

Interview with Donald Daily

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Interviewer: Philip Pogue – ALPL Oral History Program

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Pogue: My name is Phillip Pogue, and we are here in Monmouth, Illinois, talking to Mr. Don Daily on the issue of district reorganization. We are in the Regional Office of Education here on February 23, 2011. Don, could you give us a little background about your educational experience, family and work background?



Donald Daily

Daily: Sure. I grew up in this area, in Warren County in Kirkwood and attended the Yorkwood schools and graduated from Yorkwood [High School]. Went to Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant. Came back to the area and began working here in Monmouth, for the former Monmouth District 38, in 1973 as a physical education teacher and later on, a coach. In 1980 I went to Western Illinois [University] in Macomb for my Masters in Educational Administration and finished that masters in 1984.

Shortly after that, [I] went to the Union School District, again, the former Union School District—because it has now been affected by the school reorganization—as an elementary principal. Then returned to Monmouth three years later and was an elementary principal, followed by junior high school principal, followed by eight years as superintendent.

Pogue: What experience had you had with reorganization prior to your time at Monmouth?

Daily: Well, in 1960, the Kirkwood and Little York school districts reorganized in a consolidation. Though I was only nine years old at the time, that was my first experience with consolidation and forming the Yorkwood School District. There were other consolidations around this area; the Warren School District was formed, reorganizations at least.

As I worked in the Monmouth district as a teacher and as an administrator, many of us that worked in the district felt that there was a real need for a consolidation involving Monmouth and the then Warren district, because it surrounds us. Of course, that didn't take place and still has not taken place.

When I was at the Union District as a principal, we often talked, in and out of board meetings, about the need for reorganization for that district. The natural partner was the southern district, which also was in Henderson County. That eventually did happen.

I was involved in reorganizing within our districts, both at Union and then when I became Superintendent here in Monmouth, in reorganizing our elementary schools, so we would be attendance centers, as compared to neighborhood grade schools. That was very successful in balancing out low income, as well as the middle and upper class in town, among the schools.

Pogue: From the experiences that you mention there, both with Yorkwood and Union, as well in the community of Monmouth, what do you remember about the community feelings for those kinds of mergers or attendance center boundaries?

Daily: Well, as you may know, in the mid-'50s to late-'50s, to that point, the country schools in the rural Monmouth area fed into Monmouth High School. At some point in the mid-'50s to late-'50s there was some hard feelings between the two communities, the rural communities and the city of Monmouth, and that formed the Warren district.

Throughout the time after that, some of those hard feelings continued, as the Warren community liked being where they were. They liked the smaller school district. They liked more equal representation on the board of education from people from the rural community.

As I became superintendent, I talked with then superintendent at Warren, Bill Reese, about the possibility of the two school districts ever getting together and so on. Bill was consistently of the point of view that he didn't think his community was, first, in a position that they wanted to consolidate with anyone and that, if they did consolidate with someone else,

it would probably be one of the smaller school districts around, as compared to being with Monmouth.

Pogue: What is the history of the Monmouth district in square miles, number of schools, transportation, size of the high school?

Daily: The Monmouth district itself, in the early '70s, was probably its largest, and the school district was around 2,200. Monmouth High School was approximately 750 students. By the time we started talking about reorganization, in the early 2000s, the school district was in the vicinity of 1,450 students, and the high school was about 450 students.

The interesting part of the Monmouth situation was that Monmouth, of course, is the county seat, the largest city in the county and about 9,500 residents. It only had an area of 6.2 square miles to house these then seven schools. The rest of the county at that time, four other school districts, had many fewer students, as a group, than did Monmouth in the 6.2 square miles.

One of the problems in the Monmouth district was always that, if someone moved in around the edge of the district, we would have to call the courthouse to see where that student would reside, because we'd have to find out where the taxes were being paid, because it was an irregular boundary.

Pogue: You talked about some of the difficulties in efforts at reorganization because of the past history here in the '50s. Was there any recent look at reorganization among the county schools?

Daily: In the early 2000s, the Yorkwood, Alexis and Warren school districts did a feasibility study about the possibility of consolidating. Along through that process, the Yorkwood district dropped out of that feasibility study. And in 2004, the now United District 304 went into effect. That included the Alexis and Warren communities.

Roseville had talked with the people to their south, the Northwestern School District and done a feasibility study, but that feasibility study did not result in a referendum. Monmouth was basically left without a consolidation partner to have discussions with.

Pogue: What kind of efforts did Monmouth make to try to expand the curriculum, even though there were no merger partners?

Daily: Well, fortunately, Monmouth was able to maintain a very strong curriculum, from the time that it had the higher enrollments. Basically, at the high school level, there had not been reductions in force, and the district was able to continue along those lines.

However, as the district got smaller and smaller and the high school got smaller and smaller, we started to run into small classes in the capstone courses, in some foreign languages. Monmouth was one of the smallest schools in the state to have a Latin program, and I believe still is the smallest school in the state to have a Latin program. At one point, we were down to sixteen students in four levels of Latin.

When we talked about dropping the Latin program due to too few students, a community effort took place to encourage students to get involved in the Latin program. That became very successful. I don't know what their enrollment is now in Latin, but immediately after that it went from the sixteen students to let's say sixty students in four levels of Latin.

Pogue: How did the discussions begin with Roseville that led to the consolidation?

Daily: Well, as I said, the feasibility study that took place between Roseville and Northwestern did not result in a referendum having taken place. At the same time, Warren, Alexis and Yorkwood did not include Roseville in their early discussions on consolidation. So Roseville was without a neighboring partner who was wanting to enter into a feasibility study.

So they had a creative thought of what if we had discussions with Monmouth and had discussions with Yorkwood at the same time? And if that were to take place, would they be able to have a mock election to determine which would be the community's preference as a consolidation partner?

Of course, one of the obstacles in discussing anything with Monmouth was that we did not share a contiguous border with the Roseville community and the Roseville School District. However, Yorkwood did. So, once again, the Roseville people had the idea of seeking a waiver of the school code to get the approval that would be needed to have discussions with the Monmouth District.

Pogue: You had indicated that Roseville at one time had looked toward Northwestern. Had they ever looked at Union, south, or to the east of Roseville?

Daily: Avon? Not to my knowledge. I would not doubt that there might have been some informal discussions or feelers out, as to the interest of those school districts in starting a feasibility study and maybe a Committee of Ten. But Roseville had had a sports co-op with the Yorkwood School District, so I think that's why they looked to Yorkwood when Yorkwood backed out of the feasibility study and Committee of Ten with what is now United [School District].

Pogue: You indicated that there was a mock election. Is that one where the district organized a ballot and people actually came into the school to vote, or what was that type of election?

Daily: Very much so. Harold Ford, former superintendent at Geneseo, led the feasibility study between Roseville and Yorkwood at the same time that he led a feasibility study between Roseville and Monmouth. It was determined that we would use the resources of Monmouth College to organize this mock election. And it would only take place in the Roseville community, because they were the ones making the selection.

So this mock election took place in, I believe, the spring, and the Monmouth College group did organize it, did staff the voting polls and counted the votes. The preference was Monmouth, obviously, since that is the way it ended up, and Yorkwood has since annexed into the United District.

Pogue: Once that mock election took place, then what happened?

Daily: A Committee of Ten was formed immediately. The Committee of Ten did everything possible, during its work and study, to follow the recommendations of the feasibility study that had been conducted by Harold Ford and others.

Pogue: Could you give us kind of a timeline as to what months and years we're talking about, going back to the feasibility study, the mock election and then when the Committee of Ten was formed?

Daily: Sure. The new school district went into effect in July of 2005. So, I believe that probably about January of 2003 would have been when representatives of the Roseville district contacted me first. Then I contacted our Board [of Education] President, Barbara Clark, about the possibility of going after the waiver. We contacted the state representative, Rich Myers and State Senator John Sullivan to gain their support in getting the waiver through. We talked with state Senate and state legislature subcommittees about the waiver. We talked with the State Superintendent [of Schools] and with an assistant to the governor about the waiver.

All were very supportive of the waiver process, thought it was a unique way of problem solving, and the waiver did pass. So, the 2003-2004 school year would have been when, in the fall, the Committee of Ten took place, with a November referendum that passed.

Pogue: When you talked about that school waiver, what did the waiver actually say?

Daily: Well, the waiver was in reference to the portion of the school code that requires that school districts considering reorganization would have to have a contiguous border.

So the request was to waive that portion of the school code. The reasoning was that both the Roseville School District and the Monmouth School District did not have other consolidation partners available.

Pogue: And, did you fill out the normal school waiver form?

Daily: Yes. It was the same form that you would use, whether you were trying to get a waiver of a holiday or another part of the school code.

Pogue: Were there any challenges to the waiver?

Daily: No, there were not. There were no challenges.

Pogue: So, when roughly was the approval given to go ahead? After the waiver was approved, was that when the Committee of Ten was formed?

Daily: Correct. Well, the feasibility study would have taken place after the waiver because, in order to have a feasibility study and receive the \$10,000 provided by the State for a feasibility study, we had to first overcome the obstacle of the contiguous borders.

So that would have been the spring of 2003, I believe, that the waiver was approved. And then in the fall of 2003 would have been the timing of the feasibility study, followed by the Committee of Ten.

Pogue: What were the responsibilities of the Committee of Ten?

Daily: Well, the Committee of Ten has to set a tax rate for the referendum. They have to determine how they will have representation, whether that would be through an open representation, an at-large representation of seven members of the school board from any part of the school district, or by equal population areas.

This Committee of Ten decided to go with the seven at-large members of the school board. [They] had to set a tax rate, and they were responsible, once the referendum took place... There were some things they still could not do until July, when the school district would become effective, for implementation. But they could then do the hiring necessary to have the school in place.

Pogue: How did the members of the Committee of Ten get picked, or how did that get formed?

Daily: Each community, each school board, provided five members for the Committee of Ten. Now, in doing a consolidation, it could be done through each of the school boards, or it can be done through petition. This was done through the school boards.

- Pogue: Were there any debates on what the tax rate would be?
- Daily: It was a goal of the Committee of Ten, as I said, to follow the recommendations of the feasibility study as close as possible. So, the feasibility study recommendations were not very far off from the present tax rates at that time in each of the two school districts. So, the Committee of Ten decided on those rates.
- Pogue: As for the issue of debt, under consolidation law, debt stays with the original district, unless there is a different approach. How did it play in Monmouth-Roseville?
- Daily: Roseville was in the process of finishing off the payment of a working cash fund, so that was not a factor. Monmouth had a few years left to pay off on a life safety bond. There was no discussion as to paying it off in any other way, other than the former district [Monmouth] residents paying it off.
- Pogue: Were there any unusual findings from the feasibility study, since you said that was often kind of a driving force?
- Daily: I wouldn't say unusual. I think that one of the major factors in the feasibility study was the difference in curriculum between the then Yorkwood High School and Monmouth High School, obviously, in not just offering one or two levels of Spanish and Latin, but offering four levels. Instead of an English I, English II, English III, English IV [classes in] expository writing and American Literature and other courses like that, a genetics course [was added] in the science department, to name a few.
- Pogue: You were talking then about Roseville and Monmouth?
- Daily: Right.
- Pogue: How long did the Committee of Ten continue to function? And could you give us a little more detail about their working relationships with the two boards and how the two boards interacted during this time period?
- Daily: As far as the two boards interacting during that time period, board members would attend Committee of Ten meetings, as possible. The Committee of Ten did not function after the referendum had been passed. Then we had elected board members that could start working on the employment. I earlier said that the Committee of Ten did the employment of the administration and then [the] teachers in March.

The Board of Education met monthly, or even twice a month, just as an acting Board of Education would. But items that could be put off until the July 1 implementation of the school district were. There were many items, such as how each building would be used, or would each building be used, that had to be determined. Though there had been recommendations in the

feasibility study, there had to be the formal process by the Board of Education to either accept what the recommendation of the feasibility study was or to change it. And the Board did stay with the recommendation of the feasibility study for facility use.

Pogue: We'll stop for just a bit and check how our recording is doing.

(pause in recording)

Pogue: We're proceeding again with our interview with Don Daily about the Monmouth Roseville consolidation.

Could you explain a little bit about the campaign for the referendum and how it was run and who organized all of that?

Daily: Well, it was organized by many novices, I would say. I think that it was a rather informal organization, partially because of this mock election that had already taken place. The Monmouth community had a long time to be thinking about this, because of the feasibility study with Yorkwood, as well as with Monmouth, followed by, obviously, the Committee of Ten work and then the referendum having taken place.

There was a political action committee formed and not having much of a political background, as far as the people who were leading the committee that supported it, they found out a little late that they needed to form a political action committee. But a political action committee was formed and received some donations and did what you might do in any election, have banners and signs and some advertising.

As it went through, the support for the referendum was pretty strong in the Monmouth community and was about the same as it had been in the mock election in the Roseville community.

Pogue: What were the results of the referendum? It obviously passed, and it had to pass in both districts, but what were the votes, and were there certain areas in each community that were against it?

Daily: The Monmouth community, it's hard to say of areas in the community that were against it, because you only have a few precincts, and you have one township. So, it would be hard to say of an area that was against it. In Roseville there were several townships that did not vote for it that probably—only speculation—felt that they were closer to the Yorkwood community and so on. But I don't think that changed much from the mock election, overall.

Pogue: And what were the results? How big did it pass?

Daily: It passed reasonably comfortably. I'm not remembering the exact number of votes, but it passed reasonably comfortably.

Pogue: From the information that was provided to me, Monmouth basically had a high school of about 450, and Roseville had about eighty—

Daily: About eighty-seven students at Roseville.

Pogue: What were the advantages that were listed by both districts for a successful referendum, and why would those be advantageous to each?

Daily: Well, the Monmouth district would gain by having additional equalized assessed valuations [EAV] per student, so additional resources to draw from. The former Monmouth district was in the bottom 20 percent in EAV per student, throughout the state. So that district was always very much reliant on general state aid and other state sources for funds.

The Roseville district, if I remember right, had about \$129,000 behind each student, at the time. So, for Monmouth, it was a little more stable financial situation than it would have otherwise been. For Roseville, it was a matter of gaining additional students in their high school, additional programs in their high school, additional classes, extracurricular programs, as well as curricular programs.

Monmouth did not have an ag [agriculture] program prior to the consolidation. Roseville, of course, has had a long standing and very strong ag program before the consolidation. That was something that was very important to Roseville to continue in the consolidated school district.

Pogue: What were some of the disadvantages that were being considered as a result of a merger of both districts?

Daily: Well, the largest disadvantage would be distance. The village of Roseville is twelve to fifteen miles south of Monmouth. So there is a distance, as compared to what you might have with a contiguous district, such as the former Warren district or the Yorkwood district that shared a border with Roseville. But that was seen as a lesser obstacle, because you had a four-lane highway connecting the two communities that was as safe as possible.

Pogue: Were there any building issues that had to be considered? The current consolidation issue does not give incentives for school construction—that's in a separate kind of grant allocation—so you had to be looking at existing facilities. Originally you said, at one time Monmouth had seven buildings and Roseville had probably an elementary-junior high combination or junior high-high school combination. How were those building needs fitting into a plan?

Daily: And I misspoke. Monmouth had six buildings. I did say seven, but Monmouth had six. One of the problems was that the buildings were all of use. They weren't necessarily filled, but they were all of use. Monmouth had four elementary buildings, Garfield, Lincoln, Hardy and Willis. And as I said, they had been reorganized to be attendance centers, a junior high school and obviously a high school.

Though the Monmouth High School was built in the very early 1900s, there was a complete renovation of Monmouth High School in 1978 through 1980. So it structurally was in good shape and could house the total number of students that would be needed in the high school. On the other hand, the Central Junior High School building lacked outdoor area. It was on a one-city block, and it only had an asphalt playground and no football field, no track nearby, things like that.

At the other end of the district, Roseville had a good elementary building, K-8 [kindergarten through 8th grade], at the time. Their high school building was built in the mid- to late- 1960s and was in excellent shape. So, one of the decisions of the Committee of Ten, following the recommendations of the feasibility study, was that the Monmouth High School building would be used as the Monmouth-Roseville High School building and that the Roseville High School building would become the Monmouth-Roseville Junior High, in order to take advantage of those outdoor spaces that were available, both football field, track and grassy play areas for physical education and so on.

It was necessary to do some moving of walls and partitioning to have enough classrooms for the junior high school at the Roseville High School building. However, that was somewhat easily accomplished.

Pogue: Were there any major remodeling expenses to prepare for this merger?

Daily: At the Roseville High School building, we spent approximately a \$150,000 - \$175,000 to make the necessary accommodations. What I did not say was, not all the buildings in Monmouth would be used.

The Garfield building had been a pre-K center and had been the home of the administrative offices. It was the smallest of the buildings in the former or new district. So, it was put up for sale and was sold. It's currently a Head Start location for their offices. The offices of the district moved over to the Central Junior High School building, and the pre-K also moved over there. At that time also, some regional office classrooms were moved over there.

Pogue: So far, you indicated that you had help with the feasibility study and help from the members of the General Assembly, who serve in this region. How helpful were those and others tied to getting this merger together?

Daily: Well, the General Assembly and the state superintendent and the governor's office were all very helpful in their support, in that the state does want to

encourage consolidation and school district reorganization, but especially consolidation.

We also had good support in the communities from people pitching in and jumping on committees, whether they were paid staff jumping on committees for curriculum or other committees or volunteers. We just had excellent support in not making the Committee of Ten and then the Board of Education do all the planning.

We had many subcommittees that talked about curriculum at each level, that talked about extracurriculars, that talked about clubs and building facility use and so on.

Pogue: How much time did you have to prepare for the new school district, after the referendum took place?

Daily: The referendum took place in November of 2004, with the implementation of the district taking place on July 1 of 2005, so about eight months.

Pogue: The state provided a variety of incentives to encourage reorganization. How were those incentives used here, in the new district?

Daily: The school district qualified for two incentives. One was the difference in salary schedule incentive. As that implies, if one salary schedule has a higher pay than another salary schedule, then the state provides money to offset those costs. Those were to be received for four years at \$70,000. Then the \$4,000 per certified staff member incentive was also applicable, but for three years. I don't remember the exact amount, but I believe the certified staff incentive was probably about \$150,000 at the time.

Pogue: Did you have any problems with the staff members and the new assignments with the district?

Daily: Timing was essential and lucky, I guess, on our part. Between the two school districts, I believe we had eleven planned resignations in retirements and others leaving the district. We had one administrator that was retiring. That it made it possible that we did not have to get rid of any of the administrators in the district.

I was asked to serve as superintendent. The then superintendent at Roseville, Mike Kirby, was employed as elementary principal and assistant superintendent. Generally we did not have to make a lot of changes in administration. In the teaching, we did not have any reductions in force, due to the retirements and other resignations.

Pogue: Now the district started in July, and you had become the superintendent of the new district. I assume one of your big challenges, then, would be the

transportation that Monmouth did not have to worry about before, being a somewhat land-locked district. How was the busing issue dealt with?

Daily: That was handled through a blending of what was already in place. Of course, we did have to get some more buses, due to the transportation of approximately 300 students each day to Roseville for the junior high school and approximately eighty-five students back to Monmouth for the high school.

We had Cavanaugh bus service that had been a contractor in Monmouth for a number of years [and] that continued to provide a contract. And, as I said, Roseville had its own buses, a bus fleet, and we added to that bus fleet, as Cavanaugh also added a couple of buses in order to accommodate the additional transportation of largely the junior high students.

Pogue: So you had kind of a mixture, part contract, part in-house district people with Roseville moving—

Daily: Exactly, exactly. It was not viewed to be feasible to go completely with district-owned or leased buses at the time of the consolidation, so we had that blending of Cavanaugh bus service and the district-owned buses.

Pogue: Were there any issues with the merger, as relate to collective bargaining agreements or salary schedules?

Daily: We had to negotiate a contract. I suppose it could have gone longer, but we did have good success in negotiating a contract, during the summer before the implementation of the school district. At that time we did a three-year contract, and negotiations went very well. It was refreshing and a credit to each of the communities, the way the contract negotiations went.

Pogue: When you look back at the eight months of planning that you had, basically from November to July, what were probably the most difficult things to settle on?

Daily: Well, (sigh, small laugh) when people throughout the state talk about killing the mascot as being the most difficult thing to do, I think that certainly was something that was not so difficult, in that both groups knew that there needed to be a new identity for the school district. But then, deciding what that identity would be took a little time.

We had to, of course, think about how to best use the facilities. It was very important to the Roseville community to keep their elementary school open. So that was not only a matter of educating their younger students down there, but also it was a community concern. Since [then], the school district has closed that building, due to financial reasons, and it has closed another building here in Monmouth, due to financial reasons. That has been one of the negatives that has taken place after the consolidation that is regrettable but probably necessary.

Pogue: Now that you look back five years at this merger, what advantages had you hoped for that seem to still exist? Also, what the new advantages have taken place that you maybe had not planned on?

Daily: Well, I believe that there's been good participation from Monmouth area students in the ag program, which of course would not have been the case prior to the consolidation. The high school curriculum continues to be strong and has held up. Once again, as I just said about the facilities, the school district has experienced financial problems, just like every other school district in the state seems to be experiencing, so these things are under review, just as we speak.

Probably an area that was somewhat of a surprise—but should not have been—was the students blended immediately. There was no, I'm from Roseville; I'm from Monmouth. It's Monmouth-Roseville, and the students just blended very well from the very early stages of the first school year.

Pogue: Did you have any concern from parents of Monmouth students that would now be going to the junior high in Roseville, since they had not been used to busing and pick up times and road conditions?

Daily: We did have a few concerns that were noted. But most of those concerns were related as to where they would get picked up, whether there'd be pick-up and drop-off spots throughout the city of Monmouth or whether it would be going to a central location. We decided on going to a central location, because inside the city of Monmouth, or at least the school district boundaries of Monmouth, it was not possible for a student to live more than one-and-a-half miles from the pick-up, drop-off point, so it would not be required. And we had a concern that if we did have various drop-off points and pick-up points for the junior high students, the amount of time that might take, as well as, would there be a need for additional staff to supervise?

Pogue: As far as extracurriculars, in some mergers that might lead to an expansion, because you have smaller schools that suddenly create a much larger entity. In this case, Monmouth was a fairly large high school, in comparison to Roseville. For the Roseville kids, it would mean additional opportunities for different things that they could participate in. Were there any actual extracurricular groups that were now formed, because you had another ninety students?

Daily: Not at that time. Soccer has been added since. But at that time, no additional extracurriculars were added.

Pogue: Going back to the support you had from the members of the General Assembly, who in particular helped you during this time period?

Daily: Former Regional Superintendent Bill Braden was of great help in heading us in the right direction, as to who to contact and in the procedural portions. As I said, State Senator John Sullivan, State Representative Rich Myers were of great help. Mike Kirby, who was the former superintendent at Roseville is also the

Mayor of Roseville. So that helps also; I'm sure. And we had several people from the Committee of Ten that remained very active throughout the planning stages, after their responsibilities were over with the Committee of Ten, that were very helpful.

Pogue: Were the new members of the Board [of Education] elected at large, or were they elected by districts?

Daily: They were elected at large. The first Board of Education had four members from the Roseville area and three members from the Monmouth area.

Pogue: And of those seven, how many had been involved in the past Boards of Education?

Daily: I believe probably five. I believe so.

Pogue: Did you use any district mergers, earlier than the Monmouth-Roseville, to serve as a model, or because Monmouth was somewhat larger than Roseville was this just kind of setup that they could fit right in?

Daily: There was a concern, I know, on the part of Roseville residents that they didn't want to necessarily lose their total identity. So, the board was especially aware of that. It was easy for that fit right in, because the high school building was able to accommodate and so on. But there certainly was concern that it not look exactly like Monmouth, that some of the traditions that Roseville had would continue and so on. There wasn't a concern on the part, I don't think, of Monmouth, in that Monmouth High School had been the size that the new district's high school would be, not that long ago.

Pogue: Well, one of the things that had to change would be, I guess, nicknames. Monmouth had the unique name, Zippers. Roseville, I think, were the Panthers.

Daily: The Panthers.

Pogue: And you ended up with Titans. How did that take place?

Daily: Well, as I said earlier, everyone knew going into it that the former nicknames, the former colors, would go by the wayside to create a completely new identity.

There was also difficulty in determining what the district would be named. Would it be named Warren County Central, or would it be named, as it is, Monmouth-Roseville or something else? In deciding what that would be, the Board talked about, well we do want people to know where we're from, as compared to something that would be totally different, some independent type of name.

The Board of Education involved the community in determining what the mascot would be and in determining what the colors would be, had high

school students vote, had input from the community, had a subcommittee on that after the referendum had passed. And I think, for Monmouth people, because the Zippers were unique, in that there is no... A person who wrote a book on school mascots in the Chicago area, contacted me and said, "Please don't kill the Zippers name, because it's the only mascot in the country that has got that name." Of course, that had to go by the wayside. But, people get over that.

Pogue: As far as the issue of school reorganization, now that you have gone through this experience, plus your own experience at Union and earlier as a young person watching Little York and Kirkwood merge, what advice or suggestions would you give the State Board of Education, General Assembly and the governor related to school reorganization?

Daily: I would agree with those who believe there should be more school reorganizations, whether that would be consolidation or annexation or other forms of reorganization. I believe that we have an efficiency in the larger organization. I believe we have more consistency in our curriculum, because of the larger organization.

There are certain challenges that reorganization cannot address, the challenges of aging facilities and the challenges of unused facilities. As I said, now five years later, sooner than people would have thought and sooner than people would have liked, the Roseville elementary building has been closed and deeded over to the village of Roseville. The Willets building, here in Monmouth, has been closed and is, I believe, still undetermined what its fate will be.

But, the students are benefiting from the consolidated school district. Students from both communities are benefiting from the consolidated school district. I am a proponent of reorganization and consolidation. I look forward to the next step for Warren County, which would be a county school district. I hope that happens in a timely fashion, before students and programs suffer. I don't know that that will take place, but it's certainly my hope that that would take place. We have aging buildings and, rather than build new buildings that would then have to be emptied at some point, through an additional reorganization, I would like to see a consolidation that would be county-wide that would end up in a new structure and new facilities that would serve for decades to come.

Pogue: Are there any other incentives that you think would encourage and promote school reorganization that are not currently on the books?

Daily: I believe that the incentives that exist are valuable incentives and were **very** helpful in our consolidation and would be in a future consolidation. I think that the continued stress in financial resources will be what will cause, not only in

Monmouth-Roseville and Warren County, future consolidations, but all around the state.

Pogue: Now, since the merger of Monmouth-Roseville has taken place, what has been happening in your neighboring counties, as well as in this county, regarding merger?

Daily: Well, just prior to Monmouth-Roseville, as I said, was the United School District and the West Central School District, which is all of Henderson County; the West Prairie School District, which was the previously mentioned Northwestern School District and the Caulchester School District. Those have all taken place. Just last year was the first year for the Mercer County School District. So, school districts are falling in line with reorganization, largely due to this pressing need for resources.

Pogue: Had Monmouth ever looked to the east toward any consolidation?

Daily: Well, we had not because we obviously had the Warren district surrounding us. With the exception of about a quarter mile area on the west side of the city of Monmouth and west side of the school district, Warren surrounded all but that quarter mile, and that was Yorkwood. Well, of course, now Yorkwood is part of United, as is Warren. So Monmouth is the center of the doughnut.

Pogue: You said Warren surrounds us. Since this is an oral discussion, can you give us kind of the square miles that we're talking about that Monmouth is surrounded by?

Daily: Oh gosh, no. I would have to know the square miles of the United District. However—hopefully some good math—I would say that it would be something like 200 square miles, I would imagine.

Pogue: Are there any other questions that you think would be helpful for this discussion with school reorganization?

Daily: Well, depending on your listener or reader, whatever the end result of this is, I would only encourage people to keep an open mind to what can be, rather than what has been. I think the process of reorganization is difficult, yet productive and sets the tone for the future for students of that area.

We are going to continue to be financially challenged. The taxes are always going to be a concern of the state legislature. The size of districts is going to be a concern of the state legislature. As superintendent here, prior to the reorganization, I testified in front of subcommittees on school finance, and I would take my copy of the map of Warren County, and it would be color coded by school district. At that time, there would be five school districts. And Monmouth, in its tiny six-point-two square miles, was dead center in that county map.

Of course, as you know, many of the legislators are from more metropolitan areas. And each time there would be comments about, how you can have 1,500 students in a six-point-two square mile area, surrounded by this other area where there is no density of population, and not have everybody in one place? I would just recommend that people keep an open mind, and let problems from the past stay in the past, and look to the future.

Pogue: In closing, since you mentioned about the General Assembly, recently Governor Quinn proposed 300 [school] districts as a target, with a map being drawn, much like you would draw a district map. In the past, in 1985, the General Assembly took a strong approach to try mergers and got burned with it. Often, they had more liberal rules about allowing districts to merge by just having [school] boards vote four to three, and you become merged. People complained, and that led to, No, you had to have a referendum.

Daily: Right.

Pogue: They sometimes went back on encouraging referendums with a few more steps, as well as liberalizing it, where a certain township might not defeat the whole merger or having one district perhaps kill a future merger in allowing them to vote earlier if district five opted out.

Do you have any sense that the General Assembly, from your experience, which has been helpful on local issues, would want to get involved in major, statewide shake-ups?

Daily: I would see that the General Assembly might get involved in reducing or eliminating the dual district situation, where we have the feeder districts and the elementary districts feeding into the high school districts, in order to umbrella administration.

I think, otherwise, the General Assembly will face, at least in the near future, enough local pressure not to get involved that the reorganization of school districts will still be controlled more by financial situations than by legislative situations.

Pogue: Well, this concludes our interview with Don Daily, explaining about the Monmouth-Roseville merger, here in Warren County. We thank him for his time and interest in the project and for the responses that he gave to our questions.

Daily: Thank you. I enjoyed it.

(end of transcript)