

Belasco, Velma/Walter

Edited April, 1995

Q: Would you begin by telling me your name and where you live right now?

VB: My name is Velma Belasco, and I live at 790 W. Main Street in Northville Michigan.

Q: How long have you lived in Northville?

VB: Since 1922.

Q: How old were you then?

VB: I was born in '13, so I was what? I was older than that. Yeah, I was going to say ten, but I guess it would be nine.

Q: Why did your family move to Northville?

VB: Because my father bought a jewelry store. He had a small place up in – north of Grand Rapids, a little place called Sand Lake, but he bought it to be in a larger spot. And he came down here and bought Johnson's Jewelry Store. It was the Lucius Lake Jewelry Store after that.

Q: Where was it located?

VB: 124 N. Center, where Betty's Sweets and Treats is now.

Q: The same building?

VB: No, the first building was burned down. Then one Christmas time down on the other end of Center Street, down below the... then someone built the new building, we moved back. It was right next door to Northville Record. Northville Record was in that building then, next door, and then well, it was right there for more than 52 years.

Q: Ok, now why don't you proceed to tell me what you remember from the time you first came to Northville.

VB: I remember we lived on Rogers Street. At that time Rogers Street stopped at what is now Potomac Drive, and I could look out my upstairs window and see the big old clock and the Methodist Church steeple and hear it chime every night on the hour, and it was also – an old – it wasn't electrified then. And once a year my dad had to go up there and clean that clock with some kind of cleaning fluid. And I held the ladder down below because he had to climb up in the steeple. That clock had to be pulled on the ropes once a day to wind it.

Q: Did your dad do that too, or somebody from church?

VB: No, somebody from church did that, but he kept it going.

Q: Now, is that church – where is that church?

VB: The Methodist Church now? Same church that's over here on Eight Mile Road and Taft.

Q: But where the clock was though, is that the same building?

VB: Same building, yes. Christian – something – Christian Church – what is it? Open Door Christian Church. That's what it is now, yeah. But if they ever do anything in Northville, and they throw that clock away, I think they should be shot (laughter) because that clock is the most important thing that the Historical Society should have.

Q: Now, you're the first one that has told me that. I'm sure that other people know that, but I didn't realize that clock dated back that far.

VB: Oh yes, yes it did!

Q: Ok, just proceed as you were before, tell me a few things.

VB: Well, I told you the building burned down, where my father was. It was replaced by this brick building with three stores, and it backed up to the Spagnuolo Grocery and Sweet Store, and I played in that back yard with the Spagnuolos. And there was an old walnut tree in the back, and we kids had a great time in that. Anyway, over the years then, things kept changing.

Q: Let's back up just a moment. What did your family consist of, or were you the only one?

VB: I had a family of a father and one sister. And my sister went East with her husband in World War II to be with him, and she had pneumonia, and she was treated by a doctor out there with a new drug called sulfamilimide, and when she was treated she got worse, got worse. So then they gave her another big dose thinking her pneumonia was worse, and it killed her. And this doctor – she was 24 years old – and this doctor told us this is what killed her. And later on, I started working at the clinic, at Atchison; I found out from one of the specialists there that many people were killed. It was the first derivative of sulfa – it euthanized the kidneys. It was after that they finally changed things to where, after that it would be a good medicine again. But she was my only ...

Q: Of course, no one even thought it in those days.

VB: They really didn't know the consequences.

Q: So, it was just you and your sister then.

VB: And my dad, of course. And I remember on the corner of Center and Main, Mike Gunsel's Drug Store, and they used to serve – they had a soda fountain – they served sundaes, ice cream, soft drinks in there, so there was a – like a candy store now or, you know, a fast food place. Besides he had drugs, of course. The bar stools, yeah, he had a regular bar. You've seen those too, haven't you? Anyway, that was there on the corner of Center.

Q: Is that where Williamsburg is?

VB: Yes, that's where it was. That was Mike Gunsel's Drug Store. Now, let's see what else have I got here that I thought might be interesting. The building where the Northville City Hall is now belonged to the Filkins Company, or Filkins family, which also owned the building my

father was in. I don't know, but they did, they bought it from the Filkins family that had it. They also owned this property on the corner of Dunlap and Rogers that was for a long time the Methodist parsonage. Filkins? Oh yes, he was, he was a very good organist for some church in Detroit. I forgot that part. John Filkins, that's right. Oh, another thing that I bet not many people remember – there was an old colored man that lived down on the corner of – oh Northville Road – just before the corner, where the Moose Lodge is now. And he had an old horse and cart that he used to make deliveries. He'd deliver anything. He'd pick up things at the depot and bring them to you, you know. And he did all kinds of yard work and things. And that old horse – just one horse and wagon and ...

Q: Did he live alone?

VB: He lived alone. Nope, he didn't have anyone else. No, that was the first black man I'd ever seen around Northville. Salem had black people, but not Northville. Anyway, he was quite a guy, and he was very, very nice, we thought a lot of him. Everybody thought a lot of him.

Q: Now, you attended school here. Tell me a little bit about it.

VB: Well, I attended school from the time I was in the sixth grade, I can't remember what grade I was in, but I attended school here until I graduated in 1931.

Q: Graduated from Northville High, did you?

VB: Graduated from Northville High in 1931. Then, I went to Ypsilanti Normal, gonna be a teacher. Well, first of all I wanted to be a doctor because my family all medically inclined, I mean Dr. Holcomb, he's a friend, but he's also a relative. All my family were doctors and lawyers, and I wanted to go and be a doctor. But no woman, no woman could get into medical college then.

Q: I'm sure it was hard.

VB: Well, they wouldn't let you in, so somebody said, "Well, you can be a nurse or a teacher." Well, I really didn't want to be a nurse; I guess I'm gonna be a teacher, so I went to Michigan Normal. And then I decided when I got to practice teaching that this thing – that's not for me either, so I'll be a librarian. Then went on through to be in the course, buy anyway, didn't get to be that either because... Then I went and had a summer job at Cadillac Motor Car, and I had an office manager there that was really a woman's... every day of my life I worked down there, finally, in the fall when I was leaving I said to him, "I'm leaving, I'm sorry I didn't do a very good job." He said, "Oh yes you did, Velma." He said, "What you should do is go into business." He said, "You know you're the only one here this summer that I thought was worth anything." I said, "What?" Anyway, so that's when I began looking around at business schools. Then 'lo and behold' I went to the Burroughs Business School, and that worked pretty good, and when I was done, they gave me a job right at Burroughs. Then I worked for Chrysler for a while – oh, I don't know how – oh, they got me the job. And then the minute I started there, I said, "uh huh, not for me." Then I went back to Burroughs and said, "I need another job," and they said, "Come right here." So, I did that and stayed right there for a long time. Then finally, let's see, what happened next?

Q: I think you told me on the phone that at one point you had a restaurant in town? Was that after you were married?

VB: Yes.

Q: Well, we'll get to that in a few minutes.

VB: Anyway, after all these other experiences, I worked for Burroughs, I worked for Chrysler, and then finally came back to Northville and worked for Atchison Clinic.

Q: What did you do at the Clinic?

VB: Oh, I went and got a medical assistants course, and I was sort of a little bit of everything, office manager and everything.

Q: Where was the Clinic?

VB: Right on the corner of Dunlap and Linden, where the 'bed and breakfast' is now.

Q: The Atchison House?

VB: Yes, that was their Clinic. And that's where I finally would up, and I was very happy at that time there. But then I went into the restaurant business.

Q: What sort of things – let's back up a minute – what sort of cases, or what sort of things did the Clinic do? Was it an all around?

VB: General practitioners and they had three doctors, three live-in doctors in partnership. But then, they also had all kinds of specialists come in, and they had – Dr. Atchison was very, very forward-thinking, and he had specialists come in and give us lectures for the staff, about once a month, something like that. And the whole group of us would get together, all the staff, and these doctors and specialists would give us lectures so that we all knew a little bit about everything.

Q: What changed from that time you came here until the time you worked for the clinic? What changes did you see take place? Other businesses were in town – you mentioned the drug store, and your dad's jewelry store, and some things, what...

VB: Well, let's see now. The old Opera House was there, where Bruce Roy's place is now. And in that place, they had a lot of old things like – I remember a pipe organ that one of the Richie boys bought, when they decided to clean it out. And let's see, there was a meat market on Main Street and what else ... [Walter and Velma talking, but not possible to transcribe.] Then there was the Smith Store on Main Street, and there was a dime store on Main Street. [More from Walter but too faint.]

Q: Let's pause here because your husband remembers quite a while back. How did the two of you meet? At what point did you two join up and start talking about ...

VB: ...that would be interesting, I'm sure. Right in the center of Main and Center Street, where they come together, there was a big old bandstand. And there was some trolley cars – the Interurban came from Detroit out around down Griswold to the Ford Factory, right on Main

Street to that band stand. Then it stopped, and it filled up with people who wanted to go to Detroit. They would back up and go down there and go back on out around to Detroit.

Q: It turned around there, do you mean?

VB: It backed down – it came in, and then backed down – that was the end of the track. But this bandstand was right there in the center of the street, and every Saturday night they would have probably some – well, the band would come and play and they'd have street dances. And they'd close Center Street off from Dunlap to Main, and they'd have street dances and jive it up. (Walter in background) Oh, the route took – it went down around to Grand River, and then I think it was – one went into Detroit and the other one went ...

Q: Which way to Grand River?

VB: Right up around Eight Mile. Up Griswold, and then around down Eight Mile. It circled around and came out there where the old – what was that – the Interurban barns, wasn't it – right there in Farmington. It split there I think, didn't it, and the one went down Grand River and then the other track, there was another one, it came from Wayne, and it went right straight down around and out Northville that was right out Seven – Northville Road, didn't it? And I don't know where that – I think it went to Michigan Avenue. We never went very much that way, so I'm not familiar with that way. But they were there for many years, for a long time after, the track were there...

Q: Let me see if I'm picking up your voice (directed to Walter Belasco).

(Editors note: tape full of static and subjects too far from microphone for good transcription).

VB: There used to be a big depot across the tracks right here on – let's see, off Main, I guess you'd call it. Then, also there used to be Eddie Stinson's airplane factory on Cady Street, and it used to be a big old furniture factory, Globe Furniture with some of the big, huge oak furniture that... yeah that was later. The Globe Furniture Factory was there, and they made this solid, oak furniture and many of the church pews in this area. In fact, OLV (Our Lady of Victory), the Catholic Church right here in Northville had a lot of the pews they sold in there. And the Glove burned down. And then after that, they sold it to Mr. Bellinger, and he put his offices in there, and then ...

Q: Is that the same place where the auto wash is now because that name is Bellinger?

VB: It is, but Bellinger's office is behind that, as you come around the corner there. And then Eddie Stinson made his airplane factory there, and we used to go out – if you had a field out here. I think the Exchange Club of Northville rented the field out here on the Ponsford farm, which is Six Mile and Beck, is it not? Well, Beth Ponsford was Lapham's mother – Chuck Lapham's mother was named Beth Ponsford. And that was the old Ponsford farm, and they rented an airport out there. That's where Eddie Stinson tested his planes. And this Elder, what was her name? Ruth Elder left from here at that airfield to go overseas and they never found her. She was – they don't know what happened – they thought somebody shot her down, but they weren't sure what happened. She was trying to go on a trip around the world ... testing a Stinson aircraft. Do you remember her?

Q: Not, not the name Elder, no, I don't. Earhart ...

VB: Earhart, - oh you're right.

Q: Oh, okay, I thought you were talking about somebody else. Did she leave from here?

VB: She left from Stinson's, right there.

Q: Really! That was Amelia Earhart – now you've got it! Thank you, thank you!

WB: I wonder ... Ruth Elder ...

Q: Was she a pilot also?

VB: Oh yes, she was. I think by herself, did she not? Anyway, let's see. Oh, then the spring on South Main, down there, It's still spring water, and they used to call it "Knox Age."

Q: Now how long has that spring been there? It hasn't been there ...

VB: Listen, that's another story entirely. That spring is pure spring water that we're talking about in the '20's and '30's (maybe the '40's)...then they made a gravel pit there and they disturbed the water balance table, and after that the spring was not spring water – it was surface water. So they decided they'd better do something different with that. So then they used to get it from – oh, I think the reservoir out here on Taft Road, didn't they, Wally? Anyway, they had to change it because it was surface water they were getting after ...

Q: Was that when they dug the well?

VB: No, yes – well, it was after that then they thought they better dig the well, so they finally did get well water. But for a while it was Detroit water. It's not the same, Wally. It was ice cold. And then for a while it was even Detroit water. They piped Detroit water out. But then they felt that wasn't quite the thing, so then they dug a well. At this point, I think it's well water – I'm not sure.

Q: Now, at this point, I'd like on tape for you to introduce yourself because I'm talking to both of you now.

WB: I am Walter Belasco, and I was born in Toronto in 1911, and my mother brought me over here at about six months, and we lived in Detroit for a while. Well, we lived in Detroit until 1930 something, and it was about that time that I met Velma at the lake where we used to spend the summer time.

VB: My dad had a cottage out there and his family had a cottage out there. So we used to bike, you know, got acquainted that way.

WB: That's not Northville history. But anyway, I met her and I used to come out here in the '30's, when she was still in school. I won't say where I was. But that was my first experience with Northville at about that time. And I still had bicycles, things that Velma was talking about, that (?) her house and her dad's store, and we used to have an old cane settee in the front that I spent many an hour in.

VB: Well, everybody in town did.

WB: Yeah, I know, but I'm talking about what I did. And the post office was right across the street that was in Schrader's or part of Schrader's building just north of Schraders Funeral – not funeral but furniture store. (VB: There was a bakery next to that.) Yeah, there was a bakery next to that, and right across the street – on this side of Center Street, which Velma didn't mention, was – used to be where Cloverdale is now – there was a Gayla's – a clothing store.

VB: Which I worked for, for a while.

WB: Yeah, I don't know – anything you want to know about history. I guess when you get this far along, all you see it in is flashes.

VB: Oh, another thing, whoops--excuse me.

Q: That's okay, that's exactly what I want.

VB: Another thing that I think we should mention that where the Legion Hall is now is the Neal House that faced Center Street. And when the Legion bought it, they turned it around and bricked it. It was a white house, as I recall. It wasn't right next to Casterline's – well, Casterline bought it, finally (present parking lot). But it was the old Neal home, Warner Neal and his family. Warner Neal went to The Washington Post, I guess finally, didn't he? He was up at the Washington Post. Anyway, the Neal's vault is here in Northville – they have their own in Northville. It's right up here in Northville Rural Hill, right now. So, that was part of Northville too, then.

Q: Now when did they – when did you two get married?

VB: 1941.

Q: And did you – you've lived in Northville all the time since?

VB: Oh no! I have; he hasn't. He went to the Marine Corp. We were married one day, and the next morning he went to the Marines. He was gone for twenty-one months, I didn't hear from him. That was war time – I didn't know where he was. It was war time, I'll tell you.

WB: But anyway, I was trying to think who lived across the street from Casterline's.

VB: Oh, it was Bill McKenney. The McKenney's. He was a – he did drays – anything that came into town from the Post Office. You know in the old days they didn't deliver anything. You had to go and get it. But he used to do drays. But it was between the Methodist Church – there was an alley between that and the next houses. Then it was Bill McKenney that lived there for a long time, and then I think they moved her house down on Lake Street. And besides that was the MacKennon house, and then next to that was the old Yerkes on Dunlap Street. And the house that's down there in the Mill Race that they just moved in there – Cady – was the old house on Cady Street that used to be Meryl Wilson's, didn't it? They had a little poker club upstairs, and they always had a big time – Dr. Snow, Dr. Holcomb, and Wilson, and I don't know how many others – guys from Birmingham used to come and play with them. They played poker. But that's a historical house I like.

Q: But it wasn't an inn – it was a private home. They're calling it Cady Inn now.

VB: Well, I didn't realize that. But it was a private home all along. Then Wilson used to have a little place on Main Street, place called – what was it – White Kitchen. An eating place, wasn't it White Kitchen?

WB: Oh, was that the White Kitchen, or was the White Kitchen next to....the place she was talking about was on the north side of Main Street just past the theater.

VB: Where Getzy's Bar is now – just about in that area...

Q: Now, do we call you Doc, or Mr. Belasco, or what?

VB: Call him Doc.

Q: Okay, Doc – tell me at what point did you come back from the service then. You have quite a bit of information about Northville yourself in your career, don't you?

WB: When I came back, I didn't stay. No, I didn't come back to stay until about '48. I had come back a couple, three times –in between times...

Q: Where did you go to school?

WB: I went to school in Detroit – Cass Tech and Northwestern High – both of them.

Q: No, I mean for your training.

WB: Oh, I went to-

VB: You went to Northwestern first. I've got all that down here too.

WB: Yeah, I went there for – I think I was there for two semesters, and then I went to, transferred over to Northern Illinois College of Optometry, and I left there in, I think, December of '49, wasn't it? Something like that. Anyway, I came back for good then.

Q: Did you stay here then, that time, or did you live in Chicago?

VB: Oh no, I was here. I worked at Atchison Clinic most of the time.

Q: And did you – all of your practice has been in Northville, and you didn't...?

VB: Oh yes....

WB: It was in 1950, and when I came back, I worked for the Post Office waiting for the opportunity to take the State Board, which didn't come up until about...and then I took that, and then I had to wait a little bit longer to find out, know that I passed it or not. And after that, I worked for Dr. Atchison – offered me a place in the Clinic, so I went there – I think I was there for at least ten or twelve years. And then I moved to an office over the old D & C Store, where Dr. Dopler (?) was... And I was there until '61, when I was approached by this optical company with an offer I couldn't refuse, even if I didn't feel like it. It was just fine. So I went to work for

them. I was with them until '81. I was mostly a supervisor – I was sent everywhere... So I was like everybody else that worked out of town, I came home to sleep.

Q: What was the name of the optical company? Was it one of the ones that's still in existence?

VB: Oh, yes! They were a large firm.

WB: It wasn't (?) National then. The company that I worked for Marco Optical, and they had many...until a national chain came and bought them out, and then I traveled....

VB: He was in Grand Rapids, Mio, Wyoming, and he'd get home most of the weekend, maybe. And then for a while, he was in Flint and he drove everyday there. ...in Ann Arbor.... in Dearborn.

Q: How long did you – how long have you lived at this location?

VB: Built the house in '51.

WB: Yeah, in '51. Clint Walker and I built it, and Velma was the “surgeon general” of the operation. But we got along....

VB: I tell you I learned by being alone for many years – I learned. Don Yerkes for one – he (WB) got sick in the middle of this operation, and he never thought of money – had a lumber yard. I didn't have any money, and he was in the hospital; I didn't know what was going to happen. He was sick for six months. I looked at Don, and I said, “What am I going to do?” I said, “I haven't got any money; I can't pay you.” He said “Velma, you go right ahead and finish your house 'cause you can't sell it half finished.” And he said, “I'll furnish the lumber, if you can get Clayton Walker to do the labor.” And he said, “Then you can sell your house, and you can pay me, if you can.” And at one time, I think I owed him about \$15,000, and at that time, \$15,000 was like a million now. But even when he didn't have the proper like hardwood floors, he'd say, “I don't have the kind of lumber that good kind, so I'm gonna send over to Ann Arbor and get it.” He said, “What I have on hand her is not good.” He did this without ever a dime in the bank, you know. He was a very fine gentleman, I'll tell ya. And Mike Allen put the marble in – the marble sills. (Q: Allen Monument?) Allen Monument.

Q: Doc, now tell me about the associations in Northville. I know you belonged to a couple, I know, but what were you president of tell me about it.

WB: How did you know that? There's nothing to tell. I was in Rotary for, I don't know – ten years, eleven, twelve – I was president.

Q: Was there a Rotary in Northville ever since you lived here? Or did you... (WB: Yes) Oh, it wasn't started by you?

WB: Oh, no! It wasn't started by anybody I knew. They did tell me once that...

VB: Didn't it used to be Exchange Club before it was Rotary?

WB: Well, there was an Exchange Club in the area. No, no, they weren't the same. The Exchange Club was more a business association. But Rotary – we used to have or Velma had a breakfast every New Year's Morning for all the Rotary members and their wives, and the police and fire department, you know...Saturday afternoon and then Sunday morning, they'd come tromping in here about 5:00, you'd know and they'd have to get things started about that time, so. It was a lotta work, but it was a lotta fun, as you look back at it.

Q: Now, what did the membership consist of compared to now? Was it just a few members, or were there a lot?

WB: I think it was about the same. I think there were more that were more interested in accomplishing whatever they set out to do. I don't think they had quite as many...It's just a matter of time, I think, in attitudes. Times are different today. People are – I can remember when we'd walk down the street, and there wasn't anybody that you wouldn't at least wave their hand to you or step across the street and talk to you. In fact more than once, I'd come home, and Velma said, "Who was that you were talking to on the corner?"

VB: Maybe, I'd drive through and see you standing there.

WB: Or somebody would call her up and...

VB: Oh, that's another thing. That was before the days when Rotary had women. We got an invitation once a year to their banquet and that was all.

WB: But anyway, we bought this corner down on where McDonald's is now – their used car sales lot, and back in the late '50's, I believe.

VB: '57, oh no, late '50's. From Chuck Altman – that was the Altman farm.

WB: It was just a swamp hole when we bought it. How many yards of gravel did we pour in?

VB: Five foot of gravel in there, and let it settle before we could pave it.

WB: We built this drive-in, and we went into it, or I should say I practically forced Velma into it because she couldn't see how we could swing it. But anyway, I had a (VB: Poured every dime we could.) I know, but I had a feeling that these kids at that time in town – they had drive-ins in every other place, and nothing here at that time. And I thought it'd be something for them to at least go to, if they wanted to. So that was the basic reason for starting that thing, and it got into something that was more of a family restaurant, eventually. And then we closed that out and sold it, and then – it was '69.

Q: What was the name of the drive-in?

WB: Bel-nor Drive-in.

VB: But then it was Bel-nor Restaurant later because we closed the drive-in.

WB: Everything we had was homemade, and I know Velma....

VB: They used to come from Toledo and Grosse Pointe to get those rolls and the breads (WB: Sundaes). No, honey, we had 35 employees, but it was homemade. And I was the mean old woman, I'll tell ya.

Q: Did you, well, you continued with your practice, didn't you?

VB: Oh, yes!

Q: What about you – did you manage it full-time or did you continue with the...?

VB: Well, I continued working...

Q: The question I asked you is – Did you manage the restaurant or did you continue working?

VB: I did both. I worked at the clinic. Then I also hired a young woman that could really, really manage, and she went, and she went by my orders. I backed her up – whatever she did was fine with me because she knew her stuff. And she helped me a whole lot. I had a night manager and a day manager. And we had 35 employees and split 'em in shifts. And we opened from six in the morning until twelve at night. And....

Q: Did you consider the business was pretty much a success? Did you make good money?

WB: Heavens yes!

Q: Why did you give it up then?

VB: He thought it was wearing me out.

WB: She was carrying the whole weight all the time. Mostly, because I decided....

VB: Well, you had too many other things going on too. He was all over the country with his company. He'd come home at night – he had an office in the back here too. And he did eyes back here. And he's come home and really be swamped and tired out.

Q: When did you – did you sell the business or did you just close it?

VB: We closed it up...

WB: That was in '69. Somebody bought the building...

VB: We had offers- what happened was – we had several offers of people that wanted to buy it, but I had seen too many restaurants close with new owners and the name run down and throw it back in their lap. And I did not want that. So, we decided then that we can't do that...get rid of the building...

Q: Was that still your property then?

VB: Yes, oh yes!

Q: Where McDonald Ford is – oh, my goodness!

WB: Well, not all of it-

VB: Well, on the northeast corner – right next to Roth’s Party Store – all the way beyond Roth’s is ours.

Q: Ok, that’s the part, I believe, where a used car lot is...

VB: A used car lot. But we bought that from Altman, and we, and as I said, we started with nothing...I even had to get my food in there, my first delivery of food to open that place on time...And anyway, there wasn’t even a road... When we first bought the property, there was no road – Seven Mile didn’t go through there. There was just Altman’s farm.

Q: How far did Seven Mile go?

VB: Center Street, which is Sheldon now.

WB: No, no – it went up to the race track.

VB: Up to the track, that’s all. And then they put that extension through later.

Q: Well, coming – I’m talking about coming from the east. Did it end there at Northville Road then?

VB: Yes, it did then when we bought it. We bought the property – it did. We knew that they were going to put the road through, but it wasn’t through when we bought the property.

Q: But Northville Road was through then? That’s why you had the idea of a drive-in?

VB: Oh, yes. Well, anyway we had the... How many years did we operate it? From ’57 to ’69 we had it. And in that length of time, we bought the first property; built the building; bought another sixty foot from Altman, filled it and paved it; and had all kinds of things done, you know. What did we put – two or three additions on it in that length of time and paid for every dime of it...

Q: I’ve been told that it used to be fairgrounds too, but no one has told me when that changed.

VB: Yeah, they had the County Fairs every September, and we always got drowned. It seemed it rained and rained and rained every September, when we had that – now. Betty Allen would know that. You see, her father was Dr. Snow and he started the Driving Club. And the Driving Club is what brought the race track.

Q: How about the – has any change in the configuration of the churches in the time you’ve been here? We’ve talked about businesses. The same churches – more or less – except the new location of the Methodist Church or...?

VB: The Lutherans built a church – the Lutheran Church was built – let’s see, Walter Couse built the Lutheran Church the same time he was remodeling the clinic for us.

Q: The Baptist Church, of course, is at the same spot.

VB: Yes, the Baptist Church, and OLV has changed considerably because it was a little tiny white church over on that corner of Thayer and Orchard.

Q: That's been changed again quite recently.

VB: Yes, but this is way back – it was just a little, white church over there, and this was the house here, the Sisters' house now that belong to the Stewart's because Stewart used to have the drug store – which is now Northville Drug Store – Stewart was a pharmacist. And they lived right over there in that house.

Q: When you say there for the purposes of the tape that was Main, right?

VB: Main and Orchard. And Harper built that house right over here that lives north of Schrader's It was Bloom's woods. I remember the days that this was just a trail up by here. And we used to coming flowering every spring, and from here to Beck Road was Bloom's woods. Wildflowers! Lilies and all kinds of wildflowers, and we'd walk up in there and wander around and get these flowers. It was beautiful back in there. I remember one time there was a dead horse right out here in front of Bloom's residence, which is Main, and that thing laid there for two weeks because it was just a trail and nobody paid any attention. And up back of us here is what we used to call (?) Woods really. It was just a woods. In fact, they still own that piece up in there...Caldwell...

VB: In terms of churches, that's about all I can remember.

Q: Just recently, well, compared to everything else, just recently.

VB: Another thing too, the Presbyterian Church was built onto....Brennan donated some money...

.....

Q: Let's – I didn't get that on tape though, Doc – you were saying something about Velma's father was in politics, were you?

VB: My dad was a staunch Republican.

WB: ...he was the Post Master...

Q: Didn't you tell me that this one man was the only Democrat in town?

WB: Yes, at that time. He had a rough go of it, but he had a good political job until Phil Ogilvy came to town then I guess there were two or maybe three.

VB: But I was a Republican from the word go. I was a delegate to the Republican Party from Northville....

Q: Did you cover most of the things you wanted to cover?

VB: Well, you want to know the things I have been active in? Well, I belong to the Women's Society of the Methodist Church – I was president of that. I belong to Woman's Club. Veteran of Foreign Wars, of course. I worked for the Wayne Cancer Society – I was president of that.

And I'm a Republican delegate from Northville, Wayne too, Republican Committee also. And let's see. I guess at this point, does that cover it? I've dropped out of some of those.

Q: And besides the Rotary, what all were you active in?

WB: That's about all....Optometric Association...

VB: I know something else. He was a commercial artist before he was anything else. He graduated from Lawrence Tech/Cass Tech and then he worked for the Detroit News in the layout department, where they laid out the ads. And then he worked for Ford Motor where they color-matched the paint. In other words, every batch of paint they made, he had to match up...

Q: Now, while you were in the service, was that when you became interested in optometry?

WB: No, no...I had to change because at that time, what I wanted to do...

Q: Well, I want to thank both of you. It has been a delight meeting you, and thank you very much for your time.

WB: Well, since I've been in this town...I know the best part of what we have today...what they were, what they've done,...Don Yerkes, and Russell Atchison, for his clinic

Q: What about their contribution to the City?

WB: I would probably say it would take a long time before you could find someone who has done more for the City in terms of individual relationships of person to person than Russell Atchison. I really believe that.

VB: I would say that too. I believe that with all my heart. He's a very dedicated man.

WB: ...too many new people here don't know what he's done, that he gave his time freely...as far as Don Yerkes, I don't think there's ever a man who walked the streets of Northville with a bigger desire to do for his fellow man what he did... Of course that's not to say that there are others....

VB: We didn't mention that he was part owner of Travel Plans. (?) had Travel Plans before it was Northville Travel Plans.

WB: He adopted youngsters. He'd do whatever he could do for them....and there's Phil Ogilvy, for example...I've had experience with people from all walks of life...Charles Freydl, in the sense of doing for other people, a humanitarian...Frank Woodward... You realize those people changed this town. Harold Bloom is another one...

VB: The Elys are another group.

WB: The superintendent of schools—Amerman, and Elroy Ellison.

VB: He helped everybody, too.

WB: Northville wouldn't have the high school they have today, if it weren't for Russell Amerman.

(QUALITY OF TAPE EXTREMELY POOR – SUBJECTS DID NOT SPEAK DIRECTLY INTO THE MIKE OR WERE TOO FAR AWAY, ALONG WITH A GREAT DEAL OF BACKGROUND NOISE. LAST PART OF TAPE NOT TRANSCRIBED – TOO MUCH MISSING TO TRANSCRIBE CORRECTLY.)