

The time is 12:13 PM on May 24. This is Kyle McBroom and Kathy Shaw and we're off to go interview Mr. Morton.

Kathy: We are here today, graced by the presence of one Mr. Gary Morton, who was on the Planning Team here at Century High School. What is the Planning Team, and how did you come to be a part of it?

Mr. Morton: It started out as 12 teachers that had to apply with Mr. Barnakoff, who was chosen as the principle two years before the school was opened, so we had to apply to him, and say we wanted to be on it. So the Planning Team was responsible for picking colors, names...some people had the job of designing the classrooms and how big they should be. The Planning Team was a group of 12...well, I think 14 started, and we ended up with 12 teachers who were anxious to start something new. So since I'm so old, I thought I'd shake up my life a little and come to a new school. So it was made of a team of teachers who wanted to be...actually, be a part of a block schedule. That's really how it started.

Kathy: What was your role on the team?

Mr. Morton: My role? Just be part of 12 people. That was it. We didn't have any roles; nobody had any particular role.

Kathy: You just went at it?

Mr. Morton: Uh huh. We applied for it, we were told if we got it or not, and (told) just to meet at the district office once a month, for a year, and we'll just go from there. So really, I don't know if anybody had a particular role, per se. We all just met together and pretty much through a majority, decided what would be.

Kathy: What did the Planning Team initially envision Century would be?

Mr. Morton: It really sounded wonderful on paper. But, it was going to be the first block school in Hillsboro. So we listened to some speakers...they paid them big bucks to come out here from Pennsylvania to speak to us and tell us what block was, and why classes should be 20 minutes and all that, so we had envisioned a school where we could offer more classes, keep the music, and art, and drama so it wouldn't go away, because it gets cut out of a lot of schools. We thought that if we had the block, kids would get more chances to stay in there, and we wouldn't lose art and music and all that. So, we envisioned a school where you met for 90 minutes...I kept arguing we should meet every other day. I don't think kids need to meet every day. I liked A/B. Some teachers thought we should meet everyday. 4X4. We thought it would be a great place where you could be either 4X4 or A/B, kids would have more opportunities to do things, and we would only teach three classes, not five. And I think everybody who signed up did not like the eight period day. You meet for 50 minutes, the bell rings...so eight times during the day, a bell rings, and it just causes kids to be out in the hall eight different times, and we didn't think that was too smart. So we envisioned a school with more opportunities for kids.

Kathy: Is that what initially drew you to Century? The new ideas and such?

Mr. Morton: Yes, I wanted to teach a block. I didn't think see everybody. Oh, also, we thought it would be cool if we had a gym and an auditorium from scratch, unlike Hilhi. Some people resented the fact that Hilhi did not have an auditorium at the time. So, we wanted to make sure the school had everything. 33...36 million to build it? And another thing, when it first opened, we could have anything we wanted. How many

books do you need, what do you want to teach? It was great, we could pick and choose. Now it's going to be tough, with Liberty opening, so our money's going to be really tight. When we first opened, it was nice, you could have anything you want.

Kathy: Do all of these things continually hold your interest in Century?

Mr. Morton: Yeah...yes.

Kathy: From the original goals you had, how would you view the progression of Century?

Mr. Morton: Well, I don't know if I should say this, but when Barnakoff left, it lost something. Barnakoff was a great human being who understood you needed to be everywhere and be working with kids. He was great. I just saw him the other day. I miss him L. Barnakoff's vision of the school...it was good. He walked around here, and he'd clean the marks up off the floor with his feet, he didn't like to see black marks on the tile. He'd come into your room for about 10 minutes, tell you "Good job," leave you a little note. I'm not saying anything against Montgomery as much as I'm saying that Barnakoff was a vision of this school, and when he left, I think the ideals, when it hit reality...when it came green...I don't think it was what we thought it to be. I think there's a little bit of a...I don't know. Just, couldn't measure up to what we thought it would be. Or to what it was, for two years.

Kyle: What inspired you to be a teacher?

Mr. Morton: Bad teachers. Yeah, I had some really horrible teachers. At Franklin High School, my history teacher Mr. McKey was writing on the board, and we climbed out the back windows, walked around a little bit, and came back. He didn't even know we were gone. I don't know. When I got to college, somebody asked me for the first time "What do you think? Give your two cent's worth," and I remember I'd never been asked that before. I know teachers tell you what is. That's the way it will be and this is what this means, but somewhere in there, you ought to be able to say what you think. And I think...I thought that would be kind of nice. Also I wanted to become a basketball coach. I coached for 25 years.

Kyle: Why'd you decide to go into English, and the AP program as well?

Mr. Morton: Because I read "Catcher in the Rye," and I said, "God, this is good stuff." And I just started thinking. When I was going to college, I went into a courtroom and read "To Kill a Mockingbird." I'd sit in the court and wonder what it was like. There's just something inside of me that loves literature. Basically, it's the questions that literature allows you to ask. Like, "Why?" and "What's the reason?" I just always wanted to know why. I like to cut right to the chase; I don't like busy work...stupid stuff. I like to get right to the heart of the stuff. That's why I became a teacher.

Kyle: What are you're feelings on the AP program?

Mr. Morton: I think you should probably ask that of kids. I don't know, I don't know how to answer that. I can compare...some schools only allow the elite kids in. You have to have a writing test, interviews, and teacher recommendations, and they take 14 or 15 of the best kids in school. My philosophy always was open the door and whoever walks in walks in. I don't care, you sink or swim...free enterprise. You just walk in, and you're not doing well, you'll figure it out and leave, or your getting anything lower than a C and you still want to stay in there, then hey, stay in there. My philosophy is that

let anyone who wants to take AP, take it. So we have 80 kids in the school in AP 1, and in some schools, they have 18. I don't like elitism. I don't think we should limit it to a handful of kids, who jumped through hoops and passed a test.

Kyle: How would you describe the culture here at Century?

Mr. Morton: Very blue collar. I don't know. I was watching Jesuit play Century, the boys game, and I looked across the stands at the fur coats and Armani suits, and I thought, "Who are these people?" I've never seen these people here before, and they were all from Jesuit. Rich people. I looked over at the Hillsboro side, and it was common, ordinary people, and I think the culture of Century is common, ordinary human beings. Just people...human beings. Jesuit is...I don't know what it is. It's scary...(incoherent comment on their fancy cars). I just could not believe it. I don't know what the culture is. I think we're a very blue collar school, and we have a lot of kids that come from "normal" families, who just want to go to school. And I don't think...we're far from elitist. I don't know how to answer that.

Kyle: Can you tell us some of the scandalous stories from the Planning Team?

Kathy: Yeah, we want to hear about the scandals.

Mr. Morton: I don't know...I don't know. Scandalous stories...

Kathy: Okay, well, while working on research, we stumbled upon a Silverna McCall who would often fall asleep during meetings. We were wondering what you knew about her.

Mr. Morton: Oh! Yeah, she was fired. She was asked by Barnakoff to do something else. (incredulously) That's scandalous? It was 14...12...13, and then it was down to 12, and I didn't know what was going on. I was told she was asked not to come back. So the scandal was that someone was thrown out. I didn't even know who...she never talked, or said anything. I don't even know why she applied, I don't know how she got on there in the first place. Yes, I remember that. But there was one person eliminated. (Kathy and Kyle make sounds of awe and disbelief. Mr. Morton proceeds to ask us how we found this, and we respond with how we were researching. Nothing interesting to note here, and I don't want to type it all out, for it is of no real importance.)

Kyle: What are your feelings about your peers?

Mr. Morton: (laughs)...I don't like most people.

Kathy: That's okay.

Mr. Morton: I don't. I don't like most people. I think a lot of people do a lot of fluffy and corny stuff that I'm not into. I'm talking about socially. They have office parties, I don't go. All these little awards and stuff...I don't go. I think people waste too much time running around, feeling good. Most teachers do that. I don't know if I could call anyone in this school a friend. Dave Gainy comes to mind as close. I think we've got a great faculty here...really great teachers. I respect a lot of the teachers, but not so much that I would be on a pure, friendly basis with any of them. I don't know, I guess I'm basically a loner. An existentialist. I don't mix with people well. I try not to. (more incoherence, followed by the great enunciation of the word "machine," though I'm not sure where it fits in, or what it means.) Don't ask me.

Kyle: How did your Art and Interpretation of Film class come about?

Mr. Morton: It's going okay, I just wish we had more kids. (Kathy is confused, for that wasn't the question we asked, but it's all okay, because he's Morton, after all.) Part of the problem is we compete with JagTV first period, and they're putting film class first period, and I don't think that's a good time to have a film class. It should be third...maybe third period? Fourth? In the middle of the day when people are awake. It's just really...it's tough to come in and just start watching films. It's going okay, I just wish we had more kids. Glencoe has it now as a class.

Kyle: How did it come about?

Mr. Morton: I just wanted to teach a film class. I just thought it would be nice to have a...again, going back to what we talked about, we need to offer more stuff for kids, and this school allows you to do that. A lot of schools, it just doesn't fit in. So I thought, we don't really have any way...I mean, I do it in class anyway, I show films and talk about them, why not just have a class on them? And I got a hold of a book called Understanding Movie by Gionetti, and I read that thing and I could not believe the stuff that was in there, I thought we should be analyzing (incoherent, sounds like "book," but that doesn't really fit). Film is an extension of analysis of literature. And I didn't want the arts to die, I think it's a good way...and also, it's kind of pushing...that it would be nice for the Art CAM. I don't really care about CAM or CIM or anything else. All that stuff is crap to me, I'm sorry, but I just don't agree with it. So I'm not doing it for CAM, I'm just doing it because I think kids should...and I mean, what better thing to study but film, because you do it for the rest of your life? You go to movies the rest of your life. You rent videos all the time, so why not deal with it? Yeah.

Kathy: What kinds of movies are your favorites? Do you have, like, a greatest film?

Mr. Morton: (says the following in a tone that says, "You already know this one..." and I do, but this is for your benefit) "Animal House," I love it. "Ordinary People," "Pulp Fiction," "A Clockwork Orange," "American Beauty," anything that's R-rated. I just love realism. I like realism, and I don't like films that have a lot of computer graphics in it. I don't care about "Star Wars," it means nothing to me. And I think the acting sucks, but anyway...I like films that deal with realism. I loved "American Beauty," I love films that deal with life. Real life among... "Ice Storm." Family. And films that are done well and make me think. So "American Pie" is not one of those. I mean in it's own way it's funny, but (incoherent comment about how it won't last).

Kyle: What are your ultimate teaching goals?

Mr. Morton: (laughs) I don't know. That's a tough one. Who thought that one up?

Kathy: Mel

Mr. Morton: Ooo. I don't know. I think the only goal you can have is for kids to walk out of your class, hoping that they think more than they did before. Just to take something away that allows you to think. Ehhh...it's not making money, that's for sure.

Kathy: How would you compare the atmosphere of Century to that of the high school that you went to?

Mr. Morton: I don't know if I can answer that, because I was a teenager. (I laugh slightly out of politeness) No, seriously, your point of view as a kid is not the same as

an adult. I don't know. Because you have in your mind what all those guys you screwed around with and climbed out the window in History class...I have all that stuff in my head, but You know, you can't answer that. that's an impossible question because this is 2000...something, and that was...then. (laughs) That was a long time ago. The point of view has changed. it's impossible to answer that. I don't know. I do know that when I went to school, it was with total innocence, I was an ignorant idiot. I didn't know anything. And I think people are happy to keep you like that. I was never asked what I thought, and I thought school was just something you did, you never thought about it. I don't know if that's true anymore. See, from a kid's point of view, compared to an adult, I don't know that I could compare the two. I can't, it's impossible. I can't do it.

Kathy: I think we're done with those questions, let's just make some up now.

Kyle: (confused) All right...(Mr. Morton laughs)

Mr. Morton: This is for the Planning Team, right? You are interviewing people who are on the Planning Team...

Kathy: Yeah, and other teachers...

Mr. Morton: And other people are being...okay. Are you interviewing people who just came here for the first time? I mean like this is their first year?

Kyle: I don't think we are...I don't know.

Mr. Morton: Okay, because I wonder how they...maybe this is not the first time, but who have been to other places and can compare Century to where they've been. I think that'd be cool, but I don't know.

Kyle: (humoring him) We could do that...I don't really have anymore questions...

Kathy: (wanting to continue anyway, for this is Mr. Morton, after all) Come on, just make something up. You're an actor; improv.

Kyle: So you wanted to be a basketball coach, right?

Mr. Morton: (laughs) I did. And I was one.

Kyle: Where at?

Mr. Morton: I started at Washington High School...you know the Stoudamires? Willy? Charlie? And their son, Damon? I coached the dad, that's how old I am. So I started at Washington, went to state tournament, left, got disillusioned with the big city, went to Reedsport on the coast just because I'm a loner, and I wanted to be alone, then I went to Springfield, then South Eugene, and that was like Heaven because the kids in the school were doctors and professors' kids and attorneys' kids. They had been everywhere. Our big joke was, on Spring Vacation, You going to Tahiti, or to Rome...it was like, these kids were something else. They were worldly, they knew the world, they'd been around. They were very bright. South Eugene was really...and then I left there and went to Arizona for 11 years. And we won the state championship and got to the final four, and that was my goal, so I quit.

Kyle: So you didn't put a bid in for coach at Century?

Mr. Morton: Nope, I'm done. I lived in a gym for 25 years. It'll kill you. Because if you want to do a good job, you have to have spring practice and open the gym for the kids, you got to go summer, you got to go to camp. you have team camps, and you have to go to clinics and in fall you have open gym, and in winter you coach...you don't have any time. It's 12 months a year. And I wanted to get to know my wife. You're just gone a lot.

Kathy: So now what do you do with all this time you don't spend doing basketball?

Mr. Morton: Thinking and reading, and just traveling. I love to go places. I'll go to Grand Canyon and climb out Pima (?) Point and hang out on a rock. The place where you're not supposed to go down. Went to the Bahamas, back to New England, go to Santa Fe, my favorite place. God, it's like Heaven in Santa Fe. So beautiful. Went to Hawaii three times. I don't know, I just like to travel. It's hard to do that when you're coaching all the time.

Kathy: Where would you go, if you could go anywhere that you haven't gone so far?

Mr. Morton: Ireland, (incoherent). (sarcastically) I think because that's my "roots." I think it'd be kind of cool to go back to your roots, although I don't care about...existentially, who care what your past is? I just care about today. But, I like...I just like the place. It'd be a neat place to visit. Yeah, I think I'd go to Ireland. Cool.

Kyle: I think that's it, let's wrap it up.

Kathy: (scared) It's short, Mrs. Duyckinck's going to be mad.

Mr. Morton: Now she want you to interview how many people? (we hold up one finger, indicating one person) Oh, so each person in that class are responsible for all different kinds...

Kyle: Yeah. See, I'm in the process of hunting down Stu Cabe.

Mr. Morton: (impressed, somewhat nostalgic) Stu...really?

Kyle: Uh huh.

Mr. Morton: Wow. Now, does he come back here? I know he's here every once and a while. Can you find him? He's in the area, right?

Kyle: I don't know.

Mr. Morton: I think he was going to stick around...

Kathy: Wouldn't Bill know?

Kyle: I think Bill would know, but...(mumble mumble)

Mr. Morton: Huh. Stu. He'd be a good one. He was here when we opened, he...you remember "Working"...oh, you weren't here yet, when he opened with "Working." That was cool. A really great production.

Kyle: I think I have a question now: What's your feelings on the arts department here, because I know that was a big goal, to keep the arts up and going.

Mr. Morton: I love...I think...I like it. Scheller and Allen are trying to get Humanities something other than just studying history. How many high schools have their own channel? That's cool, I like that. I hadn't even heard of that, but maybe that's just technology now. I'd never seen that, really, at that level, in any school. I can't speak for the art teachers, visual arts, I don't know them that well. I know Cochran tried to do a good job and she's really enthused about teaching art. Drama...when Stu was here, I was really excited. I just...not that I'm not now, I just remember he'd get things going. I don't know, I think it's really strong. We've got a really strong arts department. Yeah.

Kathy: What's been your favorite play put on by Century?

Mr. Morton: I think "Working" worked best. I think it was the best...because it involved so many kids, had so many parts for so many kids, and the stage...not the stage, but the sets were all big squares with people coming and going. I just thought it was really done well. And because it was our first really big production, that so much went into it that it just raised it to...maybe now, we're just getting complacent or something so we have to have a play every year. That year, we really worked hard. I think it might have been the second year that that was on, but anyway, I liked "Working" the best. Yeah. Loved it.

Kyle: Cool.

Kathy: All right. Are we done?

Kyle: I think we're done.

Kathy: Is there anything else you want to add? We're supposed to say that.

Kyle: Would you like to add anything?

Kathy: "Would you like to add anything?"

Mr. Morton: (laughs) No, these interviewers were wonderful people, give them all A's.

Kathy: I'm writing that in really big letters when I transcribe this.

Mr. Morton: (laughs) So what do you do with this, do you write this up?

Kathy: I have to transcribe it.

Mr. Morton: And then is there going to be some, like...

Kathy: I have no idea, I don't pay attention.

Mr. Morton: I mean, it's got to come together somehow...

Kathy: What were...what we're doing...I don't know...(deleted, because I may get in trouble) We're going to display something, we're going to archive something, and actually present something.

Kyle: We got a hold of the architects first sketch...so we're thinking about either hanging those in the library, or that big blank space above the north staircase over here.

Mr. Morton: Okay.

Kyle: That's where we're going to display, and we're also maybe getting a display case...I think.

(It goes on for a few more minutes, but my foot's asleep, and there's nothing more of relevance, just us explaining and inviting Mr. Morton to come to the thing, and then Mr. Morton wondering aloud how one would dress for this. I suggest as their favorite teacher, and Kyle takes the opportunity to suck up and say that most would probably dress as Morton himself. Now why hadn't I said it first?)