

Oral History of Carl Stephens

(Tell me about yourself, and we'll just go from there.)

My name is Carl Stephens. We live at, on Norton in Northville. I've lived in Northville all my life except for four years. I was born on a farm near Boyne City, near Horton Bay, Michigan, and my father came here in 1923 and opened a grocery store. There wasn't any available places uptown in Northville at the time, so he rented a house on the corner of Rouge and Novi; and we lived in the back of the house, and he had his grocery store in the front part of the house.

(Was that why he came here, or did he come here to work somewhere else?)

No, he came here for that purpose. (I see.) Uh, huh, go in the grocery business. And there's a store on Center Street, right where the bicycle shop is now, and A.& P had their store in that location; and they were moving out of there and going over on Main Street; and so my father was able to get in that building with his store; and so he moved uptown at that time. The building, which is called the Filkins Building, and that's the store where the Sweets & Treats business is located now – that was called the Filkins Building; it was under construction at that time. And he was able to get one of those stores, when the store was completed, and he moved in there. And he was in there until 1929; he sold the business in 1929 and opened a store in Bellevue, Michigan, and that was right at the time of the '29 crash when everything was going – a real bad time for him to move.

(Did you still live in Northville, or did you move to Belleville?)

We moved to Belleville at that time. We still had our home here. And things got real, real hectic in that little town; and we were all homesick and wanted to come back to Northville (Bellevue wasn't it – not Belleville) Bellevue, that's right. And so he came back to Northville and (Bellevue?) Bellevue – that's over by Battle Creek. (Oh, I see, I'm thinking of Belleville close to us) So he came back to Northville; he rented a building, which was called the Caterwol(?) Building, and that's the building where (The what building?) It was called the Catermole (?) Building, and that's the building where Bruce Roy have their real estate business. And he rented that building and moved his dime store from Bellevue into that building. (Dime store?) that was a dime store. (Ok, now he had a grocery store here and) Not at that time. He sold his grocery store. (Prior to that though, but he opened a dime store in Bellevue – then he moved that back here?) Then he moved that back to Northville. And we hadn't been back in Northville hardly any time, when the man that he sold the store to wanted him to take it back. And so after some negotiating, we ended up – we had two stores in Northville. We had a grocery store and a dime store. And it was a different kind of – really the businesses were much different in those days. He did a lot of telephone business. People would call up on the phone and give grocery orders over the phone, and we didn't sell meats. Most grocery stores just sold groceries, and cold meats, and that sort of thing. But we would pick up people's meat from George Hill's Meat Market on Main Street or Butch Walden's Meat Market on Main Street and deliver meat along with their groceries.

(You had delivery service from your father's then? How did you deliver – bicycle, car?)

Oh, with a car. Yeah, we delivered all over Northville – anybody that called up. Sometimes twice a day we went to people's houses with groceries. I know of several ladies that we'd go twice a day to their houses, and he would deliver – there was one lady in this town, and her name was Ada Peckle (?), and she lived on – that's West Street – and she, we delivered a cake to her every day, a wine loaf cake – and she wanted that cake fresh, and she knew the code on the cake, and if it wasn't – it wasn't the right code, she'd let you know about it. So, she had to have a fresh cake every day. (Did she run a boarding house or what?) No, no she was a single lady that lived there. She ate a lot of cake.

It was quite an interesting time. There were – I think we had – there was Moses Meat Market on Center Street at that time, George Hill on Main Street. George Hill's Meat Market was one of the most outstanding meat markets in Northville. He sold the best – anything you bought in his market was just wonderful. (Where on Main – do you remember?) Yes, his was just where, where the – you know where the Abloom Agency is now? They built a parking lot right across there. George Hill's Meat Market was just west of the building – that building where Bloom's is called the Richardson Building and it was just west of that building, and there was an alleyway you went in there. There's still – you still drive in there by the Bloom Agency, but George Hill's Meat Market was just on the other side of that, what we called an alleyway that went in there at that time. That was an alleyway – went in behind Schraeder's Store and those places there at that time.

And then Butch Baldwin's Meat Market on Main Street was an outstanding – he had a good business there up until '29, and he lost everything in the '29 crash. And he had a man working – Butch Baldwin had a butcher in there by the name of Charlie LeFevre that was there for a long time. And Saturday morning, Charlie LeFevre would be out in the back alley, and he'd be out there killing chickens. And he'd have all these chickens with their legs tied together, and he'd hang 'em up there, and Charlie would be out there and cut their throats out there in the back alley and have 'em bleed out. But when you got a chicken over at George Hill's or at Butch Baldwin's Meat Market for Sunday dinner, why you hadda – it was a real delicacy because I don't think chicken tastes like that anymore. You know you don't – it was different, and a lot of times I'd go in the back door of Butch Baldwin's Meat Market there, and he'd be making bologna, and you'd get a little piece of that fresh bologna – it was really delicious, you know, a real treat for me. I was just a little kid running around the back alley in those days. Joe and Pete Spagnuolo played out in that alley, and I played out in the back alley with them, and I used to ride around, around Northville delivering groceries.

Ely's Ice House was there – they made ice. And, of course, everybody – if you had a electric refrigerator in those days, that was really something – most everybody hadda ice box. (Ely's Ice House – what that on the site of where the Sawmill Furniture Store is now, where Ely's Hardware used to be?) No, no – Ely's Ice House was right there next to where the Cloverdale is. That was their business there, and they had the whole ice plant was right in there. And people would drive in behind the stores like you can now, but it was some different because it wasn't paved or anything, and buy their ice right there at the ice plant. And they'd put a fifty pound cake of ice on your back bumper – you had a bumper on your car, and everybody would come and get – in the summertime, there would be quite a line-up there getting ice, and they also

delivered ice around town. If you were one of their regular customers, they'd come to your house and put the ice right in your ice box. And they were going up and down the street delivering ice all the time in Northville, and kids loved to ride around in the back of that truck, you know, when they were delivering ice and get a little piece of, a piece in the summertime. Do all those sort of things.

(What about your father's grocery store as far as refrigeration – did you use ice or did you have a?)

No, well he did when he first started in when he was down there where A&P – I think he had an ice machine in there, but when he went in, when the new building was built there, he had electric refrigeration in that store at that time. And the milk man came every day. You didn't have to – we were way ahead of on the milk situation as to what they are today. The milk that was delivered today was thrown away tomorrow. They didn't sell you milk that had a date on it for – it was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday's milk. And he came in the morning and took all that milk out of that ice box – the milkman – and put all fresh milk in every day. And so you, and of course they delivered milk around town too. They would start around 3 o'clock in the morning (Where – which dairy do you remember?) Well, it was – there was two dairy's right in town at that time. There was Lloyd Morris Dairy which was up on North Center Street right where Phil Jerome has his law office – right, Dave Jerome. Right in the back there, he had his little dairy, and he delivered all his milk from out of there, see. And he bought the milk from farmers around here – he's pick up the milk around different farmers, bring it in there and pasteurize it, and then he – and down the streets. Even way before milk was pasteurized and things like that, you know. And back in the days when they had quarantine – diphtheria epidemic in Northville, and I remember people had their milk bottles piled on their front porches because they didn't – the milkman wouldn't take 'em because he was afraid of germs from bottles because if they ever had any kind of diseases.....

(Yeah, hold that thought in a few minutes 'cause I want to know more about but tell me about the milk delivery first.)

Well, the milk was delivered every morning. They would start out about 3 o'clock in the morning and deliver, and you'd leave your milk bottle on the – your front porch, and so when you got up in the morning, your fresh milk was sitting on your front step.

(Where was the other dairy – you mentioned the one?)

The other dairy was Don Miller, and Don Miller had his dairy on – that's First Street, isn't it Pearl? Yeah, and a – now it's kinds hard for me to tell you exactly where Don's – he was three, about three houses from, three houses south from Cady Street, and it was right in behind his house. He had his dairy – had a building back there where he did his bottling and pasteurization, and all those things. Matter of fact, I used to work for Lloyd for a little while when I was just a young boy and go down there and wash bottles for him down there in his dairy. He had a place there – a revolving brush where he washed bottles, and of course he sent 'em out in all these glass – they were in glass bottles, they weren't in paper cartons. It was all glass bottles. And the dairy business was quite different in those days than what it is today.

(Well, tell me now before we forget the diphtheria...)

Epidemic – I can't remember exactly when that was, but the thing I remember about it was because they used to – you couldn't go in the house. My dad would leave the groceries on the front steps, and they'd bring 'em in, and they'd had – I remember on Dunlap Street there was a lot of places down there where they had it, and they'd leave the milk bottles, and they were all piled up on the front because the dairymen wouldn't take 'em away because.... (Do you remember how old you were then, about what year that was?) Oh, I – it's a little difficult for me to remember exact year, but I'd say maybe '26, '27 somewhere around there.

And we lived right next to the Methodist Church – it's a house there that's been moved, since been moved (The Methodist Church being where the Open Door Church is now – is that the one you're speaking of?) Yes, we rented – my dad rented a house next to the Methodist Church there, and we lived there for quite a while. The Methodist minister had a – the parsonage was on the corner of Main and Center, and the minister's name was William Richards, and his daughter still lives out here off Seven Mile Road. Her name is Chizmar now. And we used to play with Billy Richards, his son, and Fred Casterline lived across the street where the funeral home is now, and we, all three of us, used to play around the Methodist Church. Reverend Richards took care of the clock that was up in the top of the church, and he had to go up there and wind that clock, and it was quite a trip up there because he had to go up these ladders one way and another to get up where the clock is. And we used to go up there with him sometimes when he wound that clock, and it was quite a task to wind it. It was a heavy spring and you had a big handle on it, and you had to wind that clock. (That was the minister's job, huh, they didn't have a custodian, I suppose?) Yeah, in those days, it was kind of ... And then out behind the church at that time, they had some old stalls out there where they used to – I remember there was a man who used to drive his horse down there and park it. I can't remember his name, but he lived out here on West Seven Mile, and his horse was blind, and he'd drive it down to Northville and tie up his horse out there, and he'd give us kids 25 cents to clean up after the horse when he'd gone away.

I remember a business they had on Center Street there – this is long before my dad brought that dime store in there. A man had a clothing store in there, and he gave us bills that we had – he wanted to peddle bills all over town. He was having a big sale, so he got us boys to peddle bills for him, and I think he wanted to be sure we left a bill at every house. He said, "you left those bills at every ...?" "Oh yes, we didn't miss a house." And he said, "well, here's 25 cents, you split that between ya."

Then about 1928, my father bought this property in here, and it was owned by a lady by the name of Dora Norton, Mrs. Norton owned this whole area in here. (It was a farm then, was it?) No, it wasn't a farm; it was just vacant ground. He bought this land in here, and he built his home next door. We moved up here about '28 next door here. And we lived there all the time except that short time we were in Bellevue (Belleville ?) – when we had the store in Bellevue. And we came back here and we lived here, and I lived here all my, the rest of my time in Northville, and went to Northville schools and graduated from Northville High School. (You practically lived most of your life on this same piece of land, haven't you?) That's right. We lived here most of the time. (Tell us about your suppers)

Oh, yeah. I had some friends over here on Main Street by the name of Porters. They had two boys over there, and we were, used to play in around here. And they used to hunt rabbits and pheasants and all that sort of thing, and build shacks. That was one of the big things that kids liked to do in those days. And we went up in what was called Bloom's Woods, and this is this area up on the end of Main Street. Mr. Bloom owned most all of those woods there up to a point where Mr. Whipple owned part too. And Mr. Whipple was an attorney, and he lived on Eight Mile Road over on the other side. He had a big house over there. Now, what's there now? It was up where the Methodist Church – the Methodist Church is there now, but up, when you go up the hill, the Whipple House was a big stately house up on the top. (Was it on the same side as the church ...?) Same side only up the hill more on the way ... (There are homes there now.) And he owned quite a lot of land in there, and back in the woods, he had like a sugar place, you know where they used to make maple sugar. And we went and asked him if we could take that old shack, shanty and make us a clubhouse up there. And he said, "Well, he didn't care as long as we didn't start any fires to anything in the woods." So we went up there and we fixed that old place up pretty good, and put a floor in it, and we had a little sheet-iron stove. And our folks came up there one night, and we had oyster supper up there. (Oyster stew?) My folks and the Porters, and we didn't even know they were coming up there, but they came there one night, and we had oyster stew supper up there. We had a lot of fun up there.

And then there was a sawmill on Linden Street. A man by the name of Sharksberg had this sawmill on Linden Street there, and he used to make crates, you know for potatoes, and he sawed lumber for different people. And they came up there, and they made maple syrup there at that place up there where we were, and they used to use our place in there, and they got kinda slopping with their syrup, and we got a little disgusted. And so we kinda had to abandon this whole thing at that particular time, but that was the end of our little clubhouse up in the woods.

(Now, what do you remember, was it the Casterline and the Spagnuolo boys that were with you on that?) No, that was the Porter boys over here.

But the three of us that played together down there around the church was Fred Casterline, Bill Richards, and myself. And then Sid Moase, his dad ran a meat market, and he used to play with us a little while. Sid lives on Randolph Street yet. He used to live right across from your folks there on Randolph Street. And he's been in Northville a long time. (I'll make a note, I wonder if he is being interviewed?) Well, he's been here as long as we have, maybe even longer. (And he lives on what?) Randolph, almost where Linden comes in to Randolph. His father had that meat market there, ran it for a long time, they lived on Randolph Street there for a while.

(Now you went to?)

Northville High School. Now, when I started going to school, there was a schoolhouse right on the, behind the what was then the high school on the corner - West Street went right straight through at that time to Cady Street, and it was – the old grade school was on the corner of West and Cady, right by the old cemetery there. And in that schoolhouse, I went there, I think, through the third grade, and when they had a fire there one night and that all burned. That school burned down. I can't...I guess we went into the high school; we had some grades in the high school at that time. I think I got to go in the high school, and we had some of our classes there. Because I remember when they were building, we never went back to the other school for anything else. We went to the grade school in that building (high school) and we

also went to high school in that building. After that old building burned down, that was about the fourth grade, we went into that building on the corner of what would've been West and Main, now the big, now the big, what they call the Old Village School now, but that was the old high school. And then during those years, they started to build the building where the Board of Education is now. That was the new grade school they were putting up at that time. And that's where our children went.

(Now, what is your earliest recollection of the, first of all whatever industry was here, and also the businesses, mentioned the butcher shops, you mentioned the dime store which your father ran, what about stores here then, do you remember?)

Yes, I remember we had two shoe stores. One was Stark Shoe Store, down there where Carl Johnson has his real estate office. That was Stark's Shoe Store. And then there was a man by the name of John McCulley that ran a shoe store. His daughter owned a little grocery store up on the corner of Center Street and what they call Baseline. Now that building is still there behind that house. When you go up Center Street, you turn right, and there's a little place back there, it looks like it might have been a garage. I know – is anybody living there now, I don't know. It was called Mrs. Hunt's Grocery Store, and she was there for many many years with her little tiny grocery store in there, just a little – and the kids (what we'd call a convenience store?) Yeah, and it was about the size of a two-car garage, and she sold candy, and the kids loved to go there for candy. And, of course, my dad sold penny candy. People – I remember all the penny candy he used to buy in there, and kids would come in there with a nickel and they could get a pretty good size bag of candy for a nickel in that grocery store. Or if you had a nickel, you could buy a bottle of pop. You could go down to the drug store, of course it was – there was two drug stores. There was Horton's on the corner that was Horton's Drug Store at the time. And then Lou Stewart had that drug store where Northville Drug is now. That was called Stewart's Drug Store. And then Mr. Gungel bought that store. Then after that Mr. Lorenz took the business over.

Then there was the shoe repair shop right where it is. Mr. Rivetcer, he had that. And then next to that, Ian Bogart had a grocery store in there. (What is now Genitti's?) Yes. (That was Bogart?) Eh, huh – E.M.B. he called it, but it was Bogart's grocery store.

And then next to that there was a kind of electric shop in there where they sold radios and televisions. Well, I guess prior to that, Fry's Restaurant was in there. Mr. Fry had a place in there. (Was that the only restaurant in town?) Well, Mrs. Henry had a tea room down on the corner of Hutton and Dunlap. She served tea down there and no lunches. And then there was another store on Main Street called Ware's Restaurant – Mrs. Ware. Now, Don Ware is still around Northville. (Was that his mother?) His mother ran that little place there. Across the street, I almost forgot some of these places, what was the man's name that ran the hotel over there? Right across the street from Mrs. Ware, right almost across from the theater, a place called the Cowl House in there. Now he ran a rooming house, and he served meals. And he had kind of a lobby in there. His father was a Civil War veteran, and he always had his uniform on, and right often he'd be sitting out in front. If you went in there for a – at noon to get something to eat, he'd always say, "Have some of the soup, that's what we make our money on." Eat a lot of the soup. He served good meals in there; you could go in there and get a pretty good meal. (There was three or four restaurants in town then?) Yeah, and then Mr. Fry, he had what they thought – when he went in business - a lot of people ate at Fry's Restaurant. That was a nice place to eat.

And of course there was a hotel on the – that burned down on the corner where – on the corner of Main and Center, called The Ambler House. Years ago that was a hotel there, and they served meals there way back then. (Right up at the corner where they're trying to develop?) Yeah. (OK, 'cause there's that other building that still – the last I heard was being run as a hotel.) Yeah, that's what we used to call the Greek's because – what was his name – John Polls had that for many many years. He had a bar in there and a restaurant on the other side. That was there for a long long time. And then (They moved the bar of course.) Yes, the bar's gone now, but it was there for many many years.

Then Bill Smith sold his Christmas trees on the corner, right by the bar. If you went down to buy a Christmas tree, why Bill would quite often be in the bar. So you would have to go in and get Bill. (What other bars were here, by the way?) Well, when-after-when prohibition was done, was over, Mr. Schafer had an electrical shop right there where they have that photo studio now (Fox) on Center Street, that was Schafer's Electric. Now after, when they brought liquor back and Mr. Schafer turned that into a bar and that was called Schafer's Bar. And he had pretty good place there, pretty good as bars go in those days. It was pretty well maintained.

And then there was, Mr. Polls had that place over there, and the one down on Center Street where, or on Main Street where it's called the Pub now. That was, I don't know whether you were here at that time when that was an old wooden building. (Little Joe's?) Yeah, they called it The Bucket O' Blood at one time down there.

Norton's had a beer garden where the VFW Hall is now. That was Norton's Beer Garden – the VFW Hall. (Further up on Main, you mean?) Right around the corner where the VFW is now.

And then down below the hill, when you go, where that car wash place is in there, there was a beer garden down there opened up. Of course all they sold was beer in those days. When they first started, they didn't have a lot of – they didn't sell a lot of hard liquor at that time. They didn't get going on that right away. And then Charles Altman opened a liquor store just below my father there. It's right next to – you know where that lady had that antique store and West End Lamps – yeah, Ely's Coal Office used to be in there. At that time Ely moved down to

On the corner of, there was C.F. Smith's Grocery Store, C. F. Smith had a grocery store on the corner of Main and Center Streets in the old Opera House, and they were there for quite a lot of years. (Now, where was the old Opera House in relation to what stands on the four corners now?) Well, the Sparr's Florist Shop there on the corner of Center and Dunlap. They tore the old Opera House down. Henry Ford wanted to buy that Opera House at one time and put it down in Greenfield Village because it was kind of neat looking building he thought. But some reason or other – I don't know what owned it at the time or anything about it, but the deal wasn't completed.

(In your memory, what was the old Opera House used for before it was turned in to a ??)

Well, the upstairs was completely abandoned. You could... (There were no performances there?) No, no – it wasn't structurally safe to hold that many people. But if you ever got up there, it was interesting to go there and see the old stage, and I think in Jack Hoffman's book, I think there's some pictures in his book of the old Opera House upstairs.

And then after C.F. Smith moved out of the downstairs there, Sam Pickard put a meat market in there. Now, Sam Pickard was something else. He was really a character, didn't have a telephone. Come up to my ...he'd always come up to my dad's store to use the telephone, to call his meat order in over in South Lyons. He said – we didn't have dials then 'cause you had to talk to the operator. He says "give me South Lyons." He says "Sam Pickard talking. Merle, send me over two halves of heifers." (Two halves of heifers?) Two halves of heifers – he was an Englishman and he didn't pronounce his h's. "Send me two 'alves of 'eifers" is what he'd say. But old Sam was kinda fat, and his apron hung down; and they did a tremendous business in there. He was not a real skilled meat cutter, but boy he sold the meat I'm telling you. (Now, were the stockyards in South Lyon, then, that are why he was ordering from...?) I don't know, somebody over there sold and he'd buy from anybody. He didn't care who he got it from. He'd buy from anybody. And when he first opened up, I thought it was kinda unique, he had a whole pig in each window there and in winter time he didn't have any heat on in the place, you know. They'd all be bundled up in there, didn't need refrigeration 'cause he refrigerated the place with the elements. You went in there to buy anything, you'd stand there and shiver, while they were back there cutting the meat and wrapping it up. And he did that all day long. Old Sam was something else.

John Sipio was a colored man that lived on, just north of Plymouth Road, where the Moose Lodge is now in the A & W. And that's where John lived and he had an old horse and wagon, and he'd come into Northville and he'd clean up out in the alley. Everybody threw everything in the alleys in those days. I mean you burned all your cartons out there. People had big fires out there burning up cartons and things and stuff they didn't want. And the garbage cans were all behind the grocery stores. And John Sipio would come and clean up all that stuff where they burned at and haul it away with his horse. And he lived down there in that kind of an old run-down house, and the barn was getting so bad down there that it just about was laying on the horse's back, I guess. I think the Rotary Club put up the barn down there.

(Now, did he live there alone, did he have a family, or what?)

No, I don't think he had any... (Pearl Stephens: I think he had a wife, but I don't know if she died, but I think it was a long time ago. He was a real character).

Then there was Lyke's Hardware Store on Main Street there where – that's where what's-his-name has his restaurant next to the – MacKinnon has his restaurant. (That was a hardware store?) Yes, Lyke's Hardware Store – he had a plumbing shop upstairs. Alec Lyke's Plumbing Shop up there.

Walter Ware had a hardware store on the corner where The Record is or where the Credit Union is on the corner there for quite a while. And then Walter Ware went down and build the building where Black's has the shoe store (and IV Season) and IV Seasons – well, just beyond Four Seasons. If you look .. (You mean Del's or was it Black's?) Del's, Del Black. And that was Walter Ware's Hardware Store. He built that building in there, and up at the top, you can see "Ware and 1929". It's still visible up there. (It seems to me that came up during our briefing on this recording, they mentioned that. I think the woman that's going to be doing Mrs. Ware.)

Now, there's two Ware boys that live in Northville, Irv and Herbert. (Let's back up just a moment, you mentioned something about Del Black. Is that the family that owns Black's Hardware?) They're related. (I ask you 'cause it's known as Del's Shoes, now, but it was Black's?) His name's Black, Delbert Black. And then right in there, they used to have a hamburger stand in there too, before they put that new

building in there where the Four Seasons is. A man by the name of Peterson, a little man. This is before MacDonald's got going. And then a couple of fellows went over to Plymouth and opened a hamburger stand over there. And this man Peterson opened this hamburger stand there, and did a terrific business there with this, hamburgers were not ... I don't know how he made 'em, but they weren't all stuck together. (Pearl S.: It wasn't a patty, it was...) (Like a Sloppy Joe?) It was a different kind of a hamburger really. Yeah, and he was there for quite a long while in that hamburger business.

(So, we've located the hardware stores, most of the restaurants, and the dime store, and the drug stores, that's about all?)

Of course, the Lapham's Store was called Ponsford's (Ponsford's?) Uh huh, that was Mr. Lapham's grandfather. A man by the name of Ponsford owned that store. (Was it a men's store then?) No not particularly, they sold yard goods and I guess they sold some ready-to-wear things.

And, of course, Frydl's has been here forever. One of the oldest businesses in Northville is Frydl's. (I was going to ask that.) Uh, huh. (When you were growing up, it was there?) Yeah, uh-huh. Of course, Schraeder's was one of the older businesses in Northville too.

(Braders?)

Brader's, when my dad came to Northville, had their store. He was also in the Opera House on the other side. At that time we came to Northville, he was there on Center Street, Sammy Brader. And they were a very nice family, and they ran a – he ran a good business, and that business really survived a long while in this town. He moved down on Main Street where, where they have that clothing store there, Blacks have the clothing store, and they bought it from that other man that had that store; and he bought it from 'em. It was Braders for a long long time. (I recall when it's Braders, isn't it still Braders, or not?) No, they changed it; they call it Del's now. (Pearl S.: Harry Hemelstein bought it from Brader. He sold it to a guy named Gettelman, I think.) Yes.

Oh, when my father was in business, of course the Post Office was right across the street from his store in that building where Schraeder's was there. Schraeders rented them that building, and the Post Office was there for years and years in that building before they went down on – built that building on Wing Street down there. Post Office was there for a long time and then Schraeder's Funeral Parlor was right next door. (Schraeder's was a funeral parlor before it was a furniture store?) Both, they had both. (Oh did they?) Yeah, at that time when they were in there. (Well, you had Casterline's and Schraeder's?) Not then, it was Schraeder's, and Ray Casterline worked for Schraeder's at that time. (Oh I see.) Yeah, and the reason I know is because Fred Casterline and I were the best of buddies and we used to play around the Schraeder store and ride around in their truck. His father was in charge of the funeral business there for many years. He ran the funeral chapel there before he opened his own business on Center Street or on Dunlap Street. (You only had the one funeral home then?) Just one – they called it a funeral chapel, they didn't call it a home at that time. And they had the funerals there on Center Street. When they had a funeral, they just put up "no parking" signs and they parked all down Center Street there. If they had a big one, why they'd double park 'em right down Center Street while the service was going on.

(I want you to tell me more about your own career, but I don't want to interrupt it. Let's talk about anything else you can remember about your early childhood and early Northville because I understand that you had a ...)

Well, of course, I remember when they had the band thing in the middle of Main and Center Street down there. And they had band concerts down there on Saturday nights. Saturday night was a big night and the band played down there every Saturday night, and everybody came to Northville and they went to the movies, a big night at the movies. And the band played down on the corner. Spagnuolos had their popcorn, selling popcorn on the sidewalk, and Joe and Pete were selling the News, Times and Free Press papers down there. They really hollered, I'll tell you. It was quite a town in those days.

Blake's Jewelry – when my dad went in there in the Filkin Building, Mr. Blakes went in there with his Jewelry Store. He was there for years and years, and his daughter lives over on Main Street here. Her name is Mrs. Blasco. We knew the Blakes very well – quite friendly with the Blake family, back and forth.

There was quite a lot of activity along Center Street in those days. Next door where Cloverdale was, Sally Bell Bakery was in there. A man by the name of Herr ran that Bakery shop and they had a lovely bakery in there. I wish we had, it was just a marvelous bakery in there. They made salt-rising bread, and when he made the salt-rising bread you'd smell it all over town. It was something else. You'd go in there and it would make you hungry. I loved to go in there and get a lunch roll, a big long lunch roll, frosting on the top.

When I came home from school, of course I'd start eating at the front end of the store and go to the back, candy and cookies. And then by the time I got home, my mother had dinner at 6 o'clock and I wasn't hungry because I was eating at the store, munching all the time.

(Now, what did your own family consist of, Carl, I mean brother and sisters?)

I had no brothers or sisters. I was an only child.

(And your relatives, of course, were not from here. You were born up north, you told me.)

Yes. My grandfather was a Methodist minister and lived in Horton Bay in the summertime and in Florida in the wintertime. He was retired by that time and he went back and forth many times. Twenty-five winters, I think, he spent in Florida. (That was unusual in those days.) He lived a long life. Yeah, and he had a 1926 Dodge he drove back and forth to Florida, and in those days, that was a rough trip. You know, it took him about... they would drive a couple of hundred miles a day. They'd stay overnight and keep on going; it was quite a trip down through there. And they came every Fall and Spring, stopped here and visited here on their way to Northern Michigan, we always enjoyed that. I enjoyed when they were here. And then we - my mother and I would go on the train up to Charlevoix, and he'd pick us up in Charlevoix and we would spend some time at Horton Bay. That's our place yet, up there; we still go there. And we now have five generations there. (Is that right? Isn't Horton Bay where Hemmingway stayed?) Yes, it's a very notorious place. (Did you know any of the Hemmingway family?) No, I didn't. You see, when Ernest Hemmingway came to Horton Bay store, I was two or three years old; and we lived just a mile down the road from that store. My grandfather was there in Horton Bay at the time, and he

was married in Horton Bay he (Ernest Hemmingway) was married in Horton Bay. It's quite a possibility that my grandfather might have officiated at this fir wedding there. He'd been a minister in Horton Bay.

(A moment ago you mentioned trains, what do you remember about the interurban that came out this way?)

Well, yeah, I remember it came up there right in the center of town, and you could get the streetcar there, and you could go to Farmington or to Wayne and clear into Detroit on the interurban streetcar. I remember going on it a few times, but I didn't take too many trips on it. I remember they had to turn around down by Griswold and Main, down there. They had a place they turned around and backed the streetcar up to Main and Center because there was no place to turn around up here so they'd be going the other way. Do you remember riding on the interurban? (Pearl S.: No). People that worked at Ford's used to ride on it, and they'd come in here and work at the Ford plant, you know in those days.

In the early days of Ford's before we let anybody smoke in the plants, you know, Mr. Ford did not allow smoking anywhere on the Ford property, whatsoever. And so if you went by Ford's about 7:30 at night, you'd see all the men sitting out on the curb there having a smoke because he wouldn't let them smoke in the plant or even on the property, so you had to go out in the street to smoke.

(I understand you worked for Ford's).

I worked there for thirty years. (Thirty years, at the one valve plant?) The valve plant in Northville. (Tell me about that.) Well, it was a fun place to work in those days, really, because when I went there the people that worked there had been there a long while and knew all the things that happened along the way. It was almost an entertainment to go to work. They had so many characters down there in those days. I don't think it was that way when it got to the end on our journey there.

(What did you do there?)

Well, I was a machine operator, and I was in the union. I was president of the union for quite a while. I'm still active; we have a retired chapter here in Northville and I'm the chairman of the retired chapter of people that worked in the Northville plant. (Is that right?) We meet once a month during the winter months here in Legion Hall. (Were you instrumental in keeping it here as long as it's been here, you think?) Oh, I think I was, yes, I think I contributed quite a bit to that. ('Cause it seems to me they wanted to close it more than once.) Oh yes, they talked about it, that was quite a common thing to hear that they were going to close the plant. But the plant always made money out here. It was a productive plant and it was always a money making thing, it made a profit all the time down here. And we were in competition with other places that made valves, but we made a tremendous amount of them, made the biggest percentage of all the valves for Ford products down here at this plant. And there for many years did a lot of business down here.

(How many employees when it was at its peak, do you remember?)

When I was there, when I went to work for Ford's, they had over a thousand, a thousand employees. They were building – they were making – had a job in the basement – they made two-piece bushings down there at that time besides the valves. And then when they went to – they did away with that

bushing job down there, and we had – we lost quite a lot of business then. And then we went to making totally valves and went down to about 300 then.

(Now, I've been curious a long time about the water wheel, which I know is decorative more than anything, but what's the history of that?)

Well, it was hooked up to a - when the plant was first built there, it was made to generate electricity. You know, they had a generator on it, and it powered the generator. And then they finally sold that generator to the Mexican government, and they had to take part of the front of the building out when they took that out of there, and it was shipped down to Mexico – that generator. (Detroit sold their streetcars to Mexico, and Ford Motor sold their generator.) Uh, huh, as a matter of fact, Mr. Beal, who was the chief engineer down there, went down to Mexico to set that generator up and get it going. He lives in Northville on South Center Street. (Was the waterwheel where it is now?) Yeah... (I mean was it visible over on Main Street?) Yeah, it was right where it is now – same place.)

(What other industry was here then that?)

In the beginning you mean? (Yes) We had a scale factory one time over here – made Stinson Scales here. (Where was that located?) That was over there on Cady Street in there. And there was a foundry in there – they made furnaces – the Bell Foundry. They made furnaces here; boy they made lots of furnaces. (Pearl – I thought they made manhole covers...) I don't think they made any manhole covers then.

They made airplanes here – Stinson Aircraft was in here. (Really, the complete plane?) Yes. (Where was that?) Right in there where, right down from the car wash there. (Pearl – almost across from Ford factory.) Yeah, made Stinson Aircraft was here for many years. Eddie Stinson lived here at that time in Northville. (Was that during World War II or ?) No, this was prior to the War. Stinson Aircraft moved to Wayne, and they were operating, making airplanes during World War II.

Marvin Multop, a man who lives here in Northville, was – went to Stinson Aircraft and worked over there for a while. He worked for Stinson Aircraft when it was here in Northville. Then he worked for Ford's for many years. Then he went back to Stinson's. Marvin lives down here in Northville, yeah on Wing Court. M.J. Multop, Marvin Multop. You might like to write his name down. He's getting on in years now, 82 years old, and he's quite crippled. (Will he remember?) Oh yes, I think he would. Marv is a very nice man and he – (Where does he live?) On Wing Court, the first house, when you drive in the first house on the right. (We have to coordinate a lot of this with the director because they're several interviewers doing these things.) If you called Marv, Marvin knows a lot about old Northville too. He was here for a long time. (Pearl – well, his wife worked for your dad.) Yeah, she worked for my dad; Mrs. Multop worked for my dad. She worked for my mother too. Marvin knows a lot about old Northville and about all those things; he worked for Stinson's.

That was something else. They used to take airplanes right up Main Street, you know. And they had an airport out there on the corner of Six Mile and Beck Road, out in that area out there. I guess they play ball out there now, out in that area where they had the airport. In fact, Amelia Earhart came here one time to fly, fly one of their planes. They made one the called 'The Detrouter'. (That's interesting. About when would that have been?) In the 20's. I remember when they used to take 'em right – (They taxied them?)

No they took them out with a truck without the wings on. They'd take them out right out Main Street and right out there, fly them out there.

(Pearl- Joe Louis trained out there too.) Yeah, you know when Joe Louis was training for Bob Pastor fight down at the Northville track down here. (Well, tell me about that?) Well, he had his training camp down here at the fairgrounds where Northville Downs is now. We'd go down there and watch him, watch him train and he had all these fighters down there. My mother went down there and seen him, I didn't go, isn't that funny? She went down there and seen him train and she got an autographed picture of Joe Louis. I've got that yet, and it was signed by Roscoe Toll, he was one of the sparring partners. James Braddock, who was once champion of the world. (Yes, he fought him.) Yes he signed the picture, too. He was down there, isn't that funny, she got all them people to sign that thing. That's quite a thing, and those sparring partners, about noon time – (That might be an interesting picture to get a copy of.) About noon time, all those people would come up to that Cloverdale, right next to my dad's store, all them went in there and they sold them big ice cream cones, and them sparring partners would come there eating those great big ice cream cones. Every day at noon, they'd be over eating. Pearl's dad loaned Joe Louis a saddle when he was out, and he lived out on Newburgh, Newburgh and (Pearl – The part of Newburgh they call Halstead.) OK, well it was just left (North of Eight Mile). The place is still down there where he lived.

Pearl – For some reason or other, I don't know whether they were going to have a parade or what the deal, he wanted a fancy saddle. And we used all English saddles on the farm, but my dad always had a few western, and he had this one that was very beautiful. Somebody told him about it and they said they wanted to borrow that saddle for whatever this occasion was for Joe Louis and I know my dad loaned it to them.

I never saw Joe Louis but my mother went down there. I saw all them sparring partners, but he'd down there and training for that fight – Bob Pasteur – and she went down there and saw him. I think he charged a couple of dollars or something to go in, and watch him train. A lot of people came here and watched him, it was kinda interesting. Oh, Northville had a lot of things happen. (It sounds that way, certainly sounds that way.) Yeah, we didn't think much about it then, but it was quite a thing really.

(To go back to the band – did you have street dances, or - ?)

Yeah, they did – they had a lot of street dances in Northville. They did – they had a lot of regular street dances here. At night – quite a few. They used to block off Center Street and have dances out there, put corn meal on the cement. I'd forgotten about that.

Pearl spoke about the raffles for the cars at the Fair. One year they gave away three cars, gave a Ford, a Plymouth and a Chevrolet. And I know one of the men down at the plant won a Ford, Russell...one of the Fords down there.

And you spoke about the Wares. Herbert Ware was the one that got married down by the Fair. I remember his mother came in my dad's store and saying, Herb and I can't remember the girl's name, but her name's Lemon; "They're going to be married down at the Fair. They might as well get married down there they're going to get married anyways." And they gave them a lot of things, you see, they gave them gifts from the stores like (The Fair, the people ...?) Yeah, the Fair Association arranged to get all these

things for if they'd get married down there, on the platform down there. So Herb Ware and this Lemon girl got married down there. But every time you bought anything in the store, they gave you tickets on the cars, you know. That is every time you made a purchase they'd give you a ticket. My dad ran a credit business, and people that bought all their groceries there, well, boy you ought a see the tickets they got. They had tickets up their ears.

(Did he have problems running credit? Did he have bad debts or were people around Northville fairly honest?)

Well, I think by-in-large they were pretty good paying, you know. People that a – just as good as cash. In those days, they day they were to pay their bills, they came in. We had a few we had to go after once in a while, but I think most people were pretty honest. He didn't have too many difficult times with people not paying, really. Those days, he had a \$60, he'd run a grocery bill for a month, and it would run about \$60. (Would that be a family?) That's a big family, I'm thinking of a big family. (They had to pay their own meat bill, didn't they?) The meat, that didn't include the meat. But \$60 was big, that was a really good customer that had a \$60, like Duggets (?) Claude Harper. They were some of his best customers, and they would run, they would go \$60 or \$70 a month. Well, a loaf of bread was a dime and a quarter of milk was a dime. Talk about meat, you went in and you could buy a pound of round steak at George Hill's Meat Market for 30 cents a pound. Then if you wanted porterhouse, why it wasn't too much more, you know. (No wonder you bemoan the changes, I do too.) Yeah, you know it sounds foolish, but that's the truth.

I mean things were...but the wages were cheap. (Pearl- \$1.10 a ...) Lord, when I went to Ford's they started you at 85 cents an hour. That was your starting pay at Ford Motor. That was 19__ (Did you start there right out of high school?) Right out of the service I went there, 1945 I went there. They started you at 85 cents an hour those days. When you got to \$1.10, I thought I was a millionaire then. That was real money, \$1.10 an hour. You were getting up there then. Isn't that something? Well, you could buy a ... Pearl and I bought a new Ford right after we were first married. You couldn't get one for love nor money. And you just about had to beat'em on the head to get the car, and she did, I guess. And we finally got that new Ford. It didn't have anything on it but a heater. It was \$1,400. A new Ford, a brand-new car. (What year would that have been?) That was a '47 Ford. We'll, I suppose, back in Model-T days, when you bought Model-T's why they were about three or four hundred dollars. I remember my dad bought a new car in 1926, it was a Chevrolet Roadster, and that was a pretty sporty car. That was the only care we had. He used it to deliver groceries with around Northville for a long time. (Did you - you drove it?) Yeah, I drove that car. That was the first car I ever drove.

(OK – thank you very very much Mr. Stephens.)