

18 Bonner History Roundtable: Bonner School Days

March 16, 2014, St, Ann Catholic Church in Bonner

<https://youtu.be/ZyMQIewYQxg?si=OT8wkYvYjI5bIOGe>

Kim Briggeman

Kathy Milodragovich

Judy Karl

Don Felton

(This program has been edited for clarity.)

[Intro music with credits]

[00:00:58] **Glenn Max Smith:** Okay, a lot of people call me the Bonner Hooligan, and that's for good reason. I went to school here also. So with that, I would like introduce our panelists: Don Felton; Kathy Milodragovich... Have I got that right? From Butte? Okay; Kim Briggeman; Judy Karl.

I saw Judy the other day. We were doing a thing for the kids down at our history center, and I believe she stopped by to get the mail. That little class of kids in there came un-soldered. I never [laughs] seen a better display of affection for students to a teacher then that day, that was amazing.

Judy Karl: Oh, thank you. That was my last year's class, the last class I taught at Bonner School.

Glenn Max Smith: Oh man. What an experience. That was worth it. So let's get back to the Hooligan. [laughs] When we decided to do the Bonner School history, I got the old scrapbook out and I looked in there and I saw [the] graduating class of 1957. Reached right out, slapped me alongside the head, the number 57. And, I kind of chuckled over that and then I crunched some numbers and found that it has been 57 years since I graduated from Bonner. Now, that threw me in a kind of a state of shock, 57 years since I graduated school. But then when I look out over the audience, I don't feel quite so bad. [audience chuckles] I see Kenny Peers, he got lots of years on me. Lefty [Pleasant], where's Lefty at? He got years on me. Who else can go way, way back into history?

Lois [Johnson]. Cool, Bob [Johnson], you betcha, Willie [Bateman]. So now I don't feel quite so bad. So with that I have to wind up by stating that the Lumberjack chapter of my life was probably as rewarding as any I've ever experienced. It makes me proud to be part of the old Bonner School and I gotta salute, once again, the teachers and the staff that worked at that school to make this possible for me and countless other students.

Okay. With that, I promised Kim, I'd keep myself down a little bit. Don't go rambling on. So that's what I have to say as far as my experiences with Bonner School. Is there anything else I need to cover?

Kim Briggeman: I can't think of any.

Glenn Max Smith: Okay.

Kim Briggeman: No, not that I...[trails off]

Glenn Max Smith: All right. With that I'll go sit down, shut up, get outta your hair.

[00:04:22] **Kim Briggeman:** We'll introduce the panel in a few minutes here, but just so you understand, we've assembled a panel the Bonner History Roundtable, which I'm not actually a part of, but they asked teachers who had been students at Bonner School to come. We had one seat for one more, Karen Lange Hansen, and she wasn't able to make it.

The three teachers we have here were all graduates of Bonner School as well as longtime teachers of Bonner School. I thought maybe we could start with getting some exercise: if all Bonner grade school graduates could stand up. (many stand)

Now in a minute I'm gonna ask by category for you to sit down again, but when you do that, I'd like you to call out your favorite teacher from Bonner School, [crowd laughs] and so let's start out with anybody who's graduated from Bonner since 2000 - nobody. How about the 1990s? Who's your teacher?

Aislin Addington: They're all! (crowd laughs)

Kim Briggeman: Very diplomatic. She's sitting next to her mom...(laughter) 1980s.

unidentified speaker: It was Mrs. Marks when I had her.

Kim Briggeman: Thank you. 1970s. I would be sitting down in that category. 1960s.

Tom Briggeman: Mr. Burlingame.

Kim Briggeman: Mr. Burlingame? Second that motion.

Tom Briggeman: (inaudible)

Kim Briggeman: Thank you, Tom. 1950s. Go ahead and shout out

Unknown speaker: Ms. Splann, later known as Mrs. Turmell.

Mike Nelson: I'd go with her also.

Kim Briggeman: Thank you. Mike Nelson goes with Mrs. Turmell as we knew her. Yes. We have a lot of their pictures over here on the wall. 1940s. Oh no, that was fifties, sure.. But you can, do you have a fifties?

Shirley Cuplin: Yeah, (unclear) and I, we both have graduated [in] '56 now. We were the last class at the old school then they tore it down .

Kim Briggeman: But who was your favorite teacher?

Shirley Cuplin: We had Mr. Burlingame in the fifth and sixth grade, so I do think Burly was probably my fave... they all were... I'll have to say Miss Kuney.

Kim Briggeman: Miss Kuney, who we have a picture of over here.

unidentified speaker: Okay. I Hazel.

Kim Briggeman: Boy. We have Hazel Splann. Wow. Okay. So now where are we at now? We're on the forties. Okay.

Lefty Pleasant: Hazel Turmell.

Kim Briggeman: Okay. Willie.

Willie Bateman: Forties?

Kim Briggeman: Forties. Yeah. Who's your teacher?

Willie Bateman: All eight of them. (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: There's none of them around now. (laughter) They're not.

Willie Bateman: All eight of them.

Kim Briggeman: Okay. Now do we have anybody that graduated in the thirties? So could I have the forties graduates stand back up?

Lois Johnson: I have to say Mrs. Wagner, 'cause she was one of my favorites. Most everybody hasn't even heard of her probably.

Kim Briggeman: Mrs. Wagner?

Lois Johnson: Mrs. Wagner.

Several speakers: Second grade. Third grade. Oh, second. A long time ago.

Kim Briggeman: So you guys that graduated in the forties. If you graduated from between '48 and '50, let's say. Could you sit down?

Kim Briggeman: How about '45 to '48 or '47? I guess seven. So Lefty's, the last one standing.

Lefty Pleasant: 1942.

Kim Briggeman: Lefty Pleasant, 1942. Lefty, thank you.

Lefty Pleasant: My dad was on the school board. That's why I got out of there. (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: Well, thanks. I didn't know how far back we'd be able to go there, but I appreciate, I thought that was a good way to get some exercise. There's a lot of memory lanes that we're gonna travel down here today probably, and you don't need to listen too much to mine. But I, and I went to school in the sixties at Bonner, and so there's not a probably a whole lot that I remember, but I do remember, the voices of my teachers, and maybe you guys can identify with some of these.

[00:10:06] My first grade teacher was Mrs. Naomi Hall, Mrs. Hall. And I can hear her voice. Second grade was Mrs. Bonnie Elm. Elms?

Kathy Milodragovich: Elms.

Kim Briggeman: No, it was Elm. e-l-m I think. I can't remember.

Kathy Milodragovich: That's right.

Kim Briggeman: Third grade was Maurice Darrington. Fourth grade was Hazel Turmell at that time. But most of you remember her as Hazel Splann.

Fifth grade. Florence Saunders. Sixth grade. Tony Terriault, whose daughter came back to teach at Bonner. Colleen Martel.

Judy Karl: She still subs there.

Kim Briggeman: Colleen still subs there. Oh, didn't realize that. And seventh grade was Mr. Larry Burlingame. And my eighth grade teacher was Mildred Dufresne.

And so those voices I can hear. Do you guys that were graduates here that went to Bonner School, remember the smell when you walked across the gym? Not in your street shoes by the way, but you went back to that back equipment closet in the back corner. You opened that.

Do you remember what that smelled like? The mats and the balls? You get that smell? One of the other smells that stand out to me were, of course, the lunch room, the cafeteria, especially the days when we had chili and cinnamon rolls in the sixties. You can smell that now. (audience reacts) And then the other, ever present smell to me was the wood smoke. When you stepped outside for recess or off the bus. Boy, I miss that smell.

Bus time for grade six. How many people have heard that over the intercom in the new school? Mrs. Demmons, "Bus time for grade three. Bus time for grade five." Mrs. Hall, my first grade teacher, she had those long red fingernails, painted fingernails, with the dangling earrings and the, I don't know what you call it, the honey bun hair... beehive. We loved Mrs. Hall.

On a November afternoon, right after noon recess, when we came into second grade, Mr. Musburger leaned in the door. We were all seated. Mr. Musburger leaned in the door and he kinda, I can picture him now. He kinda rubbed his fingers together and he caught Mrs. Elm's eye and he just nodded and she turned to us and said, "Boys and girls," and we had probably heard of John F. Kennedy, but I think it was the first time I ever heard the word assassinated. And that was in sec[ond grade]. That was of course in 1963. I think the first time that the word Vietnam ever entered into my conscience was on the bus home one day, probably not many years after that, when George Otto was driving us home and one of the older students was talking about Vietnam.

I didn't even know what Vietnam was at that time.

Mr. Burlingame taught us the "Whiffenpoof Song." We were poor little lambs who had lost our way. And Mr. Burlingame taught us every word to a lot of songs. From that to "Leaving on a Jet Plane" by Peter, Paul and Mary. The by the time we got, I got in seventh and eighth grade near the end of the sixties we were introduced to, we were, I guess quoting pithy comments like "Sock It To Me", and "here come the judge" and "look that up in your Funk and Wagnalls." That dates me there. Mrs. Dufresne, when it came time to choose our eighth grade graduation songs, instead of maybe The Beatles and "Let It Be," she taught, she picked two New Christie Minstrel songs. One was "What Color Is God's Skin?" And the other one was "Gee, 'I'm Lookin' Forward to the Future."

[00:15:06] So I guess I do remember some things from way, way back when. My job actually is not to stand up here and yammer. I was actually volunteered, I guess to put Bonner School in a historical perspective. I think the easiest way to look at, or one way to look at the history of Bonner School is the three schools that have served Bonner School District.

The first one, and I gotta get my notes for this, the first one was the first classes were in 1889 in what became, I guess called various things, but the Masonic Hall at the far end of Bonner. [1889] until 1907 when Bonner School students moved into the two story wooden building basically between here and the school that sits there now.

That was until 1957. And somebody correct me on this, the classes moved into the present school building over Christmas break of 1957. So started classes in 1958, and that's the building, with many additions, that we've been in ever since. And these, so these last 50, 57 years.

So, essentially the first school was used for roughly 18 years. Then the next one was for 50 years. And now we're on 57 years in our third school. The first school was - people older than I remember where it was, but as I understand it it was near the railroad tracks on the right hand side of the highway as you went up at the end of

Bonner. Correct? And Lefty, I think you told me one time, it's... it was basically where those last two houses are on the right hand side or farther, closer to the railroad crossing?

Lefty Pleasant: It was closer to the railroad crossing and they took it out, I think right after the war, 1946. Tore the building down. We had it as kids, and Lois can know this, Lois Johnson, we had it as kids. We used it for dance hall and recreation and everything. The company let us use it. That was the school house.

Kim Briggeman: The Bible of Bonner history is this book, (holds up A Grass Roots Tribute, the Story of Bonner, Montana) and I hope most of you are familiar with it, but if you're not, I think they're still on sale.

At the school for 20 bucks. This was done in 1976. Put together mostly by teachers of the school at that time. And several of you here, I'm sure, had part in this book. One of the coups that Gladys Peterson pulled when she was the editor of the book was she made contact in 1975 or '76 with a lady named Georgina Fenwick who lived at the time in San Francisco.

She must have been about 95 years old, but she was a student at the first class of Bonner in 1889. And so she provided for this book, a reminiscence of the school and of Bonner back then. And so I was, I thought I'd just read that to you. Part of that, if I can find it. (looks for notes)

And Georgina died shortly after that, after she wrote this, and I think even before the book was published. So it really was a treasure to get in this book.

"I was eight in 1889 when I moved from Helena to Bonner with my parents and my younger sister and brother who were both too young to go to school. Margaret Robinson was my first teacher. The school room was upstairs in the Masonic building. We sat on benches in front of desks for four pupils. In one corner, a wood stove heated the room in winter and in the opposite corner was a pail of drinking water and a tin dipper. The pupils were the usual mixture found in a mill town of that era: French Canadians, Scandinavians, Canadians, and Midwest Americans.

[00:20:07] "In the old school registers are the names: Cormier, Nearman, La Beau, La Pointe, Manville, Sailor, Newport, Clynick, Graham, Fenwick. I remember about 25 pupils in that room, and Ms. Robinson taught all eight grades. There were several big boys and girls who could have created problems for a less experienced teacher, but she was a firm disciplinarian, maintaining order with great skill and good humor, and she was very pretty. There were blackboards and shelves for books and a table on a raised platform where the teacher sat. Children came to the front of the room to recite their lessons when their names were called.

"Few pupils went beyond the eighth grade. Some would drop out before the great event of 'graduation.'

"Recess was the highlight of our day, except lunchtime. When the weather was nice, we played 'run sheep, run,' 'prisoner's base,' 'kick the can,' and unsophisticated baseball. In the winter the deep snow was all around, but we had our sleds for racing down the hill behind the school. We skied on barrel staves and had many a snow fight."

The first classes went to school in probably, she wasn't able to pin down the exact date, but it was in the fall of 1889 in Bonner, Montana Territory. We weren't a state for a few months after that. And when you think about it, if you were a 13-year-old kid in that first class, you were born the year of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

The school being on the far end of Bonner at that time served basically just what we know of as Bonner in the mill area. But as we spread out here in Bonner, Milltown grew up. It became an issue how far kids had to go to get to school. And when you think about it, Milltown or Finntown as it was known back then was, I guess, the workers' kids.

And part of this book talks about the time in our history where the school rivalries of the Bonner Punks and the Milltown Skunks. (laughter) And while I mean it sounds somewhat humorous now, I think there were times when it became a serious issue and the principal of the school, Mr. Akin at those times, had to take measures to quell those kind of rivalries 'cuz he had basically the bosses' kids in Bonner and the workers' kids in Milltown, West Riverside, Piltzville, et cetera.

And that was an important part of Will Akin's legacy as a principal. I'll get into that in just a minute. So when the Anaconda Company ended up buying the mill in 1898 or so, it became clear that they needed a new location for a school and they formed a school..., a new school district passed the first bond issue, I think, or first mill levy and built the second school in 1907, which was closer to the other the growing community.

The three, I'm not gonna try to cover everything, but the three superintendents in the, I guess, the ones that you folks will remember starting with Mr. Akin - Mr. Will Akin, there [are] several pictures of him over there that Minie Smith of the History Center has run runoff. He was, I think, [and] still is the longest serving

superintendent of Bonner School. He started in 1913. He retired in 1945, and he served every year of those years except for the World War I, year 1917 to 1918.

[00:24:57] And then he was followed by Frank Lightfoot, who was there from 1945 to 1952, followed by Leo Musburger from 1952 to 1974. And I am guessing that those three cover pretty much everybody in here that went to Bonner School. William Akin, again in this book, Bill Soucie, who was a student at Bonner and also a teacher - he was the manual training teacher for 11 years - he wrote a piece or some observations for the book, and he said, "W. F. Akin had as much influence on the communities of Bonner, Milltown and Piltzville as any other single individual in their history. He established Bonner School as a consistent leader among grade schools in all of Western Montana." And again, he retired in 1945 and was replaced by Frank Lightfoot.

I put together a quick timeline to give you an idea of when things developed at Bonner School. The first B. Bill Doucette's eighth grade class of 1943 was the first to put the B on the mountain.

1948. The new brick gym and kitchen. Separated from the school, but we had the wooden schoolhouse essentially. But in 1948, they built the gym that's there now which had the cafeteria on the stage, if I remember right.

1949. The PTA was formed.

1950. The first hot lunch program and the PTA helped establish that.

1952. According to Dusty Deschamps was when ballpoint pens were introduced to the school. (crowd laughs)

Then 1953 and this was as Mr. Musburger's tenure began, the tradition of the eighth grade class visiting the state legislature and the capitol and the bank and Historical Society. I think that became a seventh and eighth grade tradition. And I don't know, does it still continue? No. Okay.

1954. Mr. Burlingame was the Cub Scout master in the basement of the old, second, school.

1958. We moved into the school number three, the current school, after Christmas break and that was the one that, of course, featured that 30-foot Walter Hook mural in the cafeteria at the time. That is since now on the wall in the school library. And then finally in 1958 also Lee Farrell spearheaded the first school bus service. In 58.

So just two more things to read you and then I'm outta your hair. This is a newspaper article, a very short one, that appeared in the Missoulian and in February of 1964. "Bonner PTA play is Thursday and Friday" is the headline. "Margie and the Wolfman," a three-act play will be presented by the Bonner Parent Teacher Association as a fundraising project. Performances will be Thursday and Friday at the school with curtain time set for 8:00 PM both evenings. The director is Winnie Hintz and the cast includes Aggie Nielsen, Bev Leary, Kay Hay, Helen Ellis, Dick Petaja, Kenneth Lizotte, Joanne Nichols, George Nichols, Bob Heyer and Dennis Pleasant."

Now mind you, we have a picture of a, wasn't the same year, but of a PTA play that the parents used to put on. And you guys remember this; I don't remember it, but of people including Fritz Thibodeau, Judy's father, dressed up in hula skirts. And it's one of those, one of my favorite pictures from the Demmons collection that's over at the school and now also online.

[00:30:20] Last thing. I've got something to read that's dated March 12th, 2014. It's the Bonner Lumberjack Log that came out this week, and it says, "Bonner Schools extended campus." It's written by Principal Ashley Parks. "We are fortunate in Bonner to be surrounded by many excellent outdoor resources. Our students demonstrate a passion for the outdoors by the variety of activities they participate in during their free time. Connecting students to their environment through outdoor education is a focus at Bonner School. Bonner School has two wonderful outdoor education resources adjacent to our campus." When I read this, I started thinking of Bonner School in 1889. "The Hill with the Bonner B and the Learning Park by the river create opportunities that most schools don't have easy access to. Our students have been using these resources for many years. We have decided to increase ease of access to these two sites by calling them our extended campus. This will reduce the amount of paperwork required by teachers before traveling with students to these two specific locations. The teachers will continue to notify the office that they will be at the extended campus and will carry all necessary emergency supplies."

Help me. Where's the one by the river?

Judy Karl: Yeah, by the caboose over there.

Kim Briggeman: Oh, by the caboose. Is that open now?

Ken Peers: Not yet. This, not to the public open yet. Okay. Kids can go back. We put that together and it's a part of the school program right now, and it's closed to the public cause all the grass hasn't restored on that area.

Kim Briggeman: Okay.

Ken Peers: But it'll be open in 2015.

Kim Briggeman: And the students can go over there. (Judy Karl: yeah.) It's part of their campus as I understand it. That's [a] cool tradition. I'm outta here.

The panel today from left to right we have my sister, my older sister, Kathy Milodragovich from Butte. Judy Thibodeau Karl, who just retired last this past spring. And Don Felton, not Ron Felton [twin brother], Don Felton, who was also a student and a teacher at Bonner. I'm gonna let them talk a little bit about when they were here. And then we have some questions in the basket here that each of them are gonna address whether they want to or not. And when they, for each question, we're also gonna ask you, the audience, for some input, some observations. But to do that, we're gonna do it with this traveling mic that I think Jim Willis is gonna help us with. If you have stories to add to these particular questions, just raise your hand and Jim will seek you out.

We've got plenty of time, but we need to be wrapped up by four o'clock and we're hoping that most of you will stay after and at least grab a pasty to go or have a pasty dinner at that time. Okay. Kathy, would you mind starting out who you are?

Kathy Milodragovich: I am Kathy Milodragovich, and we live in Butte now. And I currently teach in Butte at a middle school And I attended Bonner from 1958 to 1964. Graduated in eighth grade and I didn't realize that when I started third grade here, we moved from Helena, that it was the new school. I guess I didn't realize that until I'm hearing Kim say that. [I] didn't know that it was a brand new school. And then I taught in Bonner from 1989 to 1995. Having a brother like Kim makes me a little self-conscious about dates 'cuz he can remember them that I can't. So (laughter)

[00:35:13] **Kim Briggeman:** that's what this is for.

Kathy Milodragovich: Yeah. Anyway and so that's my background right now.

Judy Karl: All right. Let's see. I attended Bonner School. I don't know when, all eight years 'cuz I grew up here. And my sisters both attended Bonner School. My dad was on the school board for several years. He was on the school board when we built the new, I don't know which school.

Don Felton: The middle one.

Judy Karl: The middle one? I don't dunno. With one of them over there. The library one?

Kathy Milodragovich: The one that went beyond the office. The new office.

Don Felton: The middle section.

Judy Karl: The middle section. Yeah.

Unknown speaker: He was on the board on the other, this part of the school?

Judy Karl: Yeah, in this part of the school. Okay. Oh, that's right. And then I student taught here and then I taught here for 42 years. From 1971 to last year, and now I've subbed here. Just since Christmas I've subbed a few times. That's an interesting job. I subbed in the kindergarten and let me tell you, they earn their money. (laughs) But it's been fun. And my husband, Hal, was the custodian over there and a bus driver over there. So been around here a long time. Good school. Oh I don't know any other schools, so I have to say it's a good school.

Don Felton: Don Felton. We moved here in 1954 to the.. he mentioned idea of Nearman, the old Nearman place. That's where we moved to. Old hand-hewn log house. Dad always said it was because he had to get the boys outta town. So we showed up here in the second grade. Graduated with David Otto and some of those in 1961 from here. Went to high school and then the service, and finally got out and student taught here. And then finally in 1985, I taught for 18 years out here. That's all I did.

Kim Briggeman: Can I add one thing about Judy? She taught for 42 years here. The previous record, or the record, I guess, is in dispute. Maurice Darrington started in 1962-63 school year and retired in 2004. And my addition says that's 42 years as well. Judy tells me she didn't wanna break the record because why?

Judy Karl: When I saw Maurice last year, when I retired he told me, he said, "How many years did you teach?" I said, "42." He said "at Bonner." I said "42." He said, "Good thing." He said, "'cuz when I broke Larry Burlingame's record," he said, "he died." And I said, "Oh my gosh." He said, "I taught 43." And I said, "Thank

goodness I stopped at 42. I don't want you to die." So I thought he taught 43, so I don't... I let him have the record. I don't want him to die. So I'm not sure...

Kim Briggeman: I think you tied for the record.

Judy Karl: Okay. Tie and maybe he'll stay alive longer. I hope.

Kim Briggeman: We also have very some longtime teachers here at Bonner here in the front row. Oh, and Mary Ann Strothman, right. If you guys wouldn't mind if I introduce you? We have Lindsay Addington in the front row. Stand up, Lindsay. And Debbie Thrailkill in the front row. Fourth grade mostly, right, Debbie?

Debbie Thrailkill: Yes. All almost all of my years were fourth grade, 38 years, and I had fourth, and then a few combination grades. Third and fourth started though, in that back bandroom. And often we'd be forgotten over there. So the bus would come and the bus would go and there was Debbie with the whole group. Oh, those were interesting times with Leo Musburger,

Kim Briggeman: Lindsay. You started at that in that band room too, didn't you?

Lindsay Addington: Yes. In that, yes. That was the kindergarten room for so long. Yes.

Kim Briggeman: And you for most of the time were..

Lindsay Addington: I was 15, 20 years in first grade, 15 in kindergarten, and three in second. Before I retired a couple years ago.

[00:40:03] **Kim Briggeman:** Mrs. Strothman,

Mary Ann Strothman: I was the seventh and eighth grade English teacher

Kim Briggeman: for?

Mary Ann Strothman: (unclear)

Kim Briggeman: You were English, not math.

[00:36:49] **Mary Ann Strothman:** (unclear) (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: So I guess I'll do this. We're gonna just pass [the basket.] We have a number of topics to discuss and we'll start it at one end. And you just, Kathy, you pick out the first question.

Kathy Milodragovich: Okay.

Kim Briggeman: You will be required to answer it or pass it. And then if you two would chip in with any observations and then we'll turn it over to Jim with the mic. For anybody that wants to add to it.

Kathy Milodragovich: I'm really glad I stayed with Kim's family Friday night 'cuz I got to preview these questions. (laughter)

"As students, we probably took the playgrounds of Bonner School for granted, but as elementary schools go, they are special. Share a playground memory from your childhood and from your teaching days." And I guess for me, I remember more from childhood. Um, they took the merry-go-round and we really had fun on the merry-go-round. But that went when I was a teacher. They, it was considered unsafe. I just remember that we had a lot less grass out there on the playground. We did a lot more. Oh, as Kim said, I remember playing tag and kick the can and recess was the best part of the day for a long time. And as a teacher, I don't know. Maybe it's just doing recess duty and keeping the kids from arguing or whatever they do at recess. So that's what I remember.

[00:42:11] **Judy Karl:** I think I remember the bus garage. Playing ante-i-over or whatever on the bus garage when we were kids. And the students loved the bus garage. Also, [I] remember, as a teacher, we couldn't see what the kids were doing on the playground with the bus garage there because they were on the backside of it. And at one time there was only one teacher out on the playground so it was hard to watch what was going on out there. And then I do remember I came up here the day they... what did they do? They tore the bus garage down. I thought that was a sad day to see that bus garage go away. But, I thought that was pretty unique. I don't think too many playgrounds had a place where you could play the games the kids played on the bus garage and throw the dodge ball against the..., that we played. The kids loved the bus garage. And when it was gone that year, in the fall when the kids came back, they really felt bad. But the merry-go-round was a big thing too.

Don Felton: The one thing I remember is in the springtime probably just a little later than this, Leo Musburger would never let you go in the grass if you're gonna leave footprints or scuff up the grass or whatever. And so the first time he would let us run around there and, of course, we'd take off our shoes so you could run faster. And

that was always a big deal for the first few days that you could do that, but he always stood there and watched because he didn't watch you tear up the grass.

Kim Briggeman: How about as a teacher?

Don Felton: As a teacher, geez, as a teacher. There wasn't really, I always thought that there wasn't very much left to do

Lindsay Addington: You need to talk about the sixth grade hill project. 'Cause that was new. That was the first educational trip.

Don Felton: It was before they logged it. 'Cuz I always hammer on them for the logging that. But yeah, for a long time, for quite a few years Gene Solomon that lives down on under Brickyard Hill there, he and I wrote a book and all the worksheets and all that stuff for different stations up on that hill. And we'd go up there, there was like 16 different stations, and we'd pair the kids up and up we'd go for three hours a day for six weeks. And we used that hill quite extensively. I remember the first year we went up there, Jimmy and Rita Milligan were really upset because they looked up the hill from their house and I had spread some pink ribbons around to mark one of the spots. And they thought they were building a road or doing whatever. Geez. They were really upset before they finally figured out what we were doing. But yes, we did use that an awful lot up there. And the idea that it's an extended campus, well it was an extended campus a long time ago. That's what I know.

[00:45:36] **Kim Briggeman:** Do we have any observations from the audience? Let's wait for the mic, if you would.

Mary Ann Strothman: As a teacher, I got in trouble when the newest part of the school was built. There was a part that goes behind the music building and it's a sidewalk and we had a really good year for ice. And, I mean, I thought it was great. The kids were out there, seventh and eighth graders, and we were skating down that thing going, taking a run and going down as fast as we could. I ended up in the office. I got in a lot of trouble for that. I thought it was a lot of fun. The kids all had a good time, [of] course.

I didn't think too much about broken arms or things like that because when I went to school at St. Helena's Cathedral, we used to get on our haunches and go all the way down that hill and down and slam into the school. This was a lot safer. So anyway, that's what I remember.

Kim Briggeman: Any other recess memories?

Ken Peers: I got a recess story.. Yeah, I was in about the seventh grade and there used to be a barrel out next to the school. (illustrates rotating with his hand) Lefty probably remembers that. They wouldn't have anything like that in sight anymore. You'd get on that and run until you fell off. And I was playing there and Harold Tilde(?) came by and he started pushing around and we got in a fight. Now, I'm not a fighting person, I'm a lover, but we got in a fight and we had to go see Mr. Lightfoot and he made us write three times this letter, a definition of a gentleman, and it's in my album there if you wanna read it, but you had to write it three times without a mistake.

And finally after, I must have taken a month, but I finally got through my three. And Harold Tilde hadn't finished his, so Mr. Lightfoot said I had to help him finish his. Well, that didn't feel right to me. And my mother very seldom interfered in anything in school. But she called up Mr. Lightfoot and she said, "This is wrong and he's not gonna do that." So I didn't have to do that. So I got the definition of a gentleman, if anybody is interested,

Maureen Peers: It was 500 words.

Ken Peers: Yeah.

Kim Briggeman: Ken, what class were you, Ken Peers?

Ken Peers: '48.

Kim Briggeman: Class of '48. So if you wouldn't mind identifying yourselves as you grab the mic. [crowd chatter] Any others? Should we move on to the next question?

Judy Karl: (Reads) "Describe a happy moment as a student; a fulfilling moment as a teacher." I would think as a student, maybe when I got a good report card, if I ever got one. My grades weren't too good. I think as a teacher, I think every morning when the kids come in with a happy smile on their faces, that was always a good feeling to me. Oh, Kathy, he's trying to think. (referring to Don – hands paper to Kathy)

[00:50:01] **Kathy Milodragovich:** One of the happy moments I remember as a student and this is funny, in the spring, Mrs. Dufresne used to have us make these copper serving platters and we would go outside and etch flowers on 'em. And then I think we gave them to parents for Mother's Day or something.

Judy Karl: Yeah, I remember that.

Kathy Milodragovich: And that was always, I thought that was always really fun. I was trying to think of some of the things I remember. And then as a teacher five years ago we were in the thoroughfare area in Yellowstone Park, and there's only, it was longer than that ago. Anyway, there's only a hundred people that get to use that. We were camped and the rangers came through and we introduced ourselves and there was a ranger whose son was at Bonner when I was there. And she said he always remembered you and really liked what you did, which was a real, was real fulfilling to me to have that happen.

Don Felton: I was trying to think of a happy moment when I was a student. (laughter) I'm not real sure I can do that.

Kim Briggeman: So why'd you come back?

Don Felton: I don't know, uh, that leaves a little bit to be desired. Happy moment. Probably the people that, other fellow students that I met - David Otto, Tommy Johnson - kind of helped my brother and I through the rocky points, I guess you would say.

So the people that I met around here are probably the best moments I had as a student. Because I had somebody to share the misery with maybe? As a teacher, I guess I would have to go along with Kathy in the idea that last year I ran into a person. Of course, they stood about six' seven" and I knew 'em when they were about this big, (gestures), and they knew me. Of course, I hadn't changed, but they had, and I said, "Who are you?" And so then that person told me and he had moved to Alaska and had just come back, he and his wife and stuff. And he was talking about the idea of the Hill Project for one, and just Bonner in general. How he really cherished the time that he spent here. Of course, he spent most of his life, I think

(side conversation) yeah, they did. Who was that? Adrian. Yeah.

Don Felton: And he's really a tall boy. Yeah. Six' seven," I think. But something like that. It was neat. It's after the fact that you learn these things, I guess.

Kim Briggeman: So, the teachers or ex-students of the audience have something they wanna say? Happy moments as a student.

Don Felton: (takes a slip from the basket) I have to think about these.

Kim Briggeman: Go ahead and identify yourself.

Aislin Addington: Hi, I'm Aislin Addington and I graduated in 1998, and went all through at Bonner and I remember growing up through the grades. The week of graduation was always really exciting to see 'cuz there were these different sort of rituals the eighth graders got to do and it was such a big deal to watch them go and move up into it. And Mrs. Strothman had a lot to do with all those rituals that last week. And then when you finally got there, I just remember feeling so special that it was our turn to run down the hallway and it was our turn to go up to the B and it was finally our turn to come back the day after graduation. Which, of course, we did. It was a day off, but we always came back to visit and I thought that was so cool in our community and then going to high school and college and talking about grade school with other people. No one else has had that kind of send-off that we did. I thought that was a really cool thing that all the teachers kept going, for sure. And I hope it's still like that.

Don Felton: This one. This is really a strange question. I look for help. Kim. Says, "What nationally significant event or person do you associate with Bonner School?"

[00:55:01] Not being the greatest student, I probably don't have a whole lot, but there's two people that I remember when I was going to school. One being Walter Hook. I don't know how much of a national figure he would be, but to me he was good. And the other was [Mike] Mansfield. He came to Bonner School and quite a lot of us students met him at one time, and I don't even know what he was doing there, but he was there. And so that's the only person that I know that would be of national significance.

Kim Briggeman: How about events?

Don Felton: Event. National event. Let's see. I guess when I signed up in the Navy, (crowd laughter) I have no idea. (laughs) You get to do it (talking to Judy.)

Judy Karl: I don't know about people. Let's see. Event. I just remember I was teaching in the computer lab, walked in one morning when 9/11 happened. I just remember walking in the door and that was just a really frightening morning in the school. And then I remember when Mount St. Helen's erupted that we just couldn't go to school. Those were the two things that I remember really affecting the school. I'm sure there were others, but ...

unidentified speaker: The explosion?

Judy Karl: Oh, not a national one, but yeah, the explosion, the boiler explosion at the school. 'Cuz then I had to teach over here in the church. This was my classroom for about two months, right here where we're sitting, both third grades taught in here. And we had, our lunchroom was actually in the kitchen there for two months. Yeah, that was, so that was a local event, but it was an interesting thing.

Kim Briggeman: But the t-shirts went national, didn't they?

Judy Karl: Yeah, I think they did. Uhhuh, I just saw mine yesterday. Should have worn it. Yeah. On the basement.

Kim Briggeman: What did they say?

[00:52:47] **Judy Karl:** I survived... "I survived the Bonner Blowout." Wow. Uhhuh. Yeah. The boiler door actually blew by Hal's head [Hal Karl, the custodian, is Judy's husband]. Thank goodness it didn't hit his head, but I don't know. Maybe it would've been good. (laughter) I don't know. Knock some sense into him (laughs)

Don Felton: now remember you'd have to go home with him.

Judy Karl: Yeah, that's right. He might not like that.

Kathy Milodragovich: I, for me, I remember a school issue when I was teaching. The second year I was teaching kids that have a harder time focusing, and they were building the new addition, the last addition onto the school.

And our room was right on the edge of where they were doing the construction. So for the whole year, there were jack hammers going, and there were kindergartners sitting here that couldn't attend a task. And the jack hammers were going. I just remember that was a pretty long year. I hope... it's interesting because the mom I saw in West Yellowstone, it was one of her sons that I had, so it was good that he remembered that he learned something. And then I also remember the Kennedy assassination and how we just couldn't even understand what had happened. And then I also remember the Cuban Missile Crisis, 'cuz everyone was building bomb shelters and trying to put food in the bomb shelters. And it was a real scary time. I remember just being afraid all of the time.

Kim Briggeman: One of the things that prompted that question was something else that was in this book, A Reminiscence by Jean Akin Stempke. And she talked about when her father was the principal, and this would've been in 1927 after Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. And when he got back to America, maybe you knew this.. he did a state by state tour basically of advocating for passenger and air transport.

And so I'm gonna read just the paragraph that she wrote in this. She said, "Dad was very pleased when Bonner School was honored by Charles Lindbergh. Mr. Lindbergh circled the school and dropped a greeting to the school. In the years that have passed, the paper has been misplaced." That would've been in September of 1927.

[01:00:04] **unidentified speaker:** Interesting.

Kim Briggeman: How about the audience? Nationally significant event or person associated with Bonner School?

Lefty Pleasant: Okay, can you hear me? Yeah. December 7th, 1941. I was in the eighth grade and every radio, I think in Bonner, probably Milltown too, was announcin' about the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor. Now this goes to the school part of it. So the next day, Mr. Akin had the speakers out and everything and we got to hear President Roosevelt's famous speech, how we declared war on Japanese. That's all I got to say. Thanks.

Kim Briggeman: Got lots more time here.

Kathy Milodragovich: This question is "when you think of music at Bonner School, what do you think of?" And I remember Mr. Burlingame, but I really remember Mrs. Dufresne. I remember any of the songs that I know that are considered songs you should know in your background. She taught us, I remember the Glee Club that, I think it was called Glee Club. And I remember we had performances at Mother's Day and at Christmas time. And she taught a lot of music and a lot of what I know about music I learned from her. So that was really important to me.

Judy Karl: Let's see. I remember Mrs. Dufresne also, but I remember we used to have band before school. So we had to come at 7:30. So Dad had to bring us. One morning he was bringing us to school and I don't know what he was doing, but he was backing outta the driveway and we all got in the car and he backed out of the driveway and he hit the fence post and he wiped out all the windows on one side of his car. And it was a quiet ride to school. (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: That's your music memory? (laughter)

Judy Karl: Well, it's tied to music. I do remember that.

Don Felton: I, when I think about music, being not a very musical person, I quit band. But I do remember Burley [Larry Burlingame]. Burley, was one of the few guys I knew at that time that was good at music. And especially playing the piano like this. (gestures) He did. And of course he played the march for graduation forever. (Makes tall motion with his hands pounding on the table like it's a piano.) But anyway, that's all I know about music.

Lindsay Addington: Lindsay Addington. I remember when I started teaching in 1973 that all of the rooms had a piano in them. And I just remember thinking that was amazing for a school that music was so important that there was a piano in every room. And that there were several teachers, I wasn't one of them, but several at that time that played the piano so well - Mrs. Simmons, Mrs. Erickson, and you could, just walking down the hall in the morning, this beautiful piano music going up and down the hall. And that was really something that amazed me. And we had them for a long time.

Jim Labbe: I'm Jim Labbe and I graduated in '53. My sixth grade teacher, Margaret Strong, she made you sing. We had the old double desk. She would sit right in the seat with you and she had this mouth harp thing and she'd play a key or whatever and you sang. But I enjoyed her. Like my uncle Willie said, I enjoyed every one of my teachers here at Bonner. They were all just good teachers.

[01:05:31] **Willie Bateman:** Yeah, when Jim mentioned Mrs. Strong. She was my teacher in the sixth grade and she taught us music. I couldn't read one note from the next, but anyway she taught us to recognize all of the instruments starting with the piano and, uh, the drums, all of the wind instruments, all of the string instruments the violin, the cello, and all of those. Anyway, somebody in the class mentioned about a banjo. She just come unglued. She says that is not an instrument. (laughter) She must have hated a banjo and I loved the darn things anyway, but she was our teacher for music and she tried to teach everybody how to read notes. And I think most of it went over the top of our heads like a dirigible really. 'Cuz I couldn't read one note from the next now. But I love music, so..

Ken Peers: All right, I'll introduce myself this time. I'm Ken Peers, but I also had Mrs. Strong in the sixth grade. And I went to school with Bill Lien, which a lot of you out here know. He passed away quite some time ago. But Bill never got anything but an "A" from the time he was in the first grade till we graduated high school. Very smart. But he went through music and he could not carry a note in a tin can. So he just struggled with music and Mrs. Splann was going to fail him in music. And finally he made a deal with her and he had to write a song in music with notes. And he did that and she passed him and gave him an "A." (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: Do we have any questions then? We have one general question that we're gonna end with, and then actually open it up to an open forum for people to talk about whatever they wanna talk about. But we got a couple more questions left.

Judy Karl: "Share a story about, or observation about hair or clothing styles as a student then as a teacher." Oh boy. Well, I can tell you one as a teacher. When I first started teaching, we always wore dresses. Always. And that we had this Thanksgiving dinner at Thanksgiving time and the school board members always came, and retired teachers, people came. And Mrs. Addington and I, one day for Thanksgiving, decided to wear pants and my dad came 'cuz he'd been on the school board and

Lindsay Addington: It was okay to wear pants.

Judy Karl: It was okay to wear pants at that time. Yeah. So we had pants on that day and my dad came to the dinner and Mr. Musburger was with him walking down the hall and they came to our room and looked at us. They looked at us like, "Whoa, you are not dressed for school" 'cuz we had these pants on. So it took them a long time to think that teachers could wear pants to school. But nowadays it's, I mean 'cuz it was really nice to be able to wear pants and get down on the floor and crawl around with the little kids. But it took a lot of people a long time to think that lady teachers could wear pants to school.

unidentified speaker: (unclear)

[01:10:12] **Judy Karl:** Yeah. Not jeans. And nowadays you actually, at Bonner you can wear jeans or nice jeans on Fridays, if you wear a Bonner shirt. They have Bonner t-shirts that say Bonner School. So you can wear 'em. Kids, well, they don't have much of a dress code anymore. I think it's kinda scary. I think your pants are supposed to be as long as your fingertips. And, you know, when we went to school you could wear pants underneath your dresses. I remember that. When it was cold outside. Yeah. But now it's.. I don't know. When I subbed the other day, some of 'em already had shorts on 'cuz they thought it was spring.

Don Felton: I look at this question and a couple things come to mind. One, the girls wearing the pants under the, under their dresses when it was cold, um, and the short shorts. Had an awful time in the sixth and seventh grade with the short shorts. For some reason, girls think they had to wear, or some of the girls at least, had to wear short shorts. And the only thing I had that was really good was I had the ugliest long T-shirt. And if they ever wore short shorts, guess what? They got to wear that or call their mom. And I had one student that, and I'm sure that Mary Ann knows who I'm talking about, didn't wanna wear the shirt, but I made her wear the shirt. She was right on the phone calling her mom getting some new clothes because she didn't like that shirt. For sure. That's all I know.

Kathy Milodragovich: I guess I think of this more impact as a student. We lived in Marshall Grade and we had to walk down the road to catch the bus and girls still wore dresses and so you would have to put on pants under your dresses, which looked really stupid when you're like in seventh grade and you don't feel good anyway. But it would be so cold. I just remember we had to do that 'cuz you, you had to wear the dresses as a viewpoint of a girl. Then we get to school and run in the bathroom and change all your clothes. So I just, that's what I remember as a student.

Shirley Cuplin: Oh well, if we're talking about clothes, I remember the can cans and the farther out they would be, the better you like them until you could hardly get on the school bus. You'd crowd yourself in and you'd go like this and you'd finally get on the bus. But that was a, that was an awful era that we lived through. We thought it was wonderful at the time, but looking back on it, it was a hard time.

Mary Ann Strothman: One year in my homeroom, eighth grade, I had a student, a new student, about every third to fifth day because she would come in with a different hair and different colors and different everything. And the final coup de grâce was when she came at Christmas. And her hair, she had wrapped a whole string of lights in her hair. I didn't care. You know, it's not a big deal. It's just hair. Come on, let's, it all grows out or it does what it needs to do. And she came in... I was in the furthest, uh, in the new building, the furthest classroom on the left hand side. And we had outlets in the floor. So I said Go for it. Plug yourself in. (laughter) Which she did, which was cool, but I had more company that day than I think I ever had in my whole life. I think every teacher came down to check out this young lady and we went through dreadlocks to totally bald because soon she decided she didn't like the dreadlocks and you couldn't get rid of them without shaving your head. I, it was incredible. Every five days. It was fun.

[01:15:06] **Kim Briggeman:** Dress codes in the forties and fifties? Anybody wanna talk to us about what you wore back then? Or hairstyles?

Lois Johnson: I'll tell a story. I'm a shy, go ahead. We used to have to wear,

Kim Briggeman: don't excuse me. Don't forget to identify yourself in the microphone.

Lois Johnson: Like this? My husband made me do this. When we were kids in Bonner, we had to walk to school. Clear from Bonner. We didn't know that was a long way. They didn't run buses. But when it was cold, it was cold. And the one thing we had to do was wear long stockings, underwear actually. And we hated it. So we would, and we had to do it as long as there was snow on Sheep Mountain. And I think you all know where Sheep Mountain was. And sometimes the snow was there till we were swimming in the river. (laughter) But anyway, we wore 'em because we were good, we minded. Until we got partway up here. And then we all took them and slid 'em down and rolled them up so that we still had anklets on. Only we had these big wads, (laughter) our boots and our shoes. And by the time we got to school, we were frozen. And, of course, this was the old school where right inside the door, a very short ways was great big vents in the floor because they had the wood slab furnace in the basement, and that's how they heated that two-story school. And so it came up through the floor roaring in the mornings and we would all go crawling in the door and lay on that thing with our wet clothes and our big baggy socks. And we thought we were very fashionable. (laughter) It was a lot of fun. That old school was really fun.

Kim Briggeman: Any other clothing or hairstyle stories? Is there one more question in the basket?

Don Felton: Kathy has one more question there. It's in the basket. (reads question) Oh, you already did. It says "share a story or observation about the smells of Bonner School." Hmmm. I have to think about this one. You have any smells?

Judy Karl: Smells, yeah. Well, cinnamon rolls.

Don Felton: Oh, yeah.

Judy Karl: But when it rains outside and the kids come in, if they've had to stay on the playground, their hair smells.

Kathy Milodragovich: In addition to the cinnamon rolls. I remember the rolls that they used to make, just the regular rolls that we would have for lunch sometimes. That would always, oh, the lunchroom would smell so good. But I'm like, Kim, one of the things I really remember is the smell of the teepee burner and the wood yard and all of that stuff. He sounds like he remembers that fondly. I just remember that it made you sick. It was just, it got really strong in the... Remember every year when school started, and it would be all like in September when it was hot and it would all just be foggy. Foggy and smell. I just, that's what I remember.

Don Felton: The only thing I could really think about smells is when it was raining out and everybody was runnin' and chasin' one another. Usually when they walked in and sat down in the classroom, I always had to open the windows. I don't know about the rest of 'em, but I did.

[01:19:50] **Kim Briggeman:** Any other smells? You guys talk about the rain, I think of the smell of the rain on the asphalt at recess. That's a distinctive smell. . But what hap..., what did it smell like when you opened up the coat closets? Sometimes?

Bob Bateman: My name's Bob Bateman, and Judy and I were talking about this a couple weeks ago. How many people remember the smell of Frank Dufresne's mop closet? (laughter) Anybody? How many? Mrs. Saunders would send us across the room and sit in the mop closet. If you weren't paying attention, you'd sit there for 20, 30 minutes. With the door shut. With those mops in the buckets right there. Now that's the smell I remember. I think because some of us spent a lot of time there. (laughter) Thank you.

Kim Briggeman: By the sixties we called it the little dark room.

Don Felton: Mrs. Saunders?

Kim Briggeman: Mrs. Saunders. Yeah.

Judy Karl: You never got sent there?

Don Felton: Mrs. Saunders. I remember one time she... Melba Johnson got pretty upset at her and actually went and talked to Leo Musburger about her because she'd walk around with a pencil and she used to always hit Tommy [Johnson] on the back of the ears with his pencil 'cuz he was always talking to somebody or something. And oh man, pretty soon his ears had little scabs on 'em.

Kathy Milodragovich: She didn't send him to the closet?

Don Felton: Nope, she didn't send him to the closet. She just whacked him on the ears.

Judy Karl: You never got in the closet?

Don Felton: I didn't, boy, I'm good. I have to ask Linda [his sister] next summer.

Judy Karl: Linda probably got in the closet.

Don Felton: Bobby, were you ever in the closet with Linda? (laughter)

Bob Bateman: No, just by myself.

Virginia: My name's Virginia and I have a story about Mrs. Saunders. She was my fifth grade teacher and I was scared to death to go to school for the fifth grade, but the summer before school started, just before school started, we went down and saw some old friends down in Sheridan, Montana. And I had to ride the bus back. I have never been by myself. And I remember the bus stopping in Butte and everybody on this Greyhound bus got off. And here I am sitting all by myself 'cuz I was told "get on that bus and do not leave until you get to Milltown." That's the only time I could get off that bus. So I sat there by myself and I was just, the guy come back, the bus driver, "Aren't you gonna get off the bus?"

"No, I got my lunch right here." He goes, "Come off the bus. I'll make sure you get back on the right bus." So he took me off the bus. He bought me some soda or something while I ate my little sack lunch, got me back on the bus and introduced me to the bus driver. Lo and behold, the bus driver was Mrs. Saunders', I think, nephew or something. It was a relative. And when she heard that, I felt like I was treated very good. I didn't worry, I didn't worry about the closet. (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: We have a general question that I'm gonna, oh, go ahead.

Tom Briggeman: I just had a quick smell to add. Kim talked about the equipment room and I'd like to add to the, besides the rubber balls and everything else that was in there. Those wool warmups, basketball warmups that were probably my, one of my fondest memories of going to school there was when I finally made "A" squad in seventh grade and we got to go down

on game days and wear the tops to those old wool warmups. Got to wear 'em through class for all day you got to wear those. The smell of those was something special too.

Kim Briggeman: Is that still a tradition?

Judy Karl: They wear their tops to the uniforms.

Kim Briggeman: The tops to the uniforms on game day. Okay. Boys and girls, I assume? He didn't identify himself. That's my brother, Tom Briggeman.

[01:24:57] Anybody else? We'll close then with this, and then we'll throw it open to... go ahead, Mac, when you get open. I have a story about there. Oh, we've got a a Burley story. And this can be answered by any of you at, in any order, but the, our general question here is, Um, we're 125 years old at Bonner School now and over, over the 125 years, Bonner School has been reinvented many times.

What do you feel should be among its legacies? What should be the legacies of Bonner School?

Kathy Milodragovich: Since I got to see this question before we got here today, I got to think about it. And I think the legacy is just the way that it's held the community together. Piltzville, West Riverside, Bonner, Milltown. I think that's the legacy of maintaining that community atmosphere because it's always been here and I think that's a good legacy to maintain.

Don Felton: I have no idea.

Jim Labbe: One of the things that I respect about Bonner and these communities is they taught you to have respect for people. You had respect for your teachers, your principals, all the administration, the Fritz Thibodeaus, the oh, I can go on with a lot of names, but they taught you respect. Even when you left Bonner all the way through high school and through your career, whatever it may have been, you have respect for people.

Debbie Thrailkill: Debbie Thrailkill again. I just wanna say that you have as a community, made a wonderful school out here and that those 38 years were the best 38 years ever for me. I was offered a contract in Missoula. I was offered a contract at Bonner School and I went to my teachers and counselor and said, "Gosh, what should I do? It's going to be a combination room out in Bonner, but it's gonna be a straight third grade in Missoula." And they said, "Go to Bonner. It is the best school in the state." And in 1968 and before that, I think you heard the same sort of thing, that the teachers were all respected, that the children were all pretty much behaving themselves and were dealt with if not. And I've always been very, very proud. And the people that have this community are really wonderful. You don't realize until you come from some other huge environment. My high school in Great Falls was the largest graduating class ever with 650 kids there. And we're going to have our reunion this summer. And you just don't have that feeling that you people do here. And it's you that have kept it that way. I hope it continues.

Kim Briggeman: Legacies. Legacies of Bonner School. Yep.

Judy Matson: Judy Matson. I didn't go to Bonner School, but Gary's and my children did, and my most outstanding.. we were just talking about this the other day, but one of my most outstanding memories of Bonner School... so my daughter started to kindergarten. Or first grade. There was no kindergarten here at the time. In fact, your mom [Mrs. Dale Briggeman] had a private kindergarten for years and that was the kindergarten.

But, so here was my little girl dressed up in her brand new dress with her new school shoes tripping down the street. And the school bus came and it was Jack Demmons' first day on the job as far as meeting the students. He got off the bus and he had this big paddle in his hand and we just about died! But it was for the eighth grade boys, not for Laura. So she got to school and she went tripping into her classroom. And there was Miss Walterskirchen, now Mrs. Addington, the most beautiful teacher in the whole world, and she had glasses with butterflies on them. And I think the legacy of Bonner School that comes through that story, it was a safe place. It had discipline and it had love. So I think that's a great legacy for our school.

[01:30:35] **Don Felton:** I think about the legacies and I think about the camaraderie between people. I see Bill and Ed here and Mike and Bobby and other people that I knew and they've formed other relationships and so on, and I know Judy and Bobby and my sister went to school together and they still keep in touch.

And my other younger sister and Lavonne's [Otto] daughter went to school together. To this day on their birthdays, they send this.. Of course, the card comes in a thing like this (indicates the size of the basket) because it's their birthday cards back. They send back and forth over all these years since they were in grade school together. It costs 'em two bucks to send it. (laughter) And it's huge. They don't write much, but at least they keep in contact and just these people staying in contact. And when I see Shirley Lehti [Cuplin] back there, I think about probably the first time I ever met her. Of course, she's way, way older than I. (laughter) She was Judy and one of my sister's campfire...

Kathy Milodragovich: (inaudible)

Don Felton: Oh, on yours? Yeah. But you're way young. So I didn't know her then I was gone. But yeah, she was Linda and Judy's campfire teacher. And all these people have stayed in contact with one another, or when they see them after 40 years, it's almost like they've never been gone. It's one of those, one of those things. And I know when I see David [Otto] or Tommy Johnson and he's been in Oregon now, Tommy has, for, I don't know, 25 years or 30. But it's just when we get together.. he was here last fall for a week or so, and [it was] just like he never left. [He] lived up here at Bonner and we lived down here down the road and David lived in between.

It's just. That's the way it is. And so I think that's a legacy. And then I see Billy Walker here, and he just, just like yesterday. Although he's a little cleaner than the rest of us, at least myself. But that's the way.. that's a legacy that I think about. And I'm sure lots of other people of other generations that went school to Bonner have the same feeling. So that's what I think about.

Ken Peers: This is Ken Peers again. Back in 1948, I was in the eighth grade and they decided to establish a basketball team. And so there was seventh and eighth graders on the team. And there was no gym at the Bonner School at that time. So we would take our after school and go down to the Central School or the Lowell School, whichever one would allow us in to play basketball. And there was about 10 of us at that time that played ball and it became, I think, one of the finest sports at Bonner School. And I'm sure glad to say it's still going.

[01:34:52] **Shirley Cuplin:** Well, I guess I haven't identified myself. I'm Shirley Lehti Cuplin and I grew up here and went to school here and married and moved to town. And then we moved and built on Chumrau Loop. And so I've just always been here. But to get back to being the Campfire leader, Judy and Susie Bauer came down and I was at going to the U and they needed a Campfire leader. Mrs. [no name suggested] had quit. She couldn't do it anymore, and would I just please do this? And I said I'm not really into this, but we did have a good time. But we'd have our meetings at the school, and then I'd take all the girls home. And as soon as we got down the road here and turned down to go to the Felton house, Linda wanted to drive. (laughter) In the seventh grade. And I, of course it was, no one was on that road. You'd go by Frank Bauer's dump and there was nobody there. So I'd get out and we'd change places and we'd get in and she learned really how to drive. And I said, don't you dare tell anybody what we're doing, you know, but it was a lot of fun. And we did it, I think for two years. I took the girls through the seventh and eighth grade and we just really had a good time. But I do have so many memories of the girls at that age.

Kim Briggeman: In terms of legacy over 125 years, we probably shouldn't forget the mill and the unique relationship that the school had with the mill for all those years. The first trustee in that first school board in 1889 was Henry Hammond, who was the who ran the mill, basically. A.B. Hammond's brother and his other brother.. help me, Minie.. ran the logging operations. So the Hammonds essentially were those who built the first school. And then when the second school was built in 1907, by then it was Anaconda Company. And the land that school was built on was donated by the company. And the relationship that they had with the school, the Anaconda Company, with the school throughout until 1972 when they sold to Champion was, if it wasn't unique, it was certainly special. Judy's dad, Fritz Thibodeau, told the story of.. he was always on the school board, but he was always over at the mill and when, maybe Lubrecht or one of the bosses, when Fritz would go to the mill ownership, and say the school needs something, he [manager] said, "You take care it, Fritz." And Fritz did. And we had those, remember those mesh red and green Christmas things we got at the Christmas program with the nuts and candy and the orange and the apple. [Audience comments: Yeah. Nodding heads in agreement.] That dated way back to William Akin and with the Shrine Circus tickets that the mill provided us.

I could go on and on. The guard that watched the mill, that watched the school for all those years was an Anaconda employee. The groundskeeper, I think for most of those years was the Anaconda Company. So that.. and we did lose that. Leo Musburger said after he retired - he retired a year or two after [the] Anaconda Company sold out - and we did.. he said that was one of the reasons we lost that direct connection with the mill. Not that Champion did not have a good relationship with the school, but for most of those Anaconda years, come hell or high water, they made sure that the school got taken care of.

Jim Habeck: Did the school budget collapse though? The school budget collapsed when the mill..

Kim Briggeman: No, I believe it probably increased.

Jim Habeck: It happened in Frenchtown. Why didn't it happen here?

Kim Briggeman: What do you mean?

Jim Habeck: The Frenchtown paper mill, when it shut down, the Frenchtown school budget.. they didn't know where the money was gonna come from.

[01:40:05] **several speakers:** Oh, the tax. The tax base. Tax base.

Kim Briggeman: I think that's an issue now in the years since the mill has closed down for good. But yeah, there's others that could probably talk about that. They're doing a pretty good job though on a shoestring budget.

Cliff Iverson: Cliff Iverson, class of '47. I just wanted to expand on what Kim just said. One of my fondest memories when I was in the seventh grade, Mrs. Dufresne, was our teacher. Many of you older people will remember Tony Petrov was the section foreman over here. I think he took care of the line from the Milwaukee line through the mill here. The logs came in on both railroads. She looked out the window one day, and if you remember, there was a rope that went from the bell tower, the bell, and I think it went clear to the basement. I know it went to the first floor.

She knew something was wrong. Tony came running. I don't think he was five feet tall. The weeds were almost as tall as he was. She went out and rang that bell and evacuated the school, and sure enough, the roof was on fire. But to expand on what Kim said, there was no fire department, no volunteer, nothing at the mill, but they came with every man and every piece of equipment that they could gather and went up on that roof and saved the building. If it hadn't been for little Tony and Mrs. Dufresne, we probably wouldn't have had that school after that date.

Kim Briggeman: When I went into high school in town, we were the Bonner Boys and I think they thought that was condescending. I thought it was pretty neat. Let's open it up now. Any stories, anything that's popped into your mind that you'd like to share? And that includes panelists or anyone else? I know Mac Palmer has a story.

Mac Palmer: I'm Mac Palmer, and as everybody here knows, I think, I'm not from Bonner or even from Montana. I grew up in Boston, Massachusetts. But I've been part of this history group for several years now, coming to the things, and I'm really impressed with what I've learned about this today and earlier. But the story I want to tell is about Larry Burlingame. Heard his name several times, and maybe you know this about him.

He and I worked together in the AARP Driver Safety Program for several years, and this is a story he told me on himself. He was colorblind and one day some of the kids noticed that he had one blue sock and one brown sock on and called it to his attention and he says, "Yeah, I've got another pair just like that at home." (laughter)

Willie Bateman: I noticed of all that, the teachers in here, that's one has never been mentioned was my seventh grade teacher and her name was Miss [Georgia] Payser [became Mrs. Hermann in the 40s]. And I was in the first grade at the time that this happened, but noon hour, the boys were all out there playing football out there in the old rocky field that we had.

And Pete Carlson, he was the oldest one. And also my brother, he was in the eighth grade. So anyway, the first bell rang and nobody showed up. So Miss Payser come out to round up the kids [to] come back into class. Anyway, Pete, he was way down at the other end of the field and my brother Buzz, he was clear up the other end and Pete hollered, "Buzz," he says, "heads up." And he grabbed the football and he hurled it down the field. Miss Payser, she was walking out on the field, she didn't see it coming, and it nailed her right alongside of the head. Left a big imprint of that old muddy football on the side of her head. Well, she never said anything or bawled the boys out or punished them [in] any way 'cause it was just her fault. She walked right out into the middle of it and she got nailed a good one.

Judy Matson: Glenn, would you tell your story about Mrs. Dufresne and your English paper?

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Bring the mic over here.

Judy Matson: He's got somebody else.

Rick Swanson: Rick Swanson. And I remember.. I have some memories of school. Walking from Milltown at wintertime after a blizzard, we would walk along the fence and walk on top of the snow drifts to school back and forth. There was no bus then.

And other times the kids, like Kenny talked about the barrel. We had a barrel round barrel that we run in and jump on and go over. Also they had the swings. I remember once they had a game called, I don't remember what it was called, but when you were on the swing and you went backwards to see who could jump the farthest back. I was trying that too, you know, and I ended up with a broken arm and a sprained wrist.

There was something else and I forgot it already. They called that a senior moment.. It came to me. They were talking about the school bus. Carl Johnson, if you remember him, we had the long yellow bus, and this was in high school, but it was out here anyway. And they would pick us up and take us into the high school. Some of the fellas got into a scuffle on the bus one day and he had a strict rule: any horseplay, out you go. The guys had to get off and walk home. He was very strict too.

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Bonner Hooligan here. Mildred Dufresne, my seventh grade teacher. We were studying Montana history on the subject of George Armstrong Custer. So when we got all through the course

why we was to write an essay on Mr. Custer. So rather than - I was not that good at words or anything - so I took my sheet of paper and I filled that as full of arrows as I could all raining down on this little stick man sitting on a horse. Turned that in, thinking, "I put a lot of work on them damn arrows, I ought to get somethin'." Biggest, reddest "F" I ever saw. (laughter)

But the end of that story, it didn't happen until I was in the service. And, of course, if you're in the army, you know, you want to get some rank. So I signed up for an NCO academy and part of the NCO Academy was, believe it or not, George Armstrong Custer. And it was the "spirit of an order" is what they call that. If you're given an order, how far to the left of that order can you deviate? And how far to the right can you deviate but still carry out the order? And I passed that course. I got through that one real good, but Mildred Dufresne was with me every step of the way through that NCO Academy.

[01:49:42] **Kim Briggeman:** I guess it's four o'clock. We probably better call it quits here.

Unknown speaker: We got one more.

Kim Briggeman: Oh, we got another story.

Bob Bateman: I'm Bob Bateman again. I'm just gonna leave you with this. How many people remember Larry Burlingame's ruler?

I don't know why all the discipline always comes up. It's slapping you on the hand for being.. (Audience responds: uhhuh.) Okay. Now I bet a lot more people remember Vandergriff's paddle. Back in the stinky old basketball room. (Audience responds: Yes.) Remember that? It's about this high, it had five holes in it. I don't know why five, but it had five holes in it. Jagged top. You could either get smacked with the paddle or he'd call your folks. So I just thought maybe somebody else had a.. everybody else was just nicer than Don and Judy. I guess. (laughter)

Kim Briggeman: Jim, can we have the mic up here? Doug Lawrence is gonna talk about our transition for those who wanna stay.

Doug Lawrence: Thanks Kim. Okay, we're gonna welcome everybody to our first annual St. Patrick's Day Pasty Dinner. What we're gonna need to do is just kinda give us time to set three rows of tables down through here and put some tablecloths on and wash them.

It should take us just five minutes to set up and then we'll be ready to serve. If anybody would like to buy some 'cuz they don't wanna stay with us, we'll have those available. We're looking for maybe donations of \$5 a pasty. Questions? And then we wish you, everybody, a very happy and safe St. Patrick's Day tomorrow.

Kim Briggeman: Judy, do you wanna sign off for us or..

Judy Matson: Again, thanks everybody for coming. This is the last of our programs for 2014, but we've already got some ideas for next year and hope to see you back and we really do appreciate the fact that we can have our meetings here. So I hope that if it's all possible, you'll stay for supper. Get a yummy pasty, or maybe you're like Gary [and me], we are gonna have to take off, but I'm sure taking some home with me so I don't have to cook later. So thanks for coming and thanks for a great series this year.

(Outro music and credits)



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