

This is an interview with Elroy Ellison in his home on Dunlap Street and the date is August 12, 1988. It's for the Oral History Program from the Library Association. So we can start out, I think, by having you tell a little bit about when you first came to Northville; how many years ago it was and what the circumstances for your coming to Northville.

Well, it was 51 years ago and it was September when I first started teaching. We had been living in Detroit at that time and I had been working at Chevrolet Gear and Axle. In 1933 I got my teaching Life Certificate, but there weren't any jobs available. So I went to Detroit and a cousin of mine got me into the factory. We worked there for 4 years. But during that time we'd been laid off a couple of times, as was common. In those years particularly. That's right.

About February of that year I said, "Hey, we can't get anywhere here being laid off and so forth. I'm going to go back and get my degree." So we moved our furniture out to a farm which my folks had near Ionia and we went to Kalamazoo. I finished my degree in August. Was that at Western Michigan University?

At Western Michigan, yup. And we'd had one offer of a job in the Upper Peninsula and here it is August and I don't have any job. That one in the Upper Peninsula, I've forgotten the name of the town, was \$1100 a year, so I passed it by. I was beginning to wonder if I was going to have to go back to the farm and live off my folks. And one day Mr. Sherwood, who was the head of the department, called me and said, "how would you like to go to Northville?" I said, "Where the heck is Northville?" Well, he told me. And he said, "Mr. Amerman down there wants a shop teacher, someone with experience, but other than teaching." Well, I said, "I might qualify for that." So we made an appointment to come down here and see him. We pulled up in front of the new grade school. At that time, it was 1937, and they had just moved into it in the spring of that year, and this is the beginning, ready to go to the fall term. And I said to Liz, "There isn't any need of me going up there to interview." She said, "Why?" Well, I said, "Look, you don't come out of college like I'm going to do and start in a brand new building like this. You just can't do that." Well, she said, "I think it's awful if you come way down here from Kalamazoo and don't at least go talk to the man." Ok. So we went upstairs to see the man. He seemed like a very nice fellow and apparently I got the wool pulled over his eyes in pretty good shape. He said, "I'd like to have you go down and see one of the Board members on Main Street." In that time you had four or five board members and one way of hiring was the superintendent would interview you and then one of the board members. But in between my going between them, they were talking on the telephone. And, apparently I passed muster with Fred Lyke, who ran the hardware at that time on Main Street. So I came back and he wanted to know if my wife was here. I said, "Yes." He said, "I'd like to talk to her." So, she went up and he gave us a little bit of an interview about, if we came to Northville, what we'd need to do. First of all, we were expected – if we lived in the community, why, you had to kind of do things that were normal. In those days you weren't supposed to smoke. You were supposed to join the church; he didn't mention which one, or anything.

Be a regular church member.

That's right, be a member and probably teach Sunday School. You shouldn't run your sweeper on Sunday.

(Mr. Sherwood said that before we came down here. He talked to me about certain things you should not do.)

What were some of the other things?

(Well, not smoke on campus. Ed would come to the edge of the school and put out his pipe before he got on the school grounds. Things like that. Those were different days.)

Those were structured, those days.

Also I had indicated to Amerman that I wanted to be a director of Vocational Education. Well, he said, "I'm interested in that. You do a good job teaching for me the first year here and we'll try and set the program up the second year." That turned out just that way. So in the second year – I was shop teacher for, oh a long time. Second year we began what we called this Coordinated Occupational Training where kids come to school half a day and work half a day. I'd do all the training up here at school and the boss downtown would do that and I would work with him and see that they got the training that they were supposed to get. We had a written program that we followed and there was a kind of tendency on the part of some of the employers, if you didn't have it written, well, at a grocery store they'd keep the kid in the stock room all the while. Well, if you're going to do this sort of thing real, you had to advance this youngster over a two-year period of time.

(How much you hired out for the first year?)

Well, that was \$1500. A year?

A year. As you think of it now, it would look as though it was a month's pay right now and it wouldn't go much farther. But that's the way it was. Second year, we started this program; I got a \$500 raise, to \$2000, for working this extra month, because it was going to be a full year program. And, by the way, from that time on I never had a ten month job. I always had a twelve month job, because from this point on I either went into administration or something so I was on that way all the while. Well we went through there, I think that was about five years, and had a number of kids in town here in grocery stores, secretarial work, gas stations, auto mechanics. Things like that. Well, we were going along pretty well and the war came along. We had a Mr. Bovay who was elementary principal and the service gobbled him up. So that left Amerman without a principal. I went in to \_\_\_\_\_ and I said look, I know how to typewrite and things like that. I can run the typewriter. If I can be of any help to you in keeping records or doing this sort of thing, why I'll be glad to do it until you get a new man hired. Well, he said, we'll see. So that was the last I heard of that. But I remember at this point he called me one night after the board meeting and said, "Well, hello, Mr. Principal." "What are you talking about?" He said, "You're the new principal of the elementary school." I said, "Hey, I've never had any training in that sort of thing." "Well," he said, "I'll make you acting principal. I can sort of run the show, but you'll be the principal until you get used to it." So that worked out at that time then, and I had that for about six years as elementary principal. At the same time I was teaching auto mechanics one class a day. Now after we had been in the new grade school for a while, some of us got the idea we needed a larger shop. And underneath all the first floor of the elementary school was full of dirt. So we decided if we could get that out of there that could be made into the shop. Well, the community helped, with wheel barrows and so forth, we moved all the dirt out from underneath that building. And we made that into the shop.

Now, does that building still exist?

Yes, that's the Main Street building over here now. That's the administration building.

Not the high school. The grade school with the clock on the front?

So that became the shop and my office, of course, was upstairs. Well, in 1948 then, we had a new principal. Jerry Harris was our principal at this time.

(In the high school.)

In the high school. Then Jerry Harris was hired at Farmington. Now I might be wrong on the year or two but this was the place he went. So we hired a man, I've forgotten where Pierce came from, but it was up near Lansing. And so they hired him in. He came down here

and worked for us for a year or two. And Plymouth decided he was a good enough man and they took him away from us because they could pay him more money. And Mr. Malama would like to be principal, as well as his wife. She thought it would be nice if he could be the principal of the high school. So he was made – the Board said that’s fine, we’d like to have him as principal. He’d been there about three months, and he came over to my office one day, and he said, “Hey, this isn’t for me. I don’t like being a principal.” I said, “Why not?” He said, “I don’t get to do anything with the kids. I want to teach kids. I don’t like sitting there in the office and so forth. I’m telling you I’m not going to stay after this year. I’m going to see if I can’t make you high school principal. You’d like to be high school principal, wouldn’t you?” “Well,” I said, “if they’d like to have me, yes.” Well, the board decided when Malama didn’t want to stay, they thought they’d take a chance on me. And during that time, I stayed ten years as a high school principal. And during that time we used the old building down here and we had lots of extra things going on that we got used to. We used to hold graduation exercises, of course, in the gym. And when we had only 35, 40, 45 or 50 people, we could do that. But it got to the point where we had more students than that graduating and we gave just four tickets to the people so they could let Pa and Ma and, maybe, Grandma and Grandpa come to the program. Well that didn’t work out too well. So then we went to the race track, or fair grounds, down here, and we held the graduation program in that. They took quite a bit of time, but it was a nice opportunity for the community. We had the kids, the teachers and everybody else washing chairs. Now, you may not remember, but they had chairs, ordinary stacking chairs, and we washed them in vinegar to get all the dirt off them. Of course, the birds had been flying all through the stands and so forth. So we set up that; and then we set up a platform in there for the speaker, and so forth. As I remember it, we held that probably a couple of years. I don’t believe it was any more than that. One year we did the graduation in the Penniman-Allen Theatre, but that was not much better than the old gym over here, because it only took about the same amount of seating. But it was more comfortable, of course, than what we used in the gym. So, then, they decided they wanted to do something within the high school building. So everyone was looking around, what to do. So Amerman and a couple of board members went up on where the present location is, walking though – this is all rough gravel pit at this time. Nothing looked like a school. And he was almost thrown out of the community. How in heck are you going to put a building in that kind of a place? But, when it was all done, we had a committee for site committee, finance committee, a publicity committee and a specifications committee, and I happened to be Chairman of the Education Specifications Committee. Our job was to tell the architect what we wanted to do in the school, the activities we wanted to carry on, and how we wanted to do it. But from then on the architect would build the building to suit our needs. I ran that with a committee that was teachers, students, community members on it and it took about two years for us to get this thing formulated into what we thought we wanted. Well, we started to build the building up there and there was still a great deal of criticism. People just couldn’t see a building like that. Got the building up, finally, and the part of it that we liked most was it was such a beautiful building, glassed in and so forth, but it turned out that people said, “What in the world are you going to do with all these glass halls?” That was an item that needed a bit of correction because they did get pretty hot in the summer. Well, before we moved into the building, the class decided, the graduation class, that we would move in with the class that started in September. The class before that wanted to graduate from that building up there because it would be a nicer place to go. So it finally was decided what we would do. So we got that building all set up; beautiful day like today, we had beautiful weather. Tomorrow was graduation. Tomorrow a cloudburst,

practically, came and that hill almost washed down to Main Street. Well, we discovered there was no parking up there. We couldn't have cars up there with that rain. There was no prepared parking, no gravel highway, no cement or anything. So the final situation of that was we had to get word to the people after 4 o'clock that we were going to still hold it up there, but not to drive their car up there, but park it over at the old high school, back of the old City Hall. We would run school buses back and forth to get people back and forth. Well, we made Life Magazine at this time with what had happened, because it was such an awful situation to get people up there, and mud and so forth. But we got the program started about an hour late and went through our regular program and then eventually got people back.

What year was that? (1960)

So the Class of '59 graduated from the high school. But the Class of '60 was the first group to go through and graduate from the building. Then I was principal for ten years. I enjoyed that very much up there. We had an excellent staff. In fact we've had an excellent staff most of the time that I can remember around Northville. Well, it came along and people get older and decide that they want to retire. Russ decided in 1965 that he was going to retire. So the board began to look around. One thing that Russell had done – he was a very innovative person, but he was not one who would be out ahead of the crowd unless he knew it was something that was good. Now at that time there was some discussion of the twelve month school. Russell examined that in his way, teaching, and so forth, and said that isn't for Northville. He board says yes it is. Well, so, in the meantime they hire, then, a man, Mr. Nelson from Menominee, who was gung ho for twelve month school. Amerman retired then in 1965. But Mr. Nelson was quite a different person than anyone else we had ever dealt with before. Within a year and a half to two years he had either fired or some other way gotten rid of everybody in the Central Office except Alice Hospeck and myself. Alice was Mr. Amerman's secretary. And there had been things that Alec had done with the Board of Education, finances and so forth, that weren't right and the Board called me back from a conference in Atlantic City because he had misused some funds up there. Not that he had misused them himself, but he misappropriated them. Acting when it was...a certain amount of money...the interest for that money was to stay in the funds for the new building. He put it into the general fund. That was not allowable. So there was a lot of unsteadiness around this time and I was getting a little bit upset too. I had been here for thirty years at that point and I wasn't sure I could make a living anyplace else. But finally in March of '67 I went to the Board meeting...it was an open regular board meeting held in the old Assembly Room...and I spilled the beans about what I didn't like about Mr. Nelson and so forth, about the problems we had had, a public meeting and told them I was resigning; I couldn't work for him any more. Well, the Board, I think, was expecting me to do something like this. They had another man lined up, Ray Spear, to take some of the activity. They fired Nelson, then, in the summer put Ray Spear in. Ray had asked me if I would like to be his high school principal, or his assistant superintendent, and I said, "No way, Ray, 'cause our philosophies are quite different." Ray didn't have any empathy for people, any more than Alec did. Nothing like Amerman. So I said I have another job and I'm going to the Dearborn Heights School District.

You don't want that in here at all, I don't think, do you?

Actually your subject of the school so far has been excellent. I wonder if you can get some specifics in the early days of the dates. What years were you in the school downtown and what years were you in the high school?

Well, I started here in '37. Then I took over in 1938 as the Director of Vocational Education. I think that was for five years. In the war years, about 1943 when Bovay left, then they made me elementary principal. And then that took place until 1959. Isn't that right?

(You were high school principal ... you went in about ... in the fifties, didn't you? Because you were high school principal when the twins were born in '55.)

I'm sorry, yes, that's right.

(Then you were business manager and assistant superintendent after the high school.)

I'm ahead 10 Years. I was made principal in 1950 of the high school, in that period until 1960, in that period in there was when I was with the group on that. And that was the end of my term as high school principal. The year of the '60 graduation class, when my daughter was one of the students of that. Then, Amerman said, "I gotta have some more help." So in '61...before that he had hired Ken McLeod. Some of you will remember him. He came in from Dearborn. He stayed with us for a little while and Ken suddenly announced that he had an opportunity to go to Adrian School.

(Adrian College)

Adrian College. So Russ said that I could act as his assistant superintendent. Now they wouldn't call me assistant superintendent because he thought the community wouldn't go for that. We were still a small group and there were lots of things that could be done. First of all, why did the superintendent, why did anybody else work during the summer? There were no kids around, there was no teachers around. What is there to do for a school? Well, then I was with Mr. Amerman from 1961 until 1965 when he decided to retire. Also, our offices had moved part of the time, about when we started building the new building and we got out of the Main Street School because we needed a little more space. We used what was the old library downtown, here, on Wing Street about where the MAGS Building is.

It's now in the Mill Race – the New School Church.

Yes, that's right. But it was on where the MAGS area is then. And I stayed with him then until he was ready to retire. And I was still in that building when I left for the Dearborn Heights program. But, to get the years now, were one year as shop teacher, five years at apprentice training, six years at elementary principal, took us up to 1949; and then there were ten years there that I was High School principal. And then from '60 to '67, I was assistant with Mr. Amerman. He retired in '65, so I was assistant Superintendent with him and then two years with Mr. Nelson. But I didn't quite finish the two years out.

(You were business manager, too; had charge of all the finances.)

That's right.

That pretty well covers the school years and the work you did. How about the various civic groups, like the Exchange Club and Rotary and so forth?

I was president of the Exchange Club twice. That's what put them under, I think, because having me that long a time, well, there's a story there. The Exchange Club was a national organization. And Cliff Hill, you remember, was quite active in it, and he and I discovered that one policy was that you could only have white males for membership. And Cliff and I didn't go for that. Also, the Northville State Hospital was being built out here and operating.

What year would this be?

Somewheres around '43, '44 in there.

During the War?

During the War. And I could see potential out there of doctors who were Indian, Chinese, something other than Caucasian, you know. Could be fine people to be in the Exchange Club, but we couldn't get them in. So I had the audacity to write every member of the National Board of Directors and I also included a letter to the secretary. Real quickly I got a letter back from the secretary saying you aren't supposed to do that, Elroy. If you have anything you want to talk over with the Board of Director, you write me. If I decide it's something that can go to them, then I will send it to them. That set Cliff Hill and I up real good because we said if that's the way the club is we don't want to be in it anyway. So eventually, because of that, we pulled out of it, and most of us went over and joined the Rotary Club. But during that period of time, the Exchange Club did some good things. First of all, we met together with the Exchange and Rotary Club during the War in the Methodist Church house for lunch, because it was easier, the use of food and so forth, it was a better way to go. Then, after the War was over the Rotary Club went back to their Presbyterian Church. One of the biggest things the Exchange Club did, they engineered Ford Field. George Locke, Ford Garage here in town, I think we used some of his equipment for it, but we leveled it all off with equipment and so forth. Lights were installed; I've forgotten just how we paid for those, but it was, I think, public subscription and so forth. Then we put the steps that you see in there and so on. And as high school principal at that time and working along with people, we put electricity down there. Mrs. Cook's Junior High group worked. We had a good stand down there and we had a pretty good set up at that time. That was the first football field in Northville that was electrified.

That had concrete step seats?

Yes. Now, before that when we wanted to play football, we used the field – I don't know what the name of it was – but there is a field as you go down the parkway, the first turn off that you look in, you can see a football field down there. It belonged to the Parkway and it was north of the Cass Benton Park. We could use that as a football field, but we had to arrange, and don't remember the man's name, with the Park Association, that we had certain dates that we could use the field.

(There's still a field in there isn't there?)

That's right. But we had to arrange that we could get in there and we didn't always get our choice when we wanted to play football there, so then we'd have to interchange with another school as to when we were going to play football there.

Take your turn.

That's right. That was another one of these situations that the Exchange Club did. I was trying to remember – that was the big thing the Exchange Club did. Amerman thought it would be nice for me to be a Rotarian, so he personally took me into the club and I don't know what date that was, but it was somewhere along in the late fifties, because at the present time I'm about a 25-year Rotarian.

I was active in the Masonic Temple. The reason I got in that, my dad came down here, it was hard times, and so forth, Depression during the War, so he came down and was our custodian for the two buildings on Main Street. He and I had never had very much in common, not that we were at odds with one another, but we were so busy that he and I never did anything together. When we were on the farm, everything was work. We didn't have time to go fishing and hunting and so forth. We didn't particularly care about hunting, fishing, so we didn't do anything together. He and my mother were avid Eastern Star and Mason, Masonic members, so Dad switched to down here, and I said, "Hey, how about me going as a Mason, we'll go to the Lodge together. That's what we did. That's really the reason I joined the Masonic Lodge. But shortly after that, Dad left the community and went back to Ionia, and that sort of ended my career there with the Masons, because about that time I was doing Board of Education work, or meeting with the Board every Monday night and that's when the Masonic regular meeting was, so there haven't been very many meetings at that time.

(You timed every basketball game; you were the official timer. You were at every football game down there. I don't remember what you did there, but official, and he was gone all the time. That was his community work besides some of these other things.)

That's right, 'cause in those days the principal--and still is--expected to be at meetings like that. I didn't have an assistant principal when I first started out and so I had to do all of that. After a while I had Fred Stefansky, whom you will remember, he was my assistant principal, and we could trade some things off. But it still is pretty much the idea that when an activity in your school is going on the principal should be around. We had an occasional problem with people who would come to the games and so on, and so Joe Denton was Chief of Police, you've heard of him, if you don't remember him, made me a special policeman. I had to carry the badge the same as the rest of the men and I still have that upstairs. I was a special policeman and anything that happened at the school, I had full authority (although I didn't carry a gun) to eject people, arrest them, take them down. I didn't have to do that sort of thing. I put a few people out of the building, but that was part of your responsibility.

The Methodist Church, we joined that about the first year we were here. We had no children at that time.

(Down here at the old church.) We hadn't been in very long and they got me teaching a Sunday School class. Araminta was made a member of the choir. Then she graduated to the service league, the Women's Society, what was it?

(Well, I was charter member of the Women's Society and president of the Service League. I guess the Service League is disbanded now. But that was the younger women and then it turned out to be women that were working so they met at night. And I guess they don't meet anymore.)

From that then, Liz was made president of the Women's Club. I don't remember what date, do you?

(Sixty seven, two years, sixty seven, sixty eight.)

OK. That was her involvement with us. Another thing that comes to mind the first year we were here, at \$1500 dollars, that wasn't too bad a salary. It was the best salary that any teacher in the Industrial Arts Department left Western Michigan with. Most of them were \$1000, \$1100, something like that. But the \$1500 we got by with. But to help us get by she worked at the D & C Store for \$.25 an hour. (\$.20 an hour.)

(We rented the apartment up over Lapham's store, which was Ponsford's, Lapham was a Ponsford, and her family owned Ponsford and they had gone out of business. Anyway, that store below was vacant and we had the front apartment and we stayed in that from August when we moved in until March, I think it was, or April. And then we got a house out in Novi so we moved out there and stayed about two months, and then a house on West Street which is two houses from the \_\_\_\_\_ house now, became available so we moved back into town. We moved back in two months. So that year, 1937-38, we moved seven times.)

When did you finally move to this house?

(Oh, not until 1942. We've lived here 46 years. Our oldest daughter was three months old when we moved in here.)

I remember a house drawing. You're talking about a whole row of houses here, four or five of them, built by the same carpenter. Three of them.

Built by the same carpenter, the same plan?

(Yes, we don't know who he was.) Filkins, the man who built the buildings, lived in this house, we understand. And then a man by the name of Filkins, who was the father of Guy Filkins, who was a musician who taught at the University of Michigan, music, and also was the organist at Central Methodist Church in Detroit.

(On Adams.)

So, actually, there have only been about three families that have lived in this home.

(We bought the house after Guy Filkins.)

That's kind of an interesting story. I wanted to be a director of vocational education and a friend of mine whom I was working with, he was coordinator, we had summer conferences, and so forth, and a man by the name of Hill passed away. He was the Director of Vocational Education at South Lake High School in St. Clair Shores. That job became available and I applied, and darn it, I got the job. So, in September we moved over there.

(That was September of '41.)

And we moved over there. And we discovered that there was problems over there, that I didn't want the job anymore. We stayed three months. And shortly after that, maybe that isn't a part of this, one or two of the board members were in jail after that. But I could see that this wasn't anything that I wanted to do. So Amerman called one day and I said, "How you doing?" "Not so good." "What's the matter, Russ?" He said, "I just lost my man to replace you. Have you any idea where I can get another person?" I said, "Would you take me back?" Well, we moved back, then. In fact, the first day back was Pearl Harbor Day.

December 7?

(That's right. But we stayed over there. You drove back and forth, and I was pregnant for this first baby. Moving over there I was pregnant and all this time and he drove back and forth. And he finally found a house over in Novi.) Corner of Novi Lake.

(But the woman, Mrs. Painter, said you can only have it for four months, I don't remember the reason. But, anyway, here I was, huge, and so we moved again, that was another move, into that house. Lynn was born in March and we moved back in February. And in the mean time Mr. Amerman was looking for a house for us and he knew Dr. Guy. And Guy and his mother just came here summers when school was out and they had an apartment in Ann Arbor. So Mr. Amerman talked guy into letting us rent this house. And so we moved in here in May, 'cause Lynn was three months old and we celebrated Decoration Day here. But he wouldn't sell it to us. But they had to clean it all out; they had all these antiques and things in it. And then we lived in it ten years before he would sell it to us. Guy had a heart attack and he reserved the upper part of the garage out there, put all his treasures in there. After the heart attack he said, "I can't climb stairs", so we could buy. And in the mean time, we spent our wad out at the lake and built a cottage, so we had to quick find someplace for a down payment.)

Is there by any chance anything from that old house still here in the house?

(Oh yes.)

Furniture and so forth? (He left things here. He knew we were antiquers, so he left the spinning wheel. What he left was this clock on the mantle, and that has all good work. That's about 1840. And the spinning wheel. What else, Elroy? He left a lot of things in the attic. He said you can go out there and take anything you want after he didn't feel good. There are some ironstone dishes, there's a lot. But when he died he had a studio down in the church on Adams and his wife took me down there and said, "Now you can have anything you want out of here." She had to clear it out, you see, you see. So this came from down there, this \_\_\_\_\_. And I remember that ginger jar I got from there. There was some other furniture that we moved around and stuff. I'm trying to think what else. Can you think of anything else, Elroy, that was in the house?)

Can't think of it right now.

(He said you love things, so you can have them. Oh, he was a dear man. We may have part of them up at the lake. Yeah, I've got a table up at the lake that came from his studio.)

Have you changed the house much since you lived here?

Not interior-wise. (Not floor plan, but we've done every room, had it plastered and... )



Structurally, it's basically the same house?

(We added a back room on after he had his stroke. We enclosed the back room which you should see. We love it. We live out there. We just, I don't know, this is home. I can't think of living any other place. You see all those beautiful great big elms. I'm not jealous; I don't want them. I love it here.)

And you're right in town.

Right in town and we're right on the edge of the historical district. We think the house was built somewhere in the sixties to seventies. (1865 we'd say.) End of the Civil War? (Yes, about that, we think it is.)

Guy had done a bit of renovating. We had put in this fireplace here. And he had taken a wall out right there. This was a bedroom. Took that out and he made this archway and that was his piano room; or that used to be what we called the parlor. (But he called it his music room. He taught his students, had his grand piano in there, I guess.) That's all, as far as I know, of structural changes.

(We changed when we put that room in. Here there was a doorway, an archway, that went out and there was just like an entry there and some closets and then a door out, so that you could go from the kitchen right around and around and around and that went out on the porch.)

Great for kids.

(The kids rode their bicycles, believe me, they did. We have three daughters and the tricycles went round and round.)

Right around the stairwell in the middle.

Yeah, yeah. When you want to we'll go out there and see that room, so you can put that on the tape, if you want to. If you don't it's perfectly all right. What I did want to emphasize, we've put my hand, she has, on every two by four structure, on every rafter, on every floor joist in this house. Because we had all the plaster, and so forth, off and put it back with hard plaster. I remember one day I was washing the house outside and she came in yelling at me to stop. And I said, "What's the matter?" And she said, "The water, you're squirting it in the house." It turns out this house, all it had originally was the siding on the outside and lath and plaster on the inside. There was nothing else.

(And it was the old hair plaster in the stairway, when we did the stairway. We've insulated the whole thing. We've put new ceilings, because this used to crack. We put a beam across here because it's such a long distance. But still when you walk across the room above the dining room, sometimes it jiggles a little bit. But that really went just like this. I was scared to death of it. There's doors everywhere; there's a door behind that piano that will go out onto the front porch. But, you know, it's just charming. We always just love it.)

Another part of the house, not the house, but the garage out here was a horse and buggy affair. And so horses were kept in there. The original rings where you tied the horse to the manger, and so forth, was there when we came in; there was hay upstairs, a little bit of hay and it would drop right down into where the manger was. Of course, we have taken that out, but it was interesting. It was a carriage house, like. And now we keep two cars in there.

Now, what year was this, when you first came to the high school?

It would be in the fifties. They were grade school children and there were three houses there which is next to the old high school. They extended down through to what is -

(Well, to where the Community Building is now.)

Yeah, but beyond that. And then there was the old building that was used for the City Hall on the corner. The Lapham house, yes. But we had three buildings there that we used for

grade school and, also (and this will help with the date) in those houses we had war workers training classes on mathematics, mechanical drawing. I can't think of what else, but there was three of those things, and Harry Smith, a former teacher, he was director of that for awhile. Then I was made director of it. But that would be in '42, '43 because we were getting people prepared to go to work in the bomber plant over at Ypsilanti.

Willow Run?

Yes. That was one of the fortunate things that happened to me. I could get in and out of the bomber plant. I was in and out with a lot of people. Right or wrong, I was a very fortunate person. I never had to serve in the War. I was ready to go the Board was ready to send me when school got out, probably in '44, and when the call came for me, the Board said let's try holding this fellow. So they made a request for deferment. And they deferred me because of my war worker training here in the classes and over at Willow Run. And so I didn't have to go to war. We were very fortunate I was on that and been able to hold off.

It seems to me you might have been a little older than most of the guys being drafted at that time. In other words, you'd be on the high side of the draft age?

(Let's see. When Lynn was born that's in 1942. I was 27 and you were 29 or 30.) Yeah, 'cause they were drafting 18 to 23.

(He was 1A for awhile.)

I was also a little older as a teacher coming into the system, because I had got my training in '33; went to Detroit and worked for approximately four years and then back to college. So when we came here I was 24 or 25, something along that line. And rather than the 21 people are. I was a little bit older than that.

(What did you want to ask us about?)

Do you want to give me a little background of your associations, clubs, church and the various groups in town, people you've gotten to know, did know back in those days?

(Well, I mentioned the name of \_\_\_\_\_. They lived down on east Main Street. They were a couple in the Methodist Church when we first came here. And the Strolgers lived on Randolph in a darling red brick house. We both were active in the church. I sang in the choir fifteen years. You were lay leader, Elroy was lay leader. He taught the adult Sunday School class for years.) Superintendent of the Sunday School also.

(Would you like to know about Mrs. Knapp, Patty Knapp? Pat Knapp was Superintendent of Schools before Mr. Amerman. He came from Highland Park. Mrs. Knapp lived next door and was a dear neighbor. She was elderly; she drove her own car. She was very hard of hearing. She had a Chevrolet, '36, was it? Coupe. She attended Women's Club, and she wore hearing aids. Any everybody knew it was Mrs. Knapp. She was a well-educated woman, very knowledgeable, very intelligent. At one time I think she was quite a gardener. And she was an antiquer. That's about all I can think about, about Mrs. Knapp. She was very kind to me; kind of took me under her wing, took me places.)

You were mentioning your other neighbors?

(Well, across the street was the Methodist parsonage. Rev. Lesley Williams was the minister, and Andrea, his wife. They lived there quite a while.)

Well, for many years after you moved here, I'm sure there're a lot of building that no longer exist. For instance, next to the Methodist Church on the corner there was an old building that was a restaurant.

(Yes, the old Methodist Church parsonage was on the corner where the parking lot is now. It was right on the corner, and when they sold that it was the Black's White House and

that's related to the Blacks that had the hardware here in town. And eventually it was torn down. And then the parsonage was up here on the corner of Dunlap and Rogers across from us and then it was down on the corner of Dunlap and Wing.)

When I knew Cargo (?) that's where he lived. Yes. It was the Opera House here.

(When we lived here during the War, that's another thing, the building was there but it wasn't the Opera House. There was a meat market there. And I can remember, Lynn was just, that's our oldest daughter, was just 2 or 3, 'cause she was born in 1942. I would save up my meat stamps, 'cause you know, it was during the War, and I would take them out and go down and stand in line in that meat market and try to get, maybe, a ham for Christmas. What was the name of that meat market?) Can't tell you.

That was the lower floor. That was commercial. The upper floor was a big handsome auditorium. Did they actually conduct things in there at that time?

(No, there was nothing in there but this meat market. Was there another store in there or did he take up the whole \_\_\_?)

I don't remember. (But I can remember taking Lynn and going and standing in line with my food stamps, my meat stamps and getting meat. There wasn't a lot of it.)

Also, let's go to the corner of Main and Center and start walking West and just as you get beyond the travel bureau was Hill's Meat Market. Remember that?

There was a car agency there, too.

All right. Then next to it was the Rathbun Chevrolet Agency and across the street was George Locke's Ford Agency and Mack took over from that. (The A & P store used to be on Main Street about where the bank is now. Somewhere in there, or the D&C. The D&C store when we first came to Northville was on the west side of Center Street between Main and Center, but it was about the second store in. I can't remember, what was on the corner.)

There was a Niter's (?) Hardware. Yes. No that's not the right. (That's not the right name. Nyriter's, yes.)

(Then there was the D&C store and it was painted red, dark red, and it had a wooden floor. It was real old. And two, three steps up to it. That was the first D&C store. I can remember that.)

What was beyond it? Schrader's? Was Schrader's there?

The Post Office was there. Yes.

And after the D&C store moved over, in, it's on Main Street in where \_\_\_ was shot. It was in there. Along in there. And that's where I worked for \$ .20 an hour, afternoons, for Essie Nyriter. That Nyriter still isn't right for the hardware. It was Hannaford. It was Bartholomew and then Hannaford, Neil Hannaford.

Then there was a little people's shop down on one side, this side of the theater, and there was a woman's dress shop on the other side of those two shops. Ruth Brownsville had the little people's shop, it was all children's clothes, and she came and got me for \$.25 an hour so I moved down there and worked for Ruth.

Back to the hardware. There was a George Clark that had it, Neil Hannaford that had it, Bartholomew that had it, and Hammer that had it. All four of those people.

This was always on the corner? No, it was about one store north of the corner as I remember it. There used to be a beer garden next to the corner and it was next to that beer garden, was where the hardware was. And that was still right in there where that original dime store was.

And the hardware store is now, until recently, was that Green's Shop? Yes, that's right. Between that and the corner, the corner was the Northville Record. Okay. And between the Northville Record and the hardware store was the beer garden. Before the Northville Records was over there, it was on Center.

Where the insurance company, over there first. That was when Baldwin had it. Well, and the, what's his name that I worked for. Yeah.

And across near that insurance house was Lila's Floral. Hughy Gardner got involved in it and it moved over on Main Street. Northville Florist, something like that, it was called. I remember going in there to buy things. It's interesting to follow the business changes.

(Well, Mike Gunsell had the drug store on the corner, on the south corner.) Wasn't there a bank on the corner of Center and Main Street? I think there was a bank on the corner. (No, the bank was where Orin Jewelers \_\_)

Yes, they were both on the same side of the street. And across Main Street from Orin Jewelers was Loren's drug store. (It was Gunsell's first.)

Just down the street was a TV shop. Yes, Alex TV.

And then there was E.M. Bogart Grocery in there. By the way, did Mr. Amerman give you the things that he had to do in his early days there with scrip for the teachers. Did he tell you about that?

Yes he told us the story about scrip. Very fascinating. Some of these personal associations, I think, are interesting too. The business is fine, but the personal factor, too. Start talking about the doctors you knew.

(All right. When we first come to town, there was the two doctors Sparling and he had been in the First World War. They lived in the house down where McAlstairs – that was their home for a while. And Mrs. Doctor Sparling was considered a very good woman's doctor. And their daughter, Marcia, is married to Norm Frid, she is Mrs. Norm Frid. Do you know the Frid name? Well, Sid and Sy brothers, Frid, owned the laundry on Center Street and it was in –)

Approximately where the doctors offices are, there north to the next building that was the Northville Laundry.

Who was the two brothers that ran that? Sid and Sy Frid. No, somebody else. Oh, that was the Richardsons, or Richmond, or whatever their name. They had it afterward. Sid and Sy had it first. Richards, or what? Rich, Richie. Right where the candy store -

Richie, Richie. 'Cause one of the brothers lived down the street, lived down the street below us. Louis Frid, both the widows are still alive, Dorothy and Louise.

There was Dr. Salady. Yeah. Then this house down here on the corner of Wing and Dunlap on this side. They've just been renovating it.

Northwest corner. That was Dr. Salady's home and office when we moved in here.

How's that spelled? With a C or an S?

No, S. Silady.

Silidy.

Then there was a Dr. Holcomb. Yep. And he was – South of \_\_\_ on Wing Street between Main and Dunlap.

And then there was Dr. Snow. And his daughter is married to Mike Allen, Chief Mike Allen. Betty Snow. Then there was Dr. Atchison. He's been our doctor for fifty years. He wasn't even there when we moved to town. He moved here after.

Do you have him down on your list for an interview? Yes. In a couple of weeks He went to Alaska.

Because he would be one who would be very good on giving information. What other doctors were there?

Well, there was Dennis Mileski. Where was he?

Well, he was in an office that is the parking lot of Arbor Drugs, next to \_\_

Oh wait. He was in that house on Main Street that burned down. First, we used to go to Dr. Mileski there on Main Street between \_\_ on farther down. Remember that great big house that \_\_?

Griswold? On the corner of Hutton and Main? No, it wasn't on the corner. Where they're building that new thing. Well, it was beyond there, about where the restaurant is. There was this great big old house. Was there a doctor in there living? Dr. Mileski was in there first. Then e went over to this new building on Dunlap right next to the Arbor Drug.

There was a dentist, I can't think of his name, who was involved with airplanes and so forth.

Oh North, was it North? No, that isn't right. All I can think of is Burn and that isn't right. He took me up. I can remember that. I had a very touchy stomach at that time and it made me sick. At that time I couldn't even ride in a car, without driving. What was the man's name? Well, there was a man named Stinson.

Oh, I know something else. Down where all those foundries are and Cady, there used to be a bell factory and a church furniture factory and someone in the building they were connected, you know, the name appeared. And when we were cleaning out the attic of the garage awhile back, this is probably 10 to 15 years ago, you'd bought all those patterns, and you donated them to the Historical Society. Remember that? Yep.

And, um, I don't know if the Filkin's were associated with the furniture, they made church furniture. Weren't the Filkins \_\_? Seems to me that they were. Dolph runs in my mind as being more with the furniture, though.

A man named Dubuar, many years ago had a factory I know, 'cause in Jack Hoffman's book there's a photograph of this old building, down where the Ford plant now is.

But see, that's before our time, too. Way before. I'm just kind of going back to what I know.

Yes, B. Carlson started the Beautification Commission but I don't know the year. It must be twenty years ago, at least, and all books that she had compiled are over at the City Hall. You're aware of that.

Scrapbooks. That's right. We are now members ourselves. I've been on five years now. They added her a couple of years ago. I got so interested in school that I didn't have much time for anybody else.

What else do we belong to, though? We're doing too much. But I called Joanne, I can't think of her last name, and told her I would offer the house for the dinner next year for dessert, so I think we should become more active in the Historical Society. We haven't been. We've been members for several years but we've never really taken an active interest.

For a long time. I think probably charter members, but we can't do the renovating at the Historical Village. We can't do that sort of thing. I thought about docents, but I'm not sure I want to do that. But I've had the dinner once before, and I'll do it again. I'm still in the Women's Club and I've gone back to the Garden Club and I got the June garden of the year award. I was thrilled with that.

From the Garden Club?

No, the other garden club. The Country Club. Every month they give an award.

You must have an interest in music. You have a piano.  
Years ago. I don't play.  
Coming to the band concert tonight? Every Friday night we have a band concert.  
Will you promise to air condition outside?