

DOROTHY FLATTERY – 1989

INTERVIEWED BY BETTY GRIFFIN

BG- Dorothy, would you like to introduce yourself?

DF - My name is Dorothy Flattery and I moved to Northville with my parents Ernest and Josephine Wilsher in October of 1943. My dad retired from Dodge Bros. Corporation and my parents sold their home on Linsdale Avenue in Detroit, and daughter and I, who were living with them at the time, moved to their home at 313 S. Rogers, in Northville.

My husband had gone into (the) service. He was in the Army Air Corps and was immediately sent out to the West Coast. We had given up our apartment at the time of his induction, prior to the birth of our daughter. She was born in June of 1943. I was living with my parents at the time she was born. When they moved to Northville in October of that same year, why, Janie and I just moved right along with them.

Bob was in the service about 2 ½ years. He did get one short weekend trip when Jane was born in June. Then he went out to the West Coast and from the West Coast, they went right out to Saipan and Okinawa in the Pacific.

I had worked for Michigan Bell Telephone Company before I was married and until I became pregnant with my daughter. I was in Northville one day and discovered a Michigan Bell Telephone office on Center Street. After talking to the people in there a few times, I learned that they were in need of someone to work in the office because the girl who was working there was being transferred. Since I had experience working with Michigan Bell in Detroit, they offered me the job. I went to Ann Arbor two or three times in one week for some additional training and was given the job and became the service representative for Michigan Bell at that particular office.

It was a one-woman office and it was really great fun. There was usually a lot going on in Northville during the day. The office was open, I think, until five. When I first began, I could work from 10 to 1, or 1 to 4, (or) whatever my demands were. If anything exciting happened in Northville or if there was an accident anywhere, somebody would always come into the Telephone office and tell us about it. We always felt like we were really up on top of everything. If any of the stores had butter or nylon hose for ladies, you knew about it almost instantly if you worked in that Telephone office. (Of) all the goodies that came into Northville, somebody would be sure and inform the people in the Telephone office.

BG - Those were all rationed items, of course, during World War II.

DF - We moved back to Detroit when Bob came home. Janie was 2 ½ years old. Bob's father and mother had a huge house on Burns Avenue, in Indian Village, in Detroit with plenty of room for us. Housing was so difficult to find but we had been promised (a) flat between Euclid Avenue, between Dexter and Hoener. It was a lovely flat and four doors from Angel School where Janie was going to enroll when she was old enough. I think we lived with Bob's parents for about two years. Shortly after the birth of our second little girl (Josephine), we were able to get into our home on Euclid Avenue. Janie went to kindergarten and finished the first three grades at Angel School. Because my parents lived in Northville and we loved it out that way, we thought we would like to find a place in Northville. We were fortunate to rent a farmhouse that was owned by Mr. And Mrs. Claude Caruso. It was right behind their lovely white home on

Nine Mile Rd. which was the White House Manor and which is now the Home Sweet Home restaurant. We lived in that farmhouse for about 2 ½ to three years and it was in the middle of thirty acres of ground. My children thought they were in heaven. We had wonderful neighbors, Virginia and Frank Bozak, with their seven children and beyond them were Art and Rosemary Heslip with their nine children. There was plenty to do and Carusos were wonderful landlords. When we moved out into the farmhouse, Jane had already been enrolled in the fourth grade at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School was opening up in September of 195(2). They school had eight grades but the classes were very small. Josephine started kindergarten on Main Street in Northville and had Miss Pollack as a kindergarten teacher who was an institution, I think in Northville. Dan was, of course, just a little over a year old. We stayed there, I think, about four years. The children were picked up at the end of Nine Mile Road and bussed into Northville because Novi didn't have an elementary school at the time.

BG - Is the farmhouse still there?

DF - It was moved about a year ago. It's sitting, now, quite close to Novi Rd. There was talk of tearing it down, but they decided that since the building was so old, they were hoping someone would come along and try to restore it.

We thought, perhaps, we should buy a home. We move (to) Willowbrook subdivision, in Novi, right off Ten Mile Road (which) was the first new development, I think, that had taken place in a long time. We lived in that house for thirty-some years.

BG - You were a librarian in the Novi Public Library for 22 years.

DF - That was a wonderful experience. The library was started by a group of library-loving people. I think they started in 1963. They were very well organized and they organized some Friends. They were able to obtain some books through Michigan State (Library) and we had a little building on Novi Rd., just below where Marcus Glass sits right now, close to Grand River Avenue. Where Marcus Glass sits, used to be the United States Post Office. In 1964, the two girls, Annie Nickels and Dorothy Pickett wanted to retire from the Library. I (had) some dear friends who were active in the Friends of the Library and suggested that I apply for the job. They hired me and Rose White to be an assistant. We started in 1964 and were open three days a week. In 1964 or 1965, the township put an addition on to the building. Then we went to a millage. That millage passed so we were able to be paid more than the dollar and a half an hour, I think, that they were paying the other girls. We were able to increase the hours and we were opened on Saturdays, maybe ten to one. We stayed in that little building until 197(6) when we moved into the big building on Ten Mile Road.

I would think maybe fifteen or sixteen of those years, I was Head Librarian. I did not have a degree in Library Science but I had a Bachelors Degree (in Sociology) from Wayne State University. At the time I went into the library, the State Library authorized (me) to be a librarian, depending upon the population of the area. I think we started out with about 7,000 people, which qualified me to be Head Librarian. Fortunately for me, while I was at Wayne, I took every single literature course that they offered simply because I enjoyed reading and I enjoyed literature classes.

Once we got organized, we had a library board that was appointed by the council. They sent both Mrs. White and I to a workshop at Ferris College. We stayed a week and met with

librarians from small libraries all over Michigan. Many questions were answered and you really learned a great deal.

BG - Sometime later the State ruled that each library had to have a library director who had a Master's Degree.

DF - If the library was a certain size, in order to qualify for benefits from the state, you had to appoint a library director. I believe Diane Bish came into the library in about 1976. She had been an employee of the Detroit Public Library and then she moved to Novi. She did a great deal for the library. She was a very dynamic person. She stayed for about six or seven years and (then) moved to California. When she left, the board and myself met and interviewed many people for the new post. Brenda Berell, at the time, was a reference librarian for the Novi Public Library and she was given the job as director and is still there. The Library has made great strides under Brenda. She's done a remarkable job.

BG - In this year, 1989, the Library has opened a new wing, formerly occupied by the municipal offices, which has doubled the size of the Novi Library. This new wing is going to be named the "Dorothy Flattery Wing".

DF - That was a great honor. I had absolutely no knowledge of this until my retirement when Paul Black, the President of the Library Board for many years, made the announcement at my retirement that they had decided that the wing would be given the name of the "Dorothy Flattery Wing."

In May of 1988, I moved into King's Mill and it was just lovely coming back to Northville. I renewed many acquaintances. It was nice to take up those friendships again with girls I had met during World War II when Bob was away and their husbands were away.

BG - While your children were in Our Lady of Victory School, there was a group formed (called) Our Lady of Victory Mothers' Club. You were a member and eventually elected President.

DF - I think my youngest daughter was probably in the sixth or seventh grade and Joe was born in '47 so that's probably about 1955. Our Lady's Mothers' Club then became Our Lady's League which I think it is now. It was organized shortly after the school opened. It was a small group but we did many things. We used to have hot dog sales, which the children loved. Most of the money, we gave to the beginning of the library for the Our Lady of Victory School. That was the start, I think, of the library.

BG - At the present time, you are a member of the Northville Women's Club and you are also Vice President of the Friends of the Novi Library. You mentioned that your parents stayed in Northville until they died.

DF - Yes. They were very happy. It was a big adjustment for them because they lived in the City of Detroit all their married life, but they also adjusted to Northville. I think my dad was on the Board of Appeals for a couple of years. That would be 1945-46. My mother met some very

nice ladies. They had a bridge group. It was a very nice association for both of them. I think they were both very happy there.

My mother died in 1964 at the age of 80 or 81 and my father died about seven years later at the age of 93. (He) had been in good health up until the time he had a fall, and just died.