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### Interview with Don Krebs

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#### Recommended Citation

"Interview with Don Krebs" (1993). *College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories*. 230.  
<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ors/230>

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## CHAPTER II

### INTERVIEW WITH DON KREBS

Jean: We are here today to interview Mr. Don Krebs, who was selected as the Kansas Athletic Director of the year in the school year 1991-92.

Darrel: What led you to become a teacher and later an administrator?

Don: The biggest influence was the teachers I had in the elementary and high school years of my life. Some of these teachers had a great impact on my life. In high school, the aptitude tests I took indicated that one of my strengths was working with people. I am a people person. I like being around people and enjoy helping young people. Many of my years working with young people were both inside the school setting and outside the school environment. I have spent many years working with organizations such as 4-H. As far as administration, I became interested in this area when more responsibility was given to me as a teacher and a coach. This responsibility allowed me to become more comfortable in leadership roles. I enjoy the administration end of education more than the teaching because I come into contact with more of the student body.

Darrel: Of what did your teacher training and administrator training consist?

Don: I received both my undergraduate and graduate degrees from Kansas State University. For my Master's degree, I studied counseling. I obtained my certification for both the jobs of principal and superintendent from Fort Hays State University. Another part of my training to become an administrator has been hands-on experience.

Darrel: Could you please explain your philosophy of education?

Don: A major part of my philosophy is motivation. As educators, we are here to motivate and encourage students to do the best that they can possibly do. I wrote down a few things I would like to share with you. I think education should:

1. be exciting
2. be interesting
3. allow time for students to learn
4. find ways to make students excel
5. be creative and imaginative
6. be practical
7. bring in new ideas and concepts from technology.

Darrel: Would you please describe your method of discipline in your role as assistant principal?

Don: I like to operate on the philosophy I learned from one of my past coaches -- BE FIRM, BUT FAIR TO ALL STUDENTS! I believe that Colby already has a good discipline plan, but I would like to incorporate the community and parents into the development of a plan that would be acceptable to all. If there need to be changes made, I would like to form a committee of parents, faculty members, community members, administration, and board members to come up with a plan that is firm but fair. In order to be a good disciplinarian, I must be a good role model. You will hear me often use the phrase "role model" throughout this interview, because I still think as educators we teach twenty-four hours a day. Some people think that education is just an 8:00 - 5:00 job, but students watch you all the time. The students watch you on the street at night and how you act with your own family. So you have to be a role model regardless of whether you want to or not. I would also emphasize the positive aspect of the roles as administrator and show self-control and self-motivation in my job. In order to be effective, I believe the administration should be proactive rather than reactive. There are many problems that come up in discipline that we react to instead of having a plan already in place to deal effectively with unexpected problems.



Darrel: What qualities do think an administrator needs to be successful?

Don: Number one, I think you have got to be a motivator. You also need to be self-disciplined and a good communicator. An effective communicator is one who not only knows the verbal and written skills of communicating, but also one who is an active listener. An administrator does not have all the answers, no matter what some people may think. The administrator needs to pull ideas from many different sources such as faculty members, students, and others and then use the ideas he/she thinks will work the best.

Darrel: What are your primary responsibilities as an athletic director?

Don: First, as I mentioned before, I must be a good role model to the coaching staff and the student-athletes. I also have to be a motivator, facilitator, and sponsor. All of us need some correction and honest, positive criticism about our jobs. We also need direction. I have some young coaches I plan to work with as far as inservice and conferencing. One of my main tasks this year is to provide direction and guidance to the staff. Another task that an athletic director has is to organize the overall athletic program. Too often we just look at the small

picture. My job is to incorporate the many small pictures into one large program.

Jean: Don, how have facilities, both school and athletic, changed in your years spent in education?

Don: Quite a bit, actually. We are now in a computer age, and technology has changed things dramatically. Computers and technology are not the only factors that have brought about change. Ideas and philosophies have helped to bring about change in athletics and education. Take for example, weight training. When I was in high school and college, we did not utilize weights at all. We had no idea that weight training could lead to increased performance. Now our recreation, physical education, and athletic departments are well-endowed with apparatus to help young individuals reach their full potential. I believe these facilities and programs have had a tremendous impact on athletes today. There is also a big influence on corporate sponsorships. With money for interscholastic sports becoming more scarce, some are saying that these student-athletes should "pay to play." I think now with budgets becoming tighter, we may have to look outside the school for financial support. It is critical that you be careful while you seek this support. Corporations, such as Nike, may be willing to sponsor your teams and programs. We cannot let the young people be jeopardized

by the corporate dollar. As for girls' athletics, I think we have to provide more facilities or equal facilities for the girls' programs. Girls' athletics are just as important as the boys' athletics. To be fair and consistent, schools should provide safe and adequate facilities in which to compete.

Jean: What are your views on extracurricular activities?

Don: As activities director, I view extracurricular activities as a plus for all students. The Kansas High School Activities Association has a slogan the reads: "Activities + Academics = Partnership." I firmly believe this slogan. In fact, it is proven, and studies support this, students who are involved in activities have a higher grade point average and less absenteeism than those who are not involved. I do know that there must be a balance between activities and academics. You cannot go overboard. I have seen some students who became so involved in basketball, football, and cheerleading, for example, that they became burned-out. There needs to be that balance. Parents and schools need to help the students keep that balance. It is of the utmost importance that we do not let the students lose track of the real reason they are in school, and that is to get an education.



Jean: Thank you.

Darrel: What is the educator's role in the community?

Don: I feel the educator's role in the community is one that is going to provide a positive image for education and the school, to make education exciting, and to encourage parents to come to school and school-related activities to support the students. I do think people in education are going to have to change the concept of just having the community come to the school. We need to take the school's program out to the community. When I was involved at the college level several years ago, we would take classes off campus and into the community. Maybe something like this should start happening at the high school level. Now that we have access to computers in the schools and more students have them in their homes, we could network them so the communication between school and home could increase. In Osawatomie, the school district purchased forty laptop computers that were implemented into the regular curriculum. The school also allowed students to check these computers out and take them home. Since much of a student's education takes place outside of the classroom, we need to make as many options available to students as possible.



Darrel: What role should parents play in the educational process?

Don: Some teachers and administrators are fearful of parents entering into the school. I think there needs to be a balance somewhere. Some schools have programs such as Parents as Partners. I really think as long as parents know what is going on and you do not hide anything from parents, you will continue to have a positive relationship with them. Several years ago when schools began introducing sex education into the curriculum, many parents had some real reservations about that. Some felt the schools were invading the home values. These parents felt it was their responsibility and wanted to teach it by their standards and values, not the teacher's or school's values. There must be a partnership between the home and the school, and the lines of communication must remain open at all times. I believe parents are going to have more faith in the school as long as you let them know up front what is going on in the classroom. Another topic dealing with the communication between the school and parents is parent-teacher conferences. Many times the parents the teachers really needs to see fail to show up at these conferences. One goal I have for this next school year is to increase the parental involvement at the high school level and get more parents actively involved in their child's education.

Darrel: How involved would you like to see parents in the activities of the school?

Don: I would like to see them involved as much as possible. One thing I would like to see our coaches involved in is a POP program. It is a Parent Orientation Program. This is conducted usually at the beginning of each season. The coaches for that particular sport would conduct an informal meeting with parents. In this meeting, the coach would explain the ground rules, physical forms, etc. with the parents. This is also an excellent opportunity for parents to meet the coaching staff and also to ask any questions they may have concerning the sport. This is a public relations program as much as an informational meeting. This enables the lines of communications between parents, coaches, and athletes to become firmly established. Parents become much more familiar with not only the sport itself, but also what is expected of them and how they can help to be actively involved in their child's athletic participation.

Jean: This POP program really sounds beneficial and worth implementing.

Don: Yes, it is.

Jean: What are some of the legal responsibilities the athletic director has?

Don: Each year as we become more involved in extracurricular activities, the legal responsibilities become greater. The first responsibility I have is planning. I have got to be organized, and the coaches also have to be organized. If you are ever involved in a lawsuit, one of the first things the courts look for is organization and planning. Secondly, I think you have to have proper instruction. Coaches have to properly instruct student-athletes in a sport. Otherwise a parent will come to the athletic director with many questions. Another legal responsibility is providing a safe environment. We have to be very careful with practice and game facilities. They must be safe beyond any doubt for the participants. If not, there will be legal ramifications, and you and the school will be held liable. And finally, proper equipment is of the utmost importance. Coaches under your supervision must organize practice to protect the participants. In football, for instance, a coach should not practice a tackling drill by having a large senior practice against a small freshman. The issue that causes most legal action to be taken is injury evaluation and treatment. Coaches must be extremely cautious when evaluating injuries. To get that "W" on Friday night, some coaches may play an injured player, knowing full



well he/she is injured. Parents have a right to come to school and inquire about the justification or motive in playing injured athletes. We do not want to place these student-athletes into game or practice situations too soon. A relatively new legal responsibility is making student-athletes aware of the dangers of participating in sports. Parents need to be aware of these risks as well. Many schools have a waiver of risk that both parents and student-athletes must sign. Such a waiver should spell out some of the injuries that could occur in participation. The legal responsibilities are numerous for the athletic director, but if the athletic director takes precautions and plans ahead, the threat of legal action can be greatly diminished.

Jean: What is the role of the Kansas State High School Activities Association?

Don: I think the role is covered under these five categories.

1. It establishes post-season activities. We at the grassroots administer these post-season activities. The KSHSAA assigns the referees and selects game sites, but the athletic directors take care of the logistics.
2. They promote good sportsmanship which is becoming so critical. Many people laughed when they made Rule 52 (the sportsmanship rule passed

by the KSHSAA in the late 1980s), but I see a real change in our high school athletic program since it has been in place. We were becoming like college athletics, and the KSHSAA wanted to slow this down. I believe this was a very positive step.

3. The Kansas State High School Activities Association is also there to protect high school athletes from being exploited by self-interest groups. There are many people out there who want to make a quick dollar, the KSHSAA regulates these organizations or companies.

4. The association also encourages scholastic achievement. The KSHSAA has a program that gives each team member a certificate if the entire group reaches a certain grade point average.

5. The organization is also there to serve its members in a variety of cases. For example, I have called their office many times to inquire about eligibility. The KSHSAA has many different rules about out-of-season participation. In some cases it is difficult to determine if these athletes can participate and still remain eligible for the school activities. The organization makes the final ruling on such cases.

Jean:           What is Rule 52? Could you explain that more in depth?

Don: Rule 52 states certain guidelines on what proper sportsmanship conduct is. It pertains to participants and spectators alike. Many spectators believe that since they paid to get into the game, they should be able to act in any manner they choose. But as adults we have to remember that we are watching young athletes, and they are at an impressionable age. We need to set an example. I realize that in a heated battle of competition sometimes sportsmanship is lost. We have to keep in mind the students and players are watching their parents and the crowd. Since our actions speak louder than our words, we as administrators and parents, must constantly be aware of our image as a role model.

Darrel: Tell us about the award you received. What impact did it have on your professional and personal life?

Don: I must say I was very gratified by it, and to know that my peers selected me made it even more gratifying. I am not sure I deserved it. At last calculation, there were about 450 athletic directors throughout the state of Kansas and to be named the best athletic director in the state makes me feel proud. I am very thankful for it and very humbled by receiving such an award and honor. I was at a 3A school at the time and there are a lot of 6A schools that have more activities than I had. So, I felt there was a 3A athletic director who probably deserved



it more than I did. I will honestly do my best to uphold the honor of Athletic Director of the Year.

Darrel: What are some qualities that you possess that enabled you to be selected Athletic Director of the Year?

Don: On the criteria sheet, I had to list a number of items that represented leadership skills that I participated in or demonstrated. Administrative skills, the number of activities I promoted or sponsored in that particular year or in previous years, and my involvement at the state level were all factors in obtaining such an award. I also served on the Kansas State High School Activities Association board for six years and held an office on that board. The selection committee looked at the wide array of activities I was involved in, both at my building level and the state level.

Jean: Let us now change direction a bit. You are currently an assistant principal?

Don: I just signed a contract with Colby, USD #315, as an assistant principal/athletic director.

Jean: What do you feel are some of the most critical educational issues educators have to face today?

Don: There are many issues. But one that concerns me today, especially with QPA on its way in, is the involvement of the national and state governments. I am very concerned about that. I see more and more federal and state dollars involved in operating our schools today. The more money they put into it, the more influence they like to push on us. They are basically telling us how to spend those dollars. Don't get me wrong. I am all for Quality Performance Accreditation and for Outcomes Based Education, but I think these outcomes need to be made relevant to the needs of the students. For example, I was at a school and a young lady filling out a job application form. The spelling on her application was terrible. This girl was a senior and preparing to graduate. That was a reflection back on the school. We are graduating these students who cannot even fill out a job application form correctly. I do feel we need to incorporate some of those basic outcomes for all students. They should, however, be able to master spelling and math skills to prepare them for life outside of school. At the same time, I am concerned about some of the other values that are coming from QPA. I think we need to put these values back into the home and place the responsibility on the parents to teach their children such values and morals. I do believe parents need to be actively involved in educating their children, and the line

of communication between schools and the home must be open.

Jean: I think you are right. It sounds like we have similar philosophies. Don, what do you think are the most important skills students need upon graduation from high school?

Don: I feel skills that prepare our students for life are the most important skills that need to be taught at the high school level. I realize that can be very broad. I also think students need to become computer literate. Students are going to have to use the computer because soon very little will happen without some form of computer. I know there are people who believe the computer is doing all the thinking for you, but that is not necessarily so. You have got to have some imagination and creativity to challenge yourself with the computer. Learning how to operate computers and all they can do is a challenge in itself.

Darrel: Does your role as assistant principal get in the way of your role as athletic director?

Don: I think it could, but I think you have got to uphold the same guidelines. If you are firm and fair with the athletes and treat the students the same way, you will



be all right. But, yes the students do see you wearing a different hat as disciplinarian as opposed to athletic director. I do try to treat all the students the same as I treat the athletes. There has to be discipline on the playing field as well as in the classroom. As long as they both see that honest trait coming through, I think I will be all right.

Darrel: Do you feel the community views you differently in your separate roles as assistant principal and athletic director?

Don: I think as principals, we can emphasize the negative too much. I think we have to emphasize the positive much more. There is an old saying, "You can catch a fly quicker with honey than with vinegar;" that holds true. Often times, I think when we phone parents at home, it is only for negative things. If we build a positive relationship with parents first, we will have more cooperation from them when the negative things arise. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the hustle of our jobs that we do not have time for the positive things, but we must MAKE time for them. I had a fellow principal tell me, "It is not the mountain top that gets you, but the sand in your shoes." It is those little irritations that bother us so much that, if we are not careful, we lose focus of the whole picture.

Jean: Do you have any information you would like to share with us? Do you have any advice you would like to give a new assistant principal?

Don: I think the one of the most important things is be a good listener. Another piece of advice is do not make changes too quickly. Many people feel that since we live in such a fast and hurried society, the principal or athletic director should give a quick answer. I think you should wait a while whenever possible. Many times I will sleep on it and sometimes the problem solves itself, or if it does not, I have a new perspective on it the next day. I guess my counseling skills pay off in administration as well. Another important piece of advice is to take time out for your family. I do not think there is any job that takes more time physically, emotionally, and socially than a principal and athletic director. You must realize you will be gone almost every night whether it be to a game, board meeting, program, or other activity. I am so thankful many schools have adopted a Wednesday church service policy. That is usually the only evening I can count on to be with my family. My priorities are:

1. My God is first in my life.
2. My family is next.
3. My job is last.

Many times, though, those priorities get mixed up, and my job becomes first. Remember do not lose track of your priorities.

Jean: I think that is very good advice. Thank you.

Darrel: We wish to thank you for sharing your time and experiences with us.

Don: I wish you both the best in your careers in administration.