

## Kinmundy-Alma Community Unit School District #301

“Perhaps the heart and greatest source of pride of any community lies in its school. After all, it is where we send our most cherished possession, our children. Indeed that is where we hope they will both learn and prepare for their future.

During the next few years our school district forged forward. The goal and objectives always seemed clear: to provide each student with the best education possible to better prepare them for a productive and happy future. And, in so doing, to challenge each student to use his/her talents to strive both academically and personally to achieve their goals both in the classroom and in all areas of their school life.

Superintendents and Board members alike worked very hard to hire quality administrators, faculty and staff. Often they faced the challenge of hiring the best with less than competitive salaries. It also became increasingly difficult to keep quality faculty, staff and administrators due to our inability to offer competitive salaries.

Through the years, it seems that we were blessed with both certified and non-certified employees that were actually willing to commit more than an eight hour day. Many indeed dedicated their lives to this school system often taking on extra-curricular activities and coaching assignments with little thought to the salary received for the extra duty. It always seemed someone stepped forward even to ride a fan bus, sponsor a club, or chaperone an activity.

Students who passed through those halls hopefully have wonderful memories, I know I do! When faculty members are willing to laugh at themselves as well as the situation ... I remember many faculty members who were willing to put themselves in ridiculous situations for the kids they loved. Faculty took part in the craziest skits. David Powless, Steve Burgess, Bud Alberson, and David Gray even donned wigs and cheer uniforms as they actually attempted to lead sidelines and cheer. I have actually seen Coach Shirley let cheerleaders shave his legs in a pep assembly!! Remember seeing students “snake dance” downtown for cheers and chants and then “snake dance” back to the high school for skits both in the gym and around the bonfire. Remember when David Powless shocked everyone when he dressed as a pioneer woman for one such skit! (He made a pretty ugly pioneer woman.) Then it was on to the cafeteria for hot chocolate and donuts!

Ernie Donoho, Richard Yandell, and Ted Phillips worked tirelessly and successfully to see that the Kinmundy-Alma school system remained a great source of pride for our communities. Always moving forward these men and members of the Board of Education were successful in establishing new programs for the school. In addition to a K-12 system, the district was successful in adding both Pre-K and Early Childhood educational opportunities. The district also worked with cooperatives such as Kaskaskia Special Education District and OKAW to offer specialized training that has proved invaluable in the lives of so many of our students.

Kinmundy-Alma held fast to its school traditions which are also a source of many great memories. The Junior Carnival brought the whole community out! It always began with the chili supper in the school cafeteria. Each class and organization was responsible for a booth at the carnival. The most popular was always the haunted house that seemed to get scarier every year. Do you remember the actual bloody hog’s head that was placed in one section of the haunted house? Basketball throw, baseball throw, cake walk, face painting .... The list of thrills

went on and on!! I even remember winning the “Kiss a Pig” contest. It is amazing what one will actually do! The evening always concluded with the crowning to the Junior Carnival Queen.

Students always enjoyed Homecoming week at school which included a lot of crazy days intended to raise the level of school spirit. Hopefully the Hornets would win the Homecoming basketball game! The crowning of the queen followed on Saturday evening during the dance. Together the FHA & FFA sponsored the Valentine Dance and also crowned their queen. Of course, in the spring, the Junior-Senior Prom was the main event! Perhaps being crowned king/queen of the Prom was the most coveted title.

Another Kinmundy-Alma High School tradition was the junior class magazine sales. Students really did get involved & canvassed the entire area in an effort to surpass the previous class’ total sales. Individual prizes were also involved. And, of course, the class worked hard to add money to their class treasury for their senior class trip. Without a doubt, that tradition was the most important of our high school to many students. The classes worked hard each year to accumulate enough money by their senior year to take a class trip which would culminate their high school experience. We have sent seniors to Disney World, Daytona Beach – Florida, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, and Niagara Falls. Some students may not remember a single day in single classroom, but they have vivid memories of those class trips. Some sponsors and administrators have some pretty vivid memories also!

Kinmundy-Alma Jr. High and Sr. High both have been blessed with memorable athletic programs. Again, some of our coaches have dedicated their lives to the success of these programs. We have been well respected as a school with athletes who developed an excellent work ethic and really were prepared to work harder to reap the rewards. The Kinmundy-Alma Warriors and the Kinmundy-Alma Hornets & Lady Hornets brought the community together in so many ways as we supported these young athletes.

Nevertheless, it seems almost impossible for the people of our district to believe in the theory of an equal opportunity for a quality education for all students as is so promised in the state of Illinois. Boards and administrators both realized full well that our economic base was dwindling annually. Our state aid and property tax payments were stretched to the limit to fund our districts financial needs. It was never the intent of the district to limit what we could offer each student both academically and in extra-curricular and athletic programs.

The Kinmundy-Alma Board of Education began to explore other means to achieve all of their goals for the district. A neighboring school district, LaGrove District #206 in Farina was experiencing very similar problems. The first thing that we shared was that of Joe Ross, Superintendent of Schools. The two boards and Mr. Ross then began program sharing at the high school level which was designed to help each school offer a quality education while sharing the talents of both facilities. LaGrove High School students were bused to Kinmundy-Alma H.S. for morning classes, while K.A.H.S. students were bused to LaGrove for the afternoon session. We had a common link with OKAW in Vandalia. Thus the bridge to consolidation was forged. Students soon tired of the bussing and actually thought the consolidation of the two struggling districts was the only viable solution. Both Boards already knew that. But, the hard sell was to the communities involved. Change is a difficult thing to accept, and both communities felt they were losing their school, the heart of their community. It was not an easy road, but, following a

series of public meetings, the consolidation passed, and we saw the birth of a new school district, South Central Community Unit District 401.”

### South Central Community Unit School District #401

“In an effort to bring the two districts together successfully, the Boards worked very hard to involve the student bodies. Contests were held to actually name the school and the school’s mascots, to choose school colors, and to decide which traditions from each school would survive the consolidation. Of course, the building realignment took front and center stage. Each community retained their elementary building. South Central Middle School was located in Kinmundy while South Central H.S. was housed in Farina. All things seemed to work together for good, and in August 1989 school began for the new district. There were some problems which included bus routes, class schedules, cafeteria services, and athletic schedules. No one handled it any better than the student body! In May the class of 1990 became the first South Central graduates.

The consolidation has brought a lot of success in many areas. Academically, we have been able to add so much to the curriculum. Each student has a great course offering to select from to better prepare them for their future. New traditions have been set in motion. We have had much success with so many programs including band, vocal music, FCCLA, FBLA, FFA, and Scholar Bowl. Our art classes have left their mark by displaying their talents throughout the building. Our athletic programs were expanded and have been extremely successful. The South Central Cougars have dominated the Midland Trail Conference and have won many other titles as well. The Lady Cougars have three sports including volleyball, basketball, and softball. They have also had much success. Our coaches have continued to expect and demand only the very best effort from each athlete. Our athletes seem to understand the level of commitment and thrive on it! The plaques, trophies, and banners stand in tribute to the athletes willing to dedicate themselves to excellence. It has been said that they bleed navy and silver.

We must be willing to continue to accept change and work to make the best from those changes. Change continues to be a part of our school system. South Central Elementary in Farina was closed due to continuing financial issues. Pre-K, Early Childhood, and Kindergarten through fourth grade students attend South Central Elementary in Kinmundy. South Central Middle School houses fifth through eighth grades.

South Central Superintendent Joe Ross, Bill Walters, Dan Hoeinghaus, and Judy Cole all have worked with their respective Boards, faculties and staff members in an effort to improve the district and add new programs that will be beneficial for our students.

We are blessed with a school that continues to bring much pride to all of the communities that it serves. We continue to be fortunate to have Board members, administrators, faculty and staff who are committed to giving each student the best educational opportunities that can be offered. We must continue to constantly improve our school system to better prepare our youth for this ever changing and challenging world.”

*(Unknown author)*