

Interview with Jean Pearce Kelly, Marquette Michigan, June 2.
1995.

RMM: OK good morning Mrs. Kelly.

JK: Good morning.

RMM: What I would like to do is to ask you some questions and focus on you can start on your background and then move over and focus on you father who was Webster Pearce. Where were you born and maybe give us some background on yourself?

JK: I was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan. My father was ?? and he started out in ??? and found my mother there and they were married and ??? schools around that area and then they moved up to ??? of Ypsilanti and that is where I was born. I was the third, fourth girl out of five children, ??? So he was the head of the mathematics department there but ??? we didn't stay very long until he got to Mt. Pleasant at Central as head of the math department. So I grew up in my childhood years in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan very close to the college so we were up ?? training school which is called ??? and ?? we had a cottage out on Greenbay which was about 28 miles due west so we spent our summers out on the lake and I can remember my father coming home and talking about ?? and I always wondered who ??? was. I turned out later she was the college president who was President ??? at that time down in Central. So in about 1927 dad was elected superintendent of public instruction and the public ??? public ??? so we moved to Lansing when I was in eighth grade and I stayed in the schools there until I graduated from high school and I went to Michigan State for 1 year, I always lived at home. I think my dad saved for ??? 2 years of college ??? Then he became president up here at Northern so we moved up here and I started at Northern in my sophomore year and I finished and then as a graduation present he gave me a term down at Ypsilanti because my boyfriend, future husband was a law student at the University of Michigan so I was down there for one term and then I taught in Jackson ????? and then we got married after that, lived in ??? I taught school not for the first few years of our marriage but well at the time of the war was when I really had to go to work because my husband was in the service. So I had to ?? Northern ??? third grade ?? program ??? the women who had that job had an older mother who had to drop out for a year. That wasn't a bad experience I was a civic teacher. After the war my husband and I moved to Big Rapids and I lived there some 30 years and I taught there so my teaching career all together was probably 32 years. But when I was about 53, but I was teaching because I taught til I was 65, ??? couple of years and decided to move to ?? where my other children are because these children are so far away from Big Rapids so ??? retired out there.

RMM: Could I ask you your birthdate?

JK: 2-27-15

RMM: Now could you, if you can recall, discuss how your father got the position at Northern, possibly with the process, the way he viewed the process?

JK: Well no, ??? political. ??? FBI was elected in 32 and that meant that the republicans that were in office at that time went out. And I don't know what ?? manipulating ??? and they would've been glad to have him but he said that he didn't think that the ??? that they were working under ??? I was kindof anxious to go because he said I could drive if we moved up there. ??? my brothere drive but he didn't let us. So then John Munson who was the ??? up here had sent a resignation in and they shipped ??? a better job I suppose down in Yipsi and my dad got his job. We came up here in 33 that would be and he ??? died ??? died he in 1940.

RMM: What sort of problems, do you remember when he came up ??? reference made obviously the heart of the depression ??? do you recall him worried about the situation on campus and how he was going to deal with it and the financial concerns?

JK: ?? had problems he would sit at the end of the dining room table and play solitaire, so often in the evenings he was sitting out there playing solitaire thinking through whatever he was thinking about. Now he was ??? very often and I mentioned to your present president that he had ??? and he used to say someday there would be a group because he never saw it. He ??? and he ??? and he was always ?? and my father never drank anything or smoked and he was one of the people that were doing this and I thought that was something of a problem too, that's depressing. But I don't know what the outcomes of ??? is he never discussed his problems after all ??? college over there ?? a problem to him so I just, we lived right across the street. My mother was never to happy about the fact that we came up here and the house wasn't an especially nice house, right across the ??? there was a house on the corner ??? maybe a house used for ?? or something

RMM: ???

JK: The brown house on the corner, the ?Latner? house and we lived next to that and then there was one, I think ??? and that is where they lived so he could just walk back and forth across there. And I would walk back and forth across there going to school trying to avoid my father. You can't be the most popular thing around if your father is the president you know.

RMM: How did that actually work out? That is an interesting relationship.

JK: He pretty much left me alone, I was a very good student so that was not a problem. But I went down to the, there was something down on the corner past the Latner house, same side of the street where we would go in and smoke in the afternoons ??, not a good thing. It was one of the professors that indicated to

my father that I was at some party that I ??? I don't know why he did this. But my father never said a thing to ??? He never scolded us, if he ??? at you, you knew you were out of line so it was always very peaceful at our house but when my brother came along he told my brother the things that had been said about me that my brother better not get into any trouble. ??? I don't know, I never knew if I got better grades because my father was president, it happens, as I said I was a good student ??? no problem ??? I also went to summer school ??? jobs because other people knew ??? well I got through in March when I had ??? by then ??? No we got along ??? my family always went to church. My father's father was a methodist minister, so he grew up in lower Michigan ????? his older brother was a minister, this was ??? had done a lot of ministry. But my dad instead of ??? when he was at Central ??? his Sunday school was at like 300 people, ??? ??? president was enough. But in the earlier years ????? and I bet they have ??? religious favoritism. He had his little stories, of course I don't remember any of them now.

RMM: ????? you walking across campus, you had to pass the heart of Northern.

JK: ????? heart of Northern ????

RMM: NO, no, no but there was, but the other thing ??? about were ??? that has been referred to as the heart of Northern ??? remember?

JK: NO, NO. ??? but front of our house.

RMM: No, I don't mean right in front of your house but across the street.

JK: oh across the road there would have been an angle walk going up and a straight walk going up and that was just flat land.

RMM: right

JK: I can remember going across there one time and the temperature had gotten to 100 that day, ?? and I was so ??? that that was ??? that ???

RMM: Did the home that you moved to did that have to be purchased by your family or was that part of the ?

JK: I believe that we just rented that but ??? responsibilities

RMM: Oh I see, so it was a university ???

JK: No, ??? 6 to 700 students at that time at Northern.

RMM: OK what do you remember of Northern when you were a student, you know characteristics of the institution at that time you know ???

JK: well in the home ec department ???? meals for everybody I suppose, I remember this one time, I don't know what ever happened but everybody that ??? got sick and the next day at school ??? lines to the bathrooms. There really wasn't nothing unusual about that place, everybody was friendly and did their jobs and the science department was on one end and the ??? school was on the other.

RMM: Now how did your, since you were there, did your father interact with the students what side of his relationship with the faculty and students, he was kind of a close proximity with ??? Kaye Hall that way.

JK: He was right there on the main foyer with his office. I don't know how friendly, I don't have any memories of ??? I'm sure he did. I can remember I had a close girlfriend whos name was Patricia and she was not doing well at all and he called her and he talked about putting ???? She did a lot better after that. Now I think the students all liked him, I don't think they resented him, ?? against him.

RMM: There wasn't any ??? person intervened ??? student ?????

JK: I'm sure they did, after all there wasn't that many and there were a lot of sororities and I can remember one time ?? parties at my house because my mother would let me do it and this one time I had forgotten to ????? certain dishes that needed ??? at the party and the dean of women wouldn't ???? accepted me because I had ???? dishes and I had to get dishes from home and haul them over there ??? I don't know I expect that I got ??? treatment but I don't know that because I ???

RMM: Now you talked about the Dean of Women? Do you have an recollections of her? ?? she was very concerned about rules and regulations and ?

JK: I think she was concerned about rules and regulations and yet she was a lovely women. When I first came up here, I came to come up to go to summer school and ????? would have been coming July 1st, ??? and this was in June. ??? teachers ??? for some reason and he brought me to Marquette for some reason and I stayed for several days with Ms. Carey and Ms. Spaulding lived with her and they ??? now they didn't have to take me in they could have let me get a room at a motel.

RMM: Did your mother play any kind of role in the college?

JK: No, no formal role at all just the presidents wife and ??? that sort of thing.

RMM: ?????

JK: Our home we tried to have different groups in or have an open house.

RMM: ?? kind of limited with space

JK: We didn't have a big ? I think she always felt a little bit that she didn't know if people didn't like her or if they were nice to her because she was the president's wife, she always had that feeling a lit bit. She would rather not have been a president's wife ???? or have some way of knowing that they liked her for herself.

RMM: Let's see, you mentioned earlier you did talk about your husband. What is your husbands name?

JK: ???John Kelly. His father ran the ?? which was down on front street for many many many years and my husband was then at Northern when I met him, he was a couple of years ahead of me and when he finished Northern he went down ???? and taught ?? years before he went to ??? I guess his dad didn't want to give him money right then, wanted to start ????

RMM: You said you came back to Northern during World War Two and you student taught, could you ????

JK: I was ?? while my husband was still in law school, I taught in Ann Arbor and then we moved to Midland where he worked in his law office now as the war came on he had a good urge to enlist and so ?? get him ready for that we moved back to Marquette and lived with his family for a little bit and then rented an apartment on Pine street, I was there with two kids during the war while he was serving in the military so during that time while he was gone they asked me to come in and sub as ??? and then ? they gave me that job for the whole year. But I have had a few student teachers and I am trying to think of that lovely lady's name and I don't think too much about the other teachers who were working, ??? I think ??? and the teachers and she was teaching techniques and stuff and all that, maybe ??? but I tell you when I was teaching she was right there behind me because I had ??? I could've asked her and I had teachers ???? after all I had done a little teaching already ?????

RMM: What was the situation with the war on and the number of students obviously like, what were the conditions like on the campus.

JK: I had almost nothing to do with the campus exact that ?? John D Pierce was my dad. I was over on the other end so I don't know how much the population dropped or. What was the name of the man that would be the next president?

RMM: Tate. Could you recall ???

JK: I don't remember then

RMM: Well let's end, ??? what year was that?

JK: 1937 ??? class of NMU at Ann Arbor, when we got married and then he had another year at that so I taught at Ann Arbor for a year.

RMM: You said you came back to Marquette. Were there any members of your family, sisters remained in Marquette.

JK: No my family had all left. When my father died in 1940 that was the end of my family being up here. My mother ?????

RMM: Is that where you were originally from?

JK: No, we were originally from the Alpena area ??? but maybe she had been there, lived there for 10 years when my dad was ??? I don't ?????

RMM: Were there any characteristics like you mentioned ??? or ???? are there any other characteristics that you could tell us about him and ?? his personality?

JK: Well I said??? he's never really ???? and I am sure that ???? it was according to my day, that you knew, and that was all that was necessary. He was a quite man, he was able to do many things. He wasn't asked to be the president of this college to ????? and stuff and there was some, one of the people I almost would say it is Bottum, I noticed that Don Bottum just died and ??? them. ????? He had died ???? I don't remember as I said I don't remember his working in the church, we always went to church. They never forced us to go if we didn't want to. He was very economical I can remember when I was upset that my mother would put ??? because ???? When they first got married they kept every penny and then they went over the month and they seen what they could have eliminated. So that is how he accumulated his money, he would buy our house when we moved to a new community and he would repurchase the house and then he would sell it, afterall ????? very comfortable for 20 years and there was no social security at that time. He was a family man, he liked us to have Christmas and then the grandchildren would come to visit at their grandpa's and I don't remember I mean I'm not sure ???? what kind of person he was. I can remember one time I made a big mistake ??? he never said anything except the next day and I knew that I ???? and we would go to these ??? conventions and these were the highlights of our years I suppose we got to go to Atlantic City, Atlanta, Georgia and then ??? in a deluxe hotel for a few months and then we moved out ??? to make up the difference in the money. My mother ??? I think there was only one thing ?????

RMM: were there any, remembering ?? as a student and that ??? in a unique position, were there any, do you remember any instances of when you were interacting when you either saw or heard, when you interacting with faculty or a particular problem you know was he inerested in, for instance some presidents will interest themselves in something that is going on ??? something ???

bookstore or

JK: I just think that Northern is just so small that he knew everything that was going on at the time. It wasn't like a bigger institution where you are just interested in the building program, he?? money for the school out of the legislature.

RMM: ???

JK: No but he was involved in alot of that stuff, alot of ??? as I think back. He knew all about their lives and talked over their problems with them. I think he must have gotten along real well with them.

RMM: So there was a lot of conversation?

JK; I am sure

RMM: ??

JK: He wasn't the type of person who would put himself up ??? nybody else, that is for sure.

RMM: Did your sisters or brothers ever attend Northern?

JK: No, I had, the two of them were older than I was so they were out, they had two children one born in 1900 and one in 1904 my mother had another in 1911 when I was 15 and my brother was 17 so the older two girls I never grew up with they were kind of strangers to us and they were not around ??? so my brother and I were and my brother went to John D. Pierce for maybe two years and so we got a lot ?? because then he did his four years there and my dad sent him to ??? to ?????

RMM: Is there something I didn't ask or that you would like to add.

JK: I suppose I will think of things later that I could have told you about but I will be home by then, he was a fine guy.

RMM: Well good.