

Oral History  
of Catherine Eugenie Bemish and Lawrence Merrill Bemish  
(Jean and Larry)

Legend:

L – Larry Bemish

J – Jean Bemish

Q – Jennifer Price McFall, interviewer and transcriber

Q2 – Fred Shadko, interviewer and videographer

*This oral history is also available on DVD.*

Q – OK. Today is April 9, 2005. We are interviewing Catherine Eugenie Bemish, known as Jean, and Lawrence Merrill Bemish. At their home at 8800 Napier in Northville Township.

L – 48167

Q – There you go...in case you want to send a letter.

Q – OK, first I wanted to start out asking you guys some questions about yourselves personally. I got your names. When were you born, if you'd like to divulge that information?

J – Actually I was born on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michigan's inception as a state: Jan 26, 1937. It's my claim to fame.

Q – Wonderful

L – I was born March 22, 1934.

Q – And where were you born?

J – Detroit.

Q – Detroit.... In a hospital?

J – Providence Hospital.

Q – Providence.

L – I was born in Ann Arbor, St. Joseph Hospital...in Ann Arbor.

Q2 (to Jean) – Old Providence down on the boulevard.

J – I guess; I don't have too many memories of it.

Q – Is it still there?

Q2: No, no. I think its senior housing now and they're in Southfield.

J – Yes.

Q (to Jean) – Was that the closest hospital to, where, because your parents were living out here at that time?

J – No, we lived in Detroit at the time.

Q – Oh, lived in Detroit, OK.

J – Yes, so it was pretty close.

Q – Ok, so you initially lived in Detroit and you initially lived in Ann Arbor?

J – No.

L - I lived in Northville, and moved to Ann Arbor. Actually, I'm registered as graduating from Northville High School in 1952, but I didn't. And I was registered as graduating University High School in 1952 in Ann Arbor but I didn't.

Q – Well how did that happen?

L - Well, I never finish high school, as a matter of fact. Is, is this stuff you want in here?

Q – Yeah, go...if you want it in here, yeah.

L - I had a terrible time in high school. And so moved to AA, and somehow or another enrolled in University High School, and spent a little time there, oh, a year and a half. And the principal called me in and asked me if I ever thought of becoming a dropout. And I thought, oh dear.

Q – Did he really?

L - Yes. And he said, I said, you know, well, I screwed up again. And, he said maybe you ought to go to college instead of high school; because you have, you know – we give you stuff every day, and he said you're the kind of person that needs to let all that knowledge cook. And I said OK. So they paid my tuition to go to Eastern. Oh, it was then Michigan Normal College, and I went in the summer, and they paid my tuition again in the fall, and I went, I was doing OK. And I went back to pay back the,,the three (erudite?) gentlemen. I said I've got the money to pay you back, and they said, we're not gonna take your money. They said, just anything you decided to do in life, you help somebody else. So that worked for me. And so I got Bachelors from Eastern, a Masters from Michigan, and a PHD from Michigan.

Q – Wow.

L – Don't know what that's got to do with Maybury. I'm gonna think about whether or not I want to leave that in ... because that's kind of an ego trip. I guess, it's not a pity party or anything.

Q – No, that's really interesting.

Q2 – It's very interesting, because my stepson had a really tough time in high school- with traditional method of, of teaching. And his mom jumped him the Ann Arbor systems to the Dearborn systems to the Northville system and finally he dropped out. And now he's very successful. Now he has found his niche, I guess you would say, and I'm, I'm really intrigued to hear stories like that....

Q2 - How did you guys meet?

L– Her brother and my sister were dating. And I knew Bill, in, in High School; he was a little older than me. We ran around together, shot pool together – back then that was a culture all by itself. And, Bill was dating my sister. And he came to Ann Arbor with her one time. And I said, “Don't you have a sister?” And he said “Yeah”. I said, “Is she doing anything?” He said “No, she's still in high school.” I said, “What's the number?” And he gave me the number. And I called her. I said “How tall are you?”

J – We started dating and we've been together ever since.

Q – Wow.

J – So our kids are double cousins.

Q – Oh, that's neat. Oh, so they ended up getting married also?

J – Oh yes.

L – They married....they married before we did.

Q – Oh, that's neat. Now, do you guys have any brothers and sisters?

L – I have a sister exactly a year older. She was married to Bill....

Q – Oh that's the sister...got it, got it, got it. So that's the only one... that's the only sibling?

J – Yeah, and I had four brothers.

Q – All older?

J – No, two older, a twin, and a younger one.

Q – Oh, OK. Five kids in the family. That must have been interesting.

J – Yeah, it was ... four brothers.

L – Good Catholics.

Q (to Jean) – Now, you ... lived in Detroit for a short time, and then moved out here.

J – Yes, I was eleven. I think my family was one of the first ones of the Urban Flight. My dad's company moved out here from downtown Detroit. And then we moved out. And they bought the house. It was called the old Whipple house at the time. But I have a (paper), signed by Andrew Jackson, the original land grant; and Rufus Thayer owned the original property here, eighty acres. So I'll get you it, I have it right here, a copy of it.

Q – OK. And they called that particular house, two doors over, the old Whipple house?

J – Well, we bought it from some people named Whipple.

Q – I've heard that name.

J – I don't think it was that Whipple. There was a Whipple that was involved with a farmer at Maybury and I don't think it was the same.

Q – You know, that's funny because I have some of these old maps, and these are from I believe these are from 1876, and it does say "Whipple" in several places on the map. Now this one right here let me find the right map I'm talking about. You see, right here, on this map, which at the time, when you were eleven and you moved here, was it all Plymouth Twp.?

J – No, no. It was Northville Township. 1948 was when we moved out.

Q – 1948, because it says, now you would be between Six and Seven and Napier, now here's Thayer. And then this is Whipple over here. And then another Whipple...

J – Then same Whipple lived on Seven Mile lived over at the farm at Maybury for a while and then moved back to Seven Mile.

Q – OK. And you right here are located somewhere along here.

J – We're, we're right ...

Q – No, this is Seven and Eight; you're Six and Seven.

J - We would be right. Is this Six Mile right here? (Yep) yes, we would be right along here.

Q - Yep, I do believe so.

Q2 - Very close to Seven Mile.

J - Yes.

Q - OK.

J - This was the Angell property here; they're the ones that sold to the subdivision.

Q - And that's Ruth? Is that Ruth Angell, of the ...

J - No, I don't know who Ruth Angell is; there are quite a few Angells in the area.

Q - Common name or all related?

J - I think they're all related one way or the other.

Q- OK.

Q2 - What was your dad's company here? Do you remember?

J - It was called Whitman and Barnes, they made twist drills and reamers.

Q2 - And they came to Northville Township?

J - No, they came to Plymouth. They were right next to Burrough's on Plymouth Road and they since have sold out and the buildings still there. It moved south someplace quite a few years ago. But he was, you know, he had his job during the Depression, he was one of those people, you know, he started with them when he was eighteen and retired at 62.

Q - So he... what did he do for them?

J - He was Office Manager of a type, he had women working under him. They did a lot of copying and stuff like that, I'm not exactly sure.

Q - OK, now, was your... did your mother stay home with those five children?

J - She worked at the time, when we went to high school, she went out and got a job. And she wound up getting a job at the bank in Northville where Comerica is now, it was called Depositor's State Bank. She worked there for ten or twelve years, I think. And then it went from Depositor's to someone else to Comerica.

Q - OK, that was, wasn't unusual to have women working back then?

J - No, no, actually three women on Napier Road wound up working at the bank in there, so...

Q - OK.

J - It was kind of neat.

Q - But back in the day there was probably no daycare like there is now, so if you had children you'd probably ...

J - Most women worked, it was a farming community out here too. I mean they belonged to the Farm Bureau, too. And my first friend out here, their family had a dairy farm, you know it was very rural, very different from what it is now.

Q - How much. OK, going back to the house you were born in (two doors over), how much land did you have at that time?

J - My folks started out with, I think, twenty acres, and wound up buying an additional ten or twenty.

Q - And did they farm that?

J - No, no. I had horses growing up. We had a pasture there.

Q - OK. And were there other houses around here at that time? Like, what was the ...?

J - The configuration was, there was a Green Ridge nursery next door, my parent's house, and one other house down there. Just three houses along here. And across the street, there probably was one directly across, on the corner, then the one next to it. Probably houses on the other side of the street.

Q - So it wasn't completely, I mean, just you out here.

J - No, no.

Q - Sounds like it was definitely populated.

J - Oh, it was. And when we moved out, a lot of girls my age moved out, so I had a lot of friends. It was a lot of fun.

Q - And the streets at that time, were not paved (well, they're not paved now, so I'm going to assume they weren't paved then).]

J - No, we were able to ride horseback in the 50's, I mean, all over the township and we did. I mean, you know, there wasn't the traffic, and we did a lot of riding at Maybury and the grave pits, and all that.

Q - Now, the ... was Seven Mile paved at that time?

J - Yes. Seven was paved, Eight was paved, but not Beck, Ridge, well Ridge isn't paved now. Beck Road, I don't know if you remember, was a little two-lane country road.

Q2 - I think it's only been paved in the last ten or fifteen years.

Q - (To Larry) We were just talking about what it was like growing up around here. Now, you were born in Ann Arbor. And moved back and forth. So what were the years that was happening?

L - I moved, my first recollection was when I moved to Frankenmuth. I lived on a farm, and two houses on the farm, and I can remember harvesting going on, I was two and a half I think, and my grandparents lived with us (my mother's parents), and then we moved from Frankenmuth to Saginaw. And it was my mom and sister and I. And then I remember Dec. 7, 1941, so clearly, because I lived in Howard Street in Saginaw, and I remember the guy holding up the paper, "War", and then my next recollection was when we moved back to Northville. My father lived here; my parents were separated and he lived on Main Street, and we moved into a little house on Dunlap Street, where the parking lot for CVS is. Then my parents somehow got back together again, and we moved on into a house that was right across from the shopping center, Hiller's that market.

Q - Is the home still there?

L - Yes, it's still there and it's Lake Street, corner of, northeast corner of Lake Street and Center Street. And there was, East ... was there another sanatorium, "Eastlawn?"

Q - Yes.

Q2 - Yes, it was up on the hill.

J - You know, I never did see that. I never went up to see it. It was a magnificent old building, I guess. It was way way up.

Q - You just never ...

J - I just never had occasion to go up there.

L - Was that a sanatorium?

J - It was for ...

Q - Supposedly yes, it was for TB patients. I haven't looked into it a lot, but supposedly yes.

L - Then, and then we moved.

J - When did you move to Fairbrook?

L - Fairbrook, I can't remember the dates.

Q - Fairbrook Street?

J - Yes, Fairbrook Street. It's the one that cuts into 7 Mile.

Q - Where the apartments are now, I think right? (*Note: actually several duplexes*)

Q2 - No.

L - There are some, but we lived at, I mean near the corner of Lake Street and (J- Not Lake, but Wing.) Wing, Fairbrook and Wing. One house on ...

J - They've redone the house. It's kind of orange. They have all this cedar siding on it, it's not the same.

Q - It's not the same.

J - Not the same.

Q2 - Now, at that time, Seven Mile Road didn't go through?

J - They did that cutoff when I was in high school, I think. Yes, I think that was when I was in high school, I guess you had to go through Northville then out and around. Yes. (*Looking at the map.*) Seven Mile gets lost.

Q - I tried to mark it on one of my maps, here, this is from 1943.

J - Oh, ok.

Q - And, so you're saying during high school, you see 7 Mile went straight into Fairbrook and then ended in Center. So, if for example, people were going to go out to Maybury, things came in on the railroad, which is somewhere around here. Do you remember, where was there a railroad station around here?

L - Yes, right across, right across from the Wagon Wheel. The Wagon Wheel, you know where that is?



Q - Yeah.

L - That used to be a hotel, and is used to accommodate people...

J - That came in on the train.

Q - So it sounds like you were both in Northville; you were living in Northville. Well, you (Jean) were in the Township, and you (Larry) were in the city at the same time, but you (Larry) were in Northville School and in some different schools at the time. So was that the reason why you never met each other?

L - We met once or twice.

J - We met, I mean I would see him around. I'd see his family in church, but he was three years older than me. And back when you're in high school ...

Q - Three years is a lot.

J - The older men, you never really meet. So I think it was just... I always had my eye on him.

Q - Ah, the truth comes out.

Q2 - Where did you get married?

J - Our Lady of Victory (OLV). We were the last one married in the old OLV white-framed church.

Q2 - Very cool.

J - Before they tore it down in 1957.

Q2 - So now, newcomers like me, I've only been here nine years, think of the 'new' OLV and the 'old' OLV.

L - Where are you from Fred?

Q2 - I was born and raised in Detroit, in Women's Hospital in 1947.

L - What hospital?

Q2 - Women's, I think they've renamed it now, I think it's ...(Q - Is it Hutzel?), Hutzel. And I was raised in a flat off of Davidson and Livernois.

J - OK, I lived near Seven Mile and Livernois, kind of ...

- Q2 - And then we moved to Seven and Livernois in 1957.
- J - What street did you live on?
- Q2 - We lived on Woodingham.
- J - I lived on San Juan.
- Q2 - Oh, you're kidding.
- J - I was a block from Seven Mile. Where did you live on Woodingham?
- Q2 - The corner of Pickford.
- J - Oh, for gosh sakes.
- Q2 - I went to Bagley (elementary school)
- J - I did too, I went to kindergarten at Bagley.
- Q2 - And if you walked along Pickford, there was a little hill; it was the only hill in the whole city of Detroit, and that was right alongside our house. And they couldn't build a sidewalk through there because of the hill. And there was this huge old elm tree that sat out into Pickford. And then when they paved, tried to pave Pickford, they couldn't do that either.
- J - That was dirt? Wasn't that dirt?
- Q2 - Yeah, some of it was.
- J - I remember that.
- Q2 - And people were very stubborn, and couldn't get up that hill in the winter, and they would sit there and spit their tires for hours.
- J - Pickford and Woodingham. Yes, I can still recite the names of the side streets.
- Q2 - That's San Juan near Seven Mile.
- J - Near, between Clarita and Seven Mile.
- Q2 - Near the library? There was Sherwood Forest Library?
- J - Yes, I was three blocks from that. I used to frequent that every week.
- L - Her mom took her to the library all the time. Yeah, you can see our value for books.

J - No, I ... Sherwood Forest, you know I used to walk to all the time. Get my four books, go home, read them, and go back.

Q2 - Cunningham's at the corner of Seven and Livernois?

J - Do you remember "Phone Don for Drugs?"

Q2 - Absolutely!

Q - What? (Everyone is laughing)

J - There was a drug store at the corner of San Juan and Seven Mile, and up until four years ago there was this huge sign on the top. I don't know if it was neon, or just lit up, but it said "Phone Don for Drugs". It was huge, my son was down there just a few months ago and he said they had taken the sign down. But the whole stretch in there, from San Juan to Livernois was like a small community back in the 40's. Fantastic stores and a Dime Store.

Q2 - Kohl's.

J - And there was a bakery, get bread for eleven cents a loaf ... a long time ago.

Q2 - That's good.

J - But there was a drug store, and a dime store and grocery store.

L - Wasn't there a Gem Theater or something.

J - Not right there, no. We had the Varsity Theater on Livernois and the Royal Theater on Seven Mile.

Q2 - And the Mercury Theater if you were really adventurous down on Schaefer. With the reclining seats, remember, the reclining seats.

Q - Does that area, now, any ... does it resemble at all where you grew up?

J - The side streets do. I think it's mostly black now, but we went back and saw the house about ten years ago, and it looked better than when we lived there, and it was a nice neighborhood when we lived there, but I think the stretch along Seven Mile is pretty well boarded up.

Q2 - The commercial is pretty ugly, but the brick homes, they were all brick homes.

J - Yeah, they were beautiful.

Q2 - The homes have really endured, they really have... and it's coming back. For a while, the rich kids lived on the other side of Livernois.

J - Yes, Sherwood Forest.

Q2 - And those homes for a while sold for a very little money but now they're expensive once again; it's really coming back.

L - Is Palmer Park down there?

J - Palmer Park is there, yes. (To Q). Are you familiar with Detroit at all?

Q - I'm vaguely familiar with it because I went to Wayne State, and I used to take a lot of different ways home.

J - Yeah.

Q - Because it was interesting driving and I wasn't afraid at that time, I didn't have any kids.

J - Good for you. (To Q2), So, you're ten years younger than me, so I had moved out there at the time. So you have a different recollection.

Q - So what was it like living in Detroit, and them moving way out here?

J - Do you know what? It took me about a week of adjust. I hate to say that, but I didn't know we were going to move. I was at Girl Scout Camp; when I got home, I found out we were moving. Parents didn't talk things over with kids then.

L - That was the way things were done.

J - And so anyway, so I went to Gesu School, which is a big Catholic school in Detroit, and I thought, my mom felt we were going to go to Northville School in Northville, and so we came out. She took us in there, and she found out since Thayer School was up here, it was part of the school district, that she would have had to have paid tuition for ...

NOTE: THERE APPEARS TO BE A GAP IN TEXT OR PAGES.

J - While, I didn't ride, didn't really ride until I was in high school, but I don't know, it was just, the whole community thing, with the people out here... there was a beautiful apple orchard up on Six Mile and Napier.

L - Both sides.

J - Where the compost is now. It was beautiful.

Q2 - Did, obviously, well, did you walk to school?

J - Oh yes. The only time I ever got a ride, up on Seven Mile, old Merrin Angell, one of the Angells whose grandson had had polio when he was six and he was ...

L - Dale Boring.

J - Dale Boring, he was in braces from the legs down, so they always had to take him to school. That was when they mainstreamed kids like that. So, if old Mr. Angell saw us walking and he had room, he would stop and pick us up. But Dale was in a wheelchair, I don't know how he got up and down the steps with that, you know, and anytime we would walk from school we'd have to push him in his wheelchair. He had crutches and braces. So I did get rides, but other than that ...

L - He got polio when he was three.

Q2 - What was life like in the 1 room school?

J - It was fun. I had the same teacher for three years, and we didn't have many books. The thing I remember most is she giving my English book and I would have to copy all the paragraphs and name all the parts of speech. And I didn't tune in too much to the little kids then, but, I think she was busy with helping them to learn to read and stuff.

Q - So you went from Detroit school where you had different ages in different classrooms?

J - No, in Detroit it was like first grade, second grade.

Q - Yeah, it was like normal. And you came out here and you had one teacher trying to teach how many, ages were?

J - Kindergarten through eighth grade.

L - In one room?

J - In one room. My brother and I were the only ones in eighth grade.

L - But, you know, I think with Eugenie, she was like in fifth or fourth grade. Whatever, she would listen to what the eighth graders were doing, and she picked up a lot that way. If you think about it, years ago they had an open curriculum, access, open school kind of concept and it was really kind of an open school kind of thing because it was multi-age. And you know, if you're smart, like Eugenie is, you know, it was something in eighth grade, she's going to listen to that and pick it up, whether she knows it or not.

J - Right. But anyway, I was in sixth grade when I moved out. But Carrie Dickinson was the teacher, and she just lived up the road here. She had her own Kaiser Frasier car, her husband worked for Kaiser Frasier, and she drove that up and, you know, we just had a good time at recesses and that kind of thing.

Q - So where did you go to high school?

J - Northville.

Q - The one on old Main?

J - Yes, the one on old Main Street. Larry went there too, we both went there. And the year I graduated from the ninth grade down in Thayer, all the one room schools consolidated out here, and all went into Northville, so if I was three years younger, I never would have gone to the country school.

L - But you, when the school let out down here, it was more for the agricultural ...

J - Oh yes, we got out at the end of May. And I think Northville probably got out mid June, or whatever it was, because the kids were needed on the farm.

Q - Was school mandatory back then?

J - Oh yes, it still was. It wasn't stringent, and I don't think I studied a lot in high school. I think I got by, you know, and uh, we had fun. That old building on Main Street was cool.

Q - Now that burned down?

J - No, no.

Q2 - It's still there.

J - It's the one where the handicapped go now. And I went back there, with Larry; we had taken some students on a field trip and I went back, probably about five years ago, six years ago, to the building, and it has not changed inside at all. You might want to go look at it sometime. It's not changed. They painted the halls, and everything, but the gym is still there, the old study hall is still there, and all the classes, they're all in the same place. And we're having my 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion this September.

Q - Oh, that will be fun!

Q2 - I wonder if they'd like to make a living record of that. I would be willing to come.

Q - That would be interesting.

J - You know, I've got, if you want to borrow them, I have four old Palladiums, the old high school yearbooks, '51-55.

Q2 - The old high school yearbooks.

L - I can hear everyone.

J - I said I had the old Palladiums from '51-55.

Q - (To Larry) Now what is your, I guess you said your earliest memory is when you were two.

L - In Frankenmuth.

Q - (To Jean) And, what is your earliest memory? Must be from Detroit.

J - Yes, it's from Detroit. My earliest memory? You know what, Oh I remember my brother and I, my mom had another younger one at home and we went to kindergarten on Bagley. And she decided after one day that we could walk home by ourselves. So I still see Mike and me walking down Curtis, we were a good three-fourths of a mile from home – two five-year-olds? And we were holding hands crying at the top of our lungs, lost; we didn't know where to go. And fortunately, a neighbor lady, who lived a block from us, found us and took us home. I can still see us walking along, crying.

Q - Ahhh.

Q2 - You had to cross Woodingham, Santa Barbara.

J - Yep, Pennington?

Q2 - Pennington.

Q - That was probably usual back then, no?

J - Oh yes, we walked by Wayne, when I went to Gesu we walked a lot. We used city buses. (Tape ends)

L - ...walking to school and different things. One of the things I noticed about her is that she's fiercely independent. She wants to do something, she does it. And I think that's an (out roar?) because I was raised, like, we take care of the women –uh, I don't think so. You know so, there's no feminist thing involved in it. It's just, she wants to do it, and she does it.

J - I think that was one thing about, you know, the 40's, it was very safe to walk any place you wanted. You know, it's so sad now that everybody is so afraid. And out here we walked right a town. "Shank's Mares", you know, feet that's what we used.

Q - (To Larry) What did your father do? You said he, you obviously lived in Northville and moved around in Northville.

L - He worked , he was a powerhouse engineer at Maybury.

Q - That's right, for 45 years.

L - At least 45 years.

Q - 45 years, that's right ... and your mother?

L - My mother's a nurse. And she ... I called my sister Gail before, just before you guys came to find out how my mother and sister, Clair, came up, and she couldn't recall. Burt it had something to do with my mother being a nurse and ... in Ann Arbor, so there was ... My, my Aunt Clair who was married to Leo.

J - The one that was in the sanatorium for ...

L - He was in Maybury San for five years. That's how Clair and Lee met.

J - She worked there, didn't she?

L - Apparently, but she was not, at that time, a skilled ... Lee, was from River Rouge, I think, and a wonderful person. He was largely responsible for the values that I have today, rather than my, from my father.

J - He got tuberculosis, though, I think, his sister had it, it was just in the home. It was just something that happened back then.

L - But he was, he was an in-house resident at Maybury for five years. Dr. Woodruff, who did the research there, had him as a lab technician, and he helped Dr. Woodruff with post-mortems, and record keeping, and things ... Lee was a sharp, sharp guy, real sharp guy. And, just a tenderness about him that helped me a lot growing up.

J - He wound up living on part of one lung, I believe.

Q - But it sounds like he was ambulatory.

J - Oh yes.

Q - Moved around?

J - Oh yes.

L - When he got out, he began work at the old Wayne County Training School.



Q - Really?

L - And that was part of the reason that – he would bring kids home, or he would take me to work with him, and that’s how I got interested in special education. And much of the research that was done in learning disabilities emanated from there. Strauss and Layton (spelling?) were some of the people who did a lot of research there, and they weren’t called learning disabilities at the time, but Lee would bring kids home, or he would take me to work with him. And the kids out there, just in terms of performance, were doing better than I could because, you know, I couldn’t process the information, so they were a big help to me. And then, he was, he rose to become a general supervisor, and then he had a problem with a guy, it was Rosetti, or Haskell, I think the guy was Dr. Haskell.

Q - I’ve heard the name.

L - But he was transferred from there to Eloise, which was part of the tuberculosis thing; it became a mental institution later on. I just have such warm feelings about Uncle Lee.

Q - Well, it sounded like he really stepped in as your father.

L - Yeah, yeah. But he also respected my father. He was supportive, and he said just come on over any time.

J - But I think, you know, that’s a neat example of how central Maybury was, and they wound up living in Northville for the rest of their lives. Raised their daughters here.

L - (Can’t hear) ... and niece?

J - Yes, in Northville. And I think the sanatorium, you know, employed a lot of people that wound up living in Northville. And this is Alice Woodruff, right here, she was in this high school yearbook. I think this was his daughter, Dr Woodruff’s daughter, I don’t know if you want it, I don’t even know if she’s still there. This book was printed in 1989, but you can have that card.

Q - Wonderful, thank you.

J - (Can’t understand...)

Q2 - I’m curious about something about the powerhouse. I’m an engineer...

L - Alright!

Q2 - And I was really distraught when they tore down the old smokestack at Burroughs, just thought that was wrong.

L - Oh yes.

Q2 - There was nothing wrong with it except it said Burroughs instead of Unisys.

L - I've been to England once with Eugenie once to Germany, and they have in Germany, they have building built in 1400 – they're still using. And they don't like something over here, they tear it down. It's like "no deposit, no return". But, when they were tearing down, we could hear them dynamite the stuff at Maybury, and I remember the smokestack there was huge, and then there was a big pile of coal near that. And my dad bought a pressed air BB gun to shoot rats in the coal. You know, it wasn't powerful enough but he said he could sting them. And he would take me out there and the place was immaculate; I mean, it was – the powerhouse was just immaculate. And big pipes and everything, but it was clean and neat.

J - Was there a big furnace in there? Andy, our son, talked about a big furnace.

L - I was talking to my son before he went to Florida, and he said he remembers Grandpa Les, my dad, taking him into the coal hopper. And he could see the coal going down and into this big flame, where they generated all the power. Because the heating was underground I guess. And ... but, my contact there was mostly at the powerhouse, but ...

Q2 - How did they get the coal there? Was there a railroad spur? Or did it come by truck?

L - Boy, that's a good question.

J - I would assume it came by truck. There was a road, it went from Beck Road, all the way through the sanatorium.

L - Beck and 7 Mile.

Q - I'm sorry, a railroad?

J - No, a road. That was, all the buildings were accessible to this road. And then it would wind, it wound around and part of it went back out onto Eight Mile. You could go through from 7 to 8 Mile, and then the other part came back out and exited near Ridge, just east of Ridge.

L - (Talking to Q2) You know where Ely's is, in Northville, you know where CVS is and there's a Thai restaurant? Well, just to the north of that, there's a woodworking shop and the donut shop. That is Ely and Son, Fuel Oil and Coal. They would have delivery, that was their yard.

J - I would think that's where the coal came from.

L - You know, they didn't have much more than five-yard dump trucks, I suppose, at the time, but I recall Charles Ely was in my class, called him Clancy.

J - You might want to talk to him.

L - Huh?

J - I said, you might want to talk to him, too. I don't know how many people you want to talk to.

L - They were a very rich family and, in Northville, considered you know, high brow, I guess you would... but that was part of the supply.

Q- I remember that, I know that for the state hospital they built a railroad spur, which they just ripped out fairly recently, that went off to the C & O Railroad and to that powerhouse. And then there was the powerhouse for the Wayne County Training Center that was down the hill, and there was a railroad spur for that, too, for the coal.

J - I don't remember any railroad being out here at all, so that's an interesting question.

Q2 - So they must have hauled it by truck, which might be why the roads were paved.

J, L - Yes.

J - There was also a bus service, Henry Biddle owned it, I think I told you about that.

Q - Yes.

J - His company was right across from where the State Hospital is now (*the site is now Rocky's restaurant on the north side of Seven Mile between Haggerty and Northville Roads*). He used to run a bus service, probably a couple time a day, I guess, going here it would exit here, and if I caught the bus the right time after high school in Northville, I was able to catch a ride, get off here, and then walk a mile home.

L - I got my driver's license when I was fourteen, and my dad would work four at night until midnight sometimes. And, just incidentally, I believe he worked seven years, midnight for seven years during the war without a day off.

J - Because of manpower shortage.

Q - And that powerhouse had to be staffed around the clock?

J - Oh yes.

L - Boiler operators, yes.

Q - And how many, do you know how many people worked on a shift? Was he there alone?

L - Any time I was out there he was alone.

J - But he wasn't the only powerhouse engineer.

L - No, Sam Geraci was his boss, and Jimmy Jensen was employed there. Jimmy Jensen was employed there. Jimmy Jensen was a flamboyant kind of a guy, he, I'm trying to think of his nationality, but he was a drinker, and a laugher, and when they started making convertibles after the war, he bought a Buick convertible.

J - There was also, I don't know – off the subject, when there was farms over here, prisoners from the Detroit House of Correction (DeHoCo) came over. They would put them on a flat bed behind a tractor, you know .... all the farmland.

L - You see, as Detroit House of Correction was owned, Maybury was owned by Detroit.

J - DeHoCo was owned by Detroit

L - I think later on, the unions got involved, because they used to use prisoners throughout state parks, picking up trash and stuff, and the union got mad at them.

J - But when we would be walking, I would be walking to school in the morning in the spring, these wagonloads of prisoners, well, one wagonload would go by, you know, and they'd just wave at us and we'd wave at them. They had a uniform, it was royal blue pants with a red stripe going down and a blue work shirt; and I mean, and I think as you know Maybury produced all their own food and everything, yes; it was very self-sufficient.

Q - So the farms that you're talking about were north of Eight Mile?

J - No, no, they were on the property, yes, all that – there were several houses along...I think some of the doctors lived there. And then where the farm used to be was ...

L - While you know where the new barn is now?

J - Where the farm was, the barn is now. That was an original farm there too. Yes, they farmed a lot of it in there. I think they would have a lot of history on that over there. But, yes they used to do a lot, then this Whipple I was telling you about, who lived on Seven Mile, I was just reading the history, I think it was at the library, going over some of the history, and he lived for a while on Eight Mile where the present farm is, but then he moved back the house down, the family home down a year ago and they're putting condos now. It's just right across from Steeplechase, where they have the brickwork now, but nothing is there.

Q2 - And then it traveled along Seven Mile.

J - Seven Mile back into town, yes.

Q2 - To Fairbrook?

J - Oh I'm not sure.

L - The loading place was up on Four Corners.

J - Yes, Seven Mile, Main Street and Center.

L - Where most of the galleries are, and there was a bus stop there.

J - And that's where most people and I caught the bus.

L - And there was, by the bus stop there was a telephone booth, and there was a bar railing, and then all the area to the south of that corner was parking lot, and then there was a bowling alley.

J - Where Main Center is now.

Q2 - I have an uncle by marriage, the Elliot family. The Elliot's owned a bakery on Main Street.

J - In Northville?

Q2 - In Northville. When the theatre burned down they moved to Trenton, so that was probably '32 or '33, so before you were out here. But for a while one of the Elliot's ran the old hotel that was at the southwest corner of Center and Main.

J - That's where the parking, I mean, it went way down, it was like a story drop where the parking lot was.

Q2 - Southwest corner of Center and Main.

J - Yes, and that's where the bus stop was, yes.

Q2 - So when that was torn down it became a parking lot.

J - Yes, the bowling alley.

Q2 - ...or burned down or whatever.

J - I think Main Street has changed a lot over the years.

Q - Yes, yes. How much interaction did the community have with Maybury?

J - You know, it's a good question. I would say with the doctor's kids, the one name I can't remember.

L - I don't think it was advertised that way. It was always ...

J - It was just there.

L - It was never... it wasn't hush hush but it was just ... I remember the Woodruff girls; they were nice to me, that, for a greaser was important. And I remember the fondness when my uncle talked about the ...

J - Did he have fond memories of Maybury?

L - Yes, yes, it was a growing experience for him. Not just in terms of getting well and doing research, but in terms of helping others. I mean, he was a giver. He never complained about his ...

J - Yes, I guess there are probably a lot of people living in Northville that settled there after the sanatorium closed, but you don't really know, other than his aunt who worked there and his uncle, I didn't really know anybody out there.

Q - OK, so it wasn't really part of the community, per se. Were people afraid to go there because, TB at that time, was ...

L - I think there might have been some of that, yes; maybe that was why it wasn't... I don't recall it being talked about that much. But, people would ask, "Where's your dad work?" and I'd say "San... Maybury San, it was called. Some people called it a sanatorium, which was the correct name. Other people would call it a sanitarium.

J - I always called it a sanitarium, I mean, ones for crazy people.

L - That's for the mental aspects and so there was confusion about that.

J - My girlfriend and I, there were several of us, we used to ride horses in there though, and I remember Barbara had a beautiful palomino who used to do all these tricks, and so the patients would come and stand there on this second-story screened-in porch, looking, and she'd put Sonny through all these tricks, and they used to clap.

L - You can see, in here ... (*opening Northville Michigan by Barbara G. Louie*).

J - I think she has that.

L - There's one of the buildings. (*Shows several photos of the sanatorium from Northville Michigan book*).

Q - Yes, yes I've seen those.

L - That's what she'd talking about (*points to photos*), the people.

Q - Came out here and looked.

J - Then another time we were riding our horses in there, and two teenage boys came, I think I told you both that, came to the door and were kind of flirting with us, and were trying to make arrangements for us to come back, after dark. And meet them, build a fire, they said roast marshmallows, and, anyway, the head nurse came and gave us a little lecture on how contagious tuberculosis was, and you know, get going, get moving.

Q - Wow.

J - So, that was pretty much that type of thing would have been the only interaction. We used to cut through a lot, from Seven to Eight (*Mile*), with cars as we were driving.

Q - So it was a public road?

J - Yes, anybody could go in, no, it wasn't fenced.

Q - Well, they had gates, so I mean there are pictures you see of the gates, but the public, anyone could go in there?

J - Yes.

Q - So I find that hard to reconcile, if people were afraid of TB and it was very contagious, there were people who went through there, just went through there.

J - Well, you might just drive.

L - Well, if you drive through, it wasn't by accident. You had to know where you were going.

Q - Where you were going, so was a cut through. How about the people who worked there, did you dad, were people like, "Oh, you work at the sanitarium, sanatorium."

L - I was never that close to my dad, I guess to...

Q - Or your uncle?

J - I don't recall anybody ever ostracizing him because of that.

Q - Ok.

J - I think, you know, once you were healed, you were healed. Now when I was in, when my kids were in high school, one of the last doctors that came out there lived in one of the houses on Eight Mile. And they did a lot of work with tuberculosis, I can't remember their names, it was when our...my kids were in nursery school, it was in the 60's, and one of the

things I remember most was they had a lung in a plastic case, it was all diseased, and my son was giving a talk on lung cancer one time and he borrowed that to take to school and give a talk.

Q - It was a model of a lung?

J - No, it was a real lung. It was yucky.

L - And he brought it home, shoved it in my face.

Q - Really?

J - I can't think of the people's names, but I think they were... '65, if you do the history on 1965 when the last group of kids from Garden City caught that.

L - Andy might be able to remember the name.

J - Yes, I can find it out later.

Q2 - Were there people other than from the city of Detroit who were at Maybury? Or was it... do you know?

J - I don't know. I don't know.

L - Patient population, it's in here (*in Northville Michigan book*). I read a few pages this morning, I think it's in there.

Q2 - When they decided to close it, of course antibiotics wiped it out, pretty much and they decided to close it, was it phased out... you may already know the answer to these questions, Jen, but I'm just learning.

J - No, it closed, as I say, after 1965 when those kids were there. I can still see the building they were in. We used to go in there and pick up pinecones to make pinecone wreaths. (L – what?) Pick up pinecones to make pinecone wreaths, when my kids were little. No, they just sat, and I remember another time when I was adult and still had horses and were riding in there, it wasn't fenced or anything, but they used to have watchmen in there. He came up and he said, "Um, we have three real big dogs, uh, kinda runnin' loose around here, and they don't like horses." I left and I never went back.

Q - You never went back after that?

J - Not until it became a park.

Q - It was in the 70's. 1976? (*Editor's note: it was 1975*)



J - Yes, and they had to dynamite all the buildings. The high school kids used to go up there and have fun and that's what happened and they were afraid of somebody hurting themselves.

L - The children's units, I've forgotten how many there are, but they had nursery rhymes painted on them by world-renowned artists.

J - That's probably in there (Northville Michigan book).

Q - Yes, yes, I've seen that and that's in the area that then became the laboratory where, by the time you were there (to Larry), they had the animals and things in there.

J - Yes, they had moved the children elsewhere.

L - I remember as a kid, going past that and I was so comforted by the idea that they were helping kids. You know, I would just kind of smile inside when I'd see that. Of course, my Uncle Lee, I had a strong attachment to him, so anything associated with him I felt pretty good about.

Q - Pleasant memories. I don't want to keep you guys too much longer.

L - We're having fun (laughing).

Q - Thank you, thank you. I want to talk a little bit, to finish up, about how the world's events kind of impacted you here, one of them obviously being the Depression, but it sounds like maybe it didn't impact Northville the way it impacted maybe Detroit.

J - Well, I remember when I was in high school, I graduated in '55, and I remember a couple of the teachers were kind of bemoaning the fact that they needed a new high school, they didn't have the money, because it was so small, you know, and ...

Q - Similar to now? They're now bemoaning the fact that they need more schools.

J - No, I mean, but there was nothing around. There was, you had the city of Northville, and Northville Township was all farms, country and the whole thing, other than the State Hospital – oh, his aunt worked at the State Hospital for years, too.

L - Say that again?

J - I said Clair worked at, Lee's wife, the State Hospital for years, too. Anyway, so I think, well, I think...his mom and aunt came up from Ohio to get jobs. I think his aunt particularly, to get a job at the sanatorium, because of lack of jobs elsewhere.

L - Well, I remember one of the things I got from my dad that I always appreciate is a work ethic. And he grew up in Brown County, southern Indiana. I think he went through the sixth grade or something.

J - Did he come up specifically to work there?

L - I don't think he came up so much specifically to work there as he did to get away from his home, his family... I might, I'm going to edit a lot of this out, when I look at it again, but he worked there for 45 years, and I remember my mom told me he lied about his age to get a job. So I don't know how old he was when he came up here, but his work ethic is...I used to hear him talk, he says, he was afraid a lot of times of going to work and they would fire him. You know, there was paranoia at the time; there were no unions. And he used to say, "They're going to give this guy his walking papers", and excuse the expression, my dad said, "You always go out and work, you keep your nose clean, you don't get in anybody else's business because you're going to get your walking papers." And I think, out of the Depression, you know, he hung onto what he had in terms of a job, you know; there was a fear, and sometimes realistic.

J - You know that was my dad too. This Whitman and Barnes he had worked for since he was eighteen, and he never really liked his job. He was a fantastic carpenter and woodworker, but that's what brought in the money. He moonlighted with them for years, too; he used to make blocks out of maple to hold the drills.

L - He used to make wooden toys. They would sell them at Federals Department Store (in Detroit).

J - But, so I mean, then I grew up with the sound of saws and stuff in the basement when he was making his boxes before class. Beautiful maple blocks to hold all the drills.

L - You'll appreciate this, Fred, she had four brothers and a dad, very handy, and she thought it was a genetic endowment that just men could do that.

Q - Did you prove her wrong?

J - Yes, big time (laughing).

L - She said, "I need some shelves in there"; I said, "Good", I said, "Call somebody". (Laughing)

Q - I heard during the Depression they had something that they called script? Can you explain a little bit about that?

L - My dad talked about that. He says, "We don't want any of that ... no script."

J - Wasn't it kind of like a substitute for money?

L - Sure. Not all places would take it. But my dad, we rented a house, for...the one on Center Street, we rented, the one on Fairbrook we rented for a long time and I think I was fourteen or fifteen because I was ... it was November when I was fifteen or sixteen that I left, he bought the house then from the guy he rented it from, because he finally felt safe. When my dad died, he had metal boxes, it was '74, in the basement; \$1800 in it, and you know, he kept saving. But, he says, he would go to the racetrack, he would bet with a bookie. He would say, "Bookies you can trust". (Laughing)

Q2 - There were bookies around Northville?

L - Oh yes. There's a Greek's Bar and there was the bar where... well, Poole's, Poole's Restaurant is now, used to be Joe's, old Joe's Bar.

J - Little Joe's.

L - And it was a dump. Boy, I'll tell you, it was something! And then there was another one where the hardware store used to be.

Q2 - Where ... was?

L - No, right on (Center) ... It's a gallery now (Atrium Gallery) – that used to be a hardware store (Northville Hardware).

J - On Center and ... (just north of Main on the west side of Center).

L - And then right north of that, in that, whatever there is now, it used to be a bar. I can't think of the name of it. (Ramsey's. Note: Ramsey's Bar was at 105 N. Center; Northville hardware was at 107-109 N. Center, Schrader's Furniture was at 111-113 N. Center).

J - Well, there was a pool hall there, right across from the where (Main's) is?

L - Oh, that was, across from, yeah, that was there ...

J - This was your small town kind of businesses.

L - Yes, that was Joe Alessi's pool room. I used to set pins in that at ten cents a lane. Worked all day Saturday and he had, I think six alleys, and you'd get down there early so you could set double, because you know, that's just going to ... and, they had kids from the Five Points Gang down there.

J - It's a Detroit – Grand River and Seven Mile, it was called the Five Points Gang.

L - And there was a gang. And they would come out here and they would try to get the pins, and if you got double, that was great. But if you had two Five Points guys on either side, it was a

long day. And, you know, you set one pins, you get them in, and they would lay a broomstick or something over the thing when you turned your back. When you pull it down, all the pints would fall down. And I remember setting pins for, I don't know, it was like eight in the morning until eight at night at ten cents a lane. I had a handful of money, and the guys were waiting for the bus stop, at the bus stop on the corner of Main and Center, and they rolled me. Beat the hell out of me, took my money.

J - So this is ... sweet downtown Northville (laughing).

Q - Wow.

J - The Biddle Bus went ...

L - These guys were, these guys were from down in Seven Mile and Telegraph area, and all that. I mean, it was, it was... they were legitimate toughs.

J - That's where the bus went; the Biddle Bus would go from Northville to Five Points; and then you'd catch a Detroit bus there, if you wanted, and go down.

L - So the next week, I set pins again, and they're waiting for the bus, and the one guy who kind of instigated everything, had his back to me, and there was a railing, and about 12 feet down went into the parking lot. And I went over and I picked him up and threw him in the parking lot. And the other guys started for me, and I said, "Next week you give me my money back." And they said, "You got it."

Q - And they did?

L - Yes, they gave me, like, two or three bucks. (Tape ends)

L - But Joe Alessi had pool tables in front. And that whole culture was something that people did not look favorably at and I loved to shoot pool. I was good at it. And my Uncle Lee understood that. He was good at shooting pool. And my mother would chastise me about being in the pool room shooting pool, and, just my dad would get kind of rough with me. And then Uncle Lee would say, "Go to the pool room". He said, "You and I will go to the pool room," he says. "You're gonna learn how to shoot pool. You like pool; I understand that." So he would. The sensitivity of it, the gift that he gave me is he could get inside my head and understand what I was about. And then, when the race track opened up, the people would come in to the races, that's a different culture. They would hang out in the pool room, and they would hustle one another. And that's when Lee said, "The races are coming to town, we're going to go to the pool room and we're going to watch. There's no shooting pool."

J - Yes, it used to be neat, when I was in high school, at the track. It had open seating. As teenagers, we couldn't bet but, you know, when the sun was, in the summer, on a summer

evening...was that cool. We'd just go sit in the open seats and watch and we'll pick out the horse we wanted to win. It wasn't all enclosed, like now, and a lot more people went then. Be a good subject, then, well that's another area it'd be fun to explore, people who were, who worked there, who worked there for years and their whole culture. Do you have any more questions on Maybury?

Q - No, not really on Maybury, per se, but I just kind of wanted to find out what made living in Northville special to you guys?

J - The small town-ness of it, all my friends were there. The social life was there. The movies were great; I mean, the high school, my high school years were fantastic. I mean ... (L – What?) high school years. We had the sock hops; and the football games were played down where Ford field is now, just behind Mill Race. Even when my mom worked at the bank you know, I could hang around and then catch a ride back home with her. I mean, living four miles out was four miles out, but I think just the crowd that we ran with was just all right there. You know, we didn't have to go anyplace else for our entertainment. I remember more from my high school years. And it was kind of like my country school years and then my high school years... I don't know, I just made some good lifelong friends. Is this kind of what you ... ?

Q - Yes, yes.

J - And I guess, having lived here since I was eleven, and I've lived near Seven Mile all my life, in Detroit and out here, I'm a real home person. I could never imagine – I've never moved.

Q - How about you (to Larry), what do you ... kind of remember that sticks out about Northville.

L - Of course, my interaction with my uncle. And I had two or three good friends.

Q - You did before?

L - As a kid. And, the - some of the kids in my class, their dads were attorneys, and on the board of education or something like that, or owned businesses. And some of my best friends lived down in, I want to say Bealtown?

J - Bealtown.

L - And, were first generation Italian. Wonderful people. I can remember going in and there was a big Italian family in a small house. Being ... spaghetti man ... and then ...

J - Bongivoni's.

L - Yes, that was Bongivoni's, and Don Blair...dad, where Asher's gas station is now. Corner of South Rogers.

J - And Seven Mile.

Q - Yes, Seven Mile.

L - There used to be a Sinclair gas station there. And Don Blair was my age; got me a job working there – his dad; I got five dollars a week. And I remember summertime, everyone was going out here in the gravel pit to go swimming, I said, “Mr. Blair, can I go swimming?” He says, “No, you got a job to do.” I said, “Hey, lemme...”. He says “No, you got a job to do.” So, you know, and ... those, so I remember those things, but ... school was not a good place for me, but the friendships and people I had made it a good place. And I have good strong memories of Maybury. If I, I keep thinking of the Children’s Center, and the murals. One time there was a fire in one of the Children’s Centers and there was a guy a couple years older than me, and somehow to another I got out there and he was allowed to help with the fire department holding the hose, and I wanted to do that so much, because I wanted to help save that building...that was important to me. And I think I cried when that building was burned. But, those are the, the... I guess, you know, I can’t generalize things, but ...

J - Wasn’t there a Dr. Howard worked over there?

L - Yes.

J - That’s the name I was trying to think of.

Q - It must have been really hard when they decided to close it, tear it down, and dynamite the building like you said.

L - Well, I didn’t have the value for it, then. I just thought, you know... There was a St. Joseph’s Hospital on Michigan Avenue they tore down, one time, and I remember we were living in the cabin over here, and my brother-in-law Bill went down and got some bricks to build a patio out of. I thought, gee, that’s so neat. And, then things...but I have more nostalgia from, since my trips to Europe, for seeing old things.

Q - Well, I think that’s natural, too, that sometimes you don’t appreciate things until a few years have gone by. You look back on it with a different perspective.

L - But, you know, the old Wayne County Training School was beautiful... oh god!

Q - Yes, I’ve seen it.

J - I felt bad when that was torn down... those building were ...

Q2 - Fell into disrepair, yes.

J - I think I was in them more.

L - You know, they could have been used for any number of things. You know, you could've put a community college in there, you could've put an extension for a university in there. And uh, they had their own fire department out there.

Q2 - That brings up something I wanted to mention. I just saw in the paper that they are restoring an old fire engine, here in town.

J - Yes, that's Roselle's. Rick live right over here.

Q2 - Does he?

J - Yes, Rick Roselle.

Q2 - And it was the same model as the one that was stationed at Maybury by the Detroit Fire Department. Did you see that article?

Q - No, where was it?

Q2 - At Maybury.

Q - No, where was the article?

Q2 - In this week's Record (Northville Record).

Q - Oh, it was?

Q2 - And I was wondering, when you said there was a fire, who fought the fire, was it the township Fire Department or ...?

L - I don't remember that; I don't remember.

Q2 - Did the City of Detroit ...

L - I don't remember. I just remember the fire trucks, tank truck, and hoses. But the Wayne County Training School had their own Fire Department. But it was so peaceful back there. I remember that. And then they had some abuse they discovered, and change the name to Wayne County Child Development Center, as if that's going to fix everything. And ...

Q - Well I appreciate our time.

L - Oh, it's been a joy.

Q2 - Wonderful.

J - I hope we told you enough about Maybury.

Q - It was wonderful. You know what, I would like to transcribe this, and get it back to you guys. You can take a look at it, and then if you have other things to add or edit I'd like to do that. And if I have other things to ask, maybe I can ask you, you know, some follow up questions.

L - Sure.

Q2 - Do you have a DVD player? If I cut this tape to a DVD, and drop it off to you, if you would review it, and write – kind of note, you know, how many minutes have gone by.

(Tape Ends)