

Oral History of Bruce Turnbull – October 6, 1988

Interviewed by Diane Rockall

Bruce: My father was born in Delhi, Ontario and went to Pontiac, Michigan to work. My mother was born in Tilburry, Ontario and she went to Pontiac to live with her father and mother. They both went to the Baptist church in Pontiac and they met there in church and started dating and eventually married. They moved to Keego Harbor and had a daughter named Marian, which is my sister. In 1918, my father was doing a wiring job in Northville and he came over by streetcar from Pontiac, and he liked the village of Northville very well. He went back to Pontiac and asked his boss if he could move to Northville permanently. He found a store here in Northville on Main St. that he liked and so he came back and purchased the store and went in business, himself in 1919.

DR: How long after your family moved to Northville were you born?

Bruce: My father had an electrical store on E. Main Str. It's right where the gas station is at the present time. A year later, I was born on Main St., up over the electrical store. In those days, you had your business downstairs and you had your quarters upstairs for living. In 1919, the little stork came along and dropped me off in Northville on Main St. and we have been living here ever since.

DR: The gas station that you are referring to that's there now is the one that's between Wing and Center?

Bruce: The gas station is right across from MAGS. Between MAGS and the parking lot. It's a Pure gas station, the first block off of Center St.

DR: What are the first things you can remember growing up in Northville?

Bruce: Probably the first thing I can remember is the pond. We lived at 222 Fairbrook and the house is still there. Probably the first thing I remember is a beautiful lake or pond right across the street from the house. I remember going down there to the pond and my father taking a green canoe and taking us for paddles in the canoe. There used to be what was called a lover's lane. All the lovers in Northville used to walk down on the dike of the pond and out to where the dam was and set there and looked at the water. I think that's the first thing I remember.

The second thing I would remember would be going to kindergarten in Northville Grade School. My teacher was Mrs. Taylor. Like all the other little boys that age, the first thing you were apt to (do was) fall in love with your kindergarten teacher. I was always a great one to have an imagination. I came up to school one day and I told Mrs. Taylor that a bear followed me to school right up Wing St. and right up Cady St. and the bear was right behind a tree right now, a big old black bear. I was petrified and she kept saying, "Well, Bruce, no way is there any bears around Northville. There have been in the past, but not now." I said, "Yes, Mrs. Taylor, there is a bear out there and he's waiting for me when I go home. I don't know if I want to go home!" Finally she went out with me and I showed her the tree where the bear was and I said, "Well, I guess the bear had run away."

The next thing I remember would be my first grade teacher, Mrs. Fritz. She had a Raggedy-Ann doll. She would throw the little doll in the air and all the little children would stand around and those who could catch the doll could sit with the doll all day. There was quite a fight to see who could sit with the doll.

Silly thing to do, but she would get the children's attention. I would imagine those are the first three things I can remember as a little boy in Northville.

DR: When you were canoeing on the pond, how old were you?

Bruce: We lived in the store for a couple of years and then from Main Street we moved over to 1st Street. There was a brand new home being built on First Street by a man named Mr. Johnson. We moved from Main Street to the First Street when I was approximately two years old. At four years of age, we moved to 222 Fairbrook and the man who had the place before we brought it, used to grow ginseng. Ginseng has to be grown in the shade. Our whole back yard was all shaded and we had about a half an acre of land there. The whole lot was covered with these boards like they would use for lathing plaster. Three-quarters of an acre of the back yard was covered with these little lattices, and they were built up about six feet off the ground. The man was growing Ginseng there. When we took over the land, there was no more Ginseng to grow, so my father piled these boards up and we would walk from one end of the lot to the other, about six feet high on these boards.

My mother stayed there right up until I was in high school and through college and I went into the service. When I got out of the service, my mother still lived there 'til about 1973. Then she sold the home. I lived there until I got married and moved away.

DR: The other thing you mentioned was about the dam. Where exactly would that dam have been located?

Bruce: When you come down Hines Parkway Drive from Asher's Gas Station, you go east toward Sheldon Road. Half way between Sheldon and Asher's Gas Station, you'll see a big hump of dirt on either side of Seven Mile Road. That is where the dike was. The dike was right across the road, there. Of course when they put the road in, they bulldozed it out. The dam was right by the creek going up to the cemetery. The water would back up so much you could paddle a canoe all the way up to the Fish Hatchery, which now we know is where the tennis courts are, up on Seven Mile Road. There's a high bridge going up into Rural Hill Cemetery. The reason for the high bridge was that (the water) was within about six feet of the top of that bridge. That's the reason the bridge was so high there. Ordinarily they wouldn't put a bridge that high. The dike is still there after you cross over the bridge. You can still see the dike up into the cemetery. They used to call it Balboa Lake. In the early days, during a flood, the dam was washed away. Henry Ford, as a gift for Northville came back and built a new dam across the creek. It took all summer long for his men to build a new dam there. The first week after they were completed and they moved away, we heard a tremendous explosion one night. What some of the workmen had done (was) they had come back with dynamite and tossed the dynamite into the water. The fish came up by the bushel-baskets full. (They) went out there in canoes and gathered in all the fish which wasn't too bad, but it wasn't the right thing to do. The biggest problem was (that) they made a little crack in the new dam. Anybody knows that anytime you get a dam, even though it's just a little sliver, it's just a matter of time before that dam will go out again. In about

three years, the dam opened up to about eighteen inches wide and out went the water and there's never been a pond there since.

DR: When the dam went, the pond disappeared altogether?

Bruce: Well, when you have a crack in a dam, the water just runs right out like a flood.

DR: So it ran down the river?

Bruce: Right down the river and it also swept a few houses away, down farther by the race tracks.

DR: Before the original dam was built, that was water?

Bruce: (When) they built the pond there, originally, (it) was back in the days of Mr. Ambler. In fact they called it "Ambler's Pond" and before there was Fairbrook Street, it was called another name. I think it was called "Pond" or it might have been called "Ambler Avenue". Then at that time, also, there was a lot of things going on right around the pond. That was where our first brick factory was right at the end of the pond. Also, it was Mr. Rodgers' First Condensed Milk Factory on the corner of Rodgers Street and Fairbrook (Street). That's why they call it Rodgers Street, on account of Rodgers' first factory when he had condensed milk.

DR: The Ambler Mill was also located in that same general area?

Bruce: Yes. As I understand it, he was the one who built the pond, originally, to turn his mill to do his grinding of corn and grist and so forth.

DR: So as far as you understand, prior to his time, that was ground then?

Bruce: I would say, prior to his time, it was just part of the Rouge River. When we were about fourteen years of age, a friend of mine named John Springer, who has now passed away, (we) thought, "well we don't have a pond here anymore to swim in, so we'll make our own pond. We worked for about a month and got sandbags and dammed up the creek. We did a pretty good job, because we had about eight to ten or twelve feet of water there right in the bend of the river. We had our own private pond. Pretty soon, some of the other boys in the neighborhood came down and started using our swimming pool, which was alright with us, but we had another kind of fringe benefit that we didn't realize, because girls started coming down to swim in our pond, also. It was about forty feet across and about twelve feet deep. It was a nice place to swim. One of the prettiest little girls came down the street in a Japanese bathrobe with her girlfriend. Her girlfriend was named Pearl Willis. Her name now is Pearl Willis Parmenter. These two girls came down and started swimming in our private pool. I thought this one girl was really cute, especially with a pretty little bathrobe. Her name was Rita Heatley and at the present time, she's Rita Turnbull, my wife.

DR: Let's talk some more about your growing-up years and the kind of things you remember from school. You mentioned your kindergarten teacher and your first grade teacher. Which school was that?

Bruce: The school was right off Cady Street and it was facing east. The grade school was facing east and the high school (was) where it is at the present time, what they call the “old high school”. The high school is still there but the grade school has burned down.

DR: The building that was the high school that you’re talking about is no longer used for the high school.

Bruce: That’s right. It’s used for children that (are) having problems and it’s run by Garden City school system. As I remember, that school was built for \$75,000. You can’t even build a home now for \$75,000. That was a very well-built school and at one time, they were going to bulldoze it down. I’m glad they didn’t because it’s well built and it’s well worth preserving.

DR: Did you attend this school for high school?

Bruce: Yes, Rita and I both went to high school in what (is) the old high school, facing Main St.

DR: Do you remember the fire that destroyed the grade school?

Bruce: I remember the fire in 1936 when our grade school burned down. I went up to that fire, put my boots on and my raincoat on and it was in the middle of the night, like three or four o’clock in the morning. Being only a block away from the school, I went up there with tears in my eyes and watched our beautiful school burn. The High School fire was many years before that. It seems like, to me, it was in the early 20’s when the original High School burned which was on the corner of Wing Street.

DR: So by the time you remember the building that’s here now, it was already built?

Bruce: Right. When the school burned down, there was a big problem because here was a whole school (of) children and no place for them to go. A lot of the people opened up their homes. The first grade would be in one home. The second grade would be in another home. Also, they built a portable quonset hut out in the playground and they used that also for many years for school and then later on it was a Boy Scout Hall.

A fellow named Mr. Owen, who had a clothing store in Northville, was the Boy Scout leader at that time. Eventually, that building was turned over to the Boy Scouts and then later on the Scouts got their own building, which is down where the corner bank is, on Dunlap Street. That’s where the Boy Scout hall was. Then they tore that building down. Later on, the Boy Scout Hall was moved over on Cady Street, next to the Post Office. That building was supposed to be built with the people’s money of Northville for a Boy Scout Hall. For the present time, the city of Northville (is) renting it out to other companies. But that building, as far as I know, is owned by the people of Northville for they donated the money for it.

DR: Do you have any other childhood memories (of) things that happened when you were growing up?

Bruce: Yes, one real vivid one. When I was in the sixth grade, I had a teacher, Ida B. Cooke. I thought she was a very mean lady. Because she had a habit of making her kids study. I didn’t like to study. I’d rather play sports. She and I didn’t get along very well. In fact, she didn’t like me and I didn’t like her, either. Anyhow, I thought, “Well, I can stand her for about a year” and

she probably felt, “Well, I can stand this fellow for sixth grade but boy, will I be glad to get rid of him.” We finally got out of the sixth grade and went into the seventh grade and lo and behold, she was promoted to (be) the principal of the seventh and eighth grade. Well, about this time, I figured that I couldn’t conquer her and she couldn’t conquer me, so we gotta compromise. We became the best of friends. As far as I know, she was the finest teacher that Northville ever had. In fact, later on, they named a school after her. The Ida B. Cooke School is up on that Taft Road. It is now used for the senior citizens. Of course they still have a lot of things going on there. Temporarily, the school is in mothballs, so as Northville increases in size, they’ll start using it for a school again.

DR: You mentioned that when you first met Ida Cooke, you had problems because you enjoyed sports. What kind of sports?

Bruce: In Northville, in the early days, they had baseball, basketball, and football for the boys. The girls had girls’ basketball and girls’ softball. We had no swimming pool, so there was no swimming. Northville did have a golf team, too.

Northville always had excellent sports teams and the biggest competition was Plymouth. I would say, right now, the biggest competition for Northville is both Plymouth and Novi. In the early days, there was no high school in Novi so all the students in Novi graduated out of grade school and they all came to Northville. (This) was real good for Northville because I would say that about ten to fifteen, maybe twenty percent of the teams were made up from the athletes from Novi.

DR: Were you on several of the teams?

Bruce: I played baseball, basketball, football, and golf. I was on the golf team. In fact, I even ran on the track team. Basketball was my best sport. We won (the) league championship when I was a junior, (and were) league champions as a senior. We won the district and were runners up in the regional both years.

In the early days there were no buses in Northville. Everybody would walk to school. When there was a basketball game, the coat would line up about three drivers who were very good drivers. The team would meet up at the school and the team would get in those two or three cars. Especially for a tournament game, we would go to Eastern Michigan, over in Ypsilanti. All the parents would line their cars up behind the team and they would be lined up for about a mile. It was like a snake. If we won, everyone would blow their horns coming home. If we lost, why of course, it was kinda quiet.

There was a lot of interest in sports. Of course they were in the days before television so sports were the big thing in Northville.

When we got into high school, Ida B. Cooke, again was the class sponsor of our senior class. The biggest thing in those days, in Northville for a boy or girl, was the Northville-Wayne County Fair. The Wayne County Fair was down where the Northville Downs Race Tracks are at the present time. I think practically everybody in Northville, especially the youth of Northville, kept looking forward to the five days, usually in September or early October which was when the Northville Fair was going to be. This was a real big fair. The only one larger, in this whole area, was the State Fair. They would take over the whole area and all of us who lived in Northville would be there the day before the Fair started when they brought all the animals in; pigs,

chickens, horses, ducks, cows and the sheep. We would go to the Northville-Wayne County Fair for five days, day and night from eight o'clock in the morning 'til about ten or eleven o'clock at night when they had fireworks every night. When the five days were over, we would go down on a Sunday and watch them load up all the horses. I think everybody in Northville who was my age or older, why they certainly remember the Northville-Wayne County Fair. That was a big thing of Northville.

DR: I know that the Fair was during the thirties, but do you remember approximately when they started?

Bruce: It really started in the early '20s. I would say around 1925 was when they started the Wayne County Fair. I may be wrong on that date, but that's pretty close to it. It continued on up into the '30s. In 1942, when World War II had started, there was no Fair at that time, as I remember because everything was for the war effort. Right after the War, in 1945, Northville Downs took over with their first mutual race track in the state of Michigan.

I have another little thing about the Fair. This is during the Depression days. Nobody had any money and they were trying to get more and more people to come to the Fair. This one year they advertised in the Northville Record that anybody who might get married at the Fair, they would give the couple a brand-new Ford automobile. This brand-new Ford automobile would be approximately worth about \$700. Well, \$700 back in the '30s was an awful lot of money. Consequently, they ran an ad in the paper and there were many young couples who decided they wanted to get married during the Fair. They selected a couple named Don Starr and his wife. Don was a rather short man and his wife was a little bit taller than he by about four, five or six inches. They got married at night in front of the grandstand and that really brought in hundreds and thousands of people which were rather unusual. They always had a real nice Vaudeville show along with the Fair. The night of the wedding, they played the Wedding March and Don Starr and his new wife-to-be came up on the platform. All of the chorus girls are in beautiful gowns. They had a big pink hat on top and they had pink feathers and they stood like a big wall around the couple. The minister came by and pronounced them "man and wife" and they had their Ford automobile. It was a nice black one. Of course all cars were black. The cars weren't in colors like they are now. After they got married, they got in their new Ford automobile and drove away. Their honeymoon lodge was the log cabin on River Street. The log cabin is still there and as far as I know it's the only log cabin building in Northville. At the present time, it's owned by Northville Downs. If you go down on River Street, you'll still see the log cabin.

DR: OK. Now we're going to talk a little bit what you remember of the town.

Bruce: Probably my first recollection of Northville was during the Depression. At Christmas-time, everybody was so poor, (that) to help out, the Exchange Club of Northville, which now is defunct, went out and bought goodies for the children of Northville during the Depression. They would make a little bag and in that bag there would be an apple and some nuts and a few pieces of candy. About a week before Christmas, down on the four corners of Northville, the kids would line up for about a block long, from the corner of Sheldon and Main, almost up to City Hall. They would be standing in line, sometimes almost freezing, waiting for a bag of candy. Then Santa Claus would come in jingling his bells and the children would come up, one at a

time, and get their free bag of candy. Santa Claus would come right on the corner of Sheldon and Main Street and they would block off the roads and he would give out candy right there.

Also Northville had a lot of dances. They would close off North Center Street, between Main Street and Dunlap Street and put a band shell up there. The bands would come in there and everybody would dance there. I would say three or four times in the summer they would have a dance. That used to bring people in by the thousands. They also had giveaways. Every time you would go into a store and buy something, they would give you a ticket. The night of the drawing when they had the big dance, everyone would go store-to-store and all the stores had their free gift in their window. I remember one night I went down there and I won myself a little rocking chair.

The businessmen also took over the Northville Theater and gave free movies. If you wanted to go to a movie and go to a store and buy something, they would give you a ticket to go to the movies because they tried to keep the movie theater open at that time.

Another thing about the Depression, there was no money around and everybody was broke so Mr. Amerman decided that he'd pay the school teachers by script, which was just a piece of paper saying "\$5 or \$10" worth of script. When the teachers would come downtown, they would go in a store and they would say, "Do you accept script?" They store would say 'yes' or 'no'. If the store would say yes, why then they would turn their script in and get \$5 worth of groceries or \$5 worth of commodities. Then later on the script was turned back into cash, as I understand it, by the School Board.

Dr: Can you tell me names of some of the stores or some of the businesses?

Bruce: Freydl's had been in town all the while. Freydl's is still there. I can't remember Lapham's. It was Ponsberry's before Lapham's. There was a drug store on the corner named Gunsell. Where Genitti's are, that has always been a grocery store way back to 1860 or 1870. Later on, that store was owned by E.M.B. which is E.M. Bogart. It was Bogart's father that Henry Ford gave a new Ford automobile to every year for free. Old Henry Ford didn't like the Ford Dealer in Northville too much so he went to South Lyon and bought the car and gave it to Mr. Bogart, which happened to be Mr. Henry Ford's cousin. Also Mr. Henry Ford spent part of his honeymoon in Northville up on North Center Street, right on the corner of Center Street and Walnut Street. At the present time, they are remodeling the house and putting a new porch on it. It's on the east side of North Center Street. I was always happy to see them improve that home because that was the home that Henry Ford spent part of his honeymoon in.

After E.M.B. had the grocery store, then a fellow named "Smith", they called him "Smitty" here in Northville, was also the Postmaster for many years. He owned the grocery store. In those days, if you wanted groceries, you'd call the grocery and they would give you service right to your home. They would take your order over the phone and fill the order and put it in the truck and bring it right up to you. Later on Genitti's took over the store as a grocery store and then eventually Genitti's went into an Italian restaurant which they have now. It's called "The Hole in the Wall".

DR: You mentioned Henry Ford's honeymoon. That was before you were born, right?

Bruce: That was quite a ways before I was born, yes.

DR: How do you know about that?

Bruce: From other people in town and through the Bogarts.

DR: Is the Bogart family still in town?

Bruce: Some of the Bogarts are still around the area. I don't think there are any living right in Northville, now. There are two Bogart boys who are still living.

In the early days when the Northville School would come to the end of their year, all the senior classes would go to Washington, D.C. In those days we had freight trains going through Northville and also passenger trains. For your freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year, you worked very diligently trying to raise enough money to go to Washington, D.C. Every time you worked an hour, you got so much credit for it. We had all kinds of ways of earning money. One year we tried to raise money by going out and picking apples. Taking them down to Parmenter's Cider Mill and pressing the apples out, they would jug the cider for us and they would charge us 75 cents for a jug. We would take that jug and deliver it to people's homes for a dollar. We made twenty-five cents on every jug of cider. We had a few hundred jugs of cider that we delivered. That was one way we raised money. For four years of school, you were trying to raise enough money to go to Washington. When it finally came time to go to Washington, why, it seemed like the tickets were about \$38.95 round trip to Washington and that included three days in the hotel. The train would come into Northville and stop and the fathers and mothers would take their children down to the depot. The depot was right on the other side of where the spring is, which is now flowing at the present time. They'd get on the train and we always had two people from the school system go with us. Ida B. Cooke was one that went with us and a man named Mr. Johnson, who was our history teacher. We would go to Washington, D.C. for three days, take in all the sights in Washington, and come back. That was quite a sight to see all the kids leaving on the train and coming back by the train. They would take the train to Detroit and then the train would hook up with the train to Washington, D.C. and then they would go on from there, but we started right from Northville and we returned right to Northville.

DR: When you raised money for the senior trip, did each person raise their own money, or did the class pool all the money so everybody could go?

Bruce: They would take the amount of money that they raised and each person would work and keep track of how many hours that you worked. In our class of 1937, when I graduated out of Northville High School, we had 54 students in our class. Out of 54, there was about 42 of them that went to Washington. Some of the kids didn't want to go, or didn't have the money to go, or didn't put in the hours of work. Then you'd take those 42 people and divide that into two or three thousand dollars and if you didn't have enough money, then you'd have to pay the difference in cash. There was a man in Northville named Mr. VanHove who lived up on West Main Street, and he had a daughter in our class, who has since passed away, Betty VanHove. Betty VanHove married Dayton Deal. Dayton Deal is up north right now. One day Betty came to me and she said, "Bruce, are there any students that would like to go to Washington that don't have enough to go?" I said "Yes, I know about five". Her father reached in his pocket for those five students to go.

DR: So your class actually didn't earn enough money?

Bruce: Some of us did. I did. I had enough hours in, but some of the students didn't have enough hours in and they didn't have any money to make up the difference. Mr. VanHove, out of his generosity, paid for five students to go.

DR: What did Mr. VanHove do? He must've been fairly wealthy?

Bruce: Mr. VanHove had a lot of businesses. The last business he was in was making these contraptions when a person has had a severe operation and cannot go to the bathroom anymore, they have to go into a little bag. He was in that business in Northville for many years. There used to be Gunsell's Drug Store. His little office is still there where he had his business. People used to write in from all over the country asking him to mail out so many of those. In fact, I was down to the Chamber of Commerce just recently. They got a call from someone in Texas wanting to know if that place in Northville was still there. I just happened to be in there and they said, "No, they're out of business", but Dayton Deal, the son-in-law, took over the business up in northern Michigan.

DR: Do you remember some of the larger industries in town?

Bruce: I can remember the Globe Furniture Factory that made school furniture and school desks. If anybody goes to an antique show and sees a desk, but it, because that is a Globe Furniture desk made in Northville, Michigan. I remember when the Globe Furniture Factory burned. I can remember the Stinson Airplane Factory where Mr. Stinson used to make the airplanes in Northville. He would manufacture them right down here at the railroad tracks, right across from where the spring it. Once they built the airplanes, they would take a little truck and they would pull them up Main Street and down Rodgers Street, out to the corner of Beck Road and Six Mile Road is where the Stinson Airfield was. Once they got the airplane out there minus its wings, they would reassemble the wings and then they would try it out. They would fly it around and make sure it worked alright. They practically had every plane sold before they'd get it built. I remember one Sunday, why I came home from church, and my father said, "Today, were going out to the airfield and see a person named Amelia Earhart." I said, "Who is Amelia Earhart?" A boy of ten or eleven years old, I had never heard of this person named Amelia Earhart. My father informed me that she was probably the finest lady aviator in the world and she was going to attempt to fly around the world by herself. It wouldn't be non-stop but she would be the first woman to attempt to fly around the world. We went out to the airport. My father said, "We got an hour, or two to wait. Would you like to go for a ride in an airplane?" I had never been in an airplane before in my life and I was scared to death. In those days they just had a two-seater plane, one for the pilot and one for the passenger and it was all open. They put a pair of goggles on you and a hat on your head. Of course my head was so small, I couldn't have a hat on, but my father put a hat on and he put me on his lap. It cost him \$5, which was a lot of money. We had about a ten-minute ride around Northville. I was so scared, my father kept saying, "Look down, look down". All I could remember was just all the noise because you were right out there and you could see the propeller going around in front of you. I guess maybe my father got his \$5 worth, but I don't think I got my \$5 worth. I was too scared to look. I can tell you what the inside of that airplane looked like. It had an awful lot of gadgets. But I never saw any of

Northville, or very little of it. We got back to the ground and pretty soon, why, a real slick plane came in. Amelia Earhart came in and landed at the airfield and got out of the plane and waved to everybody and signed autographs. After she got done there, she got in her plane and flew to California. You all know the story of Amelia Earhart. From California, she flew out into the far west. She was going from island to island, island-hopping across the South Pacific and all of a sudden she disappeared. There's been a lot of speculation of what ever happened to Amelia Earhart, but the soundest story that I can remember was that the Japanese were getting ready for Pearl Harbor. They were building up their reserves way back in the '30s. She had seen fortifications and airfields that nobody in the world knew except her, because she flew over them. The story goes that the Japanese shot her down and exterminated her because they could not let any of their secrets get out because they were planning a future war against the United States. If they had, why, there probably wouldn't have been any Pearl Harbor.

DR: When you saw her here in Northville, that was when, in the 1920's?

Bruce: That was in the late '30s. I was born in 1919 so it was right around '31 or '32. It could have been even '33 when she was in Northville.

DR: The Stinson Aircraft Plant that was in Northville that was located where the stores are now, across from the Chamber of Commerce?

Bruce: Yes, right across from the Chamber of Commerce. If you came down Cady Street there are still a couple of factories down there right now. There were many factories right in there together. The Stinson Aircraft Factory would be right on the corner of Cady Street, where Cady come in to Main Street on the right-hand side.

There was another business in Northville called the Silver Spring Bottling Works. In the early days that spring started flowing in 1923 and has continues flowing up until the last few years. The water was so good from that spring; they called it "Silver Springs". The trains coming through Northville would stop by and pick up this water by the five-gallon jugs and put it aboard the train. When you went into the dining car, they had a big sign there, "We serve only Northville Silver Springs Water". That train would run between Saginaw and Toledo. They also would take that spring water and they would put it in five-gallon jugs by the truckload. Each truck going into Detroit would probably have about 35 or 40 maybe more of these five-gallon jugs, turned upside down. They'd take these five-gallon jugs into Detroit to the J.L. Judson stores and to the General Motors Building. They would turn the jugs upside-down in the container and refrigerate it. That's what everybody was drinking in the offices of Detroit.

They also had a bottling works and they bottled thousands and thousands of bottles of pop. They would ship the pop all over this part of Michigan. Down where Asher's Gas Station is now, they used to carry pop. We kids used to go up there and buy the pop and drink it. It was Silver Springs Pop and that was the only king of pop we would drink. There were two popular drinks in those days. One was Vernor's Ginger Ale, which is still going, and the other was Northville Silver Springs Pop. This was in the days before Coke. There wasn't any Coca Cola.

DR: Did you tell me where the bottling plant was?

Bruce: If you go for a walk sometime, walk over the top of the railroad tracks and you'll see the ruins of where the Northville Depot was. They talk about the ruins over in Rome, well; Northville has its own ruins. You can see where the timbers and the foundations are still there from the old depot. Right east of the depot, that is where the Silver Springs Bottling Works were. When you would go in there and watch them making the bottles of pop, there was a huge, big spring at that time. Right now, it's covered over. They had a beautiful glass over top of the spring. You'd look down there in the sand and water would just be boiling up just ferociously. In the early days there was a cartoonist in Detroit who use to have a cartoon in the '20s. He would use the Northville Spring as his background for his cartoons. His name was "Nebb". Every day he would have a cartoon in the Detroit News about "Mr. Nebbs did this, and Mr. Nebbs did that". He always used the Northville Springs as the backdrop in the pictures. For years, and years that spring was called "Mr. Nebbs' Spring". Eventually, the well ran dry, just as it is at the present time. The City of Northville kept getting complaints, just like they are right now, "What happened to our water?" For a short period of time, in fact, I think they are doing this right now; they hooked up the City of Detroit water to the spring. People would come out from Detroit to get a jug of Silver Springs Water which is reality, they were getting the City of Detroit water, and take it all the way back to Detroit and drink it, thinking they were getting the Silver Spring Water. The good father of Northville figured that wasn't right, and the Rotary Club thought that wasn't right so they drilled a well. It was a forty foot well, and a man named "Mr. Reef", who has since passed away, said, "As long as that well is going there, I will repair it and keep it going". For about two or three years they'd have to put a new motor on that well to keep the water flowing. When the motor didn't run, the water didn't go. At the present time the water is not flowing out of the spring so they are going to have to drill that well deeper. They will probably go down another fifty or sixty feet to hit the same Silver Springs Water. The reason that the water is not coming out there, is that there is a gravel pit on the other side of the railroad tracks and they kept digging deeper, and deeper, and deeper for gravel and pretty soon the lake filled up there. At the present time, there are two or three lakes. The first lake there is all filled up with Silver Springs Water. Instead of diverting out to the spring, it diverted back and made a huge, big lake. That's right where M-Care is at the present time. Up off of Griswold Street, you'll see this beautiful condo which is partially in the Township and partially in the City of Northville, that's where the water is diverted backwards. When they dug the springs, they upset the arrangement of the water coming out.

In the early days, there was a man in Northville on Main Street named 'Rathburn' who sold Chevrolets. The Chevrolet garage was right across the alley from where the travel bureau is there on West Main Street. There's West Main Street, there was an alley, and then there were about four or five places of business. At the present time, the City Fathers are thinking of putting more stores in there and double-decking the parking lot. There was Rathburn Chevrolet. There was Dayton-Bunn Ford Dealership, down from there. There was the Northville Hotel between the Ford and Dodge establishments. The hotel was still there. It used to be the Northville City Hall. The building was torn down a while back, but that is where they kept the Fire Department. In those days, we had one Police officer named Mr. Cracky Lyke. When there was a fire, they had a Model-T fire truck and invariably, they would have to help and push the Fire Truck down the street and get it going, and then go to the fire. There weren't too many fires around so sometimes that fire truck would set there for quite awhile before it went out. On down the street was Gunsell's Drug Store on the corner and E. & G. grocery, where Genitti's are. Down next to that was Freydl's, which is still there. Down farther was a fellow named "Orel Owen", who had

a clothing store. Then on the far corner, there was another drug store named “Stewart’s Drug Store”. They always had a Cloverdale Dairy. Jim Spagnola had a sweet shop. Now it’s where the liquor store is. There was a Bradner’s Store in Northville which is now owned by Black’s Clothing Store. Northville always had a bakery. The bank was owned by Lapham. It was Lapham’s State Savings Bank at one time. The bank was located where the jewelry store is at the present time.

In those days everybody had their milk delivered by milkmen. You didn’t go downtown and buy a gallon of milk, you had milk delivered. Don Miller delivered milk.

There was another fellow named “Morris”, up on the other end of town that delivered milk. Mr. Morris got his milk from all the farmers around Northville. In those days the milk was not pasteurized. There was one farmer out on Ten Mile Road that had malaria fever. Not knowing it, he kept say to his wife, “I should not be out milking the cows because I feel so sick”. Not knowing it, he was putting the fever right into the milk. Mr. Morris took the milk and delivered it all around Northville and there were about ten to twelve people that died in Northville of the fever. My father was one that got the fever, but he lived through it. The fever was very bad and you get it with a temperature up around 103, 104 and 105. Eventually, you can stand it no longer and you die. It was a very sad situation in Northville. It wasn’t Mr. Morris’ fault. He felt very badly about it, but there was nothing he could do about it. Shortly after that, all the milk was pasteurized and then homogenized and, of course, there was no problem like that again.

DR: What year was that?

Bruce: That was in the thirties. When you had milk delivered to your home, you would buy about \$5 worth of tickets ahead of time. If you wanted two quarts of milk, you would tear off two tickets and stick them in the bottle. The milkman would come up to your porch and see two tickets in your bottle. He’d already been paid for the tickets, so then he would bring you two quarts of milk. In those days, the milk had so much cream on it. This was before cholesterol. They didn’t even think anything about cholesterol. The more cream the better! Most milk had to be 3.4 or better, otherwise it wasn’t good milk. There was so much cream on the bottles of milk that in the wintertime, the milk would set out on your porch, the milk would raise right up out of the bottle and you’d have about four or five inches of cream with the cap sitting on top of it. Many women would take the cream right off the top of the milk and bring it in and make whipping cream out of it. They could whip the cream, it was so rich. Now days, of course, with cholesterol, why, that’s a no-no to some people.

DR: You mentioned the Northville Hotel and when you mentioned it, you said, “It’s still there”. Is that the building that’s across from what was the “Winner’s Circle”?

Bruce: Yes. At the present time, there’s a sporting goods store where they sell Michigan and Michigan State clothing and things. That was the old hotel right there.

DR: Do you know when that building was built?

Bruce: I don’t know when it was built, but I do remember the old hotel that was right next door to it. That was called the ‘Ambler Hotel’. I remember the days of the street car. The street car

used to come up and stop right on the four corners of Main Street and Center Street. We've all seen pictures of the hotel and what it looked like. It sat on the angle. At the present time, they just sold that property. That hotel set right there on the corner and my aunt used to come in from Detroit. My sister and I would meet her up at the street car track. The first thing we would do is go across the street and have a disk of ice cream in this beautiful old hotel. Later on that hotel burnt and it's kind of a jinxed corner because that hotel must've burnt in the early '30s and up to the present time there's nothing ever been on that corner. It has been open, it's been used for a parking lot and different things. They had to sell the bowling alley about four or five times. This developer might go ahead and build something there. That's been a jinxed corner ever since the hotel burnt. That was a beautiful building there and a beautiful hotel. I don't know why so many buildings burnt except that everybody heated their homes with wood stoves and I think a lot of times the stoves would overheat and that's what set the houses or the building on fire in Northville.

DR: What can you remember about the way the Ambler Hotel was?

Bruce: Nothing too much about the hotel except it was a beautiful building and I had ice cream in there. I was probably somewhere between five and ten years of age.

I do remember the street cars in Northville. We used to ride the street cars of Northville. In fact, the street cars were very rapid transportation. In the early days those street cars used to go anywhere between forty and sixty miles per hour. That was plenty because the cars used to go between ten to fifteen miles per hour down Eight Mile Road in a muddy, rutty road. It was fast transportation. There were two lines of street cars coming into Northville. One came from Detroit, to Dearborn, to Wayne to Plymouth, to Northville. That was one line, owned by one corporation. The other corporation owned the street cars that went from Northville to Farmington to Detroit where they bypassed to go on over to Pontiac. You could go from Northville to Pontiac by street car or you could go from Northville to Detroit in two different directions. It seemed like, to me, that the street cars went from Northville to Detroit about every half-hour. It was fast transportation and good transportation. Not only did they haul passengers, but also the farmers would bring all their produce into Northville and their milk in milk cans so when the street car headed for downtown Detroit early in the morning, they would take all the farmer's supplies down to the Farmer's Market in downtown Detroit. I remember one day that we were going to go over to Pontiac to visit my grandmother. My sister and I stood on the corner. There was a waiting station to wait for the street cars. The waiting station, at the present time, is where there's a building where they are taking photographs, on N. Center Street. It's the second building on the left-hand side, where it says they'll take passport photographs for you. That was the place where you'd wait for the street car if you wanted to wait inside. My sister and I were so excited to go to Pontiac on a streetcar that we stood out on Main Street. They had a box about eighteen inches square, right on Main Street. There was a green light in there, and a red light. If the light was red, that meant when the street car started coming up Main Street to pick up passengers, they light would turn to green. The street car would trip the lever down by the Ford Factory. Everybody got excited that the street car was coming to pick them up. We would get on the street car and ride down to Griswold Street and the conductor would get out and change the tracks. We would go out Griswold to Eight Mile Road and right down past Meadowbrook Country Club. We would go on over and get a transfer and go over to Pontiac

and visit my grandmother for the day. In the evening, we would come back and get a street car back to Northville again.

The man who eventually became the governor of Michigan, owned a dairy in Farmington and out of the generosity of his heart, he donated land for the street car to cut across between Farmington Road and Grand River. It's just unusual that the tracks run right by his dairy. So, it made it rather nice. He donated the land, but then the farmers would put their milk on the street car and bring the milk right to his dairy. He was a shrewd and a very good man and he eventually became the governor of Michigan. I can't think of his name right off. A little conniving and a little politicking but "I'll give you the land, and you put your street car by my dairy". There were more dairies around but he'd get the business because the street car went right by his place of business.

DR: Earlier, you mentioned the Ford Plant, briefly. Do you remember the old building?

Bruce: No. I can't remember the old building at all. The building I remember pretty much is the one that's there at the present time. They made valves for cars for years and years and years. At the present time they're making gas tanks for the LTD Ford. Ford has changed their design from metal gas tanks to plastic gas tanks. The Ford Factory is going out of business. They've been going out of business for years and years. This time, I guess it's for sure. In December, they're going out of business.

Just a little bit about that wheel going around down there, it is turned by water that come from the Mill Race, which is across the street where the village is at the present time. During World War II, they had a generator on that wheel so that in case it was bombed by the Japanese or the Germans, why, they generator would make enough electricity so that the people could get out of that factory, especially at night. After the War was over, they sold the generator to Mexico along with the Detroit street cars. I don't know if we got paid for them or not but anyhow, that's where the generator went.

DR: So after high school you were away from town for awhile in college and in the service?

Bruce: Right. After high school, I went to college, first to Eastern Michigan, and then I went to Michigan State. My wife went to Cleary College. Eventually, Rita came back to Northville and started working at the Detroit Edison Company. At one time the Detroit Edison Company in Northville was the main headquarters for this whole part of Michigan. It went all the way as far as Howell. Northville was the main offices and the building is still there. It's a very nice building and a very big building right on the corner of Center Street and Dunlap. It was where the bank was and bank just moved out of it. When we started dating, why, I used to go and pick her up sometimes at the Edison office there and we would go down on Hines Parkway Drive and I would pack some sandwiches and we would have some sandwiches on our lunch hour.

One thing I can also remember of Northville is our old Opera House. Back in the '50s they had the final showing of the Opera House. I didn't get to the formal showing, but a friend of mine and I went into a back window. I remember climbing up inside of the building and going up the stairway and seeing the old Opera House before they tore it down. For those who don't know where the Opera House had been, it was on the corner of Dunlap and Center Street. The Opera House was a large building and could seat over 700 people. It was a three-story building and the building went much farther back than what that alley is at the present time. It

was an excellent Opera House. At one time the Northville Record was downstairs in the offices. They had two places of business downstairs, the Opera House up above. A fellow named "Sam Pickard" owned it and he put it up for sale for so many thousands of dollars. Henry Ford came by and said "Mr. Pickard, I'll buy your building". I don't mean that Mr. Ford did, but he had one of his buyers come out and make the offer for him. Mr. Sam Pickard, who owned a meat market, at that time, in the building, found out it was Henry Ford who wanted the building and said, "What does Mr. Ford want it for?" The buyer said, "He want to take it down brick by brick and take it to Greenfield Village and reassemble it." Mr. Pickard said, "Well, if Henry Ford wants it, I'll just up my price". Instead of being, say for example, \$10,000, its \$15,000, if Mr. Ford wants it, 'cause he's got all kinds of money and if he wants it bad enough, (he'd) have to pay me more." When Henry Ford heard about this, he said to Sam Pickard, "Mr. Pickard, as far as I'm concerned, I've offered you a good price and if you don't want to take my price, why, you can take it down, brick by brick." That's exactly what (Mr. Pickard) did! He tore the building down, brick by brick and they hauled it away. (It) was a shame for Northville. I do remember the Opera House in there and right over the stage, you'll see the picture in Hoffman's First Hundred Years of Northville, there's a huge, big bird, over the stage with its wings outstretched. I remember when this boy (and I) went in there, (we were) standing in awe looking at this huge, big bird with its wings outstretched. I can't remember if it's an eagle or (if) it's an owl. It seems like it's an owl. The stage was still there. The old curtain was still there. The seats were still there. Even though it was getting old and (had) begun to crumble, you could tell (that) in its heyday, it was really the opera house in this whole area and, of course, the place to go in Northville was to go to Northville's operas.

DR: It was going on in the '50s, is that right?

BRUCE: I think it was 1955 when The Northville Record had the final showing for people of Northville if they wanted to see it. They went up to see it and then it was torn down.

DR: But the argument with Henry Ford was earlier than that, (because) Ford died in the '40s.

BRUCE: Oh, yes. It was many years earlier than that.

DR: When you were a child, growing up, in the '20s and the '30s, they weren't using the Opera House for anything?

BRUCE: No. The building was there. I don't know whether it was condemned or what, but they could use the offices downstairs. If you've seen pictures, there's a store on either side and then there was a larger, wide door in the middle. That was the door going upstairs to the Opera House and that door was always kept locked even though they did use the places, downstairs for businesses.

DR: But the young people in town didn't have much trouble sneaking in to see it.

BRUCE: Well, it was boarded up, but there's ways to remove boards and I suppose if we'd got caught, old Cracky Lyke would've been after us.

Cracky Lyke was a real busy man on Halloween because when I was a boy, everybody had outdoor bathrooms. It was a great thing for the older boys. I don't remember this too much because I wasn't quite that old, but the older boys would get eight or ten of them together and they'd go all around Northville tipping over the outhouses. I heard one story that a man was sitting in his outhouse with a shotgun, protecting his outhouse so the boys wouldn't tip it over. They snuck out there anyhow and they tipped him over with him sitting in there with a shotgun, trying to protect it. The trouble was, they tipped it over with the door down. He had quite (a bit of trouble) getting out of the outhouse. Cracky Lyke was the only policeman in Northville and was getting calls all over Northville, "Come to my house quickly because the kids are trying to tip over my outdoor bathroom!"

One other thing I can remember real distinctly was a lady named "Mrs. Watts". In the early days when Northville and all the other places around had telephone operators (that) would line up eight or ten of them in a row, each one sitting on a little chair. When you'd want to make a phone call, they would take your number and manually plug you in to the number that you wanted to talk with. At night, why, there wasn't much business. There was only one person on duty, and that was Mrs. Watts. She was the night operator. If there was a fire in Northville, and you wanted to know where the fire was in the daytime or (at) night, you'd pick up the phone and you'd say to the operator, "Where's the fire?" They would tell you, or if they were real busy, they'd say, "Don't bother me now, I've got to call the Fire Department!" At night Mrs. Watts was there by herself and lots of times she wouldn't get a call there for a long period of time. For example, if Northville played basketball against Plymouth, and her son was the Northville basketball coach, Ted Watts, you would say, "How did the Northville basketball team make out against Plymouth?" She would proceed to tell you the "Northville beat Plymouth, 19 to 24" and she would proceed to tell you who the high point man or girl was who played the game. In the early days, why, they didn't have basketball (with) the first team and the second team. They had the varsity girls play first and the varsity boys played second, which I still think would be a good idea, today. She would tell you who won the game. She would tell you where the fire was. She would tell any of the news of Northville. In fact, I think she was kind of glad to talk to somebody. Once in awhile she'd say, "Hold it, just a minute. I've got a phone call."

DR: What was the time period that Mrs. Watts worked there?

BRUCE: It seemed like she was on from about eight o'clock until the wee hours of the morning. Probably eight hours. She probably went on at eight o'clock at night and stayed 'til four o'clock in the morning. Then somebody else came on to relieve her from four o'clock on. Where the telephone offices were was right upstairs over the jewelry store. The stairway is still there. There was a dentist up there, (but) at the present time there are (offices). The dentist was Dr. Alexander.

DR: What years was she a telephone operator?

BRUCE: Ever since Northville started having telephones. I don't know when telephones come (to) Northville, but it seems like, to me, it was around 1890, up until, I would say, almost to World War II.

DR: And then after that, they had the regular (system)?

BRUCE: They had the automatics like they have at the present time.

DR: She was operator most of those (years)?

BRUCE: She was there for many, many years. Her son had just come out of Albion College. He was a very handsome man with beautiful curly hair and a star athlete at Albion College, on the football team. He came to Northville and he fell madly in love with a high school girl in (the) junior class. The school board found out about this and they kicked him out of Northville as a teacher. I'm not sure about the girl, but it seems like they also asked her to leave Northville. She had to go somewhere else to graduate. It was a real "no-no" for a schoolteacher to be dating a junior in high school. The girl he was dating was the most beautiful girl in Northville and he was a handsome young college body, just out of college so they fell madly in love.

DR: Do you have anything you might like to say about the War years in Northville?

BRUCE: During the War years, Northville closed right up. Everybody went to work in a factory. A few of the stores kept going, but it was very, very difficult to keep going in Northville because there was nothing to sell. I remember when I came home from the service and I started working back at the Northville Electric Shop, we had nothing to sell to people except a few lamps. One day we got a phone call from Detroit saying that a company in Detroit named "Detrola" was holding six radios for us. I got in the car (to) go to Detroit to bring those six little radios back. We had a waiting list of people wanting to buy radios, wanting to buy refrigerators, and wanting to buy stoves. There was none being made during the all the War years. There was quite a backlog of people being without merchandise so I went to Detroit and got those six radios and all I had to do was pick up the phone call people and say, "Your radio is in", and they came right down and bought it.

Most of the women were running the businesses in Northville. Their husbands, unless they were older, and their boys were off to the War effort.

One day back in the '20s, a man named "Mr. Ware" built a new hardware store in Northville. He just got the building completed and he had it stocked with shotguns and rifles and ammunition. The people of Northville got a call over their radios from the State Police Department saying that Dillinger was coming through this area and to beware. In those days, nobody ever locked their doors. Everybody was safe in Northville. That particular week everybody started locking their (doors) because Dillinger was coming from Chicago to Detroit. He had a little unfinished business to do with some gangsters in Detroit and he came over from Chicago and he was going to wipe them out because they (were) giving him too much competition. The story goes that he came into Northville and went into Mr. Ware's hardware store, cut a hole in the back door and stole all of his rifles and all the shotguns and all of his ammunition. In those days, if you wanted to go hunting around Northville (for) rabbits or pheasants or squirrels, why, you just pick up your shotgun and walk over here by the cemetery and start to hunt. Most of the men and a lot of the boys and some of the girls hunted birds and pheasants and rabbits around town. His store was really stocked with ammunition and rifles. The trouble was, he hadn't paid for them. He (had) them on consignment. When Dillinger came in and emptied his building right out at night, he had the bills for all of these guns and shotguns but he didn't have money to pay for them, so he went bankrupt. He went right out of business.

If you go downtown, sometime, and look at Black's Shoe store, you look up on top there and you'll see the sign there "Ware's Building 1929". That's the building where Dillinger come in and stole all the rifles.

DR: This "Mr. Ware", is that Donald's father?

BRUCE: That's a different Ware.

DR: Not a relative?

BRUCE: No.

DR: Do you have any memories of yourself as a young businessman?

BRUCE: Well, my father being an electrical contractor, why, he was going to make me an electrician. For the first two or three years, why, I was out wiring houses in Northville. In fact, I presume that my father and his electrician wired practically every home in the older section of Northville. Later on, a thing called "television" came out and so we started selling television sets. We had the first television set in Plymouth outside of the Mayflower Hotel. I took a ten-inch television set home and I hooked it up and it didn't work very well. I didn't know which way was to aim the antennae so I went down to the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth to see which way they aimed their aerial. Then I turned mine around and we started getting good pictures. Later on, a crew of men and myself started putting up television antennas all over the city of Northville. In the early days, we would put up as high as eight aerials a day, one an hour all over this area. In the meantime, my father practically wired every house in Northville and I put up television antennas and ran them into practically every home in Northville and South Lyon.