

Hioki Shiro

interviewing Mr. Clarence  
Kemp

Me - This is Hioki Shiro  
interviewing Mr. Clarence  
Kemp at his home on  
Wednesday December 30  
of 1941 as far as I know  
about his life as owning  
a store and being in the  
army in Europe.  
Now when and where were  
you born?

Mr. K - I was born in  
Farmington Michigan  
August 1909, August  
the tenth

Me - How many children are  
there in your family?

Mr. K - three

Me - Where were you in your  
family?

Mr. K - Second. In my family  
second.



Mr. K - (corrects him) Do you mean  
how many children in his  
family or how many  
children does he have?

Me - How many in his family?

Mr. K - No. There's five

Mr. K - There's five children in ~~one~~  
family

Me - What were your parents  
named?

Mr. K - Harriet was my mother and  
~~Provis~~ Provis was my father

Me - OK. Did either of them work?

Mr. K - My father was an electrician  
at mines.

Me - What was the name of  
the town where you lived?

Mr. K - Jasperring

Me - Jasperring eh? Did you  
ever move



Mr. K - We moved to Neppanee when I was a youngster I went to school and graduated from Neppanee High School.

Me - O.K. What experiences occurred in your school days.

Mr. K - Well I wasn't in any athletics I was too small, but I was in the Senior class play.

Me - Um. How far did you live from your school?

Mr. K - Oh about five blocks

Me - OK did you walk or ride the bus?

Mr. K - Walk. No riding in those days.

Me - OK How old were you when you started school?



M.K. - four

me - four. Did you have any favorite teachers or subjects that you liked?

M.K. - Yes I liked Math, I liked biology, and I liked Geography and I had some favorite teachers.

me - When you got home from school did you have any chores you had to do?

M.K. - Yes my dad pointed his finger at each of us in the morning and told us what we had to do and when he came home from work if the chores weren't done. When we sat down at the supper table he says what are



you down here and we'd  
say were going to eat.  
He'd say you don't eat  
until you do your  
chores

me - Oh um. Were you  
involved in any Clubs  
or Organizations?

Mr. K. - No. The V.F.W. is the  
only organization I  
belong to right now.

me - Were you in any  
sports or do you have  
any favorite ones?

Mr. K. - Sports

me - yes

Mr. K. - Oh I liked them all  
I liked basketball I liked  
football, I liked baseball  
those are the major  
ones.



me - O.K. What school did you graduate from?

mr.k - What? What?

me - What school

mr.k - (interrupts) Oh, Neapomee  
~~the~~ High School

me - OK. Was your graduation different from the graduations today.

mr.k - Well I would I believe I would say yes. I don't know what way you talk about because I'm not familiar with the ones today?

me - Did you go to college?

mr.k - No. I had the opportunity my grandmother wanted to pay my way through College. But I turned it



down because I didn't want  
her to pay my way.  
I'm independent.

me - Oh. when did you get  
married?

mk - Jan 1932

me - How many years have  
you been married?

mk - 55 it's going on 56  
now.

me - Did you have a car  
when you got married?

mk - No

me - No

mk - No. They do you want  
to know how much  
I earned when I got  
married?

me - How much?

mk - A week when I was  
first married.



me - Oh. Have you ever had any  
~~any~~ Did you have any serious  
~~serious~~ diseases during  
your childhood?

Mr. K - No. Uh-uh

me - Did you have a family  
doctor?

Mr. K - Yep. Doctor Mudge

me - O.K. Um - Do you remember  
anything that happened  
during the Great Depression?

Mr. K - (Enthusiastically) - Yes.  
There's a lot of things I  
remember. There's a good  
many things we went  
without, we couldn't get.  
We couldn't get any help  
from anyone and nobody  
could help you. We never  
received any help from  
anybody.

me - Oh



4  
M.K. - what you got you had  
to make on your own. Nobody  
could afford to help. You  
knew nobody had any  
money.

M. - How old were you during  
the Great Depression?

M.K. - Well we got married  
when we were 23  
years old.

M.K. - you were 23 I was 22

M.K. - And um and that was  
in 1932. When we  
got married.

M. - Oh O (wife interrupts)

M.K. - During the depression we  
got along fine.

M.K. - Yeh. not that bad. we  
got along ~~fine~~ OK.

M. - were you in any wars?



Mr. K. - Was in the second  
World War

Me - Were you in the United  
States or (Central Europe)

Mr. K. - No. in Europe

Me - Can you remember anything  
that happened during the  
war?

Mr. K. - Well there's a lot of things  
that happened that you  
don't want to remember.  
But there's one incident  
that I'll never forget.  
This was after the war,  
we were driving prisoners  
~~and~~ D.P.'s around. And  
we had 60 D.P.'s on  
3 trucks, that would be  
180 D.P.'s or prisoners.



And we were going through  
this town Fieser, Germany and  
(starts crying) this officer  
says to me in charge of  
the prisoners he says there's  
a boy here. It always  
makes me feel bad. But  
he says he only lives up  
the street about a 1/2 of a mile and  
you do him a big favor.  
I said what's that, well  
he hasn't seen his wife  
and family for about 3  
years and he says your  
prison is within maybe  
a tenth of a kilometer from  
his home would you  
mind stopping so he  
could see dh (cough) I said  
sure (interrupts)

mo.k. - so they stopped for a  
while



Mr. K - (continues) so I stopped.

I said "I'll give you a  
half an hour you know  
because it was against  
rules and regulations for  
you to do that. You  
weren't aloud to release  
any prisoners you know.  
So I said well I'll gladly  
do it (cough). So he left  
and he came back within  
a half an hour. He grabbed  
me, it makes me feel bad  
thinking about it, he gave  
me a light kiss on both  
cheeks and I never saw a  
person happier in all my  
life because I had a wife  
and kids at home and I  
did it for him feeling that  
way you know

me: aha



Mr. K - So that's

me. Oh O.K. Um how did you  
did you get started in  
owning a store?

Mr. K - Well we purchased the  
store in 1956 and we  
had to pay for it by  
the month ~~(we)~~  
(wife interrupted)

Mrs. K - We put in a bid for  
it.

Mr. K - We put in a bid for  
the store and we  
paid for it by the  
month and we finally  
got it paid for.

Me - Oh. When did you start  
owning the store?

Mr. K - Well the store was  
ours and I think in  
about 7 years we paid  
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for the store.

me- O.K. Was it a family store or was it just owned by you and your family

mr.k- it was just ours.

mr.k- what was it I didn't get the question.

me- was it a family store like was (interrupts)

mr.k- well, it was my wife and I only.

me- Oh O.K. Do you still own the store?

mr.k- No we turned it over to my daughter Carol, that's the one you just met and her husband. That was (interrupts)



Mr. K. - we sold it.

Mr. K. - That was when I  
retired in 1972.

me - O.K. How many years  
have you been in the  
business?

Mr. K. - Well, in the store?

me - ~~mmm~~ mmm

Mr. K. - Well, I think it's been  
about 17 years (interruptions)

Mr. K. - from '56 to '72

Mr. K. - '72 we retired so that's  
about 17 years.

me - Mmm. Do you work there  
still?

Mr. K. - I work in a  
store on Monday morning  
and 2 hours on Saturday.



morning.

me - Oh (interrupts)

mr. k - I enjoy working with kids and people so that's the reason I work there.

me - mhm. Do you compete with bigger stores like Big Dollar and that?

mr. k - @ What was that?

me - Do you compete with bigger st (interrupts)

mr. k - No. No.

me - No

mr. k - @ You could never compete with bigger stores.

me - Do you ever deliver groceries?

mr. k - yes. When I had the store I use to deliver



to older people or crippled people  
~~people~~ or something like that  
help them out. You know.

me - mhm. Do you allow people  
to change goods?

mr. k - We had some change  
accounts but they were  
all most good people  
you know you didn't  
mind changing to.

me - yeh. Did you ever  
advertise?

mr. k - what?

me - Did you ever advertise  
like in the paper or  
something?

mr. k - No. No

me - no

mr. k - In the high school  
advis. (laugh)

mr. k - In the annual

mr. k - ~~the~~ huh ~~yes~~



Mr. K. - In the Omnibus we use to.

Mr. K. - Yeah there's some.

Me - um what goods were you best  
seller that really sold a lot?

Mr. K. - Well, most of the stuff in the  
~~store~~ store was mostly  
grocery items you know  
milk and bread

Me - mhm

Mr. K. - and staples

Me - Do you carry newspapers  
do you sell the (Interupt)

Mr. K. - Oh yes we sold a lot of  
newspapers on Sunday's

Me - Has there um. Has there ever  
been people unemployed  
from that store?

Mr. K. - what was that  
question?



me - Was there ever been people  
unemployed from that  
store like they didn't have  
a job their anymore?

mr.k - You mean that we laid  
off?

me - which

mr.k - No we had wonderful  
help ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> the store.  
I never laid off  
anybody and everybody  
there takes work  
that had to do and  
we were always sat-  
isfied with what they  
did. There was always  
wonderful people who  
worked for us.

me - o.k. what are the busiest  
hours and days at  
the store?



m.k. - at the store. well (laugh)  
but I'd say the busiest  
time where the most  
people was when the  
kids came in from school.

me-ohh.

m.k. - and after school and I'll  
tell you one thing and this  
is the honest to god truth.  
That I think we have the  
best kids that you could  
possibly get to ever come  
in our store. never had  
no problems. They were  
always nice, they were  
always friendly and  
curious. We never had  
any complaints. There  
was a few kids that  
you had problems ~~with~~  
with occasionally but  
if you had problems  
we told them. You get



the way you stay out  
until we tell you that you  
~~can~~ can come back in.  
When you do you better  
behave yourself or you  
stay out. And that's the way  
we hold it.

me - Oh o.k. @ do there anything  
else ~~was~~ that happened  
in your life that you'd  
like to tell me about?

mr.k. about the kids at the  
store?

me - about anything

mr.k. well, no just I'll say  
this. (cries). That ~~is~~  
Charlotte and I have  
been married for over  
55 years. We've got three  
wonderful children, and  
we've got 10 wonderful  
grandchildren and 9  
wonderful great grand  
children.



me-O.k. (interrupts)

mr.k. - we love them very very  
much

me-O.k.

mr.k. - that's a sentimental part

me-O.k. - well that's about it

mr.k. - that's it then

me - yep. O.k.

mr.k. - are you going to ask her  
any questions?

me - well if there's anything  
you can remember just  
tell me.

mr.k. - yep tell her something.  
there must be something  
that you remember

mr.k. - I wouldn't say anything  
that you didn't say.  
I feel the same way that  
he feels about the family.  
we love them all.

mr.k. - ~~so~~ very much

me - well thank you