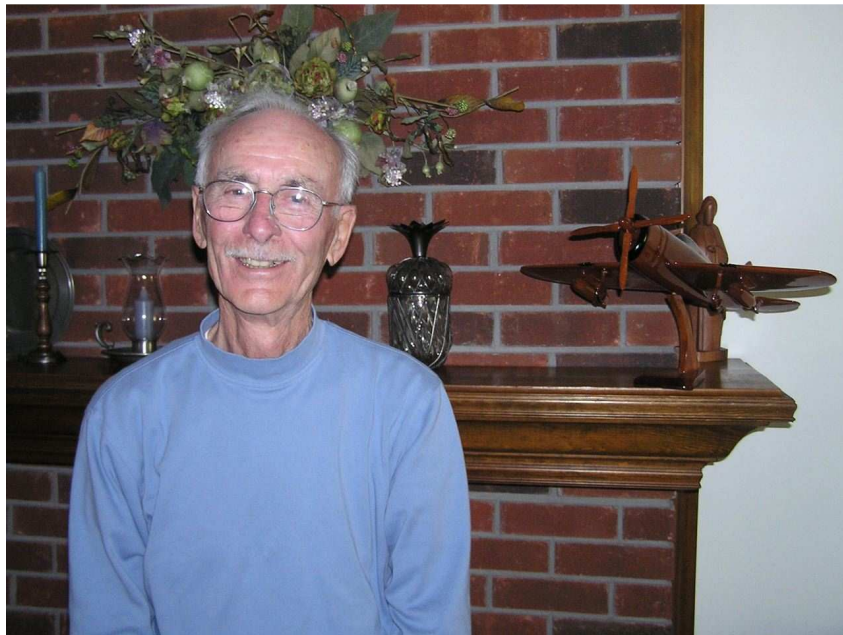


Northville Township Historical District Commission

Oral History Interview – Charles George

June 5, 2006



Lifetime Resident

Waterford School Board President

CG – Charles George
JC – John Colling
RA – Richard Allen

This is Monday, June 5, 2006 and we are doing an oral history with Charlie George, John Colling and myself (Richard Allen). We have gone over some of the background of how it will be handled. Probably the first thing to start off with is, “How long have you lived in this location?”

CG. We moved here, Dick, in 1930. My dad and mother and three sisters and I lived here. We’ve been here most of the time. I was away at war for three years and I built a house up on Bradner (16415), there, and sold it and moved back to this one. So, this has been in the family since 1930.

JC. Might we mention where we are? We’re at the corner of Meade Street and First Street (16850 Meade).

CG. Right. Right.

RA. We need to do that one. As part of your background, what did you do for a living in your other life? (Laughter)

CG. I was a telephone foreman the last twenty years I worked over there. I was an installer and a repairman and just about everything in the telephone company. I worked in Livonia, Plymouth, Wayne, South Lyon, and Northville. At that time it was a family type of an organization; it isn’t today, but it was in those days. When we moved here, why, in 1930, a little school was right up just behind us on the next block up, and that was the school system for the township here. There was one enrollment. Mrs. Wilson was the teacher.

RA. What was the name of the school?

CG. It was Waterford School. I think there was anywhere from 25 to 32 people going there—kids—and one teacher.

RA. It went from what grade to what grade?

CG. K through 8. Well, I was there from 1930 until I went to high school, and I started high school in Plymouth in 1934. In those days, you could go either to Plymouth or Northville, either one you wanted to. My dad worked in Plymouth in the parks, so that was our ride (laughter), my sister’s ride anyway. I drove and took one of the Rowland girls from up on Reservoir Road to school, and she paid for the gas and I drove, so it worked out pretty good.

RA. How old did you have to be to drive in those days?

CG. I don’t know, but I started school, I graduated at seventeen so I must have been thirteen or so, and I was driving then, and I drove before then delivering papers around here. I really don’t know. I must have been twelve or so I guess. I had an old Model A and it was a pretty good car, I thought. The school, as I say, was right up the road here, and I used to get paid for starting the fire and cleaning up the school.

RA. What happened to the old school, they tear it down?

CG. Well, we voted to close the school, it was after the war, because my kids, two of 'em, went to the school up there and I, at that time was head of the school board, which I don't remember how many was on there, but there wasn't very many. I come home from the war in '45, and Art Gotts was running the school and hiring the teachers and stuff at that time. I built a house up on Bradner and I moved up there with my wife and daughter. Art came up there one day and says, "Well, you're the head of the school board." I says, "I am?" He says, "Yeah, I quit." So, I don't know how they run it in those days, but that's the way I became head of the school board. Just a few years later they decided they would join the Northville school district. That's when the school was closed, and when that school closed, the township board took it over and that's where the township operated out of for a good many years. I don't remember who was the township supervisor then. That was after the war so it had to be, oh, forty-six, or -seven in there, -eight maybe.

RA. I think somewhere in that frame, Ellie Hammond, was she a clerk then?

CG. Could be.

JC. The Deputy Clerk was Margaret Tegge.

CG. Margaret was a clerk for a long, long time. She's the one who cornered me and put me on a couple committees up there. I served on those for eight or ten years.

RA. What committees did you serve on for the Township?

CG. I served on the Board of Review and one for the elections.

RA. Canvassers?

CG. Canvassers, yeah. Board of Review in those days wasn't too bad, but as it got to where they were building so many places around here, it got to be a job, and I didn't have time so I had to give that up. I was up there, I guess, eight or ten years anyway.

RA. When I first met you, you were on the Board of Review.

CG. Yeah, that was, well, McDonald was head of the board up there at that time. He was good. He'd come into the board and so was Dick Henningsen. He was very good to deal with, but it was fun for a while.

JC. The school building burned, didn't it?

CG. No, they tore it down.

JC. They tore it down? I thought there was a fire.

CG. I don't know why. We thought it should have been moved someplace, you know. It still was in pretty good shape. I don't remember it burning. It might have. No, it couldn't of, because I was back from the service then. As I say, I was on the school board, and I don't remember it being burned then.

JC. Obviously, it didn't (laughter).

CG. But, it was the center of our life then, you know. The kids all played up there. There was a ball diamond there, and it was that or Annie over the roof game, one of the others.

JC. How far in the district could kids come for that school? Was it just around here in the Waterford area?

CG. Well, this was, course, the only really settled area around here where there were many houses. There were probably fourteen, fifteen houses here. But no they went up as far as the Van Sickle place, and you know where Gibson's used to live, just beyond the township hall there. They came to school here, and down the other way, why, down Krumm and Tegge.

RA. Course a lot of it was farmland at that point, Farm Crest Farms had a lot of the land.

CG. When we moved here, there wasn't anything but farms around here at that time. The only industry was the Ford Plant down here and Grennans' farm over there.

RA. What did they make in that Ford Plant? I've heard different stories, but I don't know?

CG. You know, I used to think it was valves, but it wasn't. Valves were made in Northville.

RA. Seems to me it was gauges or...

CG. Yes I think it was gauges.

RA. Primarily women worked there, or have I got the wrong plant?

CG. No, the one in Phoenix, yeah, that one. The guys who worked around here were Cooks who worked there and Waterman's worked there, Steimal worked there, I think.

RA. We've been trying to find old pictures of the Ford Plant. It's difficult to find. I know Mill Race doesn't have any. They're trying to see if the Ford Archives has any pictures of it.

CG. We used to swim down here at the dam. They had a flume, I don't know if you know it came out of there and down along that side of the track and ran the wheel that ran the plant down there. We used to fish in that thing. There were a lot of blue gills and stuff in there. I think, they never did fill in the tunnel itself, but they filled the old flume in, I guess pushed it in. It still leaks. The water must still be pushing against that sucker down there someplace.

JC. Very well could.

CG. This was a fun neighborhood then, and the only neighborhood in the township, really. This was, I think, 1834, 35 when they settled in this area.

RA. There's a rumor floating around that one of the houses in this neighborhood used to be the Waterford General Store. Does that ring a bell with you?

CG. The only general store that was here in 1930 was Glen and Nellie Kings, down there on the main road, Northville Road. That was the only store I knew. I think there was a store, only it was down where Haslets were down there on Mill Street, almost on Mill, yeah Mill. It wasn't there when we came, that was in 1930, so it to have been...

RA. It might predate that, because it may go back to the turn of the century.

CG. Probably.

RA. It was one of these houses that was a store at one time, but nobody can confirm it. We wanted to see if anyone could shed light on this issue if there is any lore floating around the neighborhood.

CG. I don't remember anybody saying anything about a store, but I mean this was the only neighborhood around, and there had to be some kind of a Nellie and Glens store down there, but it was what we considered a modern store. It had a gas tank where you pumped the gas up into the globe and had penny candy and stuff like that.

JC. How much did gas cost? (laughter)

CG. I don't know, it couldn't have been much, cause I used to get fifty cents for hauling the Rowland girl to Plymouth schools, and that used to pay for my gas coming and going all week, so it couldn't have been much over eight or ten cents a gallon.

RA. Was this store a general store?

CG. Yeah.

RA. A little of this and a little of that.

CG. It had some stuff but not all the stuff. It didn't have vegetables or anything like that. I don't remember whether he had a meat counter. He had a candy counter and that's about all we remembered. He had a whole bunch of sections and they had penny candies in each one. You'd go down there with two or three cents and you'd try to get as many as you could, you know.

RA. In your years living here, do you recall when Six Mile moved when they built the overpass? I know at one time it went straight through.

CG. Yes, it used to go past Waterman's house there and straight down over the railroad track and right past the store and then up over the hill. When they redid the park down there, I guess that was part of the deal. They made the river, the river used to run all the way across and over around by Reservoir that way. They didn't want to build two bridges over on the Parkway, so they made the river run along the ridge on this side. We lost our swimmin' hole down there. That's why I remember it. Yes, Six Mile used to go straight across and up over the hill, and there was a dance hall right up on the topside of the hill. I don't know if you remember that or not.

RA. No, that's before me.

CG. It was right where the Parkway is now, just as you get up across that little rise, there was a dance hall sat right on top of that ridge there. That was the gathering point for the younger people. I was too young at the time.

RA. But you knew about it.

CG. Yes.

JC. Now, there was what most people call a ruin down here which...there's a discussion about whether that was part of the old mill or whether that was to serve the county up on the north for electricity. Do you know what ruin I'm talking about? Just south of Hill Street here.

RA. It's a dam.

CG. It looks like a dam.

CG. Oh, that one.

JC. Concrete and brick structure or something like that.

CG. I think that was just put in there as a point of the park. It hasn't been in there that long. It wasn't there when we were kids.

JC. Some reports say it was moved there when they moved the river.

CG. Oh, is that right?

JC. That's just one of about five different explanations.

RA. It's an unconfirmed story.

CG. No, I remember when my grandkids were small. We used to walk down there so they could watch the water run over it. But I really can't say when it was built, no.

JC. Now where you're living here right now, there's a lot of homes between here and Northville and a lot of homes between here and Plymouth. Which orientation did the people here have? If you went shopping for example, did you go to Northville or go to Plymouth?

CG. We went to Plymouth because my dad worked there. Most of the people went to Northville, and I think most of the kids went to Northville to school. You could go to either one. The district would pay for your tuition either way. I liked Northville better at the time, but I didn't get a choice.

JC. We were talking about the 1930s when you were a boy and everything, what was there to do around here? You said you went swimming, you went to the store.

CG. Oh, there were lots of things to do. We fished in the river and swam in the river. We hunted rabbits all over around here and squirrel. We always had a ball game going up at the one-room school up here. We flew kites. You could put them up and watch them out of the school window all morning up in the air. We had enough kids around, there was hide and seek at night, of course. There were enough kids in this neighborhood, we had a good time. And the farmer boys and girls from the surrounding area would come here to play ball with us.

JC. Being in a one-room schoolhouse, you got to know all the older kids and younger kids too.

CG. Oh yeah, and you learned...you were sitting there while they were doing the eighth grade lesson, and although you were only in the fourth or fifth, you picked up...My kids, I liked it when they went

there. After they went to Northville you sort of lost touch. I was never on the board over there or anything. I guess you just sort of lose touch when they get into a big school.

JC. Now when you're talking about Northville as a district as it now exists, it's pretty large for kids. Including going up into Oakland County. I think it's part of Washtenaw County. Do you know if those were the boundaries that were set at that time?

CG. I don't, no. Ours, for our school, the kids were right around here. I think the kids beyond Sheldon, no, let's see, it would be farther up than that, there was a one-room school up there too, wasn't there?

RA. The school, you've got Thayer school at Napier and Six.

CG. Yeah, Napier, that's the one I was thinking of.

RA. And then there was Wash Oak School which is in Mill Race, but I'm not really sure where it was located.

JC. That was on Currie Road just south of Eight Mile, they called it Wash Oaks because it served Washtenaw and Oakland.

RA. I was going through my mind trying to figure out where it was. I could figure out the name but not its location.

CG. Well, this one, like I say, there was always 24-30 some kids, so they gathered up a pretty good neighborhood around here. Let's see, one, two, three or four farms on Bradner. Then there were a lot of farms down Six Mile Road both ways. I don't think there were any farms on Northville Road that I can remember.

RA. The river and the railroad probably handicapped that.

CG. Yeah.

JC. I've been told, again, I don't know how true it is, it's just rumor, that down south of here which is now a big subdivision where Franklin road bends to Bradner road, that there was a big sand removal business down there. Are you aware of that at all? The land drops off pretty sharply there. As you're on Franklin road, you can look into second-story windows of the houses there, and I was told that's because they removed it for sand, but you don't remember anything about that?

CG. There was a gravel pit; my daughter had a house right next to the cemetery up there. They built that house, and there used to be a sand pit there. There was a sand pit on Ebersol's farm right across where Bradner shuts into Franklin, shuts into Bradner there, back in that field there right next to the Farm Crest Farm. There was one on this side too, you're right, down on this side.

RA. It could be your house or where his daughter is at?

JC. Well, my house sits on the sand...I'm a neighbor of yours. I live on Franklin right down at the bottom of the hill where the creek runs through my property on this side. We're on sand, and when they dug the basement for our house, it was sand all the way down.

CG. You're next to where—well, you wouldn't know them—Cap and Arta Curtis used to live...that house that sets the second one down from me, the big old house, that and this house were the old Sessions farm.

RA. Charlie pointed to the house to the south, but his finger didn't show up on the tape.(laughter)

JC. That's now where, I believe, the Smiths live there now.

RA. I had to translate for the tape.

CG. That was there, a small farm they had there. There's a gully that runs right down through there, and probably shouldn't say that, but the guy used to have a big melon field right at the top of that gully there, and all the guys would go down there through that gully (laughter) and get melon and come back down and eat it. My brother-in-law was his nephew, and one year he was sittin' here and we were talkin' about getting melons down there, and he said, "Oh, you were the guys." My grandpa never got a melon off that patch that year (laughter). So, yes that was an old farm down there too. That was the Sessions' farm at one time.

JC. That's right across the street from where Margaret Tegge lives.

CG. Yes, across from Margaret, the first one is Don and Andrea Graham (16585 Franklin) and the next one was the old farmhouse.

JC. The next question I have about the neighborhood here, I have also been told that one of the Benton's from the Cass Benton family, that this old house right up here on Waterford was their home. Do you know anything about that?

CG. Not that I recall, no.

JC. That was the farmhouse there with the barn and horses.

CG. There was a farmhouse there and a big barn there that was part of Farm Crest farms at one time. What the heck was the name of the lady who lived there?

JC. They used to keep horses there on the corner of Waterford and Six Mile. When we first moved here, they had horses in there.

CG. Yeah. There was a nice big barn there. Where the co-ops are or whatever you call them...

JC. Those five houses.

CG. It was in there. That was all Farm Crest Farms and some of their workers lived there. Wait a minute, wait a minute! That was Joe Denton, D E N T O N, Joe?

JC. No, I understand it was Benton; the same family that Cass Benton Park was named after.

RA. Joe Denton was police chief in the city.

CG. That's where he lived, until he moved in there into a little house that is on...

JC. That's where the confusion might be, they said Denton, Benton, you know.

RA. Could be, because he was the city police chief at one point. There's Benton Park along Seven Mile road.

JC. Just as a guess, because I know you don't know exactly, about how many of these homes in the Waterford area were here when you moved here? You said there were about sixteen or seventeen here?

CG. Yeah. Not any more than that. The one across the road is probably the oldest one, that's where Ernie Layaz lived. This one was here and the one next door and one in the valley there. Mr. Perkins, I don't know whether you knew, he shoed horses and fixed plows, what do you call him?

JC. Blacksmith, Ferrier?

CG. Yeah, blacksmith, he was a blacksmith and did all the farms around here, and his place was right down two houses from the corner. He had a blacksmith shop there. He had arms about that big around you know, a great big guy, and we used to like to go down there, and he would let us bellow his flames every now and then while he worked on a plow or something. That was a busy place down there. And that was where all the farmers brought their plows to get their points fixed on them and stuff. Then he had a rig that went around in a car, and he had acetylene torches in them, and he used to go around to the farms and do some of their repair work there. He was a local businessman, I guess at that time he did a lot of business.

RA. Do you have any recollection or heard any stories of the Underground Railroad in part of this area? Do you know anything about it at all?

CG. My dad worked on the interurban for a while, but...

RA. I know the story has it there was a home up on Reservoir as part of the Underground Railroad for the slaves' escape route. I'm looking for any information somebody might have picked up over the years.

JC. Yeah, the story that I heard was that there were several homes in this area where escaped slaves came and stayed overnight on their way to Canada. In fact, when the old Meads Mill, when it burned down the second time, they had an escaped slave who was living in the community and who was working there and living in the upper floor and was actually trapped up there in the fire.

CG. Did he get burned?

JC. No, he jumped out and broke his hip so the story goes. Course that's long before your time.

CG. I hope so. (Laughter)

JC. That was the last century. But those stories were that this was a very, very abolitionist community back in those days.

CG. Well, I knew Salem was one of those centers.

RA. I know the township records show that there are some black people buried in Waterford Cemetery.

CG. Yeah, right in the back. Old Cippio used to live right down there where, oh, what is the place right there by the river on this side toward the railroad track where it's a bar I guess.

RA. Six and Park store? Six and Park, the party store?

CG. No, no, it's right where the river makes the bend to go to the bend there and Northville Road, it isn't the Elks...

RA. Okay, I know what you mean, the Moose?

CG. Moose, Moose, that's where he lived, right there, and he's buried up in the cemetery right in the back next to where the big oak tree used to be. He was the only colored man I knew who lived around here at that time. I don't know where he worked either, to tell you the truth.

CG. Some of those old stones up there, people were here a long time and the whole family, I don't know what the epidemics were, but you can read the stones there and a lot of the kids died at the same time.

RA. There is one that Pat and I logged that thing and Dick Henningsen helped us, there is one family that had six or seven kids and the oldest any of the kids lived was 2 1/2 or 3. His wife died when she was in his thirties. He remarried and his second wife died and then he died when he was in his thirties. Either they had some bad water or there was an epidemic or something. That family had a tough way to go, I'll tell you. If you look at those stones and there is a nasty story.

JC. You'll find that was common back in the 1800s.

CG. Well, there wasn't much around here then either. These towns, Northville, I guess Plymouth had to be there, but they were small, they weren't much.

RA. We found that once people got past about thirty, they lived to be eighty. If you made it past thirty you went on for a long time.

JC. Now, I don't know the time frame, and it was probably long gone by the time you got here, but I've been reading there used to be a railroad stop right here.

CG. Yeah, in fact, right across the road there, there used to be a well, a spring, and most of the neighborhood got water out of that spring, and they say the railroad used to stop there to get water; and that's why they called it Waterford, but I don't know.

RA. Makes sense!

CG. Well, it does, but I couldn't verify it. I don't remember them doing it while we were here.

RA. Like the controversy about Novi, is it Number Six stop or Novi, or ?

JC. Well, actually we can talk about that later. Novi means "new" in Slavic language.

RA. There's lots of folklore.

JC. In Serbia, there's Novicemblija, is one of the cities over there. It's the same word as Nova, but they have gender in it. Don't record all of this. (Laughter) There was gender in their language and their words, and Nova was masculine and Novi was neuter, the way those languages are. That's all that means.

CG. Makes sense.

JC. The other one sounds good, but it's not true.

RA. Folklore.

JC. Number six, okay, back to the subject.

RA. OK, I have really exhausted some of the questions I came with, can you think of any other things that happened in your lifetime that would be interesting for posterity?

CG. No, the only other thing that I can remember that was really going at that time was the training school up here and Detroit DeHoCo over there. They used to bring the kids, they had handlers of some kind, I think. They used to come down old Six Mile and around and walk a mile around and back to the school again. We used to be scared of those kids. Course there was only about probably twenty or thirty kids around here, and fifty or sixty of them in a bunch, and they'd yell at us and we'd all run back home.

JC. Now, a lot of the roads around here weren't paved back then.

CG. Oh, they were all dirt.

JC. The mile roads and so forth?

CG. Northville Road, I think, was paved at that time, but I'm not too sure about that either. I don't know when they paved it. I think it was though. The other roads...I know Six Mile was all dirt.

JC. Sheldon probably was. I know when I moved here Beck and Haggerty were still dirt.

CG. Like I say, this has been a very, very nice place to live. We had a real good time here.

RA. Good. Northville, in general, is a good place to live and that's why people have migrated here.

CG. The people here at that time, and the school was here, and everybody was together, you know, and you had to get along. And we did. They were very friendly and as far as I can remember there weren't any fights among any of the boys that amounted to anything. Maybe a little pushing and shoving in a ball game, but that was about it.

JC. Now Farm Crest used to have an outlet store here.

CG. Yes, they did, and my daughter worked in that for a while, and they had jersey cows, I don't know whether you knew that or not. They had a beautiful, beautiful barn there with great big jersey cows, I say big, they were big when I was a kid, they're not really big cows, jerseys. Their cream, they used to have those old jars, you know, cork, and there'd be cream down about that far, probably two-thirds of the thing was cream on top. Of course everybody went over there and bought their milk over there. But

I guess there was a dairy guy that used to deliver milk around here. I don't remember what his name was, Joe something or other. I think most of the people walked over there and got their milk.

RA. George Van Hellemont managed those farms. He still lives in the community.

CG. Yes, he lives up on Six Mile.

RA. In fact, they just interviewed him while ago and he brought his, he had quite a painting of the original Farm Crest Farm of the barns and what have you that his family owned.

CG. What did they do with the piece that was in back of him there? There used to be a house that was part of Farm Crest Farms.

Ra. It's still back there.

CG. Is it? In the subdivision over there?

RA. Yeah. They used that as a construction office when they built Crestwood, but the house is still there and it's still occupied.

CG. I'll be darned.

RA. I can't tell you the name of the person; my wife knows who it is who lives in that house (Ruth Hahn). It's an old log cabin. When I first went on the Planning Commission, the man who was the chairperson worked for Michigan Bell. He lived in that house at that time. That was a one lane that went way back off of Six Mile, it had to be half a mile of dirt road to get to that house.

CG. Grennan was good to this neighborhood, though. When Christmas came, why all the kids in the school, he invited over to the big house over there and gave them all a present, and it was always goodies—candy and stuff. At that time, that was in the 30s, there wasn't much of that around.

JC. To get back, you said the milk was delivered here, was there ice delivered here and other things as well? Did you have a refrigerator in the 30s or did you still have an icebox?

CG. An icebox, and at that time this house sat up there, it used to be called a Michigan basement. We called it a root cellar, but that's where you kept everything, and it was cool. Warm enough in the wintertime and cool enough in the summertime. That's where Momma kept all her stuff. She had a small icebox.

JC. I was wondering if they harvested ice?

CG. Down at the lake down here.

JC. Yeah, they did that locally.

CG. But I don't remember who kept it. You don't remember that, do you (Richard)?

RA. That was before my time.

CG. I remember it because I remember the saws, they were about three foot long—big teeth—like a crosscut saw and one handle on one end.

RA. Ely did it in town, but I don't know who did it out here.

CG. They used to take it out of that and keep it in some barn. I don't remember whether it was this barn up here or not.

RA. I know Ely used to harvest the pond there in Northville and keep the ice. Some story is floating around that somebody asked him one time how come there was a handle on each end of the saw. He said, "The other handle is for the other guy who is under the water." (Laughter)

CG. That would be something to see, wouldn't it.

JC. As far as farm products here, you know, like tomatoes, lettuce, and cabbage, was that available from the farms here?

CG. Everybody had their own garden. Everybody had chickens in those days and that's where they got their eggs from. They didn't have enough money to buy them. We had chickens, I had rabbits, and Dad had a small garden outback. We kept it down in the root cellar. You entered it from the outside because there wasn't any basement anyplace except there. Yes, everybody canned, so there wasn't much to buy other than flour. You made your own bread, and let's face it, I liked it better then. Homemade bread is pretty good. Nobody makes it anymore.

RA. You mentioned this house that you occupied in the 30's, did your mother and father build this house?

CG. No, no, Rowland had this house, and of course that was the year after the Depression hit. Dad had a contractor business in Northville, and I was born in Northville. When the Depression come, he couldn't get any money out of the bank, he had money in there, but he couldn't get it out. So he got another job working for Detroit out at DeHoCo, and the money he had in the bank at that time, the bank had repossessed this house from Rowland. He went in there and talked to the bank guy, and he said, well, we'll give you the house for the money you have in the bank. So Dad bought the house, but he couldn't get a...the banks were closed, you know.

RA. Do you have any idea when this house was built?

CG. In the 20s, early, cause this was a balloon construction, I guess you know what that is, when the boards go up and down. Well, this old part is all that construction. The back part and porch and stuff are new. But, so it had to be in the early 20s, so we moved here in '30, and there were pear trees and apple trees that were bearing, so I would say it was built sometime after the 1900s.

RA. You mentioned you were born in Northville...

CG. Yeah, on Rayson Street (corner of Rayson and Hutton in the Village of Northville).

RA. Rayson Street and what?

CG. Rayson, the first block off Center there, yeah Center. I lived, there were, one, two, Fritz lived in one. I forget who was the next one. We were on the corner of the next street there.

RA. Hutton?

CG. Is that Hutton that goes north out of there?

RA. Hutton goes right on the side of Ford Field and dead ends onto Rayson. When they did a remodel recently, they discovered it was two buildings that had been joined; it was on two different foundations.

CG. Oh, is that right?

RA. When they tried to remodel the place, they discovered there were two different foundations on the house.

CG. Could be.

JC. I think you mentioned earlier that you were in the service. What branch?

CG. I was in the Air Force. I flew P-47s. We flew in the 9th Air Force, which was close support for Patton and those guys. I didn't get over there until...I enlisted in '42, and they wouldn't take me until I was 21. I was 21 the next year. So I had to wait until January of that coming year, so I got into the service in '43 and got my wings in the end of '43 in November, and I was over there in '44 and '45.

RA. Where were you based at that time?

CG. We were based from Paris all the way up to Frankfort, Germany. We had, well, there was an iron type grid that they put down on the ground for a landing field.

RA. Mat?

CG. Mat, yeah. So we'd be at one field anywhere from a week to a month, and then pretty soon, we'd fly in and they'd say, "We're going to fly up to the next airport, they've got it all set up for us." And Patton had already moved, you know, so we moved right up as far as Frankfort, and then the war was over then. But, it was fun.

JC. Back then a lot of people when they joined the service, they joined for the duration and six months. Where you in like that?

CG. I don't know, I've got a granddaughter now that's in Germany, and I've been trying to figure out how long she was going to have to be there. Ours was thirty missions. After you got thirty, they'd send you back, but then you'd have to go back again, they didn't take you out, they just gave you a rest. As far as I know there was no definite time set, at least as far as our guys. I don't know what it was in the service.

JC. You were strictly in fighter planes; you didn't do any bombing or anything of that nature?

CG. We bombed, but it was just 500-pounders, it wasn't anything big. No we got to strafe everything, and do anything we wanted. (Laughter) It was, I won't say a pleasure, but it wasn't marching through dirt and mud, you know, we flew, and then when we came back we were either in a good tent or else in a hotel or some house that we took over.

JC. P38's were pretty good planes.

CG. Yeah, P47 got you back, I'll say that. It had that big 28-cylinder engine in front and nothing got through it. I mean, you could get hit three or four times and just knock off a piston or something and keep on runnin'. It got me back every time.

RA. That's what counts.

CG. Yeah.

JC. Were you married as soon as you got your wings?

CG. As soon as you got your wings, you could get married, and we did. I got my wings on the 3rd and we were married that same day by the chaplain on the field. That was in Florida.

JC. Was your wife a local girl here in Northville?

CG. Yes, she was from Wayne, local as far as...I worked for the telephone company and my brother-in-law (became my brother-in-law) said, "I've got a girl for you." I didn't have one at that time. I said, "Oh, all right, we'll try it out." That's what happened and one thing led to another and...

RA. Here you are! (Laughter)

CG. He always blamed me for that. No, the P47 was a very, very good airplane, heavy. I mean if you ran out of engine up there, you just rolled it over, because your glide path was just about straight down. It could go through anything. I got hit a number of times and it always flew back. In fact I come back once, we cut some armor up in the valley in the mountains, and we were just strafing, and dropping bombs on them, and having a big time. I come back and the guy says, "How'd you do?" I said, "Great, didn't see much return fire at all." He said, "Come here a minute, look under your gas tank" and there were half a dozen great big bullet holes right straight up in that gas tank, and it was one of those self-sealing tanks. I didn't hear it, I didn't feel it.

JC. So you were moving up as the troops moved up?

CG. Yes.

JC. So, you didn't have long distances to go?

CG. No, our flights were only two, three hours, two and half, no longer than that. Patton would have a target and he would say... We had a guy who was with his troops, and when he wanted somebody knocked out, why he would call back and the guy would direct us when we got up there so we knew where the target was, who it was, what it was. It worked good that way, and then he would send us back...I still got a rifle that came back on one of his, he'd send back a big chest about yea every couple weeks with swords, and guns, and pistols.

JC. Souvenirs?

CG. Anything in there they picked up that they didn't want, they'd throw in the box and send back to us. Patton was a very nice guy, but you didn't want to fly over him at night. We came in one time, it wasn't dark yet, but it was dusk, and they were parked in the middle of a town fifty miles beyond where

they oughta be. We came running over that town and there was machine gun fire all around us, and that was Patton's guys. Nobody flew over them at night, I guess.

JC. Except Germans.

CG. They were a nice outfit.

RA. Okay, well, we thank you very much and before we go we'll take your picture and put with the thing for posterity.

CG. Well, thank you, it was a pleasure. In case there's any mistakes, just take them out. (Laughter)

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