

Interview with Kathleen Flint October 25th and 31st 1978.

Conducted by Cis Jankowski. Tape #123-1 & 123-2.

Transcribed by Laura Wadsworth.

CS: Now, this is...I'm not familiar with what this is. This happened right near here?

KF: What?

Unknown Speaker: This happened near here?

KF: Well, now that has to do...that's another little historical note that an old sailing partner of mine gave me. Now, this sailing partner was much interested in this multiple murder, and she took a whole summer and wrote it up in that little pink book. This has no theoretical connection to it. This took place in 1908, now that was when I was five years old, and I don't have any recollection of it. My father was working on the railroad and when news of the ...news of the murders first spread around in the vicinity, the Chicago newspapers sent reporters out to get the story. Now, these men would come to my father as his train was going through the yards, the LaPorte yards, on the way to Chicago. It was...his run was between Toledo and Chicago. Well, he then would carry the newspaper's copy into Chicago and at the LaSalle Street Station, messengers would be waiting to run it to the newspaper offices. Now, that I never heard about that until I moved to LaPorte, long after I was married and had a family and was established in LaPorte. When I heard about it, I was, of course, very much interested. My father said, "Let's go out and have a look at the farm." So, we did, we spent the whole day looking over it. Now, it tells about it in great detail there. I think it's....I haven't discovered any details that weren't pretty well substantiated in other reports.

This Belle Gunness was a big, (indecipherable) woman. I don't know whether she was Norwegian, or Swedish, but evidently she was Scandinavian, but pretty well endowed, let's say it that way, and uh, she married a man, and I suppose that was Gunness and lived on a farm which was near the Severs Road, just out of LaPorte, and she...her husband died, leaving her five stepchildren and she worked the farm with the help of a farmhand named Ray Lamphere, and she an Lamphere evidently got along all right. But she was not interested in farming at all, that was just a cover. What she did was to advertise in lonely hearts magazines, and when gullible men came to answer her ad, she would have communicated with them by letter, urging them to bring along whatever they had and they could enjoy it together and so on. Well, many of those men showed up, but eventually they were all killed. Now, I don't mean that many of them came at every...at the same time, I think it was only one at a time, perhaps. Although, actually, nothing was ever nailed down about the case, because when...when...when she realized the game was up, the farmhouse burned to the ground. In the ashes were discovered the bodies of (indecipherable) as it mentioned in the book...the little book. Her body was never found. The bodies of um...I think it was pretty close to 20...men were found on the premises, and...well, it was, of course, a great scandal. And Belle was looked for for many years, but nobody...but she was never apprehended. Now, of course, she'd dead, because she was....she was probably 35 or 40 in 1908, which is an awful long time ago.

US: They never did find her though?

KF: Never did. She was reported, she was reported all over the country, but when they looked...when the cops looked for her...she...she had either flown the coop, or else it was never she to begin with?

US: How did they found out that this is what she was doing then, they just pieced things together?

KF: No, one man happened to write to his brother that he was going to meet this wonderful woman and he was going to take along some of his money. Now, I don't know how rich he was...and I'm not even sure...it'll be in the book there, what his name was. But when the brother came to track down what had happened to his sibling, he could find no trace of him and that's when the cops began digging and that's when they discovered all these bodies.

Did you ever hear of the Lizzie Borden case? Now, Lizzie Borden was a famous murderous in New England someplace, and this, umm, he wrote, he wrote a play about it and I went to see the play because he was an old boyfriend of mine and I was eager to find out how he'd been doing. I thought it was quite a successful play. Well, now what else can I do for you?

US: Well...

KF: By the way, that's the only book that I have, so you keep it as long as you need it, and then give it back to me.

US: OK. I think I've seen this somewhere before, most of the gang had some of this information.

KF: It was written by a young sailing partner of mine.

US: When your father worked in the railroad, you lived in Toledo, then?

KF: Yes, yes, we all lived in Toledo.

US: Cis asked me where you lived before you came here and I couldn't remember.

KF: Well, I lived in Toledo until I grew up and got married, then my husband was an inventor and we moved to Detroit because that was the field that he was educated in. And after a number of years he lost out with his connection in Detroit and was hired to come to LaPorte where he worked for many years before anybody had heard of such a thing, on smog control. And he invented a device that...that was valuable on three counts: one, it cut off...it saved gasoline, which then was not at all important, he never got beyond the secretaries to show off his invention because the original manufacturer returned it, didn't have any interest at all in saving gas.

US: There was probably a lot more of it then.

KF: Yeah....the next important thing was it improved performance, and it did, it really helped...it used up more of the gas you see, so there was less...ash,

I'd say...fewer end products, well, the next thing, nobody had ever heard of up to that time, the en...I don't think any environmentalist had been heard of, but now, of course, they're all over the place, and the emissions from the tailpipe of buses and even ordinary cars were an important consideration although nobody realized it then. He was years ahead of his time...if he had been living till now, he'd probably have been a national figure...but he...didn't last out.

US: Was he very well recognized at his time?

KF: Oh, yes, yes, yes. He...he was not a really prolific inventor, but he did he had a manufacturer, he had a...been assigned a total of 15 patents, they were all in the field of carburetion and ignition and...oil consumption and gasoline, which I guess would fall under carburetion.

US: I think so, I'm not familiar with all those things and how they work together.

CJ: Like you can drive it, but you don't know how it works.

KF: Well, now what can I do for you.

CJ: Would...do you remember any interesting stories that might have happened when you were around, like during his time of inventing things, like the funny things that happened or unusual kinds of things that he invented on his way to inventing something else?

KF: Well, how long have you got? Let me square that away.

CJ: Well, she could always come back another time, too.

KF: Well, when he was first becoming known outside of his own company, which employed him at the time, it was the Deluxe Products operating in LaPorte; however, he had only been here for a year and a half, two years when the war broke out. This gave...the onset of the war and it greatly increased business, gave the company all the excuse...justification to beat the rap on many side promises that they had made to him. He needed help in research, he needed help in mathematics, he needed...he needed correspondence, he was never a writer whatsoever, he could not put anything together so that you could make sense out of it. That...when the war came all the people who might otherwise have been able and willing to help him were in other fields, so the thing came down on my neck. I had quite a bit of experience in assembling mixed up manuscripts; I worked with my father for many years. My father was a manager for many years of the Goodrich Tire and Rubber Company in Toledo, one of the branch managers, I don't know how many branches there were. And he could get through what was expected of him, except for the fact that once a month he had to submit a report which went to Akron. There seemed to be no way for him to resolve it. Well, I don't know how I happened to get into it, I can't recall that. I was a very young and inexperienced seventh grader. And...since there was no other help for my father, I probably volunteered, maybe he said come on we'll do it...anyway, before I knew it, I wasn't into it. We had to sum up the salient points about the business over the past month, you see, and, uh, my father and I would get into it every month, and he had no idea at all how to proceed. The first item on the outline which pop was supposed to flesh out and make readable was weather. And I'd say, well, pop, what do you want

to say about the weather, and he'd tell me just two or three words...well, it was terrible or it was alright, it was up to me then, you see, to try to remember what the hell happened. I can't remember the intervening items on this outline, the last one was how can Goodrich get more business out of our territory? And I'll never forget that, because we really expended ourselves on that one.

Yesterday, as I was taking some books back to the library, the girls ran after me with something...I don't know what...books, and I stuck it in my pocket.....(tape is turned off) I was in Chicago, with his car parked at the edge of the loop, he went there to check the performance of the clear-ex a fleet of big double-decker buses that had been sent over London, or England someplace...I don't know. They call these things Queen Mary's, well when my husband would see a Queen Mary coming down the street, he would get as close as he could to it out in the street, would sit where he ought to be safe, well, when the thing stopped to pick up passengers, he would run around to the back, scoop up a handful of exhaust fumes and smell them... gingerly...the idea, you see, was to see how much...how many pollutants came through the engine, he had installed his device on...I suppose all the Queen Mary's, I suppose that was it. Remember all this was over a third of a century ago. Well, the only reason that I would remember about that was because he told me when he came home that day, he said that a cop was standing there and this cop say his peculiar behavior, and he said...well, I don't know what he said, something like what the hell do you think you're doing, and Mr. Flint was very quick witted, he said why, officer, I should think you would be able tell...I'm smelling Queen Mary's tailpipe. That much I remember, verbotum, I mean verbatim. Well, the cop said, now what's that for, and he explained as much as he could in a few words, cause after all they were out in the middle of traffic and yelling at each other. And the behavior of this cop surprised him. He said, is that your car over there...Charles admitted that it was his car, and the cop then came up with his hand and stopped traffic in all directions, and he gave his arm to Charles and they ran all the way across the street and back to Charles' car. The cop opened the car door deferentially, ushered Charles inside, and he said...God, mister, I hope you get it done. It'd be nice if cops could breathe around here. Well, it was many years before they got any farther than that, but that was because it was kind of a funny deal, you see.

CJ: They could use some work now, couldn't they? If you've been down in the Loop and there's any buses around there, you sure..... What other kinds of things did he invent, other than for the buses?

KF: Various aids to improve carburetion, and ignition and emissions.

CJ: All for buses?

KF: No, not necessarily, most of them were for private...well, the same outfit could fit on most cars, there were only a few models necessary. Well, Mr. Flint...I don't know...what do you know about invention? There are only a few ways that an inventor can market his device. He can sell the patent outright, that's one way, he can license somebody to use the patent. Another thing he can do is organize his own company and manufacture his own product, and eventually, that's what we did. By that time, we were installed at the lake, and could go ahead...

US: That's the lake in LaPorte, where your house was. I can't remember, you told me the name of it..

KF: It's South Pine, we had a home on the north shore of South Pine, and it was everything we wanted. When I came to break up there, I (indecipherable) wintertime Mr. Flint and I lived...had lived alone for many years since Matt and Steve were both long gone from the mills, and we had four boats among other things....there was just two of us, but we had four boats, and we used those four boats. And I had innumerable toys. One was a two-man toboggan that was my particular joy. That was something I could work alone. And I also made up my own skate sail, and I loved skate sailing.

CJ: Skate sail?

KF: Yeah, you go out on rollers...on ice skates...

CJ: Oh, with like a sail that you hold in your hands? I don't think I've ever done that...I'm sure I haven't.

US: I think she was an inventor, too. Did you invent the skate sail?

KF: No, no, I went to the library and explained what I wanted, and they just went and got me something, and when I saw what it demanded, I didn't have the gall to put it together on the scale suggested. It's all calibrated according to your height and weight. Well, my height wasn't so much, but evidently, I should have had a much bigger outfit, I didn't dare....I was like this power boy that wanted to jump off the barn with a parachute and didn't have the nerve to do it. But, anyway, I put together this little skate sail, and for my purposes, it was just perfect and I really enjoyed it.

CJ: Where did you sail?

KF: On this lake over there.

MJ: Sounds quite nice, you know those (indecipherable) Sounds like fun. How long ago did you do this...was this after the boys were grown?

KF: Yes.

CJ: After Matt was gone from home?

KF: I...he might not have been gone. I had the thing for ten, fifteen years, I forgot I had it. I have a whole drawer full of yearly diaries. If it's important to you, I could look it up. I had to keep up these diaries for business reasons. I...I...my job was to do the correspondence and to drum up such technical papers as directions on how to install the device and if you think that's easy...you just better try it sometimes.

CJ: That sounds like...what do they call that job nowadays...drafting or something...must have had to learn how to do that.

KF: Well, this work...there was no drawing in connection with it, I gave up on mechanical drafting years before that, but, you see, Charles tried to teach

me about an engine so that every morning it would have been possible for me to go out and lift up the hood and say, oh, this is what the boys did yesterday, and then shut it up and walked back and write it up. I had no intention of doing that. I...I...I did what I thought I could do. What I knew I could not do, I didn't even attempt. Even so it kept me pretty busy.

CJ: I'll bet it did. Where is it that he would work on these inventions?

KF: Oh, um, immediately after the war, his company was sold to the Walker Manufacturing Company in Waukegan. I think that's in Illinois, but it might be somewhere in Wisconsin. And he uh...before this company took over, he was able to buy his patents and his shoprights and his copyrights, and most of the equipment used in the manufacturing. So, this he moved out to a big garage that we had at our home. He put in a big stove there and he worked there for several years, but eventually moved to town. I think the number was 402 Clay Street, right near the railroad, and he worked there for ...10, 15 years.

CJ: Did his inventions ever get in the way...like your family life, being he was working out in the garage so close to the home.

KF: Well, the trouble with an inventor is that most of them are not born independently wealthy, they cannot finance their inventions themselves, so usually Charles would organize a stock company and sell stock. Now, he never became wealthy, there was just no question about that whatever, but he made enough which was more than any inventor that I know was able to do. We raised the boys and gave them a decent education and started them on productive career...but all...

Side two of tape begins

KF: ...my life, really, from the time I first got into my first day of teaching until I was...until...I think my last, perhaps not my last...I hope not my last, but I uh, I was working with one student until about August 1 of this year. I was fired from my job for the mistake I made of getting married.

CJ: In those days they considered that a mistake, huh?

KF: Mistake for a teacher...you could get married, but then you had to accept the consequences...(doorbell sounds) There's Marge, you want to turn that thing off?

KF: My daughter-in-law is convinced that I'm going to get discontented here, and she tried to keep thinking of things to keep me interested. (now, would you like sugar...saccharin?) And, um, she...she urged me to draw up a kind of family tree, and I started to do it, but I wasn't at all interested. I'm not interested in who was the father of so and so, or according to the bible; who beget whom. What I had interest in was little stories about them, which I had heard all my life.

CJ: From your relatives?

KF: Um hmm...so I've written about a hundred pages on that. And I'll publish a limited edition ...in other words, ten copies

US: I was going to say, like ten or twelve.

CJ: For your family use only.

US: She's promised me that I get to read it one of these days.

KF: That would be fun.

CJ: Are these stories that you remember, or are there other people who are still telling you new stories, like oh, I remember...

KF: I'm the last one alive, that's why it's important...

CJ: Yeah, put the stories down on paper.

KF: Yeah, I'm the last one of my generation that's left. I had a much younger sister, but she died recently. And all the rest of my family is gone now. And, uh...I'll get you the dedication

CJ: (reading) To my family, distinguished from other families neither in brilliance or achievement but only in the fact that it was mine. That's really nice. It looks like...are you typing all of this too?

KF: Yeah.

CJ: Oh, goodness. What are some of the stories, are they mostly private kinds of things that happened in people's lives?

KF: The very things probably that happened in every family, but you don't read about it because it's...oh, I don't know what...

CJ: Just those kinds of things that stay in the family.

KF: One...one place where...somebody gave me a book of music and I...although I'm a very limited, very immature, I'm no musician at all, I just love the stuff, and I started playing it and enjoying it and the minute I left the piano, my sister slid onto the bench and she played the whole thing by ear, and she did it beautifully, my sister was immensely talented. So was everybody else in my family. I just got the short end of it. One time I got a book of music and started learning a piece out of it, and my sister just took my place at the bench...and I told her don't you ever do that again, that's mine, see, that's mine...don't you every play that again. And she just looked at me and laughed. Well, I came into the house unexpectedly shortly after that and she was playing Victor Herbert, and just that infuriated me. And I grabbed an oar, and I got after her with the oar, I drove her outdoors and drove her around the house, belting her with the oar. Well, my mother jumped out and broke up the fight. Well, she thought about it awhile, and then she laid down the law. She said from now on, whoever gets a piece the first can have it and no one...none of the rest of us can play it. If that's yours now...Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life, ok, that's yours, we can't play it, how do you... my sister and my mother...my mother ruled them both out. And you know, we never questioned it and that law prevailed for 20 or 30 years.

CJ: That's a long time for a law to last.

KF: My sister became a nightclub performer with the organ and piano...she was good, she was excellent. But I could never aim that high cause I didn't have it.

CJ: Nightclubs she performed in around here or...this was in Ohio?

KF: Toledo...Toledo.

CJ: Is that where you were born, Toledo?

KF: Um hmm.

CJ: You were talking a little bit about teaching and education, and you see some things happening now, you said, that are changing...

KF: The first indication I had that things were going downhill... going badly downhill was when I contacted the Truant Officer, here it's called the Attendance Officer, prettier name, I guess, and complained to him about this child that wasn't ever turning up, and he said, if the parents don't care if the child comes or not, there isn't very much that the Truant Officer can do about it. Well, maybe that's the truth, but on the other hand, I thought it was a cop out. I thought they should do the work they were paid to do, at least try to do. As a matter of fact, you know as well as I do that the Truant Officer just can't keep up with the business now.

CJ: Nowadays, that's for sure. Did you ever find out what happened to the individual?

KF: Oh, I suppose so, but, I don't remember.

CJ: What kinds of things have you seen change in education? Do you think the education we have nowadays is as good what there was when you first started teaching?

KF: I think it's very much better for the upper grades...

CJ: High School?

KF: Yeah, but for the basics, I don't think the instruction will ever beat the instruction we had in Phonics, and spelling, and writing. It was so bad that I did all of my own system and I used it for many years, many years. And I used it on kids of seven and men of 50 and was able to pull it off.

ML: Did you ever put that into a book?

KF: Sure...sure, yeah. I tell you, publishers are interested in people that can write, Kathleen D. Flint, Ph.D., and that's all. And I don't think a Ph.D. qualifies you, I think you've got to get down with these little grubby kids, and get at it right now, at the point where they're failing.

CJ: What was so special about your system that you developed yourself?

KF: Well, it was simple, it was simple. And each lesson was composed of basically one primary, preeminent fact. For instance, I would have a unit as soft G and C, that is G pronounced as ja, and C pronounced as sss, before e, i, and y. I think I would probably have six lessons on that, and then a little story. And some of those stories....

ML: You made up the stories yourself?

KF: Yeah, yeah...sure...you have to, you have to, but...but the work devoted to reading now, is of such a grand plane, there isn't a word in it less than five syllables. It's...it's not simple.

CJ: Were there many materials available back then?

KF: No, no...I first got into it about, oh, I'd say twenty years ago, and what I did...I'd even cut out my own pictures. You see, it's...it isn't very easy to teach men fifty years old how to read, they might try just as hard, but you can't write about Christmas with grandma.

ML: I bet her stories were better than some of the ones in those Scott Foresman readers, I used to...

CJ: I'm sure they were, too. Where is it that you were teaching men of fifty years old?

KF: Men from factories around the Fort...Indiana.

CJ: Was that a special program or just something that they would come and ask you to do.

KF: Sometimes the men...I don't think the men ever came themselves...they'd usually send the wife, and a couple of times, the employers contacted me and asked me if I thought I could teach Mr. So and So to read a simple work order and to write an ordinary telephone message. You see how basic that kind of is? It's um...I enjoyed that work more than any other, probably because it was most demanding, most of the cases, I succeeded. You see, there's a preeminent motivation with men. These men all needed it to keep their jobs, and to keep their bosses happy, so they were therefore going to do the best they could, with whatever I could bring to help them out. And the fact that we became quite devoted personal friends was that much of a bonus. I enjoyed their society, and probably, they did mine. It was a slow business, but the results were gratifying in the extreme. One time a man came to me with a little, tiny piece of paper, and he showed it to me with the greatest pride. He said, my wife left this for me, so that I could have it when I woke up. It said, Dear so and so, we have gone fishing. Now, he said, last year she would have waked me up, she would have waked me up and she said we're all going fishing, but this time, she knew I could read.

CJ: That's great.

ML: That was a definite payoff, he didn't have to get waked up.

KF: Yeah, he was ahead of the game, too. He told me once that when he first started in reading, that was the hardest work that he ever did in his life...you don't think of it as really hard work, but I suppose it might be.

ML: In someplace in one of the reading texts, there's a thing that you can use to show a parent how hard it would be for a child to read and it uses symbols you know, that are just as unfamiliar to you as it would be the child...I wish I could find that, but I'm not sure what book it's in...

KF: Do you remember where you saw that, Marjorie?

ML: It was in one of the...one of the textbooks that I used down in school, and it's probably one of the ones that's packed away, that I haven't seen for years. But they just substituted symbols for words, so I think you could kind of make up your own.

CJ: How is it that if the emphasis presents such basics of reading and spelling....if the...education back then was on reading and spelling, how did these men get to be fifty years old without learning to read a simple note like that.

KF: It wasn't.... Well, it couldn't have been easy.

ML: Well, education wasn't always compulsory like it is now, I don't suppose.

KF: Especially, especially....I don't know how many of my men had come from middle...from upper and middle Tennessee. Those men would have a little one-room schoolhouse opened to them during the summer. When it got cold and the roads became difficult to travel, the young children...then that was it, until the following spring.

ML: Well, Cis, even in the days when I was in college, education in Kentucky and Tennessee left a lot to be desired. The schoolteacher would just have to be whoever was willing, not whoever was qualified, and some of the schoolteachers had only gone through the sixth grade.

KF: Well, you know, Marjorie, on that business of whoever is qualified...when I started teaching I had a good...a good BA degree, but the teachers in my system who were just as satisfactory, and did just as well, and worked just as hard, were kids who went to normal school after putting in four years of high school. Those were superb teachers.

CJ: What was normal school?

KF: Education.

ML: That's what they used to call teacher's college.

KF: That's what they used to call it.

CJ: Oh.

ML: Now, why....

KF: (laughing) Listen you young whippersnapper!

ML: Well, that's what Ball State was when my uncle went there; it was called the Normal School.

KF: Is that so...I didn't know that.

ML: And there was one building.

CJ: It's much larger than that, now.

ML: Well, the present administration building was the building and they used it, he said they used to have their dances in the big round center area, there for a time...(indecipherable)

CJ: Wonder how it ever got that name...normal school?

ML: I don't know...all the ones in Indiana were called such and such normal school.

KF: There were a lot...there were a lot of them, the one around Toledo was Bowling Green Normal, now it's a huge State University, but at the time when I was just starting to teach, it was Bowling Green Normal. And I had the greatest respect for it.

ML: I think at that time they called Ball State Eastern Indiana State Normal School, and when I was there still books in the library that still said that on the inside.

KF: I think perhaps they gave...they gave the students practical information. I had wonderful courses, some of them quite interesting on um...the history of education and history among the Greeks...or education among the Greeks and so on...well. But I never had any...any light given to me on how to teach two plus two. That...those...those basic elements were shelved. Now, of course, I bridged the gap somehow, perhaps it worried me. But after all, that was a long time ago. I enjoyed my teaching so much, I forgot most of that.

CJ: Where is it that you went to school?

KF: Ohio Western University, Delaware, Ohio.

CJ: Did they used to have teacher conferences or meetings where the teachers would all get together like they do nowadays?

KF: Yep, that was always at this time of year, and those things were very...very profitable to me, because I had had so little practical instructions, that I really used them and enjoyed them. Well, now tell me what else you want.

CJ: Well, you talked...told me a couple of little stories about some individuals that you had in school and about the time that the depression was just coming...

KF: All right, shall I tell you about one of those?

CJ: Sure

KF: The Depression, was, in a way, one of the most startling events that occurred in my life, next to Pearl Harbor, certainly. It had been a long time since we had had a really first class depression in this county. And, I think people in general, had given up worrying about...about it. Now, everybody that lived through the depression, always thinks something...if you should lose on an investment, or failed to capitalize on an insurance or something of that kind, you would take it much more seriously, than as if you hadn't lived through the depression, because the depression was a basic fact with all of us. My parents were...I'd say fairly comfortable, but the first thing they did was lose \$10,000 investment in Florida real estate. One of my aunts lost, I have no idea how much, in a slightly noisome project known as Muscle Shoals. I don't remember any longer what was the matter with Muscle Shoals, except the banks regarded it with a great deal of apprehension. And this Aunt lost everything she had in the world. My mother came into some money, I forget how, and invested it just the week of the depression...the week of the Wall Street crash in City Service, that was an oil company, and it just went smash. I don't think she ever got one cent out of the money she put into it. And, uh...most families could repeat that same list of depressing circumstances, right up and down one street and up and down the other. Well, it was a hard time to live through. The Grapes of Wrath, although now, I think it's...I think...well, it's past its first impact, of course, but at that time it was regarded as highly factual. Course, I'm not in a position to judge what people from Oklahoma felt about it, but I sure as heck now how people from Ohio felt about it.

ML: Well, that's true, because along with the depression came the Dust Bowl, and all this...

KF: What, Marjorie?

ML: Well, along with the depression, as far as money, they had that Dust Bowl thing out in Oklahoma.

KF: Yeah, at that time we were living in Detroit. Mr. Flint called me up from his work and said now, go outside and have a look to the West and see the great hall of dust all over everything. He said that's the Dust Bowl coming this far East. Of course, I did and it was exactly what he said. The whole...the sun, that day, was not as bright as usual, well it was just deplorable.

CJ: You mentioned that you could see signs of the depression coming, although at the time, you didn't know it.

KF: At the time, it didn't worry me, but looking back on it, I realize....I realize that it had coming for a long time, and that we didn't...we didn't appreciate it, and we didn't understand it, mostly we didn't bother about it, we certainly didn't worry about it. At that time, I remember hearing...I remember a little girl in my class, and I taught fifth grade that year, a little girl came in late. I called her up to the desk, and I said...I remember the little girls name for some reason...I said Katherine, why are you late? She collapsed in a flood of tears. I took her out of the room at once and

told her to go to the washroom and bathe her face in cold water, and not to come back until she felt better, and I tried to reassure her that I wasn't mad at her, I just wanted to know why she was late. Later, I consulted the principle about it, because it bothered me. And she said I've been worried about that family. And that evening, or maybe the next day. She approached the little girl and asked her if she'd like to work in the teacher's lunchroom. You see, part of the payment for that work was a good hot meal, perhaps the only one the little girl got. And part of the fact that she had exploded in tears, was that her nerves had just given away. This was a wonderful principal. She organized a deal in clothes. Whenever a child would outgrow a good long sweater or boots or something practical...he might be likely to take it to the school and give it to the principal. Now, the principal, in some way, I don't know how she did it, the date they had been received and who had submitted them, and then in her own little card index, probably, she wrote who had received them. In that way, usually, the child who had given the clothes and the child who got the clothes might live several blocks apart and the chances were that they wouldn't be noticed. Such a...you see, there was no welfare at the time, there was no state organized relief agencies. That meant that every family which fell on evil times had to work their own way out of it, and in the case of older people, or those who pursued a somewhat limited liveli...means of making a livelihood just didn't have a chance. Now was I going to tell you something built around that...or what?

CJ: No, I think you were just talking about your... a couple of your students and how you saw that coming. Do you see some of those things happening today?

KF: The whole thing is different today because of the fact that we have almost universal welfare. Nobody has to take a job if he doesn't want to, and I'm afraid that that's the truth. And in those days....

Begin Tape 123-2

KF: That's right...that's right. Now, I understand that there are two generations on welfare that have never had any kind of a job. Now, of course, there's some people who can't work, shouldn't be expected to work, on the other hand, there are many who could manage and just don't want to. All up and down these streets, you see old people getting out and attempting to rake up leaves. In the old days, you could get a strong, well-muscled boy to do that kind of work. But you can't do it now, you can not count on it. There is no reason to think that a boy will work unless he wants to. And, uh, people living on fixed incomes, or people who are too old to do the work themselves, or handicapped in some other way, have to make other arrangements, just have to do it. I had to give up my own home that I loved dearly, because I could not hire people to come and rake up leaves for one thing. When we first got the place, I was capable of doing it...twenty five years later...I'm not so capable.

CJ: You spoke about an individual...another fellow with an invention, that maybe he came to you because your husband was also an inventor and thought you knew about that a little bit.

KF: Well, this was long before I was married and I knew, and I knew nothing about invention at that time. This man was the father of three little girls, all in our school...nice little kids. He...perhaps I was the last hope that this

man had. He came to me and told me about a golf tee, although I didn't know anything golf, he explained it to me in particular detail. This golf tee was, I don't remember how it was constructed, but it was decorated with...oh, tassels and paint and white ribbons and what not, so that when... when the golf ball was hit, the tee would fly maybe five or six feet away, but it could be retrieved because of its color it could be found and used again. This man thought it was worthy of serious consideration. Well, there are many inventions worthy of serious con...what did I say...consideration that don't get it. And this encounter has worried me for the last fifty years, and I deeply regret that I didn't maybe write a couple letters, or do something for this poor man...anyway, about two days later, he committed suicide. And if I had been...if I have been brighter, I couldn't have prevented it perhaps, but I...maybe he wouldn't have (indecipherable) to extreme frustration at this point as quickly as he did and completely as he did. The mother, however, evidently nobody worried about the mother, she wouldn't commit suicide, I don't know what she did, but she kept the family together. Yep.

CJ: How was suicide treated in those days?

KF: How was it treated?

CJ: I mean people's attitude towards it.

KF: Well, people were all very sorry, or course. What do you mean was it treated as a crime, or what? I don't think so, I...I don't...except from a legal aspect, I don't think that's a legitimate contention. The whole act is founded in such deep frustration, that a person is hardly in a position to grapple with the problem and wrest a solution out of it without...without help. At that time there was no such thing as hot lines, I never heard of such a thing until much later. But I...I think that's...those hotlines are very, are very fine ways to attempt to at least put off putting the question to the ear.

CJ: That may be somehow, in the meantime, that something else would come up that would keep them from doing that. Where did people go for that emotional support?

KF: I don't know that there was anyplace for them to go. Thousands of them turned up for work whenever a chance was advertised... I know that. But, this was still when Herbert Hoover was president. Until Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated and had put the first elements of his program in operation, there was no...no systematic relief at all. And when it first came on the...notice to the country, it didn't receive a great deal of consideration, it was WPA or PWA, one of the other, for awhile it was one and then for awhile it was the other. And, at that time, the work that was manufactured for these poor people, for these poor men, was really not work, it was pulling the weeds and raking leaves, and the things that weren't so...things that didn't add up as a really demonstrable total. People were being paid for, paid for being worth money. It was just a means of making the recipients do something. A good many of them...and you can see them in many, many streets...a good many men got applied for a pick ax or a shovel or something, and then spent half their time leaning on them.

ML: There was an awful lot of jokes about that story.

KF: Oh, an awful lot of jokes, yes. And the fact was...the fact was that it was all quite common. My youngest son was a pretty close observer, and he told me one time that he was going to play workmen, and that's how he did it...he thought that was real, you see.

ML: Well, I remember the kids joking about what the letters WPA stood for.

KF: Workmen's...what was it...workmen's...

ML: No, I meant the joke, not the serious version.

KF: Yeah, I know, but I just can't remember what it did stand for.

CJ: Works Progress Administration

ML: Works Progress Administration, or something, but the kids used to joke about being We Piddle Around.

KF: You know the waterfront in Michigan City? A good deal of that was put together at that time, and it uh...now, that, at least held up quite well.

ML: I think the area at the end of the park came along, that part of the pier, and many of the buildings at the zoo, I've been told, were part of that.

KF: And the benches, too, these stone benches. Not works involving a great deal of engineering ability, but nevertheless, comfortable.

ML: So you see, they say they found a project with nothing new.

CJ: Sounds like some of the same criticism though that even the CETA Projects have nowadays. A lot of people think that they're...a lot of people who are not working and getting paid anyway.

KF: And the amount of fraud that's uncovered in late years, and the amount of what they call double dipping. The people on government payrolls, and set themselves up as being in need of a check from...from the Health, Education, and Welfare Department.

CJ: There were some kind of interesting art and writing projects, though, that came out of that time, which I didn't see happening, but I saw the results them of when I went to school because a lot of the art project pictures of them had been used as examples of what had gone on and I think there was a nice guide to probably every...every State in the Union written through a writers project that came out of that.

KF: Writers and artists were especially hard hit, especially if they were young and not...not really established, and they were just wiped out overnight.

ML: That was the frills, that was probably the first thing to go.

KF: Um hmm, yeah, yeah...very likely. But these guidebooks, some of them were quite good. Some of them were just put together, just for the sake of putting

something together. They weren't adequately researched, and there was everything wrong with them. But there were some that were good.

ML: Sort of a history and atlas thing, 'cause we used to use the Michigan one, my mom, when we were going on trips we would take it out of the library and take it with us, and that was many years later.

CJ: You mentioned about writing, were you going to say something.

KF: About what?

CJ: Writing. It sounds like you've spent a good deal of your life writing different things, you wrote an education booklet and now you're writing about your family.

KF: I've only had two books published; I'm not what you'd call a prolific writer.

CJ: Only two, I think that's more than what most people ever have published.

KF: It is...it is...it's something I've had to spend oh, years of my life on. Mr. Flint was an inventor and soon after he got started on his program at Deluxe, which was a factory in LaPorte, and it immediately cleared out a good number of people who could otherwise have helped in researching, in mathematics, in writing, and in various items of invention that don't have to do with the nuts and bolts, and there's a great deal of that. I know, 'cause I've been through it. At that time, the factory hired me to take care of his correspondence, and I did, I did that for most of the war. And, as time went along, the correspondence got more involved, and over a greater number of people, but I didn't particularly mind in., because at that time, I had not yet become caught up in the main interest in my life which was teaching. I was offered a job, soon after the war broke out to teach...to teach...to do substitute teaching. And I was...oh, I was thrilled, I was so pleased. In order to get time to do all this work for my husband's factory, I started my habit then of getting up at five o'clock in the morning; I kept that up for years. Anything I had to do that was important to me was done at 5 in the morning, because that was the only time I had. When it got to be 7, that was when I had to prepare breakfast and do whatever else had to be done. But I have always done a great deal of writing. In work like the work Mr. Flint did. Which involved automobile gadgets, one thing that has to go out is instructions. You put them on by the front headlight rather than the rear taillight. You gotta put that on, you gotta do it. And I was interested in making it plain enough to be understood. And it involves...sometimes a piece of work no longer than three inches might require three days of careful writing and re writing, and then it had to satisfy Mr. Flint who knew where piece J joined piece H and for what purpose. For me, I didn't care, but I had to make it sound good, and make it readable. I didn't even care what it meant. But it had to...it, but if you know the difference between the subject and predicate of the sentence, you know how to hitch things together so that they form some degree of coherence and even plausibility.

ML: I think it would be hard, though to write about that kind of thing about something you, you know, when you don't know how to put H and J together.

KF: You see, Mr. Flint, he thought these things were so simple. And at one time, he spent an unconscionable amount of time trying to teach me how an engine works. Well, the only thing I could do was listen. I didn't care, I didn't want to know, nothing seemed to me to be less worth (indecipherable) so he didn't really have any good ground to work on. But he did the best he could to show me how simple it was. Why, look, when a thing goes into the manifold...look, look now, look...well, you understand that it's got to go someplace, well, now where do you suppose it goes? Who cares?

ML: I couldn't care less how the car worked, as long as it did.

KF: That's all, that's all, that's all...if it turned over when I stepped on it, that was all...At the same time, I realized that...I realized the difficulties he was working under and of course I was able to help him keep his job, that was just, of course, the preeminent concern. And if I hadn't done my very best at it, I don't know where he would have gotten that help because there was there was nobody else available. Moreover, there were people around that factory that knew I had a degree from Ohio Wesleyan, to them, that couldn't of ranked less, couldn't have ranked lower. Those people sprang from the University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois, and Northwestern, which are all very, very fine places. But would ever get into an argument about the difference between affect and effect, they would make me prove that my, that my solution was right...well, that's... was sometime hard to do. So, although it wasn't easy I was interested in helping him keep his job. And he was very much interested in trying to develop whatever it was to help the war effort. At that time everything was geared to the war effort, of course.

CJ: It sounds like you've had quite a bit of practice then, with writing. Tell me about the two things you've had published. What were the two books you had published?

KF: Textbooks, textbooks.

CJ: In education.

KF: Yep. And another field that interests me greatly...teaching English to foreigners.

CJ: How did you go about that?

KF: (laughing) Teaching English to Foreigners.

CJ: No, I mean how did you go about writing the book to do that...is it much..

KF: Cause there wasn't anything else available...if there had I would have probably bought it.

CJ: Did they have the dialogs then, like they do now. It seems...I took a couple of French classes, and basically what it was, was just dialog so that you could speak a little bit of the language. Is that pretty much how you set those up?

KF: Um...for the most part, yes. There was a good deal of dialog, because that can be geared to subject matter that the student is interested in.

ML: Or a necessary question.

CJ: Uh huh.

KF: Yes, and you can...you can...you can accent the parts that you need, that need accent, by putting in questions. Somebody in the crowd...and now father, what about this and that.

CJ: Did you do that pretty much alone, or were there a team of people who got together and wrote the textbook?

KF: I wrote the textbooks alone, I didn't teach alone. I succeeded to a solution of a very difficult, and on the present problem, I don't know how other people settle it. At a time right after the war, when we had quite an increase in immigration. After awhile, the school board had to deal with it. They did, what seemed to them to be a sensible thing, they applied to a high school English teacher. Now this...this woman was a very fine teacher, but she taught high school English. However, she was a decent individual and she was highly eager to turn in a good day's work. Which she most certainly did. Her name was Russell. And she started out to teach the class. Well, let's say I know how it was in later years, we had about 30 people to each class. And she would start to teach 30 people the same way you start out to teach 5th graders or 3rd graders. The only trouble was, that in the front seat might be a man who had a good engineering degree from Prague. The man next to him wouldn't even open a book the way we do, he would open it from we consider to be the back. There was no similarity at all to...the...there was the widest possible divergence in school experience so that a...and even in language. Most of the people came from Germany, but many came from Eastern Europe, even as far East as Armenia and Georgia, a Province in Russia. And these...these people just had no common starting point. After awhile this woman became convinced...well, she...it was no problem to convince her, she probably tried every way she knew to bridge that difficulty. But, she soon found out she couldn't do it. She went to the American, American Association of University Women. She went to a board meeting and explained her problem. She thought it would help if she could get the University Club to send over a certain number of people who would act as tutors. Well, the board acted on it very quickly. It was submitted to approve Branch meeting. They agreed to try it, so, by George, the AAW got into the business of teaching English. I signed up at a certain time because it was my duty as a member of the group, and since I had no intention of being the rat, why, I signed up. I went once and I was hooked. I loved the place. After that, I went every chance I got and I mean I didn't wait to be signed up or anything, I just went. It was all volunteer, except for the...except for the teacher, it was all volunteer, at work. And I just loved the place. I probably worked there for a year and half, say. Mrs. Russell, the woman who had gone to get help from the AAW, went abroad to teach army dependants. Then the...the uh, the job was offered to a Mrs. Pancowski, who was quite knowledgeable...quite knowledgeable. She kept the class going during the summer, and since I lived near her, I was there every...

ML: All summer long.

KF: Yeah, but when...but when she had a baby, it was offered to me and I accepted with the greatest joy in the world. I, at that time, divided each class, say about 30, into groups that had about the same school experience. There would be the top group, which knew a little English perhaps, or were knowledgeable in certain fields. That...that was relatively easy. There was also the first...the ones that had the least experience, which I always taught myself because it was the most difficult, and that was also not too hard. But in between, I planned the lessons, I either wrote all the work and at that time, they didn't have Xeroxing, so I did it all by carbons, and, uh, there was no amount of time or work that I wouldn't put on it and I enjoyed every minute of it, of course, just enjoyed every minute. And I did it...I don't know how long, I suppose I could look it up...I did it for several years. Then the tide of immigration fell off and uh, there were so few immigrants that the class was disbanded. So then I came over here to Michigan City and taught over here for two, three years. And that was a really worthwhile experience.

ML: That was teaching English to foreign born, too?

KF: Yes, yes, yeah. There was also always a certain number of illiterates and a few who were sentenced by the judge. We would take them...we took them all, and enjoyed it.

CJ: Why would they be sentenced by a judge to come to your class?

KF: ...Ever want to make sure about this point, I suggest that you could go to the place where they take traffic examinations. And find out how many men have to have the questions read to them.

ML: Maybe they can read stop and go and things like that, but not to read...I've been down there at least twice and they've been doing that of course.

KF: Yes, that is right, that is right. If there's anything that shows the inconsistencies and the failures of modern English...modern education, that kind of thing is it. Also, you never...you never get a coupon to send away for something that doesn't say please print. You notice that? Meaning everybody's...everybody's handwriting is unreadable.

CJ: Probably in most cases that's true, too. How did teaching adults compare to teaching children?

KF: Teaching adults is a lot more fun because you don't have to worry about motivation.

ML: Or discipline.

KF: Or what?

ML: Discipline.

KF: Usually discipline. The only place where adults are likely to get undisciplined is smoking, they might smoke in the halls if it's twenty degrees below zero. But usually...usually if you go out and just look up and down they'll skitter out the front door and stand on the sidewalk to smoke.

And, uh, they're grateful for any help they can get. I can't tell you the number of han... times I've had my hand kissed. I'd stick out my hand and say, why good evening Mr. So and so and he'd grasp my hands with aplomb whoop it up to his mustache. The first time it happened, I didn't know what to do, I just smiled and I'd seat him somewhere and that seemed to take care of it.

CJ: Do...You said there were problems, there were more discipline problems with the children. They had discipline problems back then, too when you first teaching?

KF: Woo ooooh!

CJ: That's not a new thing then, huh?

KF: Oh, no...oh no. But there were many more ways to combat it then.

ML: Like what?

KF: Like what? Oh, the main was is what teachers called retention and children called keeping them after school. .My first year of teaching, I became discouraged because the children weren't making more rapid progress, and I thought then that'd I'd have to go into this business of keeping children after school. So, if a child just threw paper airplanes and paid no attention while an arithmetic problem was being explained, then he couldn't do his problems when it came time to work them. So, a teacher could then say, I'm sorry you didn't understand when I went over it, but I'll go over it again after school. Now, you be back and we'll try it again.

CJ: That usually works.

KF: Oh, you're darn right it does.

ML: Now, teachers are out the door almost before the kids.

KF: The teachers and the students are both out the doors, because the buses don't wait, the buses are lined up and they go as soon as...and that takes away, I think, the best tool that a teacher has. There is no other time, except after school, that is so...that is so appropriate to keep a child in. If you keep him in at lunchtime, he has to eat his lunch in a hurry. And if you keep him in at recess time, he doesn't have the chance to get the steam out of his legs, which he has to do. And I think that is one of the main reasons...well, not one of the main reasons, of course, but I think it's too bad that teachers have lost such a good tool and a tool that is acceptable, if a child gets spanked for failure to pay attention, any number of people object to that. But hardly anybody could be found who objects to a child staying 15 minutes after school, see what I mean?

CJ: Were you able to spank students back then?

KF: Oh, I never...I never laid a hand on a child, never. For one thing, I had a lousy temper, and I knew it, and I thought if I ever got hold of a kid, errrrr, I'll shake the feet off him before I realized what's coming off!

CJ: What were some of the other nasty things that the kids used to do that you had to discipline them for? You mentioned throwing paper airplanes, was that about the worst thing that they would do?

KF: Well, let's see...during the years that I was substituting, oh I substituted about the first year and a half of the war. I could have had a full time job, but I couldn't because I had too much else to do. I had two young sons and I had this extra stenographic work that I told you about. So that mostly threw me back to part time work in the schools, which I dearly loved. Well, one time I came in and every boy had his shirt on backwards. I paid no attention, whatever, I didn't notice there was a thing wrong with their shirts, and after awhile, I suppose they fixed them up. They expected a big uproar, but of course, they didn't get it. Then I remember another time, every room, if the teacher is any kind of a manger, has an up to date seating chart. The chart shows the location of every seat and who was sitting in it. Well, I remember one time every...nobody was sitting in his proper seat, and I looked around and didn't really notice anything. But I said, there's something here that isn't quite the way it should be. I will turn around and I will count up to 25, and when I turn around again, maybe things will look a little better to me. And I did and that was all that happened. Everybody jumped into his proper seat.

ML: I wonder if that would work today.

KF: Well, it worked then.

CJ: Do you think the students liked you? Were you a good teacher?

KF: I suppose so...I suppose so. I guess they liked me. I wasn't in it...I realized I shouldn't be in it to win a popularity prize, I should be in it as every teacher should in order to make sure that the, that the child gets what he's supposed to get. And, that's really the basic of it.

ML: So being a good teacher and being well liked don't always go together.

KF: Sometimes I think that the teachers aren't appreciated until maybe 20 years after they're dead. But there are a lot of good novels and many short stories that are written about teachers. I can think about two, one of them is Mr. Chips, and another one is Good Morning Miss Dove. And, uh, another one is something about Miss Bishop...Three Cheers for Miss Bishop or something...those teachers were popular, but that wasn't there...that wasn't what they were aiming for preeminently. They were aiming to make the children reasonable, decent, honorable citizens. And, uh...they did their best.

CJ: And in the process, they were well liked, also?

KF: No, I don't think so. I think after...I think afterwards, the children appreciated them. I think Mr. Chips was. Of course, you know, if you write a novel, you can make it turn out any way you want.

CJ: That's right. That's one of the great things about writing, isn't it? You can do it any way you want it. How about the other way around, did you have special pets, what they called certain students that would be your pet students that you liked for one particular reason or another?

KF: I liked the boys...I was...I was...somewhat afraid of the girls. Even in the fifth grade, I was talking one time about washing the face and the neck and so on, and I noticed a girl in the front row looking at me as if to say you poor nut. And I got to thinking about it and well, I guess I am a poor nut. These girls all seemed to be able to put their hair up decently and...and to look pretty good, and...girls are more adept in the social graces, boys will drag their feet and complain louder, but you know where you are with the boys....with girls you never can be too sure.

CJ: How about with their studies? Do you think that the girls needed more help or the boys needed more tutoring?

KF: Well, the girls needed more help in arithmetic...the boys...I think they regarded it less reverently, and the boys needed more help in language. Now, I don't know how that adds up, but that's what my experience was. I had a girl one time who was just not quite all there. She didn't have a full allotment of what she should have had. She had one great asset, though, she could write very nicely, that is, she could write...her handwriting was very good. She could hand up a paper and copy an arithmetic problem it was all spaced nicely and the figures were under each other in nice, neat columns. When it came to the answer, she put down the first numbers that occurred to her. I kept her after school thinking that I could...I realized that she wasn't very bright, but I didn't realize how bad off she really was. I said, now, Helen, if you had 10 cents and twelve cents....10 cents in one pocket and 12 cents in the other pocket, how many pennies would you have. And she thought, and thought, and thought, and finally she said 18. So then I put it down on the board and went through it with her, I said, now, Helen, why did you say 13...or 18. Well, she looked at me as if I'd lost my mind. She said why, 18 is a much...is a much prettier number than 22, as if I should have known that.

CJ: That's a new way of doing arithmetic, isn't it...the prettiest number. Did the children pay a tuition back then?

KF: No, this was the public schools, they paid tuition in the sense....I don't re....no, they didn't even buy the books, I mean they didn't even rent the books, now I think they usually do, but at that time they didn't.

CJ: So it was completely free then?

KF: The only thing they had to buy was paper and pencils.

CJ: Even nowadays, that's hard for some children to afford, I think, the paper and pencils.

ML: I always look at the book rental slips and wonder what we're paying taxes for?

KF: I read it...I read Sara's note about it and I couldn't believe it.

ML: How much is it in Junior College?

KF: Oh, what was it...20 dollars or something?

ML: Oh, I'm complaining about 12.

KF: Well, I'm not sure, but I think that'd be about it...it was some odd number, it was 21 or...

ML: \$21.60 or something.

CJ: Makes you wonder how they come up with those odd cents.

ML: How about teacher's salaries? How did those compare to about what teachers are getting paid now.

KF: I was always paid, but I would willingly have paid the school board for the joy and privilege of teaching. That was it for me. I didn't, you see, well, I didn't have...I was not extremely poverty stricken, although, my family is not rich, I was always comfortable. What I got, the salary I got, I remember my third year, seemed to me that I got #132.32 a month. I think that's what I got. Now, I can't remember the first year, but for some reason, I remember the third year. Well, it...even such salaries were eagerly sought after, I mean eagerly, there was any number of people who wanted to teach even then.

CJ: Was that considered a high salary?

KF: No, it was not considered a high salary, but it was considered adequate. I remember I was so pleased to be getting some money, that I tried to pay my parents board, and they refused indignantly. So then I collared bills that came into the house, and I paid them up to what I considered a legitimate amount for me to pay for. And at the end of the month, I explained what I had done, and I said, now, should we do it your way, or should we do it my way...it's a lot more trouble for me to do it. So, they agreed that I could pay...I could pay some. (indecipherable) Hello, Sara...

Tape ends