

INTERVIEW WITH

Howard Funk

on

June 24, 1964

by

WALTER V. BARRASH

Oral Historian

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY

Abilene, Kansas

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of
HOWARD FUNK.

In accordance with the Provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, John Ebert Funk of Abilene, Kansas, hereinafter referred to as the donor, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of personal interviews conducted on June 24, 1964 with my father, Howard Funk, and prepared for deposit in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall not be available for use by researchers during the donor's lifetime. After the donor's death, access to the tape recordings shall be for background use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or quote therefrom.

(3) During the donor's lifetime the donor retains all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the copyright in both the transcripts and tape recordings shall pass to the United States Government. During the donor's lifetime, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcripts (but not the tape recordings) without the donor's express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the open portions of the interview transcripts, but not the tape recordings, may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the interview transcripts, but not the tape recordings, may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

John Ebert Funk
Donor

August 21, 1987
Date

Francis Bunker
Archivist of the United States

Aug. 28, 1987
Date

Oral History Interview, June 24, 1964 with Mr. Howard Funk.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, would you, please, tell us approximately and under what circumstances you first met Dwight Eisenhower?

MR. FUNK: Well, it would be in 1909 when I first started to high school.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, in 1910 Dwight Eisenhower was a graduate student at Abilene High School and he, also, played football, could you, please, tell us how he was able to do this?

MR. FUNK: When we played football--why--we had trouble getting enough players to make a team and anyone was eligible that was in high school, sometimes the Professors.

MR. BARBASH: In other words, then there were no high school scholastic rules about graduate students playing football---anybody could play as long as they were back in high school.

MR. FUNK: Correct.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, what procedure was used to pick boys for the Abilene High School football team---did they have try outs or was anybody allowed to play that came out for the team or was there a selection made by the coach?

MR. FUNK: We didn't really have a coach--we had a fellow that came up and helped us out but he wasn't hired--or wasn't payed for it and most anyone could come out and play--we didn't have only about three substitutes.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, Oren Snyder was the coach the year you played with Dwight Eisenhower----why was he selected coach and what were his qualifications?

MR. FUNK: He wasn't selected--he just volunteered, but he was a good one.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, what was Snyder's background as far as football was concerned--did he play in college or was he just a good enough player to be able to coach?

MR. FUNK: He'd played in high school in Abilene but he was a good player.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, what sort of uniforms--football uniforms did the players wear and who supplied them?

MR. FUNK: We supplied our own equipment--sometimes, it wasn't very good. We had a sweater and a pair of football pants, that was about the size of it.

MR. BARBASH: What material were the pants made of?

MR. FUNK: They were--most all football pants--that is--duck pants with a little padding and no headgears in the whole team.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, would you, please, describe a regular practice session for us?

MR. FUNK: It was mostly running and some tackling--but it was a pretty hard practice until we got broke into it--and that would be about the size of it, I think.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, could you, please, tell us how many players there were on a team in those days, how many points you got every time you scored, that is, scoring the various ways--touch down--point after--and field goal?

MR. FUNK: The touchdowns were 5 and the field goal afterwards was 1 point but the drop kicks were 2 points---there were 11 players--the same as there are now.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, what was the shape of the football you used in those days?

MR. FUNK: Well, we didn't have very many footballs and it got pretty round before we got through with it, but it was practically the same shape only it was quite a bit bigger around.

MR. BARRASH: Mr. Funk, what was the basic formation that was used by football teams in those days--what I'm driving at is today we have teams that use the Wing T of the T formation or teams that use a lot of pro-football formations--what type of formation did you use when you played high school football?

MR. FUNK: Well, it was like their T formations nowadays--they'd most always play from a straight back instead of a T unless there was a punt and they went back to the--straight back to the punter.

MR. BARRASH: Mr. Funk, would you, please, tell us as much as you can about the first game with Junction City--I didn't find any accounts of it in the local newspapers but I did read in one of the biographies of Eisenhower that Abilene was defeated by a 2-0 score, could you tell us how they got 2-0 score?

MR. FUNK: Well, as near as I can remember it would have had to have been a drop kick and it was the only score in the game.

MR. BARRASH: Mr. Funk, the October 21, 1910 Reflector had an article about the game with the County High School and says that Merrifield, Nicolay and Hoffman starred in a 0-0 tie--now it doesn't make any mention of Eisenhower--can you tell us briefly what positions these gentlemen played--Merrifield, Nicolay and Hoffman--and if you can remember anything about what Dwight did in the game?

MR. FUNK: Well, I can't remember too much about that--we had a lot of trouble with Chapman always--rivalry--and Nicolay and Hoffman and Merri-field were in the back field--Six MacDonnell was quarterback. Ike was tackle and he was awful good man as tackle.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, the next account we have of a game is from the November 8, 1910 Reflector and it states that Abilene beat Enterprise 11-0---could you, please, tell us about that game?

MR. FUNK: That must have been a mistake some place along the line I don't remember of ever playing Enterprise---the Academy never had anything higher than a high school team.

MR. BARBASH: Do you mean, Mr. Funk, that the Enterprise Academy didn't have boys old enough to play high school ball?

MR. FUNK: The Academy never had very many pupils--it was an Adventists School and at that time it was very small.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, the newspaper went on to say in that article that the team was getting ready for the game with Salina and they asked the Abilene citizens to turn out for the game and support the boys and they gave some write ups about some of the players and said that Bud Hoffman was one of the best defensive backs in Central Kansas,-- could you, please, tell us a little about Bud Hoffman and, also, could you tell us what kind of defense your team used?

MR. FUNK: He was an awful good player and he was also the captain of the team. He was awful rough on the players most of the time--It was standard defense but there was a lot of punting in the game and we got away with a lot of ground gains by punting.

MR. BARBASH: This same write up also stated that Abilene had four good kickers--Funk and Barber were the punters and MacDonnell and Johnson were the drop kickers--now, could you, please, Mr. Funk, could you, please, tell us what position you played and about your ability to punt and Barber's ability to punt.

MR. FUNK: Why, I played tackle--right tackle and I could kick the ball plenty high and if we had a little wind--why, we had a lot of ground gains.

MR. BARBASH: How about this boy, Barber, Mr. Funk, was he a good football player?

MR. FUNK: Yeah, Charley Barber was an awful good player.

MR. BARBASH: The article said that MacDonnell and Johnson were the drop kickers--now by MacDonnell, I assume that was Six MacDonnell--- who was Johnson and how was the drop kick used in your game?

MR. FUNK: Six MacDonnell done most of our drop kicking--he was quarter-back and Johnson, also, kicked drop kicks--it was-- we could-- it was in goal distance--why a drop kick counted two points if it went between the bars.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, the next game I ran across was reported in the Reflector of November 12, 1910, in which Abilene beat Salina 18-0-- now the newspaper said that Six MacDonnell opened up Salina with passes and with the so called "Spread Eagle" offense--I wonder if you could tell us whether the pass was used very much as an offensive weapon in those days and, also, what was the "Spread Eagle" offense?

MR. FUNK: The forward pass wasn't used very much--it was a straight out pass from the side and it worked pretty good---Salina most always beat us, they had a bigger school and they had a coach that was paid to work with them all the time.

MR. BARBASH: Now, Mr. Funk, was the pass thrown forward or to the side?

MR. FUNK: Most always to the side---one side or the other.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, do you remember enough about the "Spread Eagle", as the newspaper described it, to tell us what it was?

MR. FUNK: They spread halves out probably 10 feet and then they opened for a pass either way.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, the newspaper said that Hoffsan and Ike were the stars and that Merrifield made a long run--could you tell something about Ike's playing in that game because this is the one that he's gotten the most publicity for?

MR. FUNK: I don't just remember about that play.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, coming back now to the Chronicle--the Chronicle for November 5, writes up the game with Enterprise and it said that Dwight Eisenhower ran 25 yards for a touchdown --I wonder if you could clear this up for us in light of your statement before that you didn't believe that Abilene played Enterprise because Enterprise did not have a team of high school boys?

MR. FUNK: Well, I don't remember and I played every game that year that the high school played.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, did Eisenhower ever play the backfield when you played with him that year?

MR. FUNK: No, he didn't.

MR. BARBASH: Now, Mr. Funk, the next game that the Chronicle writes up is November 11, which is once again the Abilene-Salina game and he , also, says that, the writeup says that Eisenhower made some good line bucks----did he play the back field in the Salina game?

MR. FUNK: Not that I remember.

MR. BARBASH: The November 25th Chronicle writes about the game with Russell in which Abilene was defeated--there was no score and, also, the Chronicle said that if--that Abilene was in the lead for the Central Kansas League Championship prior to the Russell game--I wonder if you can remember what the score was and if you can give us some reasons why Abilene was defeated at Russell?

MR. FUNK: As I remember it was about 12-0 and we figured that we had played the city team.

MR. BARBASH: Do you mean that some of the boys looked like they were much older than high school boys?

MR. FUNK: They sure did. We were---stayed all night with students and the next morning when we went out on the field--it looked like men we were playing against.

MR. BARBASH: Did Abilene win the Central Kansas League Championship?

MR. FUNK: Yes, they did that year.

MR. BARBASH: Did you have a good time after the game, Mr. Funk?

MR. FUNK: Yes, they tried to show us a good time but we was kinda downhearted. They had a banquet and a dance for us, treated us awful nice--we didn't take it that way.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, there is noe more game mentioned in Kenneth Davis's book, Soldier of Democracy, that is not mentioned in the newspapers and that is the game with St. Johns Military Academy. Could you, please, give us some information on that--that is, if you can remember the score and what sort of game it was?

MR. FUNK: I couldn't remember the score on this particular game--we played them each year but I don't remember the score.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, I'd like to insert this question now because I didn't ask it in the beginning, but I wonder if you would tell us what position you played on the football team and, also, what part of town you lived in in abilene at the time?

MR. FUNK: I lived in the country two miles from town and drove to town to school and I played tackle on the team for four years beginning as Freshman and Ike played the other tackle--I was--at that time I weighed about 220 pounds and I could, also, kick the football pretty good, so that helped quite a little on my being on the team.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, in later years there a lot of newspaper articles and magazine articles about General Eisenhower's temper--that is, it was--he got hot in a hurry and he cooled off just as fast but he could get pretty excited and angry at times--I wonder if this was evident when he played football.

MR. FUNK: He was a good scrapper on the field as well as other times.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, when the football season ended, did you have any occasion to pal around with Eisenhower or did you go your separate ways?

MR. FUNK: Well, I never got to pal with Ike very much afterwards because he went to West Point shortly after he got out of school.

MR. BARBASH: Mr. Funk, did you ever see Eisenhower again after he left Abilene--that is, let us say roughly from the time he went to West Point till he became famous in 1941?

MR. FUNK: Oh, not too often, he came back two different times that I seen him. He was back oftener than that but I only met him about twice after he got in the Army.

MR. BARRASH: Do you remember what the occasions were that you met him when he came back?

MR. FUNK: Well, he came back to see the family and I met him and that was about the only time.

MR. BARRASH: Did you meet him at all when he came back during the War or immediately after the War in 1945?

MR. FUNK: Yes, I met him on two different occasions after he come back to run for President and after he'd been elected President.

MR. BARRASH: Did you meet him at the homecoming in 1945?

MR. FUNK: Yes.

MR. BARRASH: In 1952, when Eisenhower came back to start his campaign for the presidency, Mr. Funk, did you have occasion to attend the party that was held for Eisenhower and I wonder if you can describe or relate any conversation or incident that you had at that time with him?

MR. FUNK: Anything of importance?

MR. BARRASH: Did you see him at all at either of the political conventions or the inaugurations?

MR. FUNK: No.

#