

## **Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois**

### **Tom Pile Oral History Interview**

Suze Gibson, Interviewer

July 11, 2017

**Suze Gibson (SG):** This is Suze Gibson interviewing Mr. Tom Pile July 11, 2017. Mr. Pile is a resident of Edwardsville, Illinois he was a long time teacher and coach for the Edwardsville School District. Mr. Pile, you were born on a farm in Winchester and raised by a single mom, can you tell me about that?

**Tom Pile (TP):** Yes I was bor - raised on a small – in a small town, Winchester, Illinois that has roughly between 1800 and 2000 people. And ah, I lived in town until the 3rd grade and then we moved to a farm 7 miles away and it was one of my top ten worst day of my life because now I had to leave my friends and go to a farm that was isolated. Mom, was a single mother, raised by Mom until about I'm thinking just before the 1st grade and she married a gentleman from Pittsville, Illinois named Everdunn, and ah she carried that name and I had a sister three years old, older than me, and she did not want him to adopt us, which I can't understand why a three- year-old would have that much power and he probably should have because he was just like a dad, you know, so he just passed away in 2013, and he was 92, so for, and I'm 73, so for - almost 70 years he was my father. So it was single mother for a while, which, doesn't sound like much, until, you don't have a dad, he left when I was born, and he moved to ironically Wood River, Illinois.

**SG:** Okay, after college you went into the army and completed a year in Vietnam, did your military experience influence your teaching or coaching?

**TP:** Well, yes. But everything then did, everything effected [microphone falls] my teaching I think it started when I was old enough to remember what I did, my mother affected how I taught, my granddad affected how I taught and why my ah, upbringing in little small town of Winchester growing up on a farm definitely affected my coaching and my teaching, ah you know farmers lot different than other people they're - you gotta do certain things, gotta be regimented and stay on task, those type of things so then ah, I had experiences in college. Ah, one of the reasons I went into teaching is ah for selfish reasons when I was in high school Kaye was a Christian and I was a Methodist and I heard the Christian Church was gonna go to Jacksonville to the mental hospital around Christmas and you know play games and show their support and do the right thing. Well, I wouldn't do that, I think I was about a Junior in high school, I'm not going to go do that, and but I went, I finagled my way in, 'cause Kaye was there, and so I went up there but I never saw Kaye so I start playing games with these patients, and ah talking to 'em, visiting, laughing, trying to do the right thing and when I got done and coming home I went to bed and I was laying there thinking: "Gee, whiz, I mean I got this warm feeling in my body that was I never felt before with helping these people and so going there for the wrong reasons came out to be a right reason, so that's number one why I went into teaching, two, ah, these are outta order, Kaye and I were married and we went on R&R to Hawaii, and a guy we took a tour of the Arizona, and the guy was on there telling a story, had a suit, looked immaculate, he would go up high then down low and pause and very effective message on the Arizona even when we got done I didn't have any money I offered him a five dollar bill as a tip

which was unheard of in '68 and he said: "Oh, no, I tell this story because I love it." He said: "I'm a lawyer and I do this every Sunday." And I said, "Well, you are absolutely wonderful." But here's the deal, he was storyteller and he was telling a story of the Arizona and he made it so real a couple times I even ducked like these Japanese Zero's were coming in and I said "Man, that's pretty powerful." So, if you - so that's what I did, I was a storyteller as a teacher. Three, ah I was in college at McKendree and a group was going to East Saint Louis to teach young kids to help young kids read and we did that for about 4 or 5 times, again, I went for a grade, all the wrong reasons then when I got done doin' it, I just felt that warm feeling again, and how powerful that was to help somebody read that couldn't. And, that was three. Four, I was going to master's program at ISU, and I could get three hours credit if I would go to a camp at Bloomington, Lake Bloomington, for underprivileged kids and I said yeah, I'll go, yeah three hours credit, my God, it's only a week so again, for selfish and not the right reason I take this on, I get there and we got 12-year-old kids and I mean they absolutely do not know how to act. So I'm the head of the cabin I got the oldest cabin, 12-year-olds, and probably the worst we got a kid named Reggie that was a bad actor I mean this kid didn't know how to act he was the worst. I had little problems with other kids in the cabin so I approach him and I said: "Will you help me?" you know, tryin' to throw some responsibility on him, and he said ah, "No!" real emphatic he didn't like me he didn't like whites, he didn't like anybody. Well, for some reason we were practicing for Olympic at the last day and he ran and he clearly was the best athlete in the camp. There was boys and girls there and all kinds of ages. I think it started from oh, 9 up to 12 and um, my cabin was the worst, it was the direstest, we got last every time, but I asked Reggie, we were runnin' a race, and he won and I go over and hug 'em, I don't know why cause he was in my cabin I guess and his eyes got big, like I don't think he's ever been hugged, and, so from then on we got to the cabin he said: "Yeah, I'll help ya with these other kids." I said "Geesch! Thanks!" Well, now I got Reggie in fold now I had to get the other kids one kid peed the bed first 4 nights and they'd all make fun of em' so, I told the kid I said: "Look, we had sessions how not to pee the bed." I took a bag of peanuts and my motivation for those kids was a peanut they got one peanut maybe two if they got three peanuts it was big time. I told 'em, that I'll give him three peanuts if he will not pee the bed. And I'll be damned he didn't pee the bed. So, the next night three peanuts he didn't pee the bed. Now I told all of em' to get around, we came together there was about 10 in the cabin maybe 12, 10 or 12, been so long ago I forgot, and we came together and praised the kid and calpped and I mean that really really made an impact but, I was also the waterfront head [phone rings] of the whole camp. These kids couldn't swim, they were afraid they hadn't even had showers, baths, you know, occasionally, and I say 3/4ths of em' couldn't swim by the end of the cycle through motivation and different techniques outside thinking outside the box, I had every one of em' swimmin'. Not great, but everyone got in the water, everyone swam, and I got to thinkin', man, that's pretty powerful if you can get 3/4ths of the camp that can't swim and then you teach 'em the right way and do the right thing, then, that's powerful. So all four of those plus all the things did it and Vietnam it was the Army, I wanted to teach like some Sergeants they were very effective and they would teach people that don't want to learn, that don't want to be there after 20 mile forced march and teach people how to do things right, that's very powerful, so, that'd be five things, the Army, and these deals, and I don't think Vietnam had - I already made my mind up I wanted to be a teacher when I got out, and I had a year left of college, so I went into education and ah, became a teacher, so those are five reasons why I was a teacher. PLUS! One more thing, my mom who only had a year of college and then got married to the first husband, she was a Sunday school teacher and she was outstanding these she did a ah class with young adults well they wouldn't even go to other churches, they'd come to her because of her class and how she was very powerful, so, I get a little of those jeans, I think, from my mother who would have been an

excellent teacher, and who by the way, volunteered to be the director of plays twice when they couldn't have anybody that any teacher do it so she just did it free, and um, she also ah taught reading free, volunteered reader she'd tell me stories about what she did and stuff, and, ah, so that made an impact.

**SG:** In 18 seasons as the head baseball coach at EHS you compiled a record of 508 and 147. You also brought the Tigers to five state tournament appearances and to win state championships in 1990, and 1998. In 1998, ending as the nation's top-ranked team and a perfect 40 and 0 record. When you reflect back on that record, how do you feel?

**TP:** Well, I started coaching I didn't get a, I was the head coach in baseball and basketball when I first came out of college, and I wasn't very good. I was 3 and 19 and basketball, head basketball coach of a small school in Washburn, Illinois. They never won anything and they didn't care, well I got there, and we were 3 and 19 'cause we just were terrible and so I told Kaye, I said I - either I gotta get better or get out, so I tried to get better, next year we tied the school record in the third year we set a record and never been broken in 24 wins, which is unheard of at that school. I won a heck of a lot of games in baseball, which they never won, but it was a small school and I wanted out but I did learn one thing which I already knew but I hated losing and so if you - and everybody says that hate it, you know I work hard and I hate losin' well, I'm different than that. Mine is REALLY EMPHATICALLY, I hate to lose. Ah, I was telling a guy today at lunch matter of fact, that I went to camp my grandkids are going to camp, and I told em' when I was in 7th grade I was lucky enough to go to Wisconsin to this 6 week's camp. They had everything, canoeing, swimming, the rifle, fishing, you name it they did it. Well, if we had a whole group of campers going across to Lake Tomahawk and back I would be number one. If we played softball I had to be the best, and I was little and that's another factor that drives ya, and I didn't have a Dad, and I gotta forceful granddad and very domineering mother, and that's for some reason about the 7th grade when's I changed and had to be number one. Now if you want to be number one, it's very difficult. You've got to pay the price, it's a lot of stress, and then when you do get to be number one, then to maintain that, is almost ungodly. But I wanted to be the head basketball coach at Edwardsville High School and they were noted for basketball about it. Well, I didn't get it, I finished second, and I was furious and it still got scared that was in 19 - 73' I came in 4, that was '77 1977 I didn't get it. Then, in 981 four or five years later, they throw me a bone because I did a good job teaching and a good job as a football coach a good job as an assistant basketball coach and assistant football and so they said: "Well, we'll throw him a bone and give him a baseball job. You know it can't hurt..." and I was very emotional, very temperamental, and some of the people didn't like it - about half the people liked me and about half didn't. So, but that's pretty standard and that never bothered me, and I did it my way and not anybody else's way because Harry Truman I mean I'm a historian, I mean I read a lot of books, Harry Truman is one of my favorites, I didn't like 'em, once I read about him then I loved him, and ah, he said ah: "when you make a decision, do what you want and what's RIGHT because 50% aren't gonna agree with ya, and 50% will, so do what you want." So I did it that way, in teaching, and coaching I did it my way because half of 'em don't like ya, and half of em' do. I mean I've had parents, I've had kids about 4, the honor spot, 3 or 4 in a lineup, and those parents didn't like me, and you know they started every game, they hit 4, they didn't like me, well one of 'em I found out because I didn't pitch 'em, he wanted his son to be the pitcher too, well we tried him out, and he threw fastballs, threw harder than anybody else, but his ball was straight and it didn't move, and he didn't hit corners, and he couldn't locate so we didn't use you know, and then why use him when we'd get work with other guys, make them better, and also he'll be a better outfielder and a better hitter if he doesn't have to do the pitching too. But they didn't realize that, they don't realize what's going on, but getting back to the,

what was original question? [laughs]

**SG:** How did you feel about your record? And your 18 seasons?

**TP:** Oh! Okay! Yeah we're talking sports, well, I mean, the record speaks for itself, 64 in a row, unheard of, state record: 48. We'd massively destroyed it, we're 4 away from the national record, and we would have won it, if we had a team beat and they beat us on a two-run wind-blown home runner we would have 72, which, 68's the record. There again, you see, ah when I was in the army, I had to be number one, I set a record in ah, the PCPT Test I had to run the mile with combat boots in 6:30 I ran it in 6:29 I had a hemorrhoid operation three days before I took off my boots in my fatigues, and I was down to my shorts and I had blood all over the place, but I'm going to run 6:29. I'm going to make the 100 points. So, I don't know why... I do know why, but I was driven and so my kids bought into it, but the main reason why we did so well in baseball mom and dad were down, and my Kaye was sitting here, and I just got the job we having dinner, and I hit the table all three of 'em jumped about a foot high, Dad, Mom, and Kaye. I said I'm going to take Edwardsville Baseball to levels they've never even heard of, or dreamt of; well we've been nationally ranked first time ever 8 times we were number one in Saint Louis from Illinois School 8 or 9 times, and um, we set all kinds of records, we won two state champions, we were second 39-1, lost a championship game, we were ranked number one in the nation, so, I was driven there is no question about it and luckily my kids bought into that, and they hated to lose as much as I did, and we feared no one. When we went to Chicago to play in state tournaments, it's another day. They're not afraid of Chicago, they're not - the only person they're afraid of is me. And, I was very hard on 'em, but I hugged 'em. I was a hugger. If they did good, they got hugs, if they did bad, they got yelled at, and benched, and I don't know but I think I'm smart enough to know I better be hugged than yelled at, and there's a reason for that I had two teachers that were like that and I learned that from them. And I better be hugged than yelled at, and definitely would rather win than lose. And my little Edwardsville kids, and I had little kids, 130 pounders that would go up against these Chicago kids had buy a sense they looked like Atlas, and we'd thump 'em, beat 'em 10-2, 11-0 because we were fearless. And that's the way you win the state title. You can't be afraid of anybody.

**SG:** So how did you become so knowledgeable about coaching baseball, and football, and basketball for that matter?

**TP:** [laughs] that's a good question. When I was a kid, I worked on the farm and I asked dad there was a game of the week, there was the only game that was on TV, back in my day. And Dizzy Dean, Buddy Blackner, and ah, I'd ask dad I'd say: "Look. I will work on the farm ah, the game starts at 1, so I will take off at 1, and, til 3:30, maybe 4, so that's extra hours so I would trade with him, and I'd put in extra hours so I could watch the game and I'd sit there, and I was mesmerized by the game. The purity the throw, if you make a bad throw, the guy's safe, if you miss a base, cutoff man, the guy goes to another base, if you make an error they get another at-bat, so all of that - I was - I didn't know that I was doing it, but tell you the truth I was studying it, and absolutely loved the game of baseball, but I loved all the games, basketball, football. When the Cardinals used to lose when I was a kid, 7th grade, I'd cry. When they got beat in a game in the 50s and Karl Siwaski [?] of Milwaukee hit a three-run homer and beat 'em and that didn't mean anything because they're still 7th place but I kicked out a TV. I just went over, we had an old black and white TV, and I kicked out the whole damn thing out mom and dad looked at me didn't say a word, and then I got the bill, \$75 took me two weeks of farmwork to pay for it and that was it, a new

black and white picture tube. So, even back then I hated to lose, I was very emotional, very passionate, I listened to Illinois basketball, they'd lose, I'd get so mad I'd throw the radio of even cry when even Edwardsville players were up there there was ah, Manny Jackson and Govon - I didn't even know Edwardsville but I knew they were from Edwardsville, Dono but no, I was very studious I read books I read every Johnny Wooden book when I got the head in basketball job at Washburn and I didn't use 'em. I tried to emulate Johnny Wooden but hell, they got guys 6'10" 6'8" I got little ragamuffins and I'm trying to do what Johnny Wooden did with all his talent, well, it didn't work. But, some of the things I did use but I read books, I watched TV, today, on a Saturday, college football, I'll watch football from 11 in the morning til 1 at night. Every game. And I'll flip and know what's going on, in one setting with the flipper which by the way is the most important invention since the wheel, the flipper. So, ah, no I was possessed and read and studied and looked at other games, and coaches I umpired which helped me in baseball I'd see the good things coaches would do and the bad. And I would emulate the good and leave out the bad. I learned the situations and plays by umpiring and I went to every Cardinal I could go to. If a church was going to a Cardinal game then I'd call the minister and ask 'em if I could go if a kid was having a birthday party, and I wasn't invited, I'd call the parent and say: "Can I ride down with you? I won't bother you I won't do nothing, I just want to go to the game." So, and I watched every move. So you know, when you're obsessed and when you you know I got a pretty good memory, and I just stored all that stuff and what didn't work for us in practice, then I'd change it, or what did work we kept. And we didn't -I didn't like shaggin' I didn't like certain things in baseball, we didn't do em' we didn't shag. A guy would hit a ball, he'd go get his own ball. I didn't want him to be bored. I want my other guys hitting. We had 21 stations we went around we took 300 ground balls, 300 fly balls EVERY DAY. We had situations 300 ground balls a day when I played I might get 3. We had 300. Per player. And there was a system in the way we'd do it and I had a buddy come out, he snuck in and we went down and saw him standing there I thought he was spying he said: "This is unbelievable." And he was a player and he coaches some and he said: "I can't believe it. It's like an orchestra. You got a million balls going around and nobody ever gets hit." and I said: "Well I came up with it, designed it." I had an umpire, major league umpire come over from Vandalia he heard about me, he wanted to see a practice - he said: "You outta patent it, give it to minor leaguers and major leaguers and patent it." He said: "This is unreal." But we covered every aspect of the game and we had 21 stations and we'd move. I'd say: "Alright. Move." Boom! They'd move. No talking, no nothing, all work, all business because I'd pick kids that were tough. I'd rather pick a tough kid that couldn't hit and couldn't field and teach 'em but I want him tough. And I want him mean.

And I want him to pay the price. See a lot of guys will keep a good athlete but he's a bad actor or he's not disciplined I mean he won't get the bunt down, they'll go, I hear other coaches, "Well we'd won another game if my guy got the bunt down." Hey! My guy's got the bunt down. How come? Well, we practice that every day and I expect them to get it down, and when they did get it down which was 98% they'd get a hi-five from the team. We had guys hit home runs they wouldn't get a hi-five but if they got a bunt down, they got they get a hi-five. Matheny, Cardinals La Russa, they both could won a lot more games if they used the bunt and steal and hit and run and all that no, wait, and a yadda who can handle the bat hit it into a double play. I get furious. I mean, hit and run, do something different be creative, think outside the box, they're like robots! They get paid \$2 million dollars a year a ballplayer who's getting \$40 million a year and can't hit; hit 280, ah 250, and a manager just sits there, and that's it. So I get very furious over that too, go ahead.

**SG:** Okay. You have said that the kids love to compete when referring to the high school students, you've

been quoted saying: "I demanded a lot, and I got a lot." How did you instill that work ethic into your athletes?

**TP:** Fear. They were, they knew I hated to lose, and they empathized that. And I had great assistance. And they hated to lose. We were all three different personalities all three different but we all three had the same objective. And that was to win. And they just didn't want to make a mistake. Because with me, they knew I wanted to win, and also they didn't want to get chewed out. With the other coaches they just didn't want to let them down. They didn't yell much but they just look at em' like they were disappointed, you let me down, you know you threw a strike right down the middle and he hit it. So you disappointed them. You made an error; I worked mostly with infield, and hitting if they made an error it just it killed me. And we didn't make many. We made mistakes but we made less than the other team and that's the key. Make less and expect failure. We you know you're going to fail in baseball, you're going to strike out, you're going to make a mistake you know, but make less than the other team. So, basically, I answered most of that question in the previous answer.

**SG:** Yes.

**SG:** You've also said you can't coach unless you're emotional. You might as well give up. Is that for you personally or do you believe that goes for every coach?

**TP:** Well this is the problem why I get in trouble. I criticize most coaches and managers and they say: "Well, Tom, don't you like any of 'em?" well in the Major League Baseball level, no. Because they are all weak they are all robots, they don't care - I mean they care, but they don't want ta, like Matheny I think is soft. He's he answers questions brilliantly, but that's not what happened. And, he's soft because he doesn't make em' accountable. He's not tough. Not that you have to be as tough as me or as mean as me, but you he's soft. And all the others they don't hit and run, they don't steal bases well I don't squeeze because he might miss the ball, and I'll be yelled at. Hey! I squeezed all the time I had 4 squeezes win the state title in 1990. Four! Unheard of! I've got 105 records that state there's a list of five. Top five. Well, I'm in, well we were in it when I left, 105 times. Um, hey, you gotta have guts, you've got to have emotion. You're got to have PASSION I question Matheny I'm just using him as example his passion and his emotion and his teaching skills and what's he tellin the coaches to do. He's got 100 coaches, and they can't bunt? They can't hit and run? They can't hit a fly ball? Something's wrong. And um, I can teach a kid to bunt in 15 minutes. I could come over and teach your kid in 15 minutes how to bunt now, to make him real good, then he's gonna have to do it. And do it. But I could teach him the proper technique and um, they don't do it. So I get upset with that. (30:13)

**SG:** Okay. As much as you like to win, you are also known to be fiercely protective of your players and won't overuse them. Has it ever caused you any problems?

**TP:** Three of my biggest mistakes are because of that question. Tommy Price in 1988, probably our best pitcher went to Notre Dame on a full ride which is unheard of. You don't get a full ride in baseball. But I negotiated that for him. I took him out in 1988 as a sophomore because he's throwing, he's walkin' to bunt. We're ahead 6 to 1 against Barrington of Chicago and they won the legion state tournament the year before they got everybody back, they're stacked. We got 'em down 6 - 1, well now, it's 6-3 because Tommy's walkin' the ballyard so I take him out and then the floodgates opened. We got got beat 9-6, it

was semis, if we would have won that game, we would have gone in the finals and I think we would have won, so we would have another state champion. I took him out and that's one of my big mistakes, and also he pitched a lot there at the end and I didn't want to ruin his arm. But the worst one, was 1991 the next year, we're 39-0, we're back - we could be back to back state champions number one in the nation we're ranked, ah, about 5 or 6 things go down. I had two pitchers not a third. The third pitcher, championship game against the all-world team, Thornwood of Chicago they were all world they had two major leaguers on it, Cliff Floyd and Taylor guy, and I had to pitch little ragamuffin weighed a 130lbs but he was competitive, tough, he just wasn't good enough to face 'em, but my 1 and 2 who might have beat 'em, they came in the room the night before or that day we went back to take a nap, we played two games Saturday, and one of em' pitched Friday whole game, and one of 'em pitched Saturday a whole game, both great pitchers, they begged me, begged me to pitch and they said we'll split it, you know 3 and half and 3 and a half or 2 and 5 or 3 and 3 and then maybe one guy come in to finish it, we'll split it. Please, begged me, because they knew how I coached. I said no. If they blew out an arm, and then both of them went to college on a scholarship, one of them made the majors, Jason Boyd, and he made the majors if they would have not blown out an arm, I couldn't forgive myself. There's a kid from Harrisburg, center fielder, I mean a pitcher and a center fielder, and he pitched, and they won the state, but he pitched every game in through 130 140 pitches, and then he was done he had a major league arm and they pitched - legion all the time, and then his arm was like a rag. They blew him out, a kid that had a lot of talent, and um, no, I couldn't do it. But, if I look back I look back on it, maybe I could have gone 2 and 2, maybe, and that'd be 4 innings and maybe let Droskey pitch the last three and hopefully we had a league. We were ahead in that game 2 to nothing by the way, and um, lemme tell you about the first inning. The first inning I got Dean Surry kid stole 65 bases, which is unheard of, nobody steals that many. They won't steal that many if they had a four year career he's got a state record, and he broke his own record the next year with one more. He leads off, he's fast, he gets thrown out the shortstop makes a great play, son's kid. He's out that far, second guy Drosty gets a double. So it had been second and third or one one nothing. He gets a double, then we come up with ah Slimmer. Slimmer gets a double. So we're ahead one to nothing Slimmer's number three, fast, so, their catcher got hurt and all relaxin' [?] and he just start playin again, and in the sectionals. So, Slimmer's still third, so that'd give J.J. Server my catcher, more of an opportunity to take the pressure off of him, he hit a fly ball, hit a ground ball, they'd score. So I'd still third. This catcher threw a I could heard the whistle [imitates whistle noise] and they keep him right on the base, and Dave slid in to - he's out like that. So I got two outs, by under an inch. I can't believe that he's out, but he was. I'm right there, I mean, both calls were good. And, ah, so, and then J.J. hits a home run. See, but I'm aggressive, was I mad at myself? In that situation, sure, 'cause I could have had three runs, and if Dean - if Dean's safe, I could have had four runs, we could have had four runs, first inning. And I got Boyd Blaski pitchin' and anybody who could attack on a couple more, it had been a whole different ballgame, but, we had two quick - we had two outs, and both of 'em, were great plays on their part, and um, and then Droskey ran into trouble second inning, he got 'em out 1,2,3 in the first. But um, it didn't work. So if I had a do- over I might have pitched 2 and 2 to answer that question. Maybe! I don't know.

**SG:** You have the nickname "Moto" - how did you get that name and what does it mean?

**TP:** Well I got that at McKendree I can't tell you, my wife doesn't know, my kids don't know, and the only guy that knows is dead. Ah, he died he was a roommate of mine at McKendree he died and he gave me the nickname and him and I is the only knows really - well, there might be a few at McKendree know,

but I don't even know if they know. And I just stuck with me, lot of people think it's "motovator" "Moto-mouth" ah, all kinds. It's not. And it's not that big a deal, but it's kinda fun, nobody knows, and he's dead. And it's gonna stay that way.

**SG:** Not only are you considered a great coach, you also won teacher of the year honors at both Washburn High School and Edwardsville High School. What was it like and what do you think made you so great?

**TP:** Honesty. Integrity. Character. Consistency. I treated everybody the same I don't care if they're an all-American ah they were treated the same. Ah, if they're a straight "A" student an honors student, they're treated just like a guy that rides his motorcycle could care less about school. I think consistency was the most thing and honesty. And plus, I taught as a storyteller outside the box and they enjoyed my class. Nobody slept, ever. And, um, they knew better. One guy kinda dozed off and I threw an eraser at him, hit him right in the head. And ah I've thrown guys out of a second story window at Washburn, I pinned them up against the wall, I ripped their shirts off, they knew that you don't mess with me. I don't care how big you are, or how bad you are, and they didn't mess with me now they say "Oh you couldn't get away with that today..." Bullcrap. "Kids are a lot different today." No they're not! Maybe the teaching methods are different because of mandates and that's bad but you gonna tell me I'm not gonna grab a kid every coach I know grabs a kid and then if they don't like you as a coach or they wanna get rid of you as a coach, you don't win as a coach they'll get rid of you so you grab somebody. Well, I got away with murder because that's just the way I was, and you wanna fire me, fire me I don't care, because I really didn't and ah, so I was I didn't care, I taught my way, I got in trouble all the time by the principals, administrators, but ah, hey, I did it my way, and the kids liked me and that's the bottom line. Tests... oh you gotta teach to a test. I'm not gonna do that. You gotta teach from the book, one guy even administrator said "Tom you need to teach like I used to." And I said: "Why? Put half of 'em to sleep?" When I'd walk by his class, and half of 'em are asleep and he'd read to them out of the book, I said "hell they can read a book! Give 'em an assignment to read it at home when they're not gonna do it anyway, but give it to em!" I didn't teach out of a book, I didn't teach from a test, I taught out of, I was a storyteller, they knew my stories were good, and I knew when to how to not go too long in a story or not you know make it a little more information and stuff I would tell things that they would never hear in a history class. Lot of stories that I would read somewhere I was a big reader and I shared my knowledge with them and tried to make it interesting, fair, and I was consistent in my discipline. I didn't write referrals. Ever. 31 years. I'd just put them out in the hall, like a little kid, and then, next day they'd come in class and I'd say "uh huh, you're not you're out in the hall, man, where you belong." and I said "Now, if you want to apologize to me, they'd talk in class or something, and I would say, um, "You apologize to the class to me and don't let it happen again, I'll let you in." And one principal goes - "You can't put 'em out in the hall, what if they go home and stuff?" I said, "Well, so what?" "Well, they might have an accident." You know they always lookin' as - it might happen it might do this they might do that. Bull. So I was controversial, and I was lucky I had a community behind me, a lot of the big hitters in Edwardsville I taught their kid. They knew where I was coming from, I either coached 'em or taught 'em, and I had some big hitters that are not going to - well matter fact I really got two principals fired, for incompetency. But that neither here nor there. I helped they weren't very good and they're gonna go.

**SG:** Okay, you coached 10 players who were drafted and played professional baseball. Quite the accomplishment. How do you feel about that? (40:58)



**TP:** Well, actually it was more than that. Because, if you go to minor league team, that's considered professional baseball. Now I put ah actually it was three and then Tommy got a cup of coffee with the Dodgers, so we got three in the majors out of a little town like this is that's a tribute to our program, and it's a tribute to the kid. I mean that shows that they they wanted it and they were talented. And we had some talent, but really no more than most other Belleville's got talent, O'Fallon's got talent, back in the day, Collinsville not so much now, they had some great baseball teams and we're a hotbed of baseball even the little schools like Columbia, Waterloo, my God, they play good - ah Freeburg, they play great baseball. Matter of fact, a lot of cases they were better than the AA schools half of 'em and they played tough baseball. We played Gillespie a couple of times and man they come down to compete. Ah, you played Jerseyville who's half the size of us and had a great coach, and um, they complete boy, you had to play tough to beat 'em, Alton-Marquette, you know, why I like those two programs they only had one coach really. I had an advantage in 1987 we turned it around to become the best program I think because of we built a field and we built for a practice facility and we thought it was the greatest field in America. Well, my god, Florida's got 6,000 fields little league fields better than ours but it was OURS we BUILT IT there was NO MONEY, ah I raised the money we had the support was just phenomenal from the community and the kids and we had some fundraisers and one time, we weren't rushing, you know we was the first team to go to Russia to teach and play. And um, ah J.J. Serbo's a freshman I think, maybe a sophomore and we're setting there and the reason we got beat in one of those games, no lights we had to go to the LeClaire. And I said, man, if we had lights we would never lost that we would have won about 72 games in a row and he says well we'll never have lights here. I said what? He said we'll never have lights, well, we had 'em the next year. I said that's J.J. we'll have 'em up next year before you come to practice. And I wanted 'em for practice, late, and for games later, and also I built the field and several others I built the sophomore and freshman diamond field and the girls' softball and gave money - baseball money we had some left over to the football program, and ah, that whole thing came about because Dick Ford who I coached football with and he's asking if I want a baseball field and I said yeah, and so we built that and so it was quite an accomplishment and ah, but it was more for practice and that's when we really got good. We had our field, I had cages I had 9 pitching machines. I didn't have any when I took over I had three baseballs that were any good and I had 6 others that were torn. I had no bats, we had no budget I only had an \$1800 budget to run a whole baseball so I had to raise more money in the Busch Stadium game which I started with some other teams, in 1981 gave us some money. I bought my first machine, we got a dollar kickback per ticket Joe Cunningham called me and said do you want to go Busch Stadium I said are you kiddin? Are you kiddin? And he's a player you know, major leaguer, I said we'll walk down there or hitchhike, YEAH we're comin! So we were 1 of 6 teams ah three games ah now there's like 65 they got colleges comin in and we started that and ah he said oh and by the way if you sell 1,000 tickets you'll get a dollar back. I said are you kiddin? I said we'll sell and we were the number one seller for 17 years - us and my other team. I said are you kiddin? I'll sell 1,000 tickets myself. And um, I bought a machine with it, it was a big event. Little things like that were big events to ya.

**SG:** Yeah. And that baseball field that you built in 1987 received a \$700,000 make over in 2008 and was named after you in a beautiful ceremony. What was that like?

**TP:** Was it \$700,000?

**SG:** I think so.

**TP:** Or 70?

**SG:** I think it was \$700,000

**TP:** Well you might want to check that and make sure,

**SG:** I will.

**TP:** But ah yeah that's and that's a tribute. That's a tribute to Timmy who played three years for me in 1988, 89, and 90 and tough little ballplayer, wasn't very big, tough. Good ballplayer and um, he took over after me and he's done a good job with it, but it was in place the practice facility and he kept Waldo which was important and so you know and that's good. Um, ah the ceremony yeah, it was awesome, it was great, but Hightower had a BIG part in all of Edwardsville, I mean this guy, you either liked him or you didn't. He was kinda like me and we both had big egos and we both think we're all world and we both are. But the thing of it is, he was driven for some reason and man he turned this thing around he got better coaches, he got better band people, or his band people he gets a track coach from Herron that won, now they finish first, second, first, second, they're first this year, unheard of, two seconds two first track from from Herron he gets Dougherty he brought Dougherty you know Dougherty was part of it and now he's got Martin, does a good job our coaching - and Laurie Blade which was a big deal for girls, huge. And um, so I started it kinda, and made Edwardsville on the map, but then Ed took it to another another level too. And um, so we started this field and they put a lot of money in it. Now it's got ah a new ah but the hired it done. You know, we did it piecemeal which was fun, I mean now you raise the money - see I raised over \$400,000 dollars, the lights and then when I got lights then the girls want lights well they get 'em school buys 'em, and then football field wanted new lights. They had the old ones from the old high school, poles that had woodpeckers in 'em and termites but they got the new lights so it was all part of it. The school was built there because of the complex that came along. The complex came along because of baseball, you see it's a lot more important than you think all that developed from a little old baseball diamond and then football was developed and Coach Ford has nothing out there his name doesn't appear anywhere out there and it needs to be out there somewhere because he was the dude that did it when it was the AD. Dell Keller I call him up on a Sunday and I said Dell, I want to cut out a baseball field so he brings out an earth mover he works sunup sundown, didn't pay him a penny, I don't know how much fuel he used; he said what about the other diamond I said yeah let's dig it out, Freshman diamond, Sophomore Diamond, Girls Diamonds and um, course girls were down in a low place and they couldn't use one of 'em so they had to take one of the baseball fields so ah now they got astroturf at one of 'em, and they got astroturf football field. I coached football 8 years. Hey, we had nothing. We had a football field that was 98 yards. We had a 440 track that was 410. Or 415. I mean and we had to practice at the Leclaire school when I came here we had the worst facilities and the smallest school in the southwestern conference and held our own. We were second one year we won first and we were second with no facilities except a good basketball gym. And we've come now where we've got the second largest school about 90 behind O'Fallon we've got facilities you won't believe we've got band uniforms, we've got a band looks like the University of Wisconsin. I mean you know I mean they're UNREAL! I went - I know Ed came in and said well I'm going to get a new band director I said oh. He said well we finished third in a 5 man deal and Collinsville even beat us and so he says I'm going to put him in the junior high and bring in a new one. Three years later I'm in a ballgame, my God I thought Wisconsin was down here. It was UNREAL! We got an orchestra. We got drama, we got Kate Motley's all-world we got some skilled people up there, and um, I think that's what

draws a lot of people in. Sports, and the extracurricular, now I don't know about the academics I know when I went out, 7 great teachers went out and I don't know if it will ever be replaced. But um, 8 of us went out and 7 of 'em were the more popular teachers and they were very good. And usually, you're popular because you're good. You know they just don't like you because you gave me an "A" well, I might have been a little more popular because I was so easy. I didn't I mean I was really an easy teacher. But I didn't want to be hard. I don't care, as long as they learn.

**SG:** True. So you and Mike Wald, ah your pitching coach have always had a very special relationship. Can you tell me about that?

**TP:** Well that's funny, Mike was in 1980, he was a volunteer for Coach Funkhauser I took over for him in 81, he was my volunteer I had another coach and he volunteered well, he was so much better as a coach it was in his blood and he was good he had a lot of strengths he has a couple weaknesses he's only coached two years, but had a lot more strengths than weaknesses so the next year 1982 I hired him full-time as my assistant. And I had him and then in 1986 or 7 I had a freshman coach Darryl Butler and I got diabetes in 86 and I was tired I'd get more tired than I normally would and I'm going to give 100% or I ain't playin'. Well, I fell in 87, I'd get tired and I maybe didn't give them everything I wanted to give them, so I hired Darryl, and we paid him. So we start winnin', that's when we turned the tide. We won, we won 20 every year but now we start turning the corner. Darryl Mike and me, we got three coaches that are all good! And um, and then all of a sudden the other coaches - well look at Pile he's got three coaches they only had an assistant well I paid him. Rather than lettin' them pay assistants they said well we gotta get rid of Darryl I said no. I said no. Ah, and so I fought for him and we got him in and he wasn't going to get paid - he couldn't get paid that's what it was. So he we couldn't pay him but um, I mean that's how they thought they always thought that way. Rather than do something good, and positive, let's go the other way. I had a dirt dirt road down there to begin with I had a guy that was gonna give us free gravel, they said no. School said no. No free gravel well we'd have to maintain it and pay for it. Didn't want anything because you'd might have to maintain it and pay for it. And see when Hightower came in he was just 100% opposite, yeah, let's go let's get it for you, very progressive, the others would look at the negative and it was gonna cost us money. Well, and the grounds crew was spread thin and they wouldn't take care of my field and I said I'll do it, well no then it was a union thing, and so I had a lot of problems early. Lot of stress, grounds, um, you know controversial, umpires were you know, I think to be honest with you I thought they would call two strike zones, one for them, one for us, of course, I'm always partial to the umps but I had a lot of stress I had a lot of problems and um, health wise I was fainting in 98, Darryl wanted me to continue on, set a state record, in wins, and if I could have, I figured it out the other day the state record is 950 and if I was still in it today and just coaching and not teaching and having Darryl help with me and Mike, Mike's still there he's been there 120 years and um, the thing of it is - oh I don't know about him, his energy level he coaches basketball and baseball head basketball lot of stress and then he does baseball I mean he's done it for 230 years both. And the thing of it is, um, I would have ah about 1200 wins. In 16 years less than the guy that's got 950. 16 years less. So. But, I would be dead. And not getting the head basketball job I reflect back on, I'm still mad, but I'd probably be dead with a heart attack. I'm too emotional too passionate, and when we lose it just take everything out of me. I mean we'd lose in baseball and for two months, three months, all summer it'd affect me. Not good. So I got some bad things going on, it also made you good.

**SG:** So after the perfect 1998 season, then you retired. Then the position went to Tim Funkhauser he was

really young at the time but he had also played under you?

**TP:** Well, Timmy was lucky in that he went to Western, and played, and was captain and did a good job, but right out of high school, college, excuse me, he went to Triad and was the head coach so he got a bunch of wins there. I think Timmy will set the state record in wins. There's no question about it, if he stays in it long enough cause, I'm 38 I won 509 games in ah from 38. He started 22 or 3 and so he's gonna shatter my record in Edwardsville which he's already done us for wins, in one year less because everything was in place. I had I won 24 I won 24 twice and 20 once barely won 20 one year and one kid went [whoosh] I didn't want to be the team to lose you know only win 19. But and when I'm developing all this we're still winning 20, 24. And that's pretty good. But, like I said when it turned, we had the field. We had Darryl. Darryl helped. Mike's more experienced. I'm better, Mike's better things that didn't work the previous 6 years the couple little things we made them better. And every year we progress and made a better practice and it got better and better and better. I think Funkhauser and Porch who's my freshman coach ah used my stuff I think they still do, but they also improved on it. It's like Thomas Jefferson he didn't write the Declaration of Independence it was the British and the French he used it, their words, tweaked 'em, and came up with the Declaration of Independence. So, we all copy everybody it's just sometimes how much do you improve upon it Declaration of Independence, great document, he improved it. Those words. But that's the way it goes down. You know, basketball you're running other people's stuff, it just how much do the kids buy in, how much do they believe and how emphatic are you how passionate are you? How emotional are you? I mean in this little old interview, you can tell I'm in it, man, I'm passionate and I'm emotional.

**SG:** This is true. Okay so in 2014 you were inducted into McKendree's Hall of Fame. How was that?

**TP:** It was a great honor. You know anytime I'm in the wall of fame in Winchester, Illinois the first charter member in my high school, my God, they got teacher that are rolling over in their graves because I'm a charter member of the lot of great people in a little town like that. I'm one of the top five. I mean, c'mon. Ah, McKendree I didn't play - I played a little baseball and I had the inducted and one of the guys came a friend of mine Tom Wheeler he was a I told him in the speech now there's a guy it was a starting shortstop and starting point guard and I wanted to be both of those and he did it. And um, and now I'm in the hall of fame I came in with the track team that won the Nationals when they were there. I invited 21 people to go to dinner and they said Tom your speech is unbelievable and I don't know why I just I didn't prepare for it much, but I just told experience about how McKendree changed me meeting different people, ah, blacks, Jewish, different ah, Orientals. You know, Winchester I've never seen those people. And then I look they're like me. They like to have fun, they like to you know do things, play flag football go have a beer, and so that's why McKendree was very important to me. Very important because I learned. New Jersey! I don't know New Jersey people and how they act, we had great times you know Long Island, guys from the South, religious people very religious a little mix in there and it taught me all those different things. Which helps, when you teach, because you get all kinds of people.

**SG:** Yes. Over the years, you received not only 70 coaching honors for your baseball accomplishments you earned National Coach of the Year accolades from several organizations and were a three-time coach of the year honoree by the Illinois High School Baseball Coaches Association and the American Baseball Coaches Association. Six times you were selected as a Saint Louis area coach of the year by the IHSBCA you were also recognized as the area coach of the year 6 times each by both the Belleville News-

Democrat and the Alton Telegraph, you've received numerous honors and awards from local organizations as well including the Paul Ray Award from the Saint Louis Baseball Writers Association in 1998 and the Special Achievement Award from the Missouri Athletic Club. That's a lot of awards. Does it ever get old?

**TP:** No I wish I was still getting them. No, ah, I got a couple others that are in there that are very important to me, ah, baseball writers when I met Mark McGwire and there was 2,000 people down there and I got his picture, it was funny Bob Kostas was the announcer and I got Mark McGwire's autograph and then I gave him one of me, in one of those old ugly pictures high school pictures and I signed it to Mark, Love Moto. By the way, he married one of students, one of my girl basketball player. You see, and to, it's a passion with me because you don't coach freshman girls' basketball unless you love it. You don't coach sophomore basketball, JV, I mean, I coached 'em. Ah, I put everything I had into it and I learned a lot in football, 8 years of football never coached it came here and coached it. Played it, loved it, matter fact football is my favorite sport to play, basketball is my favorite sport to coach and baseball I just like the purity of the game. I mean, you gotta right on or you don't win. But um, no it doesn't get old, and I've got some other Silver Awards and I've got an award from somebody coach of the year in Franklin Life, Coach of the Year in a bunch of 'em ah, 6 in Alton, 6 in Belleville. Belleville, well, they didn't give me a lot of 'em, I think I deserved because they were giving them to me all the time and they had to pass 'em around a little bit you know, give 'em to a Bellville coach a Bellville newspaper. Alton Telegraph has to give it to somebody else and um, yeah I think there should have been more. But, that's me! That's how who I am you know, um, I got a lot of awards but there should have been more, yeah.

**SG:** Great. That's all the questions I have for you is there anything you think you should still state for this interview?

**TP:** Not really I've been very lucky, I've been driven, I had a wife. That was very important she went to almost every baseball game my God, she doesn't even care, she went to - think of how many games I've coached, she's gone to basketball games, she's gone to football games, she's seen me throw cottage cheese when I got beat, two weeks after we lost my first regional in 1981, we were playing an all-stater and I got a kid throwing up three times got the flu, and as my first year we'd go I nothing they beat us one to nothing and we had a ball hit a runner, we would have won it, but that's first and last time a ball ever hit a runner of mine but we would have won it we had the bases loaded with two runs would have scored and we went beaten an All American from O'Fallon and I came home, and didn't say a word. And then about two weeks later something happened and Kay and I had a tiff or something I don't know kid did something wrong, just got a big thing of cottage cheese and I just picked it up and rifled it and it's all over it's in the crevices and woodwork took me about three - four hours to clean it all up, but um, yeah she had to put up with stuff like that. Broken lamps, ah you know and ah, she'd been a trooper but she's got a different personality and thank god she's got it. If it was like mine we'd have been in big trouble she'd take it she knew who I was how passionate I was how much it meant to me Cardinals. She watches the Cardinals even now I think because I'm so passionate about 'em and I'll come in she'll have it on. She'll have it on rather than some cooking show or a flower show, but Kay's been a big part of it. Kids, they had to sacrifice it's hard you gotta be a grandson you wanna be the best grandson possible. You had to be a son and spent time with your parents and you demanding mom especially and then you had to be a father you had to be a husband, you have to be a friend, then you have to find some time for yourself, and to do that all that and to teach 154 kids every day and then you gotta go out and coach and be good? Think about it. You wanna be good in the classroom 5 times a day and then you gotta go out and driven nobody come up

to me no principal or kid came up to me and said hey you gotta do a good job, I just did it on my own. Then I gotta go out and coach 3 -4 hours and put everything I have in it. It took a lot of energy and luckily my prep period I took a nap. I did - Darryl and I go down Darryl taught history and we'd go down and pass out both of us he was an excellent teacher and Mike ah to his credit he had a different position where he would put people in jobs and stuff it was quite so demanding and he said that he told us he said I don't know if I could do what you guys do if had to teach history everyday Honors and AP and traditional I don't think he'd still be coaching.