

VELMA FREYDL – AUGUST 11, 1989

Interviewed by Lucile Fairchild

VF. I came here when I was married (about) 1920. We built a little house up on Eaton Drive. Lived there all my life. (My husband) had his own dry cleaning business. He was set up in the back of his father's store, Freydl's Store.

LF. His father already lived here?

VF. Oh yes. He lived here and he started his business downtown in a men's clothing store. We went on from there building our business up which wasn't easy. I have lots of fine memories of the people. They were so good to us and patronized us.

LF. Were there many stores on Main Street?

VF. Just the same as there are now.

LF. Was it paved?

VF. No. They paved that after I came here. There were street car tracks that went up through the middle. The Interurban from Farmington and from Plymouth. They went both ways. They made a 'Y' down at the Ford Factory. That's the way you used to go into Farmington to go shopping or go to Detroit. (We) took the Interurban. Slow transportation. (I) used to do it for a pastime, really, because (I was) newly-married and no children and not a lot to do.

LF. Did you help your husband in the store?

VF. Yes, for the dry cleaning. We had it in the back of his father's store. I used to help him there. I did the pressing of all the dresses. At that time we did slacks. I did as high as eighty-five slacks a week, I'd press. That's the way we grew.

We were married five years before we had any children. We had two sons. They grew up and were married here.

LF. Did your husband's parents grow up here?

VF. The mother grew up here. Her name was Joslyn. Her husband grew up in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. His parent's came from Germany and he grew up down there (in Ohio). He had an aunt that lived up here. He came up here to live and went to work here. He started his own business here. He had a tailoring shop.

LF. Your children all went to school here?

VF. They went to school up at the Main Street School. They went on and both graduated from High School. Carl went to Ypsilanti to Cleary Business College, and Bob went to Michigan State.

Cracky Lyke was the police chief. The library was on the east side of Wing Street.

LF. I heard that you had fires back then.

VF. Indeed we did. There on the north side of Main Street. That was a terrible fire.

LF. Was it anywhere near your store?

VF. Across the street. My sister-in-law was here with her niece from Youngstown, Pennsylvania. Sparks flew all over buildings there and was really a scary sight. That's where the Brader Store is now. It took the bank. I think that was Northville Savings (Bank) down there. There were two banks here at that time. The one up on the corner was Lapham's.

LF. You always lived in the same house?

VF. Oh yes. We built that house and we've lived there ever since until I had to come here. I came here (to Wishing Well or Star Manor) because I didn't want my family to have to be responsible. The kids didn't put me in here. I put myself in here. I'd rather be home. Every day, I want to be home and I could if I could get somebody to stay with me.

I worked with all those years. Forty-two years.

LF. When did he take over the store?

VF. The dry cleaning business, he always had that. Then his father passed away and he took over his store.

LF. What about the dry cleaning business? Did he keep that too?

VF. Oh yes. That was our business.

LF. Do they still have that?

VF. Oh yes. It's (in) a separate building but it's in Freydl's store. There are two Freydl's Stores. My sister-in-law started up a ladies' store. I had two children and they always knew where to find their mother. They came down there after school and played down in the alley. (There was) a sandbox down there. I worked all those years and my husband and I enjoyed every minute of it.

LF. What happened when your husband died? Did your sons take it over?

VF. Yes. That was the end of my world. I never had any daughters but I had two wonderful daughters-in-law. That's my husband's picture up there on the wall. Wonderful fellow. His boys just worshipped him. That's the old country home up there (at) Five Mile Road and Tower on the west and Curtis on the East (in) west Salem.

LF. Is that house still standing?

VF. Oh yes. We just recently sold it. My brother was living there and he got to the point where he couldn't take care of it. He had a stroke and so we sold it. Some people bought it and were going to keep it as it was. They restored it. They painted it a tan color now and my brother,

of course, thinks it's terrible. (He) thinks every house ought to be painted white. I'm just thankful (that) we have someone who wants to restore it. It has two large porches. One on the front and one on the side.

LF. That's where you grew up?

VF. Yes. My father worked awfully hard. Bert Nelson.

LF. Did they grow up in Salem?

VF. My mother grew up on the road that goes to Whitmore Lake and my father grew up at Lapham's Corners. I had a sister who died when she was six months old (and) one brother.

LF. You lived in this home until you got married?

VF. Yes. I was married when I was twenty.

LF. Where did you go to school?

VF. Plymouth High School. I never went further than high school. My brother went to Ypsi to Normal College (for) four years.

LF. Is he still living?

VF. Oh yes, at Whitmore Lake. He comes to see me occasionally. Well, he's had a stroke. His wife brings him. We never traveled very much. My husband and I (had) been to California once. He had an aunt that lived out there. We worked all the time. I miss him terribly.

LF. How long has it been?

VF. Five years.

LF. What anniversary did you celebrate?

VF. Sixtieth.

LF. Did you have any activities that you joined?

VF. I really was a busy person. I didn't have time for cards. We belonged to the American Legion Post #147 and the Auxiliary and the Eastern Star.

LF. That's thunder. We're going to have a storm.

VF. I don't like storms. I lived through a couple of tornadoes at home on the farm. I was a young woman. It hit the barn.

LF. Did anybody get killed?

VF. No, not there, but they got hurt severely over on the next road a mile over. One family, their barn was down (and) all their cattle died. They didn't get hurt. They were in on the bed playing with the little baby that they had just recently adopted. My mother and I were away from home that day to a Farmer's Club meeting and we were a mile north of it. I could see it. We didn't know what we'd find when we got home. We drove over three trunks and everything else (in a) horse and buggy. We were very lucky. My grandmother was there with my dad and they were there alone. It went through the back end of the farm and tore down trees and everything and then the next mile over, it tore barns down and a man lost all his cattle.

LF. When was the second one?

VF. Well, one time it took all the windows out of the side of that same house. I was a young person. We had men working for us that day and there were blinds on the inside of the house. My father and one hired man jumped up and held the blinds shut. Mother and I went to the bedroom downstairs. I was so frightened.

LF. Did your grandparents live with you?

VF. My mother's mother lived with (us). Well, my (grand)mother lived with my folks all their married life. She was a widow. My mother's father died the spring before she and my father were married.

LF. You always had the horse and buggy when you lived at Five Mile and Curtis? Did you and your husband have a horse and buggy when you got married?

VF. No. We had a Ford. My father taught me how to drive (the) first car we had (on) country roads, you know, and I could drive safely.

LF. How old were you?

VF. Oh, fourteen.

LF. So you knew how to drive when you got married?

VF. Oh yes. But it was a different car. One winter I had the flu and the measles both, two weeks apart. (I) lost all my hair. I was very ill. That's when my father used to take me back to school with the horses. I lived with my aunt in Plymouth.

LF. While you went to high school?

VF. Yes.

LF. How did you get to school? Did you walk from your aunts?

VF. Yes, about three city blocks.

LF. When you were little, going to school, (from your Five Mile Rd. house), how did you get to school then?

VF. (I) walked a mile and a half. My father was real good about taking us (in bad weather) and he'd take the whole neighborhood.

LF. In the winter, did you go in the sleigh?

VF. (Yes).

LF. How did you keep warm?

VF. Well, you had soapstone.

LF. You heated it up?

VF. Yes. (We) used to go to Ann Arbor that way. That was an all-day trip. We had a cutter (or a one-horse sleigh.

We had a cottage on Whitmore Lake. We spent weekends there. Loraine and John used to come up. They were Charles' buddies. We'd entertain them one weekend (and) I'd stand over that kitchen stove, cooking and I always did all the dishes. We had just a plain little cottage. Just one big room.

LF. You had a dock?

VF. Oh yes. One reason that we bought that when we did (was for) a place to raise the kids and all their friends. Our yard looked like a used car lot every Sunday. I cooked all those kids' chicken dinners. It was fun. We had a long picnic table that my brother-in-law had built. The picnic table was in the cottage. My husband would go out there and get in that boat and paddle out and fish.

LF. Did you like to fish?

VF. No. He stayed out too long. The water was pretty deep sometimes (and) I was afraid of the water. I never learned to swim. My kids were taught to swim, and their kids.

LF. Do you remember any elections?

VF. My husband would never run for an office. He would not run for an office because, he said, "When you get in you got half of them mad at you and when you come out you got the other half mad at you."

LF. Now what would you be doing different at home that you can't do here?

VF. I could cook and read. Just being home.

LF. (Do) you still have your house?

VF. Oh yes. That's the part I keep fighting for. The boys have wanted to rent it but I said "No". 'Cause that's my home and I might want to go back there someday". (They would say), "Well what would you do there and how would you take care of yourself?" I said, "It wouldn't matter." (I'd get someone) there to do for me just so I could be home and look out that window.