

LEONARD FRITZ

Q: You said that you were born on Randolph?

LF: Yes.

Q: How long did you live there, throughout your childhood?

LF: No, until I was about five.

Q: Where did your parents live after that?

LF: On Center Street, down near where Cutler's is at now.

Q: The same house?

LF: Yes.

Q: Oh really, now had your parents settled here or had they come from somewhere else?

LF: Well, my parents came from Canada.

Q: When did they come to Northville, do you know?

LF: Probably around 1915, 1916.

Q: Do you remember the schools that you attended in Northville?

LF: Well, there was only one.

Q: There was just the one school? Which was where?

LF: Well the, the one that's on Main Street right there, that was the high school then.

Q: The Old Village School?

LF: Yeah, and right behind there was the grade school, but it burned down.

Q: I see, and so you attended the grade school and then went to the high school?

LF: Yes.

Q: I see. I don't know much about the elementary school. Was that just a one room schoolhouse type of thing?

LF: No, there was the present high school, which, well I call it high school. I don't know what they used to call it. And right south of there was another building of six or seven rooms, which was the grade school.

Q: I see.

LF: Oh, there was more than six or seven rooms, they had an upstairs and a downstairs.

Q: Would you remember when that burned?

LF: I was trying to think, because I was about the fifth grade... about 1927. That's just a guess.

Q: Yeah.

LF: Probably later than that, 1932 – 1933.

Q: Now were you attending the school when it burned down? Where did you go when it burned?

LF: I, that's what I was trying to think, because some of us stayed here, and I stayed there, so it must not have been completely destroyed. I must of only had a year to go or so.

Q: Oh, I see.

LF: And the rest of us were spread around to the homes. See there was houses where that Community building is. Some of the kids went to school in that house and some went down here where on Main Street where that bed... What do they sell there, bedding?

Q: Oh, I know which one you're talking about. It used to be the Bedspread Place. And now it's an art gallery. And they used that as a part of the school. As a temporary measure?

LF: Yeah.

Q: I see. And then you just went right across to the high school, which was almost next to it?

LF: Yes, downstairs was the junior high, and upstairs was the senior high.

Q: I see. So you didn't have far to go.

LF: No.

Q: And I take it that you walked to school. You were that close. Do you remember anything particular about your school days? Anything memorable? The school burning down was probably it.

LF: No. Not a heck of a lot.

Q: No? Do you remember any of your teachers?

LF: Oh yeah.

Q: Do you really? Who specifically?

LF: Well, there was Mrs. Cooke, there was ah Mrs. Hawkins. Miss Gilbert. Miss Buckley. There was mostly women teachers, occasionally men teachers. But that was usually when you were in high school.

Q: Sure.

LF: It was usually a single person. Mrs. Babbitt over here,

Q: Yeah, May Babbitt.

LF: She was my fourth grade teacher.

Q: Is that right? Do you still see any of them, or her?

LF: Yeah, 'cause you can't go around Northville and see anybody you know.

Q: (Laughter) Right!! And you said you graduated in 1940? Did you go into the service?

LF: Yeah, but not right then.

Q: And how long did you serve?

LF: Just under three years, about thirty-three months.

Q: What division were you in?

LF: I was in the Air Force.

Q: And what did you do?

LF: I was an airman pilot. Of course, the Air Force was the army then.

Q: Yeah, so you were in for quite a while, the three years?

LF: Well, a lot were in for a lot longer.

Q: Yeah, so when did you come home?

LF: It was New Year's Eve of what, '45? The next day was going to be '46, wasn't it? Yeah, 1945 it was.

Q: Is that right? When you were going through training, where did you go?

LF: Well started out in Amarillo, Texas, Denver, Colorado, Las Vegas, Nevada, some fort in South Carolina.

Q: Now, were you married at the time you went into the service?

LF: Yeah.

Q: What year did you get married?

LF: 1942, or was it '41? That's right, December 2nd, 1941.

Q: And how soon were you off to war after that?

LF: 1943, I went in 1943.

Q: Do you remember much of Northville during the War years? What was going on in town?

LF: He wasn't here, neither was I (Mrs. Fritz). I went to stay with my folks in Pennsylvania.

Q: Was there a lot of campaign drives and that sort of thing?

LF: I don't think any more than today. Now, when you say campaign drives, what do you mean?

Q: Well, was there a lot of, I don't know, ah bond, war bond drives?

LF: Well, most of that would come in factories where you worked. See, I mean its solicited in there. And the schools had 'em too.

Q: The schools had them too?

LF: Yeah, they'd sell stamps.

Q: Do you remember anything being rationed here in town?

LF: Oh yeah, everything was rationed, sugar, shoes.

Q: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

LF: Oh yeah, I got four sisters and three brothers.

Q: Are they still in Northville, or did they move away?

LF: One of 'em is still here, a brother. The rest all moved out of town. South Lyon, Plymouth, Florida, California, Traverse City, Northville Township.

Q: Can you tell me anything about downtown? Like maybe what it was like when you were a kid?

LF: Well, there were a lot more stores.

Q: Were there? What kind of stores?

LF: Well, you had C.F. Smith grocery store, A & P, Kroger, appliance stores.

Q: Were these on Main Street? Or were they located elsewhere?

LF: Main and Center.

Q: What did you do, were there any theaters, any entertainment?

LF: Well, we had our own theater.

Q: Was it for films or plays?

LF: Films.

Q: How about any restaurant or hotels?

LF: Just the factory type restaurants, nothing fancy, just the average type.

Q: Do you remember anything particularly memorable that would go on downtown when you were a kid, something that you would come in to see or do?

LF: Well, they used to have band concerts. Usually in the city part. Where the City Hall is now. There was a house on the corner. The rest of the area was a park.

Q: Did they have any kind of a community building?

LF: Seem to me it was mostly the school bad playing out for these.

Q: What about transportation? The Interurban?

LF: Well, they had transportation then that you don't have now. You could take buses. Get the Biddle bus and go to five points and get the City bus. See, now you can't get anywhere unless you have a car.

Q: Did you belong to a church in town?

LF: Well, my mother did. But most of us didn't.

Q: Now you were with the post office quite awhile. Where was the post office when you started working there?

LF: You know up there where that beer garden is now? Just this side of that building. Tom Quinn had an appliance store than, the post office, then Schrader's right on Center Street.

Q: Are your parents buried here? Rural Hill?

LF: No, they're buried in Oakland Hills.

Q: Is there anything particular you remember that stands out in your mind?

LF: No, there wasn't much that took place in Northville. Just a bunch of guys that got together to gab and pass time. Hitch-hike to Plymouth.

Q: What did you do when you were working, did you join any groups?

LF: No ma'am, I'm not much of a joiner.

Q: So then, when you came back here after the war, where did you settle? I mean, where was your house?

LF: Well, it was on Cady Street. It's tore down now though.

Q: Oh really, and how long did you live there?

LF: Twenty years, and then we moved to this house where we are now.

Q: Interesting.

LF: Not really. That's a long time in one place. Actually, I'm kind of a dull person.

Q: Do you remember anything about politics? Do you remember any public officials?

LF: No, I meant it was all small town politics.

Q: Who was the postmaster when you first started working there?

LF: Lealand Smith.

Q: You probably went through quite a few postmasters?

LF: Actually, no; you see, there only was two for the whole time.

Q: Well, I think that about takes care of it.

LF: Like I say, I wish I could have told you more. Like about something exciting anyway.

Q: Do you know why your parents decided to settle in Northville? What about Northville in particular?

LF: To be honest with you, I don't know. My dad was from Canada, my mom was from Kansas. She was born there.

Q: Now, were they married here? Or were they married somewhere else and moved here?

LF: Well, when they got married, they come here. Your mother (Mrs. Fritz speaking) moved to Mayville in the thumb area when she left Kansas.

Q: Then they were in Northville shortly after.

LF: Yeah, he got a job at the Globe furniture company. 'Till it burned down. He was a furniture maker. I guess that's what you call everyone who worked there. Then he got a job at Ford's.

Q: When did that burn down? Do you remember?

LF: Boy, I can't remember. That was a long time ago. I was pretty young at the time. But I remember everyone in town was having a hard time because of it.

Q: Is that right? You said you remember when the school burned down. There was a lot of fires back then. Everything being made out of wood.

LF: There was a hotel somewhere on the corner that burned down right on the downtown center corner, but I don't remember that. I was only one or two years old when that happened.

Q: Was the opera house downtown when you were growing up? Do you remember going there when you were a kid?

LF: That wasn't in operation then. That was tore down since the War. We used to play in there as kids. We had to sneak in. But I don't remember that ever being open to the public.

Q: Well that about does it then.

LF: I wish I could have helped you more.

Q: It's really very helpful.