

Oral History of Fran Mattison (Mrs. Roy)

Edited April, 1995

Lives at 39861 Six Mile Rd, Northville Township

Q: Fran, I believe you moved to Northville Township in 1955?

A: Right.

Q: Could you tell me what it was like along Six Mile at that time?

A: Well, it was all country from Inkster Road on; in fact, when we left Detroit at Inkster Road was the last street light. From then on it was just darkness.

Q: Now you built your own home?

A: Right.

Q: Did you make a point of going into Northville to shop?

A: Well, originally my interests were Plymouth because we lived in the Plymouth school district, but we did go to church in Northville, but with the children being so young and going to the Plymouth schools, most of the activities were geared to the Plymouth area.

Northville, I became involved primarily through working at the Township when we moved here in 1955.

Q: How did you get your first job with the Township?

A: Well, I registered to vote and at that same time I had always worked on elections in Detroit, in fact, I have always worked on elections ever since I was 21 years old. So, moving out here I asked if they had any elections yet, and of course the Township had just split from a village to the city and the township. So, the Township was fairly new; they met in the old school on Waterford Road.

Q: Is the school still there?

A: No, the school burnt down, or the school district burnt it down because they were building Meads Mill and I guess it was not conducive to have the school right there and vandalism. When I registered to vote, Mrs. Tegay was the deputy clerk at the time and I asked if she needed election workers, and it just so happened that there was an election coming up. I believe Molly Lawrence was supervisor at the time, and DJ Start was the clerk, and Margaret was the deputy clerk, so she had me fill out an application for an election inspector, so I have worked on all the township elections since, barring illness or being out of town. At the time we started there were only two precincts in the township precinct, one and two. Rita Young was chairman of Precinct One, which was everything west of Sheldon Road. The township was split everything east of Sheldon Road was precinct ... it's interesting because I believe at our presidential... I have a book where we used to keep track of elections, I think there were eight or nine hundred voters in all, total voters out here.

But this was the time of Farm Crest dairy when everybody that lived along here bought our milk at Farm Crest Dairy. Where the Commons is was all fields, where the cows would ... Ann Hass owned the dairy and of course there was Brennen farms, where Ruth Craft (?) lived and we were all... that's when I began working on elections I got to know more people in the area moving out from Detroit, it was a different experience. We had always lived in the city; the children loved it because of the freedom this was before Dun Rovin and Kaisers lived in a farm there and that is Dun Rovin. Mr. Van Helmut was supervisor of Farm Crest Farms. That was before the expressway.

Q: What changes did you see in the mode of election from the time you started and up to know?

A: We started out strictly paper ballots; what was interesting ...

Q: Where did they vote?

A: They voted at, now you got me there, Precinct Two where I started working for Margaret was at the school house and I believe precinct one was at the community building. Rita Young was Chairman there. Then, and it was strictly paper no machines, what was interesting at that time after the polling places closed we would begin to tabulate the votes each precinct and around midnight DJ Start or Molly would send out to what was Blacks' White House, I don't know whether you have gotten into that at all, Black's White House was a catering firm that was at the corner of Dunlap and Center, they did very nice things, and they always did beautifully so around midnight they send out and we all had our sandwiches. I wasn't too familiar... they had a restaurant there it was an old saltbox type, I don't know if you have gotten into that with anyone else.

Q: No not yet.

A: I'd never seen such sandwiches done as prettily as they were. So I remember that because I was quite impressed, I believe it was a colored man that would bring them in at midnight, and we'd all partake and then work the rest of the night to complete the vote because at that time you just worked until it was done. Then we got into the machines, I believe Mr. Merrien became supervisor, no Mr. Clark was supervisor and Rita Young became clerk, and I took over chairmanship of Precinct One and Margaret was still chairman of Precinct Two. Throughout the years we progressed and I think now we have at least ten precincts. As the population grew different areas were ... but I am still chairman of Precinct One. I think if you figure my age and you take 21 I've worked on elections 47 years counting my time in Detroit too... but there was Gale's farms and Simons farms; this was in Evan's out Six Mile road in Livonia; and I remember the Schoolcraft schoolhouse where Liza Wagonshutz taught at the corner of Six Mile and where Newburgh Plaza is now. We would go and watch fireworks and ballgames at Six Mile and Farmington Road. Newburgh wasn't paved; Haggerty wasn't paved; Farmington was just a two lane road. I doubt if ... well Merriman might have been paved, Middlebelt of course was, but it was strictly two lanes. Inkster was two lanes but when you left that was where I remember the first Farmer Jack's being built at Inkster and Six Mile because that was the closest supermarket in the area.

Q: When did the A & P and Kroger's open up in Northville?

A: Well there again they were markets, but they weren't the supermarkets that Farmer Jack's was. I remember the CF Smith store in Northville (which preceded A & P and then of course there was the MP, was I believe where ... (No it was right across from the church)... Oh no, there was one prior to that seemed to me or was that Smiths?

Q: Did you have one care or two cars?

A: We just had the one car for the first year. The second year I couldn't get along without a car and I did the first year because we had very good neighbors and their children went to Plymouth school, and we did things together. Then I saved enough money to buy myself a second car. Because at that point my husband's ... Then we found that in case of an emergency, it was always wise to have the two cars.

Q: Now are you paid to do elections?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your pay then as compared as it is now?

A: I want to think a dollar and a half an hour; it was still like minimum wage all through and it still is. As I was going into the Township, Margaret was the clerk, a deputy clerk, and at that time the Township office was only open four hours a day from one to four and whenever Margaret wanted some time off, she knew that I had worked in the business field, and she called on me to take her place, or if she became ill I would go in and spell her.

Q: So then that led to you becoming office manager.

A: Yes. Well when I say office manager – at the time this was the sixties. The only area serviced by water was the Wayne County Child Development Center and the State Hospital and Maybury, and the people that abutted the lines going out to those places. I think there was something like 35 accounts. Suddenly, Wayne County decided they weren't going to bill these people anymore and said it was the Township's responsibility to do it. So I took over, at that time we billed them every three months. I would go in after every three month period and send out the bills. Mr. Lawrence was Treasurer; he was Treasurer but he liked collecting taxes, and he didn't like being bothered with billings I think it was in '63 or '64 he said, "Fran, you know accounting better than I do why don't you take (over)." At that point I took over and would bill, but it was still a part time position in the sense that there weren't that many people in the township and I would go in and do the billing and balance out the bank statements and pay Detroit or whoever. I believe the first sewer accounts that we were involved in were about when the Commons area was built.

Q: Would that have been the first large scale subdivision in the area – the Commons?
(Northville Commons)

A: Yes I'd say the Commons; Thompson Brown came in and built those and of course King's Mill and then Highland Lakes – those were the three. As the work increased more people

built out here; there were more connections to our water system and more water lines. It grew and my time with the Township increased so that what was a part time job became a full time job; and then suddenly I was in charge. When I first started out I was also in charge of the work out in the field. I hired the men to work out in the field, and we had a water main break it was up to me to get the help and Mr. Kochin who did most of our repair work and he did all of our water taps and it was up to me to coordinate all that and right up to the time that I left, I was in charge of the field and the office.

Q: And that has never really conflicted with the children's activities?

A: No, because it was a part time job up until '67 or '68 at that time my children were in college; and my youngest was in high school and then he went on to college. When I worked full time my children were all grown and married except for the youngest and he was married before he left college and so it worked out quite well. Prior to that my mother was a widow and say Margaret wasn't well and I had to go in and relieve her, but when you are thinking of relieving her you must remember it was only four hours a day. The neighbors were here and they had children and the children would play with them so that I could go in.

Then gradually the Township became ... we went from the schoolhouse to the library, what we call the old library building in town, over to the community building, then out to the Child Development Center. I retired when they left the child building at the Child Development Center when they moved here to what is the Township Hall on Six Mile Road.

Q: It was about what year?

A: It was '77 when I retired, so I think I have kind of covered my work with the Township.

Q: Now when did you become involved with the library commission?

A: Well, Mr. Marion was the supervisor. I'd always been interested in libraries when I lived in Detroit; as a child; I was a product of the Depression and the library was a place for me to go and get my books we couldn't afford. As they were setting up the library commission and Mr. Marion said he needed somebody to represent the Township, and I said at the time that I thought this was something I would like to do (Q: And that was when?)... I believe in 1965. I'm trying to think who from the Township was with me on the library commission, I have records here that could probably tell you, but that was the very beginning of the library commission and the joint operation. And I have been on the commission ever since.

Q: Do you recall who represented the city?

A: Well, Herb Sutherland, in fact, Mr. Stark. 1960 was a presidential election. Precinct One had 688 voters and Precinct Two had 768. This is one of my first books of instructions, and evidently we must've purchased some voting machines because that's in '60 at the end of the presidential, but I have books of minutes of the library, this is February third '66; Mrs. Chapman, Mr. Sutherland, and Mr. Nani were the city representatives, and Mrs. Harold Price, Mrs. William Slighter and Mrs. Roy Mattison; we were the Townships representative, Mrs. Helen McClatche was librarian.

Q: When was it formed?

A: This would be Feb third '66. I think it was the beginning of the joint operation of all that is joined right now. I don't know too much about recreation but here is the original bylaw. Here is a draft of the agreement between the Township and the City (that was 1963). I think you know the old library building was given to the Ladies Library Association of Northville, the Village of Northville, and this is a copy of the deed, and so I think it was done to ensure that everybody would use it; the city and the township, and I would have to read this.

Q: Could your children use it because you lived in the Township, but they went to school in Plymouth?

A: Well at that time I would say that we used the Plymouth library more.

Q: Because I heard people say that their children went to school in Northville, but because they didn't live in Northville they lived in Plymouth that they could not use the schools – I mean the library.

A: Oh no, I won't say that because we would go to Plymouth because it was more we were in that direction, but if we couldn't find what we wanted in Plymouth we would just go over to Northville. But I know that we used the Plymouth library more than the Northville Library. But there again Mr. Marion he thought it would be something for me to do that way, you know, and he needed someone to be on the board so I was happy to do it, I volunteered, put it that way.

Q: What was one of the first things that the commission did that you recall that would be a meaningful event?

A: Well there really wasn't a whole lot that ... Here is one of our first organizational meetings, I say it started in '65, but I think this was where we set up the bylaws, and the chairmen suggested several committees which the commission could work on and think about before the next meeting; library statistics, library collection committee representative to Township or Council boards, library housekeeping, and a committee to promote interest in the library, and we met I noticed here within a month I was Secretary-Treasurer and I believe Mr. Sutherland was Chairman.

Q: And that meeting was at the old library building on Wing Street?

A: Right in the library we would meet. (Q: Well eventually the library outgrew that building.) I don't recall too many meetings in the church, most of our meetings were held where the library is now when it was much smaller (Q: In the City Hall.) in the City Hall. At that time there was a balcony to the library; I think the children's books are up there. This is what kind of amused me because we always felt that a balcony and a stairway to the balcony was a deterrent to the library because the librarian couldn't keep track of the children up there, and here I went to the dedication of the new Livonia Library about a month ago and what do they have but a winding stairway and a second floor to the library so we were happy, and the librarians were happy when we closed off what we called the mezzanine and just had the one floor library, and the city took over for their offices. So, but we must have met every month because here I am

going March 3rd '66 we set up our bylaws and of course we were part of the WOLF system. Mr. Curtis who would come out and help us and direct us.

But as you later found out Mr. Kaiser was the director of the Wayne County Library System and actually set the system up, and now we have his wife living in the area. Mr. Sutherland, Mr. Nani, Mrs. Price, I'm sure that's Elsie Price and Mrs. EH Chapmen and Mark Sliher. Part of our duties was to put together a budget and present it to the Council and the Township. The Township Board at that time wasn't too interested, and we weren't part of their general budget because the library was funded with our county taxes at that time, from '65 to '70 and that was based on population. The county would be reimbursed and that took care of most of the Township portion of our budget so the township, because it didn't affect the monies that they received, we could pretty much ... but the city was of course, it was part of their budget so they were a little bit more concerned how the money was spent.

Q: So you were on the commission when they built the new library?

(Q) & A: (OK, let's take a little history of the library. They closed the library at the city hall, and we moved to MAGS building which was Northville Square.) I think at one point we moved into the community building where the food area is now, it was there and I think from there we went to the MAGS building and then I think from there back to the city hall, that's the moves as far as I can ... (I can remember pushing the carts up and down those hills) But the MAGS...

At one point we were part of the WOLF system, but the personnel were placed by the WOLF system. We did not do our hiring at all.

Q: That was my next question as to who?

A: When we did that, I'd have to go into detail here and check it out; we purchased file cabinets... it says Mr. Fridner moved that the library ask the city managers in council to purchase the above items. Copies of Township and City budgets for services during the fiscal year are '66 and '67 were forwarded to the Township Board and Council, and we were sort of, we worked, we were liaison between WOLF and the Township Board and the City Council which we still are.

In the meantime we would meet, and Mr. Sutherland, I don't know if you remember him at all, lived on the corner of Dunlap and Lyndon I think, was very interested in books and he had ideas and quite often our meetings would end up in discussions. We tried not to tell the librarian what books to buy the library, but he did.

Q: While we are in the library and discussion it, we might mention why the library was always closed on Friday afternoons.

A: Well, that was the day the librarian took off to go down to WOLF headquarters to make her book selections.

Q: Which in turn became the day the Women's Club met there.

A: Well I wasn't a member of the Women's Club at that time. I did join the Women's Club but this was prior to my time when they met at the library. I joined the Women's Club when it was meeting in the Presbyterian Church. It was '63 that's when I joined. I don't recall ever meeting at the old church.

Q: But I believe that was the tradition that started.

A: What is interesting is back in '69, I think it's when the Friends of the library started, we-Mrs. Edgerton who was on the commission had been to a book sale at the Carl Sandberg library (in Livonia). She said how successful this was and thought this was a way we could buy things for the library that weren't in the budget, so she suggested a book sale as a future activity and this was Feb 6, 1969. I think after that date we started to collect books and I believe I did this research for Betty Griffin a little bit because she wanted to know how the Friends started and Mrs. Orban (?), do you remember Ginny Orban, she was on the commission she put together.

Q: Would that year be the first year you were part of the sidewalk sale? Because I know there was a book sale in '73, I remember Marge Sligher working on the book sale.

A: In 1970, the minutes of 1970, says Mrs. Orban reported results of book sale and her experience with the sales tax collector ... agreed to enter city wide sidewalk sale August first and reserved decision on entering the fair the following week, requested a study of future library needs and recommendations from Wayne County.

Q: So it sounds like we have been participating for about eighteen years?

A: Since about 1970 I would say, but at that time there weren't the Friends as such. The Commission worked and put together the sales – the Commission members and their families. We would all get our husbands and the librarians would help sorting out the books and different people on the commission, the children and the husbands and wives worked on the sales. I think the very first thing we purchased for the library is the globe that's in the library that whirls and Ginny Orban was very active and a doer she was.

Q: And it became a tradition every year to be in it and always be located right there by the Northville pharmacy?

A: Here it says; "Discussion of change of hours renewed decision of June meeting to extend hours to nine pm four nights a week beginning in October and continue through Nov. Meeting recessed continued sorting books for sidewalk sale". So you see the commission was the Friends at the time here meeting out of books donated for library sidewalk sale. Library has selected and processed over 100 books to date to add to the collection including an excellent unabridged Webster's Dictionary. Considering the average cost of a new book purchase of \$6 this makes approximately \$600 value that was added to the library collection; receipts from two 1970 sales totaled over \$250 compared to 1969 sale of \$190. Mr. Jan Reef donated a subscription to the Wall Street Journal. Mr. Sutherland, I think at that time, was secretary, and I was chairman of the commission, so there were those of us that were on the commission...the different positions fluctuated amongst the ones that were on for quite awhile.

(Well I know the Friends were an active group in '73.) Here it says Mrs. Mattison moved that funds which have been raised from book sales by Friends of the Library be used for the purchase of two chairs and a lamp and possible cushions for two Windsor chairs now in the library; these will provide some comfortable seating especially for senior citizens. So that was in 1971.

Q: So it sounds like you actually adopted the name at that time?

A: Yes, we were referred to as Friends. At one time Mrs. Slighen, this would be 1970, we went to Schrader's and purchased the Windsor chairs and the lamp and the area rug for the balcony so that the children wouldn't have to sit on the floors, I remember that. But in '70 or '71, up until that time the commission was primarily the Friends of the Library.

Q: How do you feel when you go past the plaque in city hall with your name on it as a member of the commission that was responsible for building the new library?

A: Well it kind of amuses me because they call it the Carlo addition, John Carlo addition, and I don't ever recall him ever doing anything for that. It was done with a bond issue that the city floated and paid for out of community grant funds and how he ever got involved in it I don't know. He was never a part of the commission. I'm truthfully quite proud of it and when I go to the library I show the children. I don't know how long it's going to be up there, but if I take my grandchildren there I show it to them that it's there, and I hope I'm around when we do get our new library building. Maybe my name will be up there.

Q: Well you're still on the commission.

A: I'm still on the commission and it expires, I believe, in 1990. So whether the Township wishes me... or whether I'll still be around. This is the only commission other than the recreation commission in the Township that has never been paid as far as I know. (All this is strictly volunteer.)

Q: Your budget has certainly increased over the years.

A: But your Planning Commission, Appeals Board, your Zoning Commission, I know your city boards are never paid.

Q: No, we're not.

A: But in the Township they are paid.

Q: Oh they are?

A: The Planning Commission, Zoning...but the library...and if you can figure from '65 though how many meetings I have attended through snow and fog.

Q: Oh fog, oh yes.

A: You yourself being an active member you know what it's like and we spent hours meeting with architects for the plan that was to go on the corner behind the community building.

We spent hours with architects for changing over to the MAGS building where they had people come in to adapt the area to a library. So it isn't just a meeting every two months as the situation required, you might be there twice a month. But I've always felt good about it because I feel the library has done pretty well with what we've had to work with. We'd love a building; maybe someday we will have it.

Q: Well, maybe.

A: Well a library is certainly an essential part of the community where would we be without it. There have been a lot of dedicated people working on the library, on the library commission; Weken, Mrs. Orban, Mrs. Sligher, and Mrs. Chase. All along there was Carol Ann Agnes was on the commission before she became active.

Q: Now you have these records and sometime in the future are you going to be putting them on record.

A: I have given these to Betty Griffin to go through for any background she needed to do a history of the Friends, but I don't know what will happen with these copies of minutes...

Q: But you might ...

A: ...and correspondence and I feel if I ever move from the area or something should happen to me that I should probably give them to the Township to do with as they see fit.

Q: I think that's one thing that we are concerned about when people do have good records that they are not lost, and I think that is the one thing that we do well, we are concerned about is not having records.

A: Oh, I must have half a dozen books with library minutes and things; this is I believe I told you once that if I move it will be into smaller quarters and I won't be able to take care of them, and I will probably offer them to the Township. I have already given Pat Orr all the background I had when we put together the plan for the library corner behind the Rec building, and I hope she's gone through. I gave the notes when they established a Task Force Committee; I thought perhaps it would help her because there was a lot of background in putting that plan together.

Q: Well that's expensive and we can't ask the architect to do this gratis all the time. They do have to be paid.)

A: Mr. Merritt was the architect and he did a very good job, and I still think it's a very good plan because what their looking for is 25,000 square feet and this building was adapted to the corner of that parking lot I think and it was for 25,000 square feet and they could use it.

Q: Yes.

A: And it's close enough to the recreation building, to the post office, and to the city hall so I find it's better to have all of these things together.

Q: Well you don't have a town unless you have that criteria with everything that people need.

A: You couldn't walk out there to the Fish Hatchery.

Q: Right.

A: Cady Street is ok, now I'm expressing my ideas about the six lots that they have recommended; I don't go for the Ford Plan. I feel it's just another temporary move which we have done so much. I keep saying I'll never move the library again – four times is enough.

They want to build a nice new building; the parking lot right across from the Ford plant could be used to build an attractive building and it would be a nice addition to Mill Race Village, and it would promote that as well.

Q: I think maybe families feel safe with the children in the city hall area riding their bikes to that area.

A: It's interesting. I did have the statistics, but few people actually walk to the library, most everyone drives to the library, even the senior citizens don't walk. There aren't that many that can walk that far, even if they lived three or four blocks from the library.

Q: But it is accessible to the children in town.

A: But most of the children live out of town.

Q: But the population is growing. Parents may want to drop them off while they shop in town.

A: Right. This is why my children use Plymouth so much, Plymouth Library. They wanted to while they were in high school because it was right across the street.

Q: Let's get into a discussion on town hall when did the town hall let your series start, Fran, and why? Wasn't there one in Plymouth, Livonia or Farmington?

A: No, we were the very first hall series in this area. Ann Raleigh who is a member of our ladies league at the Catholic church (OLV) – they were discussing means of raising funds, and she had been a good friend who was active in the Grosse Pointe lecture series, and I happened to go to a league meeting, and she was explaining to the league what forming a town hall series entailed. She said she could get all the information we needed to from somebody she knew on the committee from the Grosse Pointe lecture series. But she needed ladies to help her. Well, there again, with my clerical background I said I'd be glad to help. I happened to be at a league meeting and my children never went to the Catholic schools because of transportation primarily. This was prior to the funding for buses.

Q: Yes, now the league you're talking about is Our Lady of

A: Our ladies league?

Q: Our Lady of Victory?

A: Yes, Our Lady of Victory. So I said if she got the materials I would write whatever letters were necessary to the agents to find different speakers from whatever speaker's bureau they use. (Wasn't this overwhelming to be thinking of?) Well, Ann Raleigh was the type of person we knew and my one comment to her at that meeting was that if you got the right people interested in this, it could be a success in a small town like Northville. This was, I think, in '59 or '60 and I felt that this was an interesting way to make a contribution to my church. I mean volunteer work, I wasn't yet involved in the library so what we did was ...

Q: Now you are looking at one of the first town hall programs, who was on the committee.

A: We knew that Northville alone could not support this, so we suggested inviting people from Farmington, Livonia, Plymouth and Northville. But Northville would be the organizer and OLV would be the sponsor this and we still operate on that basis. The way we would involve these people is by promising that part of our funds would be distributed to these different communities. I recall Mrs. Willoughby (Northville (?), Mrs. Dale from Plymouth, Mrs. Harrison from Farmington, and I believe it was Mrs. Parks from Livonia that were... and Mrs. Huff was from Plymouth. We met at Ann Raleigh's house the league, the members of the league, and we all contributed names, and one of the names suggested was Mrs. Caruso she lived in what's now "Home Sweet Home" in the white house.

Q: Right on Nine Mile and Novi Road.

A: Nine Mile and Novi Road. So our first organizational meeting was at Mrs. Caruso's home and Couse. She was a woman that we needed funds to start, so we went to. Down here is a list of the people. We still have the funds the original \$950 that was contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Casterline, Mrs. Walter Couse, Mr. Lewis Caruso, Mr. Sterling Newton, Mrs. Hann, Mrs. Martin Kaiser, Mrs. Langfield, Mr. and Mrs. William Sliger (?), Mr. and Mrs. William Walker and Rev. Whitstock and the PNA Theater.

They gave us old PNA Theater in Northville, which is now the Marquis. I believe they gave, some didn't actually give money, like Mr. and Mrs. Sliger they gave us publicity in their paper and printing for our programs and the equivalent of money. Some gave maybe \$00 and some as much as \$250, but we still considered that our patrons funds. We still have it on our books and, if at any ... The way it was set up in the original minutes was if at any time anyone of these people would like their money back after, they were welcome to it; they have never done it, most of these people have died and gone on. That was the way we started and our first speaker was John Mason Brown, Madame Jeannete Spenye and Anthony Wedgewood Bend, Ian Ross McFarland, and Bennett Serf. At that time I say in the Ladies League at that time the Ladies League was known as the altar society of Our Lady of Victory Church.

Q: You held the town hall series at the PNA?

A: At the PNA theater and that's how the PNA... They donated the theater for the first year so that we could... I believe I can look for how much the first tickets were; I want to say \$10 which was the series ticket.

Our luncheons were held at a different place each time to make it more interesting. We had somebody prominent in the area to introduce the speaker like John Mason Brown was introduced by Mr. Harrison who was superintendent of the public schools in Farmington. Then Madame Spenye was introduced by Philomene Aesock, a former fashion editor and women's feature writer for the Detroit Times, so they were really getting a package of two in one. We've since deviated from that.

Q: Where did you go to lunch?

A: We went to the speaker, the art theater at Lofy's in Plymouth. Now evidently Dr. Howard from this introduced Anthony Wedgewood Bend, I'm going over the first program. Mr. Sexton from Plymouth introduced Ian Ross McFarland, and Jane Sherminhammer from the Detroit News introduced Bennett Serf. I guess Lofy's, it was several years afterwards that we went to lunch; we would go to Lofy's. We went to lunch at Meadowbrook and the Plymouth Meeting House.

Q: About how many people came to the lecture series?

A: Well, the theater held 500 and that's pretty much what we would try to sell, at least 500. Sometimes we ... The other thing that we put together was a program book and sold advertising in the program book and we have merchants in Northville that were in our first book and are still advertising and supporting the Town Hall. Freydl's is one and Guernsey's Farm Dairy. That's a source of profit for us too; our program book.

Q: Now the funds from this you have put back into...

A: When we set up the series one because the league sponsored us, a half of the profit went to the league and the other half of the profit was distributed amongst the different communities that supported us; and to this day that's the way it is held or done. We have a board which we call the Board of Awards and on this board, we meet once a year, are representatives from Farmington, Livonia, Plymouth and Northville. Because of the growth in the area we've added on Novi, because they are quite a few people coming from Novi and support our series.

Mrs. Wagenschutz was Chairman of the Town Hall Board of Awards at the beginning and Mrs. Milney was Secretary, and I was involved with the general committee. They were all involved with Town Hall. I think Mrs. Milney was Clerk at the time. Then gradually as things changed and time went on, I became Chairman of the Board of Award and I still am for Town Hall.

Q: Now is the meeting the lecture series always started at eleven in the morning?

A: Yes, it's always started at eleven o'clock.

Q: You've had to change the location?

A: We met... we started at the PNA theater. When we went into the PNA Theater, those of you who remember, it was back in 60 and 61. It wasn't a very attractive place as it is now. We

as a group, the women on the committee, we painted the hallway, we had a podium built, and we purchased the curtains to cover the doorway and actually one of the duties for the women to ...

Because they donated the building. Of course movies at night, you don't see very much but this being at eleven o'clock in the morning, we had to clean it up a little bit. We even had to set up the marquee, or we hired a young boy to do it and we bought the trimmings for the marquee to make it quite a gala place.

I know Town Hall day ... When Town Hall came to Northville, all you had to do was go to Northville that morning and you knew it was Town Hall day. Because all the women from the area, surrounding area, would come and they were always dressed in their finest. They always had hats and if they owned a mink stole, it was worn that day. It was just a nice day and to go out in.

Our primary purpose in bringing it was also a way to earn money for the church and for charities in the area. But it was a chance to hear these speakers that we would've had to go to Detroit to hear. It was patterns at that time. I myself went to the Detroit Town Hall series at the Fisher Building, but I didn't go as often as I liked because it wasn't easy to get down there.

Q: Right.

A: So that's what... Also the Grosse Pointe, and Birmingham lecture series was very popular at that time...that's what happened. You couldn't get a ticket to their lecture series; you had to be on a waiting list. Their tickets would be gone like the first day that they were offered or the first week that they were available. So when we put together our series and we had good speakers we had quite a response and it was a success.

After that Livonia started a Town Hall, Plymouth started a Town Hall, Farmington started a Town Hall, but none of them were quite... I think ours was a success because ours was strictly a charitable thing. It wasn't for any particular club. All the money that we earned is given away each year. It is given away to organizations that help the communities that we cater to, I believe we've ...

Q: Such as name some of them.

A: We've given to King's Daughters every year since the beginning. We gave to Plymouth's Women's Club every year until last year, for some reason or other they didn't apply last year. That's the one thing, to participate or be considered by the Board of Awards, you have to make a written request every year and specify what you'd like to use the funds for. That's what this Board of Awards does. We meet and go through. Mr. Mohlman has been on the Board of Awards from Northville. In the very beginning he was one of the original members on the Board of Awards. (I know the Friends have benefitted from them. The Friends we support.

A: Yes, Mr. Mohlman, we support Novi. We get a request every year from the Novi Library. The Historical Society has benefitted practically every year. The amount that they receive depends on the profit we've made. I think we have had one or two bad years when we haven't made any profit. That might be attributed to we overextended ourselves on our program, our speakers cost too much money, and of course you have to pay for the speakers.

Q: What did they originally in the beginning what they ...

A: I think our first program if I remember correctly, for the five speakers that we mentioned was \$2,500 for all five. We have spent as much as \$16,000 for our speakers now and that's only four.

Q: Yes I'm going to say you're down to four. What was your most expensive speaker?

A: I want to say Phil Donahue. We benefitted by that because that was the year we actually sold out all our tickets within a week or two. We sold out. We met at the Plymouth Hilton and I think we sold over 800 tickets. He was really a success. I don't think I have to explain why.

Q: No.

A: Everybody listened to Phil Donahue.

Q: I think if you had him today, they'd be right back there.

A: Well, I don't know. He's changed a bit more, but anyway.

Q: Can you recall some incidents that have come along that are amusing that we might be interested in. Well, did you ever have to go to the airport to get anyone?

A: Yes, I met Anthony Wedgewood Bend. He came to town and I believe he came here from another speaking engagement, not too far away, maybe Grand Rapids. He came on the train and Jean Sheehan who was on the original committee and I met him. Here's this young man, who can see how young he looks there, got off the train with a beret and long topcoat. He was English. We were as surprised to see him looking the way he did as he was to see us old...well, I joined the committee when I was 39.

Q: Well, that's not old.

A: I'm one of the older members on the committee right now. So we asked him what he'd like to do. He says well right now after riding that train for I don't know for how many hours and this was early in the morning because we ... He says, "I'd like a bath". So that we didn't know where to take him because we hadn't made any provisions for an overnight stay for him because he was probably going to the airport after he finished with us. So Jean Sheehan took him home, and he took a shower in her bathroom. That was kind of fun. It is fun to meet the speakers. I met Baroness Von Trapp.

Q: Did you, Oh?

A: Ruth Knapp who was on the committee, one of the original members on the committee. She and I said we would drive down to meet the Baroness Von Trapp. Of course both, Ruth was a very great admirer you know. She and I got all dressed up and went down to meet her at what was the Book Cadillac. Ruth parked across the street in the parking lot, and I went into the hotel to meet the Baroness. As I entered the lobby, she was right there waiting for me with her little bag, which was sort of like what you have. It was more of a carpetbag and all her. She walked

across the street with me. You could tell she wasn't a woman full of idle chit-chat, so I didn't chose to speak to her. I spoke when I was spoken to. So when we got to Ruth's car I said where would you like to sit. "Well, I like to sit in the back seat alone". So I sat up in the front with Ruth. She says I hope you use the speedway. Ruth says, "I never drive the speedway." Did you know Ruth Knapp?

Q: Yes.

A: So, we went home out Grand River, which was a good thoroughfare in those days. But I could have gone the Lodge or something like that. But anyway so she is sitting in the back seat and Ruth and I are in the front seat. Of course both, I was disillusioned because you know after the Sounds of Music and her books, and we'd all read her books, I just thought. So pretty soon, and of course this is the morning of the Town Hall, we are both dressed in our finest. So she suddenly looks to us and says to me, "Have you ever thought about your hat?" And I said, "No." I was sort of surprised and she says, "Well do you realize," and I had a feathered hat which I still have, she says do you realize how many birds were killed to make your hat. I said, well those are probably all chicken feathers and all chickens, you know. My hat is a pretty hat, but that was the Baroness.

So we're heading out Grand River and she says she's due at the theater at 10:30. She says I do not want to go to the theater until a quarter of eleven. I said, well they expect us for pictures there before time. She says "Well, I have to meditate." So here we are, we don't know what we're going to do with her for fifteen minutes or a half hour. So we're coming out Six Mile and I said, "Ruth, we'll stop at my house." So I thought I'd fix a cup of coffee or something and she said "No, I want to be alone." When she came into the house, you can see my house is very small. So the only place I had was in my daughter's bedroom. So she and her little satchel... She had a little altar that she carried along with her, and she went back there and until it was time to go to the theater she sat there, I suppose medicating.

She did tell us that she wasn't very comfortable speaking, but you'd never know to hear her speak because she looked very relaxed. She says it was really a chore for her to do this, and that she did this to support one of her daughter's charities. I think her daughter was in some island in the South Pacific doing some work, and all the money she earned was contributed there. It really changed our feelings because she wasn't very friendly and we expected her to be so outgoing.

Q: A Julie Andrews she wasn't?

A: Pardon? No, she wasn't a Julie Andrews, but we got her to the theater. We had pictures taken, she was charming and everybody was very pleased with her. So Ruth and I had a little secret of the true Baroness Von Trapp.

Q: Now when did you start providing overnight stays for them because that would certainly increase...?

A: Well, we always had to do that.

Q: So where did the Baroness stay then?

A: Well, but you see she evidently had a prior commitment, maybe in the area, so she stayed at the Book Cadillac and sometimes and that's when we picked her up in the morning. But now most of the ... I don't know how she came to town but that was, maybe she had friends here that she stayed with. It could've been that. But she suggested that we meet her there and that's where we took her.

But now when speakers come in town they usually fly in and so many of the Plymouth, the Mayflower, the Sheraton Oaks and the Plymouth Hilton, they usually gave a room free of charge to the speaker.

Q: Oh how nice.

A: For the publicity, quite often they might take a picture of the person and then put it up in the restaurant that 'so-and-so' stayed or ate here. I don't know how much they do that anymore cause... We used to have a committee at the beginning, a transportation committee, where women met this group and you took your turn and later years usually the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman met the speakers. It gives them a chance to relax with the speaker and make them feel relaxed as well as themselves and explain to them.

Although I met Helen Thomas when she spoke here just last season. There again, I was one of the people that wanted Helen Thomas to come as a speaker here. She was very brisk and it was strictly business with her. You know you build an image of these people and so often when you meet them, Nancy Gourt was the Chairman and I met her.

There again she drove around looking for a parking place and I met the plane. Helen was there and she got off the plane and all she could think of is whether she was going to be ready to leave the following day at a certain time. This was on a Wednesday the day before. I told her, I said, you know Helen when you have to be here. I think our contract reads a half-hour before the speech or an hour and at least an hour afterward because there's a limit on how fast we can get them back to the airport. Well, she says, I wouldn't have come if I had known that you couldn't, I've got to be back in Washington by five o'clock. I said that's pretty short. We have a question and answer period the people have paid to listen to you and to hear you. All she could think of... I was really quite upset with her. Finally she calmed down and I did too.

Q: You got her back to the airport in time?

A: We did get her back to the airport in time. She, I think everybody, were you at that lecture?

Q: No.

A: I was disappointed in her delivery. She read her lecture.

Q: That's what I heard.

A: She read her lecture. We felt anybody, well, I mean after all she's a newspaper woman and she should be able to... She told me that she only gives this one lecture and she'd come from a lecture down in Greenville, North Carolina. I thought she was going back to Washington

on business, and she was going back to give another lecture somewhere. So I felt... her family is from the Detroit area, we had a table of ten people that were either relatives or people that knew her and were happy to see her. But all though the thing, this is what makes the Town Hall interesting. Because you meet people that are well I don't know whether you'd call them important people, but prominent people, and some of them are very cooperative and some aren't.

Q: When did you start combining it with lunch?

A: From the very beginning.

Q: But now you concentrate really zero on one definite spot to have lunch?

A: Yes, when we went to the Plymouth Hilton is when we met you know at the theater. From the theater we went to the high school, met at the high school and then from there we went to Plymouth Hilton. I think we went to Madonna College one year and it didn't work out. Then we went to... At those places we met, and went to lunch at the Holiday Inn. Then we were, for a number of years, at the Plymouth Hilton. That's when we first started. People enjoyed going there because you parked your car and you didn't have to re-park it to go to another area for lunch, if the weather was bad. It was great. But we've been very successful. I think we've given over a \$100,000 to different charities. We are not, our primary purpose isn't to make money, it's to bring people, to bring culture to Northville.

Q: Right.

A: If you want to put it that way you might think some of our speakers don't contribute to culture but everybody has there ... So anyway we started out, there were about forty members to our committee, and we're now between I'd say 25 to 30.

Q: But they're not all on the altar society.

A: No, they're not right from the very beginning it was an ecumenical thing. There are people; Marge Cooman goes to the Presbyterian Church, she's been on our committee a long time. Martha Lyons, her mother was on the original committee, Eda Bloom, and then Martha as she grew. She's still on the committee. She's been ticket Chairman. A number of people on our committee to date aren't members of OLV.

Q: Last year you were still meeting at the Sheraton.

A: Right.

Q: In Novi, and now this year you are going back?

A: People are happy about us meeting at the Plymouth Hilton because there again there won't be the hour wait between the luncheon which we had at the Sheraton. But we've truthfully had difficulty in finding a location. Now the Holiday Inn, they could take care of us for the lecture, but they can't accommodate 350 for lunch, which sometimes can happen.

Q: As many as 350? You have a complete record of.

A: This is our, Marie Caruso, Ann Raleigh, and myself. Joan Engle was Vice-Chairman, Ann Raleigh was Chairman and Tony Alexander was Treasurer. This was taken on the stairway if you recall. Here we're going into Marie's house that day. This is a...we'd had one meeting at the league prior to this and a meeting at Ann Raleigh's house. Then, we, the next meeting was at Town Hall. It was kind of a status thing. People were quite... We used to be invited to Marie's house to come to a meeting.

Q: I see this was in the Plymouth Mail rather than in the Northville Record.

A: Here's Mrs. Willoughby, Joan Alexander, Mrs. Dale and Tony Alexander from the Northville Record.

Q: You've done a nice job of keeping the records?

A: Well scotch tape doesn't help, but this is the best available. Here we are putting up, what is it they do on the marquee at the theater?

Q: The bunting.

A: The bunting it was.

Q: I know Town Hall was the big think in the city; mother had tickets and she went to the Birmingham one.

A: We were pleased to be able to have this in Northville and we did get a lot of support. See here we are all dressed in our furs. We had, I even put the menu in here but... There's a table of ladies. Of course I have nicer books now, but this was how I started this on my own and then they... I have always done the historical on my own. Here's Betty Hoffman. So I have twelve books of this.

Q: My word, that's quite a few. Anything, now that covers Town Hall pretty well. Any other recollections of anything happening in Northville Township that stands out in your memory? I know you have been a dedicated citizen of the area obviously with all your activities and raising your children, it's been a pretty full life.

A: Well I've enjoyed every minute of it here in Northville. I really ...

Q: Who decided to move to Northville? You or your husband?

A: We originally were going to go to the Plymouth area, but we found the house and the land. We had two and a half acres here, and Roy liked to garden. When he saw this new house, it was about two-thirds built he said. We had a house in Plymouth picked out. We actually didn't know anyone, we had no relatives in this area you know like so many people do. We were glad this was in the Plymouth School district because at that time the Northville schools weren't rated too high. In fact, some people in Northville sent their children, paid extra tuition, to go to the Plymouth schools. But since that situation has reversed itself... I've always felt because my children are a little closer to Plymouth than Northville. My interests are Northville, but they ...

Q: Well they know Plymouth.

A: They know Plymouth and their friends were all in Plymouth. James was on the swim team, Janice was editor on the newspaper, Jason was in the band and all of their friends were in the Plymouth area, they sort of go that direction.

Q: Now where are your children living?

A: Well Janice is in Colorado. James is in Roseville and Jason in Livonia. Northville, I always felt, was small enough at the time we moved here that you could participate in things, be part of things where you couldn't in Livonia. Livonia had grown that much. Livonia and Plymouth was growing whereas Northville there was a need there if you wanted to become a part of the group. You know you could join and be a part of the group you know which you can't do in the big city.

Q: They asked you to join.

A: There was a waiting list and I believe it was a year or two. Usually they asked people to, they chose people to join if you had contributed or been active in the community. It wasn't what sometimes it is nowadays where you're a good friend of somebody and you need someone to go to Women's Club. That's all right. I think we're reaching that point again because our membership is filled and I think we're ready. We have a waiting list in women's club again.

Q: Yes.

A: What else have I put down here? Questers, Helen Hopping and I formed the Waterford Bend chapter mainly because we wanted a chapter that met during the day. We'd been a part of another chapter that met at night and we chose not to. We didn't like going out at night and sea larks that's about it. (Well that sort of rounds it out).

Q: We've been busy; it's one way of becoming acquainted in the community. If you sit back and wait for them to come to you they might never come. You found that out. No, it's been interesting.

A: I have all these records and someday I'll have to do something with them. But where they'll go I don't know I figure I kept them all these years I don't want them just thrown in the trash.

Q: No, I wouldn't think, it's difficult going through things like that and deciding what to keep and what not.

That takes care of our interview today with Fran Mattison.

Barbara Smith (313-420-3455)