But the whole idea that the inferior city teachers were joining his school system was there, which, of course, made me very, very angry. And then I would throw into his face, and we have classes that are manageable and teachable, not like these huge large double sessions and these huge large television classes. And so, you know, so I felt we had as much in our system, we had an agreement. In those days teachers unions were not really

unions but we had a negotiated agreement. In the county there was no such thing so you still had that top down administrative situation in the school system, in the Louisville school system. And so we had to merge that too, which brought about a whole set of another legal problems.

So but in my heart I had been in the city long enough to know that as you went into the inner city, despite the fact that we had some really, really wonderful educators, many of whom were my role models, and I'm talking African American, in those days black, black educators who were so dedicated to their communities, part of that community did wonders, but in inferior buildings with very little materials, okay. You know that hit me in the face because even though I was in that school system I was in an East End white affluent school and immediately saw this huge difference in facility, equipment, etc. Teachers were as qualified and probably even sometimes more dedicated and trying harder to help kids. But that disparity was, you know, in my face and so probably some of my zeal to make it all happen was the fact that I knew that we were doing an injustice.

EG: And you knew that through your role as head of the city teachers union or ()?

KB: Well, because as I got involved in teachers organization I met more and more teachers who taught all over the community so that was part of it. And part of it was the fact that I grew up here and because of my mother's influence, you know. I'll never forget when I was in college and now we're talking the first time I was in college was in late 50s, early 60s. So let's see, if I graduated, in 1962 when I a freshman at the University of Louisville my best friend happened to be Joe Black and

Joe was black. And Joe and I got into the ROTC together, etc., and formed a ping-pong team that couldn't be beat. And to me that was at the time I didn't realize that a black kid and a white kid to be best friends wasn't the norm and wasn't acceptable. I didn't see any difference and that's sort of like the way Mom raised me, and what I experienced as I grew up. So when we went to summer camp, I'll never forget, we went to summer camp for ROTC. We went to some place down in Tennessee, Mumfordsville. Checked into the hotel and I'm parking the car and I said Byke, you run in and check and so he goes in, says it's full. I said oh, no, Mom called. It's not full. So I said something's wrong, let me go. I went, got a room. I was so naïve even then that I didn't realize that a black kid walking in couldn't check into a hotel but a white kid could. It was just that blatant, you know. So I guess I grew up in a positive, almost Pollyanna way. As I say, when the violence occurred and people threw rocks at the buses and put out a policeman's eye with a rock and tried to turn over buses and burn them, that was just shocking to me at the time and still is because I thought our community could deal with this in a positive manner and make it happen, which is probably why I got so involved in the whole, and as my role in the teachers organization had some notability with the groups of teachers, and that's probably why I got so involved in the whole human relations training activity. From crisis team to crisis team had a black male and a white male, white female and a black female and we were called out. If trouble was brewing at a school or at a meeting we were called out and trained intensively to deal with human relations situations and try to quell the storm. So I lived through all that as well and fascinating, you know, just fascinating as I look back on it. At the time it was scary. It was scary. We went into some

situations that could have turned very violent. Fortunately they didn't where we were but they could have turned very violent.

EG: Could you describe one of those instances?

KR: Well, gee, a lot of them occurred out in the deep very conservative white part of the school system, once again the former county school system, where black kids would come out, be pushed in a corner, would respond and then there would be turmoil and either a fight would break out or boycott. The kids would sometimes boycott.

EG: What do you mean boycott?

KB: Not go to classes, have a demonstration, not go to classes, all gather, chant, you know, and so we were sometimes called into those situations as well. Black kids who would have to leave their community and get on a bus and ride for an hour and a half into a conservative white bastion and when they would respond to the negativism that they faced then indeed then that would escalate and so sometimes crisis teams were called to those situations to help defuse a situation and talk one on one, get together, just an interesting time.

EG: These conservative white areas, were they mainly middle class or working class or affluent or?

KR: Yes and yes and yes. I would say mainly the conservative white communities in the Okolona area and the Dixie Highway area, which were working class communities. Great pride in their community, busing these black children in to their schools, the black teachers who were reassigned, you know. And yet we had

some real heroes who were black teachers who had survived the county school system and were heroes in the system.

EG: Before busing or after?

KR: Before busing but there were very few black children in those schools because we would bus the black children out of schools into the city historically into the black school, so an interesting, interesting time. The busing had its toll too though. There was no way but to do it at the time but we had this massive busing situation, you know, depending on what your last name was. At the first order white kids would be bused two years out of their career. Black kids would be bused nine years. So you're in school twelve and nine of those twelve years were busing to make the percentages work out and yet the conservative white community felt that they were being put upon. This is my neighborhood school and I'm not going to go to a black inferior school. I'm not going to let my child go there. And here the poor black kids were being bused nine years out of twelve and sometimes to maybe two or three or four different schools in the beginning. So thank goodness we're past all that and now our schools do have a formula to guarantee racial mix. But we were successful enough or they are successful enough in doing that with having this forced situation, which didn't fit with either community but especially the white community.

EG: These crises, were they more so when busing initially started?

KR: Un-huh, sure, first two years.

EG: The first two years?

KR: Un-huh, then it calmed down, although there were some scars that never healed in reality. And we still have areas of this community that would love to turn the clock back and put it back the way it was. I'm not denying that.

EG: When did you begin your involvement with the teachers organization?

KR: Probably I was so dumb I didn't know the difference so right when I started teaching I got involved in the committee and then progressed up. I was on the board of directors of the state organization for something like twelve years and was instrumental in the negotiations of putting the two teachers organizations together. That was all in the courts as well because, well, as we began to merge those two, the one with the contract and an agreement, the other without, the one with the contract being the smaller of the two, we fought long and hard to treat teachers professionally, all teachers professionally. The county school system had a gentleman's agreement but no real contract, etc. So that all had to be merged and that went to court. And so we were in court for quite some time. So the merger of the school system was more than just deciding to take some kids and send them to another school. It was much more difficult because desegregation and merger were just so intertwined, which was as far as I can tell somewhat unique at the time because other school systems had their act together as far as their administration, their teaching, their buildings, etc. And so you were desegregating schools within a school system. Here we desegregated schools and merged two very large school systems so the problems were I think exacerbated by all that. You know, who's in charge? Who makes the decisions? How do we get a school board? We had first merged the entire two school boards and then came up with a plan that each year then someone would drop off, one on one

side, til we had a school board of six or seven, you know. But it was just, and of course, everybody was concerned. Jobs were at stake. Just an interesting, interesting time but because of the way it fell down historically, had we had desegregation first and then merger, or even better, merger first and then desegregation two or three years down the road, it would have been so much easier, so much easier. But it didn't happen that way.

EG: And when did you become president of the teachers organization?

KR: Oh, gee, you're asking me tough questions. Well, let's see, that'll be in that program that we looked at. That's why I brought this stuff. That's why I brought this stuff. Okay, let's see. Okay we were established in 1872 as the Louisville Opera Association. The Louisville Opera Association was a group of women teachers because there weren't men teachers back then, okay. And in 1872 this group of women gave teas and little operettas and they took the money they would earn from that because there were no benefits. So they put that in a fund and it was called the Louisville Teachers Opera Association and then it became the Louisville Education Association. And then I dissolved that as its last president. Let's see that would be in 1975, yeah, because this is the last program, because we couldn't have two teachers organizations as well. So when we merged the school systems we merged the two teachers associations and then one of the things was, you know, who's going to be the president of the new one. And I said I'll just step aside and resign so that the county person would become the president, to try to avoid and still I was on the board and very, very active and did everything I needed to do, and yet, who's going to be in charge. That didn't matter. So I stepped aside and the county, it seemed that one of

the ways the merger did happen a little better is because the county was larger and richer and whiter. Those of us who were city folks said for the good of the cause, rather than fighting, there are other ways of winning the war, you know, so we don't want to win this battle and lose the war. So many of us were willing to say that's great, we'll just join your association and that's how that all happened.

EG: Okay. And then was it called the Louisville Education Association?

KR: No, and then it was called the Jefferson County Teachers Association.

EG: Oh, when the merger, okay.

KR: Right, exactly and that's what it still is to this day.

EG: And did the merger occur before busing started?

KR: No, the merger and busing occurred simultaneously.

EG: It was exactly the same time?

KR: It was simultaneous, right.

EG: Okay, right, right. What was the teachers organization's official position during busing?

KR: After many and this is so funny. It was so politically hot in this community that we would meet secretly. So rather than meet out in the open the officers of the Jefferson County Teachers Association officers would meet secretly because we didn't want to be in the news yet. We were trying to get all our differences solved prior to being put in the light of the news media.

EG: And without having all the publicity about the differences.

KR: And without having that publicity, so I'll never forget the long hard fought meetings of what's our position going to be. And, of course, I was wild-eyed

city guy who said our position's going to be quality education for everybody and that's going to require desegregation. And that was not acceptable at all. The compromise, which I'll never forget having to come to, was there was no position. And so when asked, you know, what's your position on all this busing, what's your position on all this changing of personnel, the response was our position is we must do what's best for education for all children. And so we never ever, not to my liking, we never ever took an official statement, of course, this is right. We never did that. And, of course, when I was out getting myself in trouble saying of course, this is right, of course, but officially and that was part of the reason that it probably best for me to step aside. As I look back that was probably one of the smartest things I ever did because the cause I think won out because the personalities were removed from it. And even though we made that compromise and at the time I was ready to fight to the death over the fact that we should come out and say we are supporting this whole busing situation, we are supporting merger and we are supporting desegregation, we never quite got to that point. Now if you talk to some county folks you would get a totally different, those who have been (), you'd get a totally different view I'm sure and I hope you get to talk to those folks.

EG: Was it that the county teachers were more opposed to busing or was there?

KR: They didn't want us. See something I left out, which is an important part of the history, and see, I'm being biased here. Of course, I am. Years and years ago when the city system was wealthy, had a great tax base, was an excellent, excellent place to have a school system, the county was floundering because, you know, it was

still a farming area and just beginning to grow. People were just beginning to move into the suburbs. You know, that movement was just in. So the school system was not much and needed help and they turned to the Louisville school system and the Louisville school system said we don't need you. And they even approached should we have one school system and the Louisville school system said no, we don't, no. And then as history proves itself the city got smaller, the county got larger, the county had more facilities, the county had more money, the county had a bigger tax base. The city got smaller and smaller, which is historically what was happening across the United States. So as the city got poorer and poorer and blacker and blacker and more and more industrial and the tax base went down and white flight occurred to the suburbs, then it became time for merger and the county said we don't want you. Had it not been for that law no telling what would have happened. But because of that state law saying if a city system goes out, the county must take over. That was the law because they didn't want us either. The superintendent said well, we'll take some of your teachers but we don't want all of your teachers. You know, we know you folks have an inferior education system and inferior buildings, you know, that whole played upon it. Now once again you talk to someone on the other side of the coin they'll give you a different picture. But that's how we saw it in the city. And then I was representing the huge minority population of teachers because most of them were in the city system. That's where the black kids were. That's where the black teachers were. And so I was seen as this wild-eyed, you know, radical kind of guy that was trying to do evil things to their wonderful school system.

EG: So in terms of the, well, in the city teachers union, were you one of the few whites who supported busing and like blacks were for it or were there?

KR: The community saw it that way. I'm not necessarily, do not necessarily believe that. I believe there were lots and lots of folks who lived in the county and really knew that that was probably what was right, especially if they had any contact with what was happening in all the schools because the schools were getting decrepit and, as I say, there were no books and not much equipment. As I said, I worshipped those fantastic black teachers who spent their entire careers there in their communities being excellent educators on shoestring budgets and in inferior buildings. But when I became aware of that way, way early now I knew that was not correct. I knew that was wrong. As I say, credit that to my mom but part of that, that was part of the fire burning within me to say, you know, hey, these are kids and teachers who are not getting a fair shake. There's something wrong here, you know, that sense of justice.

EG: Did you feel that when busing started and was implemented that education improved for black students?

KR: Not immediately. I mean it was horrible at first. But looking back over all and even as I was involved in it, I knew we were heading for a better system for everybody, you know. But sacrifices were made along the way. There were several families who had kids in three different schools and a lot of folks said oh, we're going to go to private school. A lot of private schools popped up. The Catholic school system came up with a statement that they would accept children but not if they were, they would accept non-Catholic children but not if they were there to escape the public school system. That was the official statement and yet their schools blossomed. So,

you know, once again a wild-eyed critical guy here. So they blossomed under the situation too. All the private schools did. Folks who could afford it, you know, escaped.

What was interesting is that the black populations were seen as the perpetrators, the invaders, and yet the majority of the black population didn't want, what they wanted was better facilities, better books in their own communities. Everybody at that time was purporting we really want community schools, neighborhood schools, but it couldn't work because the neighborhood schools in the black community were inferior. And we indeed had a past history of defacto segregation, busing kids because of their color to keep them out of white schools. So I mean, you know, historically there was no denying that.

EG: So do you think there was any other way to effectively accomplish desegregation aside from busing?

KR: Maybe today, you know, if all of this were occurring in today's society my answer would be yes. Then, no way, no, no. It had to be that way. It had to be federally enforced. We probably had to have those National Guard called out and all of that horror. I remember attending, I don't know if you will have the opportunity to meet some of these folks, George Unseld, who's now, George Unseld is now on the council, a former alderman. The Unseld family, if you know about () law you've heard of Wes Unseld.

EG: Oh, Wes, yes.

KR: Okay, that's a local family, okay. A lot of people don't know that but that's true. And the Unseld family's very, always been leaders and leaders in the

EG: So in terms of the, well, in the city teachers union, were you one of the few whites who supported busing and like blacks were for it or were there?

KR: The community saw it that way. I'm not necessarily, do not necessarily believe that. I believe there were lots and lots of folks who lived in the county and really knew that that was probably what was right, especially if they had any contact with what was happening in all the schools because the schools were getting decrepit and, as I say, there were no books and not much equipment. As I said, I worshipped those fantastic black teachers who spent their entire careers there in their communities being excellent educators on shoestring budgets and in inferior buildings. But when I became aware of that way, way early now I knew that was not correct. I knew that was wrong. As I say, credit that to my mom but part of that, that was part of the fire burning within me to say, you know, hey, these are kids and teachers who are not getting a fair shake. There's something wrong here, you know, that sense of justice.

EG: Did you feel that when busing started and was implemented that education improved for black students?

KR: Not immediately. I mean it was horrible at first. But looking back over all and even as I was involved in it, I knew we were heading for a better system for everybody, you know. But sacrifices were made along the way. There were several families who had kids in three different schools and a lot of folks said oh, we're going to go to private school. A lot of private schools popped up. The Catholic school system came up with a statement that they would accept children but not if they were, they would accept non-Catholic children but not if they were there to escape the public school system. That was the official statement and yet their schools blossomed. So,

black community and leaders in the entire community. And I'll never forget standing on the corner of Fourth and Broadway downtown when the Klan came for their marches and I was with George Unseld, as I say, who is very instrumental in forming the crisis teams and all that and the training. And I'm standing there with George and I said I'm a little white guy. You'd have to see George to appreciate this story because he's as wide as this picture. I mean he's a big, big, big man. And I said but my only consolation if things get violent I'm going to jump behind you, George, and nobody will see me. Because I was to the point of being frightened because, you know, here's the Klan, had little children dressed in the Klan robes and they were filling the streets and shouting. It was scary. It was scary but we stood our ground, stood there and let them march past and no violence occurred at that particular situation. But it's a scary time.

EG: Were you there, as monitors or what were you doing?

KR: No, we were there because the offices of the board of education, the Louisville board of education, were right in downtown Louisville then at Fourth and Broadway in the old Brown Hotel. And that's why the Klan, and that was the heart of downtown Louisville and that's why the Klan chose to march in front of the Louisville boards of education, you know, with all it's black teachers and black students. That's why the Klan chose to march there.

EG: Do you remember any Klan activity before busing?

KR: Oh, yeah. I mean, you know, we're in the South. There's always been some degree in some parts of the community. So there's always been a history of summer camps for young people that are military in nature that represent the whole

Klan philosophy, etc. There's always been that, really not talked about but always there. Everybody knows it's there. And so that began to raise its head during this time especially because the Klan became more active then. And the Klan is still here. We still have, pick up the newspaper and you see the Klan's coming to University of Louisville to hand out brochures and the university doesn't want them there and then you get the whole freedom of speech thing. You know, it's just, it's still there.

But once again in that time of my life, as I said I don't know if I was just a positive Pollyanna or what, I chose to be more positive about where we were going, how we were going to get there, and I think I prevailed being that positive person and say no, no, we're all human beings, we're going to get past this. The community is going to survive, school system's going to be better. Looking back now we have I think, a very successful school system. I think our community still has problems and probably always will but we've come a long, long, long way. And even the folks on the other side I think would say that too.

EG: How many teachers did you represent in the teachers organization?

KR: Hard question, I don't know.

EG: Was it most of the teachers were members of the union?

KR: Oh yeah, yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. In those days it was the thing to belong. You didn't have to. You know, we were not really the NEA union. We were more of a professional organization but we were more, further the down road to represent teachers and teachers' rights than the county system. I would say we probably had about twelve hundred teachers in all schools represented by us. And there was probably four thousand represented by the county.

EG: The county, okay.

KR: Yeah, because they were the big guys.

EG: Yeah, so it doesn't really merge.

KR: Those numbers don't take those for granted. You could probably look that up some place. But we were the little guys. I know that much.

EG: Looking back can you understand why there was violence and such opposition?

KR: Oh sure. Oh sure.

EG: How do you reason it out now?

KR: I'm not sure I can reason it out now. I understand the families who chose a house in a little white protected suburb, whose children walked out of their door and went four doors down to the school. And, you know, there was a safety, security. Also there was an institutional racism there but you know we don't talk about that. But the security of that and then suddenly you have, you know, our children are going to have to leave at least for two years and be bused into a terrible neighborhood, an inferior school, with inferior teachers. And we don't want that and this is democracy and choosing your school is part of my right and now it's been taken away. So intellectually I think I can figure that out. However, I never quite accepted that. I understood for the good of the whole and had seen enough and been raised in the community and had seen enough to know that it was the right thing to do for the community and for kids. But I do understand, you know. And, of course, I try my best to talk it out. And that's why I was probably on the crisis team because I was the

guy that said, you know, well you know I'm from the East End. You know, I'm from the white area and yet, you know, but hard for people to do.

And on reverse side, a black family who has a nice home in the West End and going to a school that may not be the best school as far as facility but had absolutely wonderful, dedicated teachers who were not only teachers but leaders in that community, and you send your kid there and that teacher may have taught all the kids and grandkids and cousins and the whole bit. So it was a real community feeling and suddenly we're going to take that teacher and send them to a white school and we're going to take your son or daughter and bus them nine years of their career out into the white suburbs who have made it very, very clear they want nothing to do with you. So, I mean that's hard. That's very difficult. So, yeah I do understand the negativity and the bad feelings. I do understand it and yet still, I was right. Looking back I was right. It was good. It was good for us, good for the community, good for kids, good for school. And just recently we're having now the black school, Central High School, because of the school system's way of keeping our schools segregated, we're limiting the number of black kids that went to the historically black school. And so a group of black parents went to court and prevailed and said no, you cannot deny students' entry in this school based on race. So we're still not really over trying to make it work by some artificial rules. And that will never happen until or if ever, housing patterns change in this community. You know, if I had my wish of what is the utopian situation to education, desegregation, racial tension, etc., I would say we must do something about the situation if we still have a West End that's predominately black, an East End that's predominately white, some very conservative entire white

neighborhoods that even today if a black family moved into that bastion of white conservatism there would be problems. So it's the housing patters that our society has allowed that to happen. And so people who don't come in contact with someone does not like them and has the same belief are still back where those people were then. I think it's better but it's still that way. And schools being this social experimentation bastion, etc., if the schools are going to prepare kids to be in today's world, then we have to have the diversity that's required by our society now. And so the schools are reflecting that but our housing patterns are not.

EG: Did you see any impact on the housing patterns as a result of busing?

KR: Not really. Well, we are still having a lot of white flight to other counties, you know, to get away from the whole situation. I wish I could say there's a positive impact. I think it's probably more a negative impact.

EG: Because of the white flight?

KR: Exactly, yeah, so it's still white flight. Now people are escaping Jefferson County and going to Oldham County, which is predominately affluent. So they're still doing that and in my heart, and they'll tell you well, they're doing it because the, well, they'll tell you right now they're doing it because the school system is better. In reality, the school system is not better. The school system is less diverse and so it's like a private public school. As far as I'm concerned, their school system is more of a private school than a public school. And I'm an advocate of public education so it's the same thing.

EG: I saw that with the plan for busing there was a provision in there that was supposed to prevent white flight, where, let's see if I can recall it, where if they were

exempted from busing, if they lived in an integrated neighborhood and if a white family would move into a black neighborhood or vice versa that they were exempted.

KR: Uh-huh, that's correct.

EG: Did that have any impact? Did people move into other neighborhoods because of those provisions?

KR: No. In my view, no. And we had some bizarre plans. People began to complain about, you know, the hour and thirty minutes or two hours children were on a bus and what a waste of time. And then we had this crazy superintendent said well, we're going to put teachers on the buses and give them microphones and they're going to teach kids on the bus. [Laughter] So, you know, of course, being an educator I just fell out. But there were desperate times. The school system was saying how are we going to make this work. How are we going to make this work? What time are we going to have to put children on the street corners in order to get them to a school so far, far away, forty-five miles away? You know, just crazy kinds of stuff. So it took a long time to iron some of that out and some of it is still not ironed out. As I pointed out, why should a black family be denied going to a traditional wonderful black school because of race, you know.

EG: So are you supportive of the recent law school, of the Central High School?

KR: Well, no, I'm not. I see it as a step back into the very thing that I, and so many people in the community, didn't want to happen. So, no, I understand those feelings and yet it's like a little chink in the arm or it's like a little crack in the dam. Then the next thing is going to be the white affluent families saying this is a

traditionally white affluent school. Our children are being denied going here because of race. Here's a magnet school that has rules about who can come to the magnet school. And the whole magnet school program, the traditional school program, was once again to encourage people to send children sometimes to an inner city school because the program that's happening there. And that's happening. That's happening. My old high school is probably one of the best high schools in Louisville but it's a magnet program and kids come from all over the county to that school. And so the magnet programs, the traditional programs, the option programs, were invented not only and on the surface we talk about the fact that well, they're specialized and we're going to capitalize on these kids' talents, but they also have a real role in making community wide schools available to anyone in the community and therefore providing that diversity that we need. And I don't think it's a hundred percent working but I think it's better than nothing at all. Otherwise, once again, the forcing is more necessary. And, of course, now the federal laws are changing too.

EG: Of No Child Left Behind Acts. What do you think of that? That's a different topic.

KR: Oh, well, it's a whole different topic.

EG: So maybe we shouldn't go off on that at all.

KR: Having passed the law and not funded it is just once again absurd. And I'm a science educator and as far as I'm concerned it's just ludicrous. The whole testing situation in fact is. I just had a call from a Courier Journal reporter and I said well, since my grandchildren are in school I don't know if I want to get back into the spotlight again. What's happening now is we're teaching to the tests. So, for instance,

my grandson who's in a very good school has no science in fifth grade, zero. But it has double social studies. Guess why. Well, because we test social studies in the fifth grade. Last year he had science twice a week in the lab and every day in class. Why, because we test science. So the testing and the whole No Child Left Behind with the literacy thing, it's the same thing. When you have high stakes accountability then the test forces instruction into a place that I don't think it should be.

EG: Has the No Child Left Behind Act had an impact on desegregation?

KR: I don't think so. I know you would hear otherwise from education secretary or Bush administration. But, no, it has nothing to do with it. Whoever named it was brilliant because when I look you in the face and ask you are you opposed to No Child Left Behind, I myself who happens to be opposed to it, find it difficult because of the wording. So whoever named it has a stroke of genius, stroke of genius.

EG: I know they took it from the children's defense funds so leave no child behind.

KR: Exactly, exactly, and whoever thought of that deserves something. It's so difficult for me to get up and speak against but I love the initials, No Child Left Behind, NCLB. So I simply call it nickel be. So nickel be gives me a chance to then say, you know, funding is a central to education and you can't nickel it to death. And we are nickel being education so that gives me some ().

EG: You mentioned early on about how you never forgot some of these meetings that you had with the union, if you could describe some of those and talk about the atmosphere.

KR: Well, of course, it was uncomfortable. I can remember some of the meetings I chaired for the Louisville Education Association where teachers were so afraid of this whole merger and desegregation because were they also going to be jerked out of their school and sent to a strange school. Were they going to lose the rights that they'd fought so long for? So the meetings were sometimes hot and heavy and I got called to court once. When the meeting came for us to declare ourselves out of business there was a group that really felt that that would have been the detriment of minority teachers. And a woman stood on the delegate floor and called for adjournment and I was smart enough to have my parliamentary procedure down and I was the chair. I never really recognized her. She shouted. And so then they sued me over that so we had to go to court for that. And Judge Gordon in all his hearings, and of course, I attended those too. Those were informative and yet...

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

KR: So the meetings had, you would enter with some trepidation, the unpredictability of where it was going to go and were tempers going to flare. The meetings of the two teachers associations had tension. The meetings of the school boards were great tension. Who's going to be in charge? How many superintendents are we going to keep? How many assistant superintendents are we going to fire? Where are they going to go? The curriculums were two totally different curriculums. So you had two different philosophies of education. And I mentioned the large classes in the county with the TV situations and none of that ever happening in the city and yet the county's view that the city curriculum, the city personnel were less qualified,

not state of the art teachers. So you had that tension as well. So the meetings were, you would enter the meetings hoping for the best but knowing that tempers would probably flare. There would always be some anger expressed and generally there would always be some racism bigotry brought out. You would see the evidence of it but we all pretended that it wasn't, rather than confronting it. I don't know if that was good or bad. I guess it was good.

EG: In what ways would you see the racism indicated?

KR: Oh, well, I think many of the objections of sending my child to another school really wasn't sending my child to another school. It was I don't want black children with my child. I don't want my child with the blacks.

EG: These are parents?

KR: Oh sure, sure, yeah.

EG: They attended the union meetings?

KR: Well, no, at the public meetings.

EG: Public meetings, okay.

KR: Or when we'd go visit schools and listen to PTA's, that's what you'd hear. And I would be so tempted sometimes because I'm obstreperous and hyperactive and obsessive compulsive and every other label you can think of, and I'd be so tempted to say, hey, let's just put your cards on the table. You don't want your kids to, and sometimes I would actually do that. You know, let's just put your cards on the table. You don't want your kids attending a school where are black children, do you. And sometimes say yeah. Many times were that. But, you know, that was all there.

EG: What would you say after they said yeah?

KR: Well, you know, I'd love to be able to change the world but I can't so I'm going to make the best of what we are and it's almost like this is being imposed upon us all so let's do what's best for your kids. But, of course, they never bought that that was best for their kids. So that was a frustrating time, frustrating time.

EG: What were the major teacher concerns in the union meetings?

KR: Rights, salaries. The county made more than the city but the city had more rights and benefits than the county. I mentioned the agreement part, that city teachers had more say in curriculum matters and teaching hours, etc. The county teachers did not. So you had those too. Ann Walls, once again she was our expert on all that. She was the one that helped us do all that. County system didn't have any legal counsel much, whereas the Louisville system did. So we were just two different, two different philosophies merging at the same time as desegregation. And I guess I don't have to keep beating that drum but indeed we were so unique in that here in this community. So to try to cope with both situations, desegregation and merger, was very, very interesting.

EG: Do you know of any other city in the United States where that happened?

KR: Yeah, fact is, not long after we were down the path into the new situation I was asked by the NEA to visit Little Rock Pulaski County and [Pause] I hate it when my memory does this. They're not two school systems but three, Elizabeth. It was the city of Little Rock and then Pulaski County and there was a third. But I was asked to go down there and it was like stepping back into where I'd been. It was like deja vu because the arguments were much the same. The white county was wealthy. Little

Rock city was poor. Little Rock city was black. Pulaski was white. And the same thing that happened here was happening there. And I don't think anything happened because at that point they were looking at a lot of voluntary stuff and merger for them I think was voluntary. And so I don't think it ever happened. I never followed through with it. I've had other irons in the fire and walked away from that one. But yeah, there have been other places that had the same situation I'm sure.

EG: With all the violence and protest you mentioned you were scared and I'm wondering what gave you strength and how did you get through that?

KR: Don't know. I was with a very diverse group of people at that time. My teaching colleagues were both black and white. Our administration was both black and white. So we were like I guess it was safety in that group and the fact that I was never threatened by a black person because of the color of their skin. And so I would try to understand why others were and couldn't quite understand it. But I was secure in knowing I was safe with my group. So I guess that's how I made it through without running off into the woods or moving away or whatever we needed to do. And then, as I say, my family was always a little, as I say, Mom was like ahead of her time and very forward thinking. In those days there were a lot of families that there were taboo subjects that you simply wouldn't, and my family, even back then, gosh, we had these family meetings where we sat around and just talked about anything that came into our minds or something we were wondering about. There were no taboo subjects and everything was explained and discussed. And so that was sort of different for back then and so I had that as another strength, that I could always go back to family and

say anything and be okay and get information and help and support. So that's probably.

EG: Did you feel any ostracism from whites?

KR: Some. Some black folks, especially as I was very instrumental in abrogating some rights felt that I was being the white racist giving away their rights by supporting the merger of the two schools, two organizations. And so that, you know, and I can remember long meetings trying to deal with that and saying, hey, we may be giving up this piece and this piece but, you know, we're going to prevail. In fact, that is exactly what happened. The Louisville system's agreements sort of prevailed and went through into the new merged system. And now and it's interesting historically later on we had one of the most successful teacher strikes in the country led by the group that was the merged group of the two. And took the strengths of both organizations and made a really strong organization, which is where the JCTA is now.

And so and then personally I have remained involved said, okay, I'm not going to be the president of this new merged organization. June Lee is going to be, who is a wonderful lady that I like. And I got involved in the national politics and so then I ran and was successful in becoming the president of the National Council of Urban Education Association, which was a real coup, not for me personally, but was a coup for anybody from Kentucky to convince the rest of the nation that there was a city in Kentucky that indeed understood urban problems. And the folks in Detroit and the folks in Los Angeles, the folks in New York City just laughed when the guy from Kentucky won the position because how in the world could this rural bumpkin from Kentucky know anything about urban education, when indeed I'd gone through all the

things I've just explained to you. So I served about four years in that position and learned a lot, becoming more familiar with what's happening in urban education across this country. And how indeed the description I gave you of the urban Louisville schools historically way, way back still exists in large urban areas, so that we still have urban schools that do not reflect what's the best educational setting for kids; whereas, just around the corner, across the tracks, or however you want to describe it, you have a school that, so it still exists.

The organization that I was the president of formed within the NEA because we felt that NEA didn't quite address urban concerns because urban concerns are unique. There are unique needs. There are unique challenges that other school systems that do not have an urban situation do not relate to. The current federal laws don't really, really reflect what urban kids and schools need and I know I'll always be flouted by saying the fact that money is not the answer. But indeed urban schools are, there needs to be some special way to address those problems and I think that a lot of that is financial. A lot of it's financial. And you know when you're dealing with children who come from a socio economic level where they first worry about what they're going to eat before they can learn about learning to read, then that's a problem. That's a problem. And sometimes school systems are burdened with problems that they can't solve. And once again I don't want to be negative. I think we've come a long, long way but I still think that there are some unique urban situations that aren't addressed and there are some urban initiatives that are beginning to, but it's a perpetual problem and it was a problem then. That was part of the whole problem too because we had a suburban school system and then an urban school system and

poverty and no poverty, you know. And families who supported education and education was a top priority and families who didn't. But those same families who maybe were struggling to feed their families or to get medical care for their families. So just that huge discrepancy still exists today, still exists today and so urban schools do need some sort of extra help, extra attention, extra finances, and a lot of examination how to because it's a unique challenge.

EG: Back when busing occurred and you were involved with the union how did you address the problem of poverty that way?

KR: Well, I'm not sure we did. I'm not sure we addressed the problem of poverty. It's more of, first of all, we were smaller and that has its advantages. If there are problems in a large system, getting recognized is much more difficult in a large bureaucracy. So one of the things we had for us was the smallness, okay. So bigger is not better, especially in that situation. We went out of business simply because as white flight took place the finances weren't there because once again the tax base got smaller and smaller so school funding got smaller and smaller. So you have the urban setting with the most problems with the least amount of money. And in those days the federal government was less involved but now that the federal government is more involved I'm not sure that's the answer either because I'm not too happy with where the current administration is going in the educational field as well. So I'm not sure if there is an answer.

EG: When you went in with these crisis teams, did you see any difference between how male and female students were treated?

KR: No, it was clearly a black white situation. As I pointed out, the teams were made up of a white female, a black female, a white male, and a black male and because we were trained together, literally in the summertime lived together through that training, we were true brothers and sisters. We were family and we were tight. And so I think it was so important for all segments of a school when we would come to a school to see the role models. Oh, there's a white guy and there's a black guy and there's a white woman and there's a black woman and they're coming together and talking to us. And so we would work as a team. The problems were not unique in any way. The problems were tempers that flared. Some of it really wasn't racial. The problem wasn't racial but always became racial, especially if it involved two different people of two different races, then it became a racial problem when sometimes it was a kid problem. It was the middle school or high school hormones taking over and there is no intellect, it's just all temper. That's not racial, guess what. But if it's a black kid and a white kid, especially during that time, it was immediately a racial problem. I remember shortly and we had black teachers in the city who went to the county and had to face their colleagues saying oh, here's one of these black teachers who probably doesn't even have a degree and they're just here because they're black. We had that. We had white teachers who came from the county into the city system who'd never seen a black child. At that point in my career I was no longer a classroom teacher, I was what was called curriculum coordinator. And let me describe a funny situation. A white teacher had been on medical leave during the whole busing desegregation thing. She was out on medical leave and she comes back and the position that she had in the county system is filled and she needed a job. So she came

to my school. I'm the curriculum coordinator. And she has extreme discipline problems. So I call her to my office and say to her, Marge, what's going on. And she said well, it's not my fault. You see, they don't know how to read and they use foul language and they sit in the back of the room in a group and they don't listen to what I have to say. And I said to her, I'm really confused. Who's they? And she says, oh, you know. I said no, I don't know. You have to tell me. She says well, I can't. What do you mean? You know. I said no, I do not know. You must tell me. Big tears in her eyes and she said well, it's the black kids. They don't know how to read. They act like fools. They don't bring their books. They sit in the back of the room. And I responded, well, that's because you let them. And you know what, this is a middle school and if you let any middle school kid do this. Her response to that, I now know which is funny, is that she went to the library and said how well do you know that Ken Rosenbaum. The librarian said well, why. She said I think he has black blood.

[Laughter] See she could not comprehend that anyone, unless I was a black person or had black blood, could think of these black kids could perform. Isn't that sad? By the way, the real sad part of that story is counseled her out of the profession. I said you're not feeling well. You never really have gotten over your illness and you know you're very, very nervous. And let me tell you, it's not going to get better. It's only going to get worse, not just with the black kids but you know you're white kids are misbehaving too because I've dropped in your class and your white kids are misbehaving as much as the black kids. Interesting that you only see the black kids misbehaving. And she was never ever going to get past that. She just wasn't. And I'm glad for her and I'm glad for the children that she left.

But that just stood out. I thought I wonder how many Marge's we have out there. I wonder how many. And ever in today's school system I wonder how many teachers have a double standard, you know, sometimes saying well, you know how the black kids are going to be so I'm going to let them get away with it. Not in my classroom, but they use race as an excuse to have a double standard. When indeed I firmly believe that all kids can learn and guess what, all kids can misbehave and all kids need to be corrected and all kids will respond to the right kind of correction. That's just, you know, and I don't think she'd ever been able to get to that point. She would not be able to.

EG: Did you see other instances of this or was this just one that became visible?

KR: Oh, no, there were lots. Teachers' language sometimes who would allow inappropriate racial slurs and then in those days then the black kids would say I'm not going back to her class. She's a racist. And they'd all gather in the cafeteria and not go to class and that's when Milburn Maupin and I used to work with faculty and students saying, you know, students have no right to do that. We grant you that. But what caused them to do that? What gave them that feeling and how can we work on that? And then you'd have some teachers saying, you know, we're not going to change our behavior patterns because of these kids who've come here and they don't want to be here and we don't want them here and I'm not going to change. So you had that conflict as well and that's when Madelyn; I'm sorry I can't find that book. I know once you leave I'll probably find it some place tucked away in my house. She wrote a little book about what happened in our school and how we dealt with it and

how we took the human relations team concept and training concept to the children and began to form talk groups with black and white kids in it and discuss problems and discuss all kinds of problems and just to, once again, put them in that setting, you know, so that people understand.

EG: This was at your junior high school that you did this?

KR: Yeah, oh, yeah, back when the kids decided Miss So-and-So is a racist, we're not going back to her classroom and they'd walk out. And we formed our own team sort of for this. And I had been at the school most of my career so I had a pretty good sound reputation with especially the white community because we didn't have that black kids before busing. And she had her husband being a very prominent person in the black community, she also, her daughter being a highly professional black community person, we had the ability to bring the kids together.

EG: She was black?

KR: Yes, she was black. I didn't say that, did I? Yeah, Madelyn was black.

EG: And she was a teacher?

KR: She was our counselor, our first black counselor.

EG: Your first black counselor, okay.

KR: And we worked through that together. She saw me as her comrade in trying to make it work and I was the established white guy there so that's how we formed a wonderful friendship and approached a lot of hard times. But looking back on it, it was great. Now looking back I can say that was good times, good times.

In addition to changing some teacher behaviors and making kids feel wanted and needed and trying to convince people like Marge that kids are going to be kids and

I don't care what color you are. If you're a kid, you're a kid and you're going to misbehave sometimes and you need correction and consistency and not having a double standard or perceived double standards was so important. And it's still important today.

EG: Did you see this getting better over time?

KR: I think so. I think so. I think we have to watch though. Even in today's situation we have to watch about ability grouping. We have to watch racial makeup of all classes in a public school setting. We can't allow a programmatic change or a ruling to put all the black kids in one class and all the white kids in one class. I guess because I was a part of the fight to make that go away, it bothers me probably more than the average guy out there because I don't want that to happen. Our schools have to reflect to our society that we're and we're supposed to be preparing kids to deal with the real world. And so many times I'll have people in the community say well, we know you're a public school educator but isn't this private school better. And I say, well, you know, depends on what you're looking for in the school. If you're looking for schools to help your child be prepared in the real world, then the real world is so diverse now and getting more and more so. And so how can you possibly think that you're child is going to get prepared for that in a setting where everybody in the classroom is the same color or everybody in the classroom has the same values or comes from the same socio economic? How do you think you're going to be prepared to deal with the diversity that's out there? They're not and that's eventually going to be a failure for your child when they grow up. They're not going to make it. Hard argument but.

EG: Do people respond to that?

KR: Oh, they think I'm this crazy old guy who doesn't know any different, you know. But I met a wonderful lady who came to our community, a professional woman and her husband who came to our community, and sent their child to a public school on purpose and sent their child to a diverse school on purpose. And I was working with her on a project with children's television workshop as a consultant and she came in and she said you will not believe what my child said today and I said what. And she said we live in a very affluent area, nice home.

EG: This is a white person?

KR: Uh-huh, living in white suburbs, okay, and her child goes to an inner city school that is located in the midst of a project, housing project. And so he says why do we have to live out here. She says what are you talking about. He says well, I have to get on a bus and ride all the way down there to school. She said well, do you like the school. He said I love my school but my best friend is Roderick and Roderick lives in the condominiums right across the street from the school. That story stayed with me because first of all wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody thought that public housing were the condominiums and secondly, he says why do I have to live way out here when I could be right close to my school across the street. And I thought if I could only capture that from that child and make that happen across the community, what a wonderful way it would be.

But, you know, now days and I'm in public schools as a granddad, as a volunteer teacher, and I said back then but even now I know more so in my heart, the whole problem of desegregating the schools, of all the racial tension, was a total adult

problem, and that when you take black kids and white kids and put them in an educational setting together they are indeed color blind. And the parents somehow missed that. They missed that. My granddaughter is in kindergarten. She comes home and talks about her best friend Caroline and then when I go to volunteer I just said well, Caroline is Asian. She's an adopted child from China. But Julia doesn't see that. And one of her favorite characters and one of my favorite characters is this little black child that's just a devil, written all over him with big dimples that I just want to pick up and hug every time I see him. But Julia doesn't know he's black, you know. And so as I look back and see it even today, you know, I wonder about as I watch these kids who are holding hands and working together and putting their heads together, sometimes fighting, sometimes laughing, as I watch all that happen I wonder how many parents know that when they come home and talk about Sallie, that Sallie's really not white or black or Asian. Sallie's just Sallie now and Marvin's just Marvin now. And so if only we could have taken all the adults out of that picture and let the children cope with it, it would have been okay. It would have been okay because children don't have the, they haven't learned the racism that we've managed to teach at the elementary level especially. They haven't picked up on that and so they look past it. There are no color barriers and there are no differences. They're all just, the whole little statement about each one's a little flower in this beautiful garden and they don't know the difference. And if only adults could see that and I see it. I see it today. I go into schools and see kids, see such diversity, and I see it but the kids don't even know it's there. Wouldn't it be wonderful if that lesson could be taken to the adult community? And yeah, I know there are all kinds of things in the news media

and in our culture but we've taught those things to children and it's a shame we have. But I think we've come long way because children are beginning to not learn that lesson and I'm glad they haven't learned that lesson because kids are kids. It's amazing to me.

EG: So if kids are color blind, and play devil's advocate here, then why would there be so many problems between kids when busing happened?

KB: Because I think those are all adult, I honestly believe they were adult problems. We teach our children. As parents we teach our children in many, many ways, in our language at home and what we talk about and sometimes you don't realize that children are not like that chair sitting over there. You know, they're like little sponges. Everything that happens they take it in. We teach racism. Racism's not innate. We teach it. And so I maintain that if all the adults disappeared in some magical thing and that whole busing thing happened back then, it wouldn't have been any problem. Wouldn't have been any problem because if we get the kids young enough then they haven't learned that lesson. That's the lesson they haven't learned.

EG: Yeah, another person that I did an oral history of for this project and he was a white student and had no problem at all with black students and he kept emphasizing too because that was how he was raised and about his friends that's how they were taught by their parents.

KB: Yeah, he thanked God his parents didn't teach him that lesson or he missed the lesson. Or even if his parents tried to teach the lesson if children are every day in such a diverse situation and that's the norm, then a segregated situation is not the norm you see.

EG: You're right.

KR: So they're more uncomfortable in a segregated situation than those of us who came up in my generation would be uncomfortable when they're in the minority. I just finished a big conference in Richmond and somebody said gee, I don't like the area we're in. I mean it's a high crime area. I said, well, in big cities there are lots of high crime areas. And I finally said, you know what, are you used to being in the minority. And she said no, I don't think I am. And I said you're right, you're uncomfortable because as you look around, you know, there are three white people in this hallway and everybody else is black. And I guess that was being confrontational because she sort of sat down. She said I hadn't thought about that. I said well, think about this. You know, this is a new experience and we're all a little afraid of new experiences but it's a new experience for you. You were probably raised in an all white situation and now you're the only white person in this huge sea of black people. That's probably making you really uncomfortable. Interesting, I think, once again, our problems are adult problems and not kid problems and I watch it every day when I volunteer and teach in classrooms today. And I probably see it a little differently because, you know, I'm the visitor. I go to my grandchildren's schools. My grandchildren call me granddad, as does every kid in the class call me granddad. Some of the kids don't have granddads or fathers. I walk in a school and a child may be black or white or tall or short or skinny or fat or Asian or whatever, they still call me granddad and they still come up and give me a big hug and get excited about the fact that I'm there. They don't see me as an old white guy. They just see me as granddad, who comes and does really fun things, you know. And I see them as

wonderful scientists who are going to make a difference in the world someday so I'm just as excited as they are about teaching them. But once again there is no color barrier with these children.

EG: What school is this?

KR: I go to two, two schools, because that's where my grandchildren are. Every now and then a teacher will ask me to come. Especially the elementary level science education is sometimes difficult and that's my expertise. So I have a whole garage full of science lessons that I put together to wow the kids and get them turned on, usually leave them with a problem. They write me. The teacher gathers up the little letters and sends them home they write me because I leave them with problems. Say now, be thinking about this and write me a letter and let me know. So they write me and I write them back. It's my drug of choice. To see kids learn is such a rush for me and watch them learn. So that's my drug of choice. It really gives me a reason to keep going and I really enjoy that. But going back to the color thing, there's no, you know, they don't see me as an old white guy, you know. And I think we need to get more and more, especially elderly adults of all races, involved in that diverse situation too as just readers or scribes or whatever we need in school because volunteers can really make a difference I think, really make a difference.

EG: See how we're doing with tape here a second. And I have to leave some time too to go over some proper words and I'm sure you have to get going too.

KR: Yeah, I do, I do.

EG: Yeah, so let me just look over, see if there are any major questions that I've missed. I guess I would just ask is there anything I haven't asked you or that you would like to add. I'm sure there are a lot of things but anything in particular?

KR: I can't think of anything. I've been married forty years and my wife is the historian. In other words, if you ask her what happened, she'll tell you not only what happened, but she'll tell you the date.

EG: Oh, okay.

KR: You know, she's really good at that. I'm not so I hope I've given it the correct historical perspective and the correct dates. But I guess I've told you more of my feelings than anything.

EG: Well, yeah, that's what we want too so.

KR: Well, that's what you got from me.

EG: Yeah, right. [Tape recorder turned off and back on again.] All this biographical information, I've just got to keep remembering. Just keep the tape on. That way I'll insure accuracy too.

KR: Okay. So because of the Sputnik thing the federal government made lots and lots of opportunities available to help people become better educators, especially in science education. So having a wife and two children I would bring home the applications because in those days everything was mail, you know. When I tell children now days that when I grew up there were no computers and I remember getting our first color TV and that I remember when Martin Luther King was shot and when Kennedy shot, then the kids know that indeed I'm a piece of history walking in

their classroom. [Laughter] And that's why they call me granddad so willingly because they know that I'm this real old fossil coming in. But in those days...

EG: But you look much younger.

KR: Oh, yes, you're good. So I would bring the applications home and my wife who was a stay at home mom would apply and maybe we would apply to maybe twenty or thirty of these summer opportunity grant situations to increase your science education. And I had a pretty good point average so I would win seventeen or eighteen of them and so then we'd decide where we were going to spend and they would pay you a stipend for your wife and a stipend for the children and all your tuition and your books and your housing. And so we went all different places over the country and did some fascinating stuff. And that's how I did all my post bachelor's and post master's work because of the government grants for science education, which is just phenomenal.

EG: Wow. So you got a master's degree from University of Louisville too?

KR: No, my master's degree is, the reason I told you that long story is that I had to find a university that would accept credit from the University of Nebraska, from the University of Texas A&M.

EG: Oh, so that was a conglomerate degree?

KR: So it was a conglomerate degree and Spalding University here in town, then I went back and did some work with them and so got my master's degree, which is a conglomerate degree. And then I got my specialist.

EG: At Spalding University?

KR: Yes, my master's at Spalding and then my specialist came back from the University of, no, Western Kentucky University because that's where I did the superintendence and all of that, all the extra hours beyond master's.

EG: You did post graduate work at Western Kentucky University?

KR: Correct. Just the other day I was in my granddaughter's kindergarten class and a parent came in with a new kindergarten child and he was an Indian and he asked if I was a teacher. I said, oh no, I'm just a visitor. I'm granddad. I'm sure you're going to hear from me in the future of your child. And he said we've been on a plane nineteen hours. We were visiting my family in India. And so I said well, you know, I'm not employed here. I'm just a granddad here but let me tell you, you can get him enrolled but please take him home. I said anybody who's been on a plane nineteen hours doesn't need to sit all day in school. And he said will it be all right and I said absolutely. I just said it would be all right, speaking with authority here. [Laughter] And so I said you probably need to spend some time talking to the teacher because you've missed orientation. And so I got the teacher's attention and I said Miss Miriam, he needs to talk to you. And she said well, oh, I can't leave the classroom because there's nobody certified. Oh, wait a minute. You're certified in everything. And so I immediately took over the class and read them a wonderful story and talked about the story while she dealt with them. But it's interesting and once again, the kids won't know him as any different, any different at all.

EG: Right, yeah, that's wonderful. It must just be wonderful to see that now after all your work.

KR: Oh, it is, it is, it is, it is. But I guess I regret the fact that it's because of my unique ability. I control my own work hours with my job now and so I have the unique ability to go in the classroom, be accepted in the classroom because of my background, and then be a part of watching that. And I only wish I could somehow capsualize that and give it to everybody else in this community to see what not only wonderful academic things are happening but how wonderful social things are happening and we sometimes don't think about that. And you go in the cafeteria and it's noisy and it's messy and it's obnoxious and it's wonderful because they're all just sitting together and having a great time.

EG: And you said you taught at, started at Highland Junior High School in January 66?

KR: Okay, I started at Highland Junior High School in January of 66.

EG: And how long, as a science teacher?

KR: Yeah, as a science teacher.

EG: And how long did you teach there?

KR: I cannot give you a clue. Let's see, from there, well, then I negotiated a special contract so that we hired a teacher partner to work with me so that I could leave and be involved in the national NEA thing. And so for four years I traveled in and out. And so I met with all the parents, explained the situation and so the kids for those four years had two teachers instead of one. And I had two different teaching partners during the four years. Both are wonderful and gave them some experience and gave me. Then I came back to the school system and there was a new program starting and that's when I became the instructional coordinator at Highland and

worked with my former teacher colleagues as a teacher/administrator. And I knew them and it was great. So that lasted, I don't know, maybe two or three years. Oh, my daughters have all that in a binder.

EG: Oh, great.

KR: I bet they do. There you go.

EG: Oh, excellent.

KR: Am I good or what?

EG: Excellent. [Laughter] Oh, this is great.

KR: So this is when I came in and that's when I retired. There's when I was hired.

EG: Oh, wow. This is so nice your daughters did this for you.

KR: Well, that was part of my retirement thing. I have to admit to you I'm not sure I'm happy or sad because everyone in the group found the picture of me there in the afro and the ZZ suit and puca beads and was passed around the entire audience and laughter prevailed.

EG: [Laughter] Oh, no.

KR: This was interesting. They took the school system and divided it into four segments; a West region, a North region, a South region, and an East region, and then each sort of formed it's own little school system with the superintendent.

EG: Why did they do that?

KR: Because it was so large. I mean, right now there's ninety-four thousand kids, so the thought to decentralize was important. And it didn't work. I don't think it didn't work because of community or it didn't work because of ability to make things

happen more smoothly. I think it didn't work because of ego and politics. You can't have more than one superintendent. You can't have more than one (), you know.

EG: Problems with coordination and so forth?

KR: Yeah. So this was in that region right here.

EG: Were you at a particular school or did you go around?

KR: My job, there was a content person, content resource person in each region and my job there was to implement the science program in all schools in that region. So I had high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. That's when I first was introduced to teaching elementary. I had taught all the other grades and here's where I began to teach elementary and found out that I'd probably missed my calling because the little kids thought I was some sort of magic science guy. And so did the teachers. So that was a life changing experience for me. And then I went back, this is a district wide position, all the middle schools in the district.

EG: Okay, doing the same thing?

KR: Yeah but for all the schools.

EG: For all the middle schools.

KR: Then this became a central office administrator. So in 1984 I became a central office administrator til the end of my career eight years ago.

EG: Okay. So in 1998 you retired?

KR: No, 199-. What's eight from 2005, eight from five? 1997. I can double-check that because I saw, 1996.

EG: 1996, okay. And since then you've been a volunteer?

KR: There's all the dates on the receptions that I had and there's the retirement reception.

EG: And now you've been a volunteer since that time?

KR: Well, right now I work for the National Science Teachers Association in Washington, D.C.

EG: Oh, okay.

KR: So that's why you get all the testimony about No Child Left Behind, etc. because now I visit school systems across the nation and in Canada and so I have a different perspective probably than most.

EG: And what's your title with them?

KR: I'm called the field service coordinator. Every state has a chapter like Kentucky State Science Teachers Association or Nebraska or Missouri, each one has a chapter of science teachers, as a professional organization, not NEA. We have fifty-five thousand members and we're actually moving international. And my job is to work with the convention bureau and also to work with, specifically work with each chapter and associated group as they have problems, organizational problems or want to implement something new, I'm sort of the idea guy.

EG: Yeah, and how long have you been doing that?

KR: Since I retired. Well, that's not true. When I retired the Kentucky Science Teachers Association didn't have an executive director or a staff person. And I had always been critical. Most volunteer organizations, if they're strictly volunteer then as the volunteers fade away there's no continuity. And so I suggested that they hire someone and they hired me and I worked for four years just putting that

organization together and providing continuity. And then I was appointed to the National Science Teachers Association blue ribbon panel on science education and we worked for two years just looking at science education nationally and at the organization and made some recommendations. And one recommendation of that blue ribbon panel was to hire someone who would look at all the chapters in the states and the provinces and be there for them to respond to their needs or give them advice as to what was happening on the other side of the nation in science. And so then they called me and said are you taking that job and I said what job, the job that's in the report. I said I have no intention of doing that. Oh, yes you do. And so I've been doing that and I do it on a consulting basis because I do not want to live in Washington, D.C. So I do it from my home but travel a lot. But I enjoy that and it keeps my finger in the pie once again.

EG: You said you joined the city teachers union. I know it's called the Louisville Education Association.

KR: Yeah, I gave you that whole opera thing, yeah. Right away, because when you started the profession then the thing you were supposed to do was to join your professional organizations so I joined the teachers association.

EG: And you became the head of it in? I think you told me this before. Early 70s?

KR: Yeah. I probably could find that. Well, this was the last one so.

EG: Yeah, because it was 75.

KR: Yeah, because it was 75 so early 70s.

EG: And then you said you went on and were part of a national, urban?

KR: Yeah, I became the president of the NCUA, the National Council of Urban Education Associations.

EG: And that was? Remind me when that was.

KR: I can find that. I was the first male in the Future Teachers Association in my high school.

EG: Really? [Laughter]

KR: Yeah, guys didn't become teachers. Women became teachers but guys didn't become teachers. There's a high school graduation picture I know you'll want to see.

EG: Oh, yeah.

KR: And there's my junior high school graduation picture. [Laughter] I'm so happy my daughters put this together for me.

EG: Yeah, this is such a wonderful resource, yeah.

KR: They even went to the Courier Journal and every time my name is in the paper put the article in there.

EG: Oh, that's great. What a special thing to do.

KR: I tell children the story of going to a space launch, the effect that had on my life. Also, I was very involved in the beginning of sex education, which has another whole story.

EG: Yeah, I'm sure. [Laughter]

KR: Another whole story.

EG: When did you go to a space launch?

KR: Of course, it was before the Challenger. I had become involved. I was at central office and become involved in some NASA projects and my wife and I were invited to attend the launch of the first minority pilot, who was Fred Gregory. So my wife and I sat in the stands with his family and friends.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

EG: Milburn?

KR: Maupin, M-A-U-P-I-N. M-I-L-B-U-R-N Maupin.

EG: Okay.

KR: Wife was Madelyn. Daughter is a prominent physician still in (), dentist.

EG: And you said your friend was Joe Black, the person who was your friend at the University of Louisville?

KR: Oh, his real name is Byke, B-Y-K-E.

EG: Joe Byke, B-Y-K-E?

KR: Un-huh.

EG: You mentioned Okolona?

KR: That's a community. That's in the South part, a very conservative working class people.

EG: Is it O-K-O?

KR: O-K-O-L-O-N-A. And the other one is Valley Station, V-A-L-L-E-Y Station.

EG: Oh yeah, I've heard about that.

KR: And that's out Dixie Highway and both of those were and still are conservative bastions of the white community.

EG: Fred Gregory is just like how it sounds?

KR: Yeah, he's the astronaut, first () astronaut and that's when the Department of Education became a separate department, if you recall historically.

EG: Oh, because it was ATW, yeah.

KR: You got it and so we were active in getting that to happen.

EG: Lobbying for that?

KR: Yeah, I met Tip O'Neal and had dinner with him.

EG: Oh, how fabulous.

KR: Was invited to the White House for breakfast and the whole smear. And Carter was the president and Mondale was the vice president.

EG: So your estimate for the national?

KR: Oh, 1979.

EG: Oh, you were head of the National Council of Urban Educators?

KR: Yeah, right.

EG: You said it was a four-year term, so 83?

KR: Yeah, I guess I would say, well, I think that's probably, I think we need to go back but I think it was 78, 79, 80, and 81. I think that would probably be more accurate. If my wife were here she could tell you exactly. I would probably still be involved there except I had two children and missing them growing up so I had to come back. But I'd probably be working. I was offered a position at the Department of Education but I was a Louisville guy and wanted to come back.

EG: Louisville, yeah.

KR: Back to Louisville and my kids.

EG: So I want to make sure I have this right with the union. Started in 66 and then you became head of it in the early 70s?

KR: Un-huh.

EG: And then in 1975 though you were still like a member of the board of it?

KR: Un-huh.

EG: And then you became head of the National Council of Urban Educators from like 78 to 81?

KR: Yeah.

EG: Any other professional organizational memberships that I should put down here?

KR: No, I mean the list is crazy.

EG: Yeah, I'm sure.

KR: Yeah, you know, I was an officer in the Campus Society and () but it's not ().

EG: Well, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

TRANSCRIBED JANUARY 2005 BY CATHY MANN