

RUSSELL LYKE

Q: What is your age?

A: I was born on January 12, 1904. I'm 89 years old.

Q: Were you born here in Northville?

A: I was born on Six Mile Road, half mile east of Napier; this is just about three miles from where I was born. I have lived here nearly all of my life. When I was a small boy, my dad had a farm on Currie Road, closer to South Lyon. We were only there three years. We moved from there down to Ridge Road and from Ridge Road, we moved here, on the corner of Eight Mile and Napier. I think it was 1918 when they moved to the corner.

Q: How many acres was the farm?

A: Eighty acres.

Q: So, you always grew up around a farm?

A: We lived in town I guess about three months. We lived up on Butler in Northville near "Wild Bill" Elkins (?).

Q: When you were small, what school would you have gone to?

A: I started going to the school on the corner of Napier and Ten Mile Road. It was an old stone schoolhouse. Then we moved up on Currie and I went to the Blackwood School on Nine Mile Road, just west of Currie. From there, we moved to Ridge Road and I went to the DK school. That was on Seven Mile, right across from the Sanitarium. From there, I went to DK and then I went to Northville.

Q: What do you remember about the little school?

A: I remember when I went to the school over on Seven Mile Road, there were only five kids in the school; three Lash girls, and my brother and I. Mr. Lash worked for Ed Stockweather. Our teacher's name was Ms. Kopf. I will never forget that she was redheaded.

Q: Was she a good teacher?

A: She was a very, very good teacher.

Q: What would you do at recess with only five students?

A: We had little games we played. We couldn't do too much of anything. In the wintertime, in the back of the school there was quite a good-sized hill, and we would slide down that hill. Of

course, we had two recesses, and a noon recess, fifteen minutes in the forenoon and at noon and then in the afternoon we had a fifteen minute recess.

Q: How would you get into Northville to go to high school?

A: I drove a horse and buggy back and forth for the first three years I was in high school, and the last year, my brother and I had worked enough so we bought ourselves a Ford Model T. It was quite a car. We had that until I got out of school. My sister was a year or two ahead of me in school, and at that time, you could take a six week course and then teach school. She was teaching school and when I got out of school, we bought a car together. Well, that didn't work. When I wanted it, she wanted it, so I sold out my share to her and bought me another one. I bought a used car, a 1922 Ford coupe. I had that awhile and then I splurged. I went and bought a brand new 1925 Ford coupe.

Q: You have always liked cars?

A: Yes. I think when I bought that car, I gave a little less than \$500 for it, brand new.

Q: Would you have bought it in Northville?

A: No, I bought it in South Lyon, from Hugh Arms. I have seen quite a lot of changes in Northville.

Q: What changes stand out as big ones to you?

A: One of the big ones was when they took off the electric car that used to come up main street to the four corners on Main and Center. They would come around by the Ford Factory. One car came from Detroit, and one came from Wayne. They would run uptown, and at the Y they would go back to Detroit or Wayne. Then they quit (?). Then they paved the street, the street wasn't paved when I first started going down there, it was all cobblestones, horses and buggies.

Q: Did you ever take any trips on the train?

A: I took violin lessons and I went to Wayne every Saturday afternoon for about a year and a half. Oh yes, we would go to Detroit on it. It was about the only means of transportation we had to get to Detroit.

Q: Do you remember how much it cost?

A: I can't tell you that. I know what it cost to go to Wayne and back, it cost me twenty cents. I would get off here, and get a return ticket, it cost me twenty cents; ten cents each way.

Q: Did the trains run quite often?

A: These were street cars.

Q: Like an interurban type of thing?

A: Yes. I think about every hour they came into town.

Q: You must have had musical interests then?

A: I liked the violin pretty well, but I haven't touched it in a good many years.

Q: Did you like more the classics or the older music, like when I think of fiddlers?

A: Yes, that's what I liked. What I call hillbilly music.

Q: But, you don't play too much?

A: I don't play at all. I shouldn't have given it up.

Q: You mentioned the train tracks in Northville, what other things stand out, big changes or things you remember that you enjoyed?

A: The Ford factory was a big change, but that was a lumber mill at one time; Dubuar's Lumber Mill. They'd have big logs and then cut them into boards and lumber. Then, Henry Ford bought it back in, I believe, 1921. He took all of that out and made it into the valve plant. We worked in that until 1936. I went there to work in 1924, but it wasn't just what I wanted. I worked three months and quit. Then, I went back in nine months and they hired me again. I quit after that and when I went back the next time, Mr. Marburger looked at me and said, "Have you worked here before?" I said, "Yes, sir." "If I hire you, how long are you going to stay this time?" he asked. I told him I was thinking about getting married, so I thought I'd stay a while. So he gave me a job. Do you remember Tony Bender? He lived off Seven Mile Road and Beck, and he was a foreman there. Mr. Marburger said to Carl Bryan, "You go down to see if he needs a man." You had to go upstairs and then across into the office. I saw Tony when I was going up and waved at him. He told Mr. Bryan, "Yes, I need a man right now," and he put me to work. I worked there a little over thirty-five years, doing shop work. I missed two days of work. I think that was quite a record.

Q: What exactly did you do there?

A: I did anything they asked me to. I would run any machine in the shop for the first ten or fifteen years. When they put up the new shop in 1936, I went in as an inspector and when they put the automatic inspection machines in, I worked on them. I was tool, die, jig, fixture, and gauge repairman, that is what I was classified as. I spent the rest of my time working on that job. During the War, I was supervisor. In the little shop that's there now, they dug out the basement and put machines in there and we made some things for Pratt and Whitney on the motors. We had over a thousand people working that little shop; three shifts. They needed some foreman, so they made some of the boys that had been there the longest foreman, and we were foreman while the War was on. Our help consisted of mostly young girls whose husbands had gone into the

service or old men. We didn't have any cream of the crop because they had all gone into the service, but we got along pretty well.

Q: I note you mentioned that worked at Maybury also.

A: I did, before I went to work at Ford. I worked there about two years on the farm out where the park is. That was quite a thing when that first started as a farm down there. Of course, they didn't have tractors in those days. The horses we had came from Detroit, where they were just changing from horses to the fire engines and we had gotten horses from the fire department. Some of them were pretty good horses, and then, again, you would take a team and hook it on a load and if they could start off on a run like they did with the fire engine, it would be all right, but otherwise they wouldn't pull at all. They had been broke to start on a run, when they started, but we got along with them. Lawrence Whipple was the foreman. He was a smart manager. Finally, they got two of the old Fordson tractors. Boy, that was something when they got a tractor out there.

Q: Is where they farmed mostly along Eight Mile?

A: Yes. We did go over on Seven Mile, right at the end of Ridge Road next to Foreman's Orchard. They had a couple of fields in there that we would work. I think in the whole sanitarium, I believe, there were 1,040 acres in the whole farm. It ran from Beck Road to Napier on this side. On Seven Mile, Foreman's Orchard was out of it, Sickles' farm was out of it, and Stockweather had some of it. They thought it was all swamp land in there, and now they have put some big beautiful houses in that swamp land.

Q: What did they grow on the farm?

A: We had regular crops. We had wheat, oats, barley, corn, and hay. They milked around twenty-five head of cattle, and then took the milk back to the sanitarium. We furnished enough for the sanitarium. They would pasteurize it there. They had a fellow by the name of Vern Koehler (?) who did the pasteurizing of the milk there. We raised a lot of garden stuff on the farm and that all went to the sanitarium to feed the help, patients, etc.

Q: Was the corn and some of that for the animals or did they sell that for a cash crop?

A: They kept it all for feed for the cattle and the horses. We had some pigs, but we didn't raise too many of those; at one time, we had maybe ten or fifteen hogs around.

Q: Did you use the barn that is still there?

A: Yes. Of course, since the park has taken it over, they have built a couple, three or four, little buildings around there. The big barn is still there, that we used. There was another barn just east of where the schoolhouse is that we used to put our young cattle in, but we kept all of our milk cows up at the big barn.

Q: In those days, they had to milk by hand, didn't they?

A: We started out milking by hand, but about six or eight months before I left, they got a milking machine.

Q: Have you farmed yourself?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you farming when you were working at Ford too?

A: Yes, we had twenty acres here. My dad kept forty acres and sold the other forty off. I had his forty, my twenty, and I had twenty acres on the corner of Eight Mile, so I had eighty acres I was working. I liked to work the midnight shift for this reason. I could work all day down there and come home, eat my breakfast, and then get on my tractor and go to work here. I worked until about four o'clock in the afternoon and then I would come in. My wife would have my dinner ready. I'd eat my dinner and go to sleep and she would wake me up about eleven o'clock to go back to work again. I didn't have too much spare time.

Q: What would you grow on your farm?

A: We grew mostly corn and stuff that we could sell, like wheat, etc. After my dad passed away, he raised a lot of hogs, my dad did. So I bought the hogs from my mother and we raised hogs. Then, I had to raise the corn and grain to feed the hogs.

Q: Who farms around here now?

A: The man across the road does a lot of farming. He rents land all over and he has another thing going that will start next month sometime. Kids from all over the lower part of Michigan come here. He has a farm and he gives tours. We've had as high as six hundred kids come in on one day from different schools. Then he has what they call, tour matter (?). He will have some cattle tied here and show them how to milk a cow. Then he'll show them a couple of sheep, hogs, and chickens. About every week or so, he gets a bunch of little chickens hatched, and the kids get the chance to hold a little chicken. Then they take the kids for a hayride after that. That was my job, to take them for a hayride.

Q: Even after you retired you've been working?

A: That's when I started working. I retired in January of 1969 from Ford's and I went there that spring and I worked for him every year, except for one year that I was in the hospital, up until last year. That was the first year I didn't work for him.

Q: I would imagine it would be fun around the children?

A: Yes. You get some very nice kids, and you get some very unruly children nowadays. The supervision isn't so good with some of them. It was something to keep me busy anyway.

Q: Let's talk a bit about high school. How many were there in your class?

A: I think there were 27. I played football, but I didn't play basketball or baseball. We had to drive a horse and buggy, and I couldn't go back to play basketball because it was a lot of trouble to drive a horse after dark. I did play football. I wasn't too well-gifted with brains while I was in school. I got through all right, but it was a struggle sometimes.

Q: With the class that size, you knew everybody didn't you?

A: Yes. I have a book here, called the Palladium, that has all the pictures in it of all the kids, I guess they do that at all schools at the end of the year, the yearbook. I still have mine.

Q: Are there reunions from your school?

A: No, we have never had a reunion. A fellow by the name of Don Merritt was in my class and he said we ought to get together and have one. That was sixty years then, but it's too late; he's gone now. We should have had a reunion. Of course, a lot of them moved away, but around here, there are only four of us that I know out of the class that are living; Glen Hammond, Harold Bloom, Morris (?) and myself; there are just four of us that I know of, there could be more.

Q: While you think a little bit about some things that you really enjoy about Northville, different things, I will talk to you Mrs. Lyke. How long were you at Freydl's?

A: Well, I worked for fifteen years steady for them and then I worked, all told, off and on when I look back, for 26 years. But, that was the only place that I ever worked. I should have gone to Ford and then I would have had a retirement.

Q: Were you born here in Northville too?

A: No, I was born in Romulus. I graduated from the Romulus High School.

Q: How did you happen to meet a lady from Romulus?

A: At the Northville fair.

Q: They came from all over for the fair. It was quite big, wasn't it?

A: We are doubly related. Alec Lyke was my cousin (Mrs. Lyke). Alec Lyke was my uncle (Mr. Lyke). So, I married Alec's cousin. There was no blood relation or anything like that, but it's mixed up people. When we want to confuse people, we call them aunt, cousin, uncle and so on. (Mrs. Lyke)

Should I tell her how we met or how Gary thought we met? (Mr. Lyke). Our youngest boy had just started school down here and he came home one day and said, "Our teacher wants us to come and tell how our folks met." I didn't think about what I was saying and I just said, "Well, at that time at the fair, they didn't have buildings, they had big tents up. We were at the fair there

and your mother saw me and she started to chase me and I got my foot tangled in one of those ropes and she caught me.” Well, we knew the teacher, Edna Krieger, so I didn’t think anything about it. I told him that and forgot about it. He goes back and he told her that. Boy, we never heard the end of that.

Q: They come in from all over for the fair, was it big?

A: Oh yes. It was quite a place.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the fair.

A: When I was going to school, I was in a 4-H club work and when I went to work for the Maybury Sanitarium, they showed cattle down there at the fair. I had a little experience with them, so I took the cattle down and showed them at the fair. We would take twelve or fifteen head of cattle to the fair. We took one big bull that weighed a little over a ton, but he was gentle. If you didn’t irritate him, he was all right. It was mostly regular farmers that had the exhibits there. There was cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, chickens, geese, and everything you could think of there from all of the farms. If you would exhibit there, you would get a pass to go into the fair, so it didn’t cost you anything to go to the fair. So of course, all of the farmers around here wanted the pass to get in and that is the way they got it. There were horse races there. Of course, nothing like they have today, but they had some pretty good races.

Q: Did you get a prize or ribbon, or was it just mainly to enter?

A: You got ribbons and you got prize money too. So much for first prize and second. I think just a ribbon for third. You did get money out of it. At that time, there were three institutions that showed cattle there. There was the Maybury Sanitarium, the Detroit House of Corrections had cattle there and the Training School had cattle there. It was quite a show, but there was no pavement or blacktop or anything like that. I remember one year we had an awful lot of rain and people bought all of the rubber boots there were in Northville so they could go to the fair.

Q: Would it be typically in August?

A: At first it was in September, and then they put it back so they had it in the latter part of August.

Q: Did you (Mrs. Lyke) come over with your family to the fair?

A: Somewhat, yes. Then I came up and stayed with my cousins. Mr. Lyke has forgotten to tell you one thing. We were married in June of 1935. (Mrs. Lyke) We celebrated our golden wedding anniversary in 1985. We rented a room over at the Elks in Plymouth. There were eighty-some people there for a sit down dinner. (Mr. Lyke)

(Mrs. Lyke) I was going to talk about our winning a car at the fair. In 1935, you had very little money and we rented McBurney’s (?) place and we took an old table that they sold vegetables

out front and that was our dining room table. The davenport that you might have today was a box that they had covered with a (?) or something like that. When you sat on it, it was very hard, but that was about the extent of things. Of course, he was working not always a full five days, sometimes the shop didn't run, so sometimes it was maybe three days. One fall he, his brother, and myself took on the job of picking all of the apples in one orchard over here on Beck Road. We did this for ten cents a bushel, I think, but it was a little extra money to help us along. At that time, we paid \$25.00 a month rent for the house and it did have a furnace in it.

Q: Was that in Northville?

A: (Mrs. Lyke) That was on the Chapman farm on Taft Road, near Ten Mile. We got married in June and in August we won a car at the Wayne County fair.

(Mr. Lyke) Every time you made a purchase from any of the merchants in Northville, they gave you a ticket on these cars. They gave away three cars at the end of the fair. When you bought a ticket at the fairgrounds, you got one of these tickets on the car. We happened to get a ticket when we went into the fair when we bought our tickets. When they drew them out of the big barrel, our number was drawn.

(Mrs. Lyke) We went over to watch a Brennan girl ride a horse.

(Mr. Lyke) She got thrown off and they said she was hurt. I went over to see how bad she was hurt. When I came back they had drawn the number and, of course, I was being smart, I said, "I got that number." I reached in my pocket and the first ticket I pulled out lacked one number of being it and when I pulled the next one out, that was the number.

(Mr. Lyke) "You can remember the number, can't you?" (Mrs. Lyke) 219898.

Q: What car did you win?

A: We won a 1935 Ford. I had a village coupe at that time and we wanted to drive the new car the next day, so we went up to see Mr. Elmer Smith, he was in where Harold Bloom is. You would get a license plate in Plymouth at the Mayflower Hotel, they had a Secretary of State's office there, and Mr. Smith called over there and they said if we came right over we could get it. So we went over there and I think we only had to pay \$4.00 or something for a half-year license, which was all we had to buy. That took almost all the money we had. We did have enough left to buy a little gasoline. (Mrs. Lyke) It was half full of gas when we got it. (Mr. Lyke) Anyway, we drove our car the next day. I tell you, it was quite a wedding present; we got married in June and won the car in August.

(Mrs. Lyke) The license number was 92222.

Our older son won a car. He was on the fire department and lived in Whitmore Lake at that time. (Mrs. Lyke) He and his wife were shopping and bought a ticket from the firemen who were

selling tickets. (Mr. Lyke) He bought a ticket, only one ticket, and he won a car. We were lucky, but we can't hit on the lotto.

Q: Then the Northville Fair was pretty important to you?

A: Yes, an awful lot of people went there. It only cost about 35 cents to get in.

Q: Did they have rides, entertainment, or other things going on?

A: They had a midway. There was a Ferris wheel and all of that, side shows.

Q: This was probably the highlight of the summer?

A: It was. It really was.

Q: I notice on your paper you worked at Meadowbrook Country Club too?

A: Yes, I worked there. Tom Slicer was the greens keeper. I worked there two summers. That was the time that I was taking a vacation from Ford when I was off, but then I decided Ford was the best place to work, it was steady and a little more money.

Q: You worked outside at Meadowbrook?

A: Yes, I mowed the rough on the course there. There were about seven or eight of us that worked there. Some of the guys mowed the greens. Eric Panko mowed the fairways, and I mowed all the rough. Of course, we had tractors. To mow the greens they used push mowers. Today, they have power mowers to mow the greens, but in those days, we had to do it by hand.

Q: Do you remember anything else?

A: On Seven Mile Road, when we went to school there, we didn't have any inside toilets or anything like that. For our drinking water, we went across the road and there was a tile that came out there and that is where we would catch a pail of water and that is the water we drank. Do you know the School Board or nobody said anything about it, because that's where we got our water, out of this tile?

Q: Did anybody ever get sick?

A: No, nobody ever got sick.

Q: Didn't they have the money to drill a well or was it difficult?

A: I never knew why.

Q: We have a card here that's dated 1906 with Lovers Lane here in Northville. We will have to look to see if there is something about it in The Record or something like that.

A: (Mr. Lyke) You should ask Charlie Freydl, he probably would know where that was.

Q: He might have, but I don't think he did.

A: There was a man that could have told a lot about the history of Northville. I can remember, though, when Charlie Freydl's dad ran the men's store. He made suits at the store by hand, I can remember that.

Q: But, you don't remember any Lovers Lane though?

A: You said that was in 1906; that was a little bit before my time.

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I can remember when they paved the streets in Northville. I was going to school down there and one of the boys in my class lived over on Six Mile Road, and he rode a horse to school. At that time, skis were just coming around. They had just put the pavement in and they didn't allow any traffic on it. Of course, he and I were smart alecks, showing off, and he would get his horse out, and I would ride his horse and he would ride the skis up and down that street all noon hour.

Q: I have heard quite different things about Buchner's Hill.

A: That was quite a hill. They would start way up at the top and come down right across Main Street and down towards the fairgrounds. That was located where the sanitarium was and now it's where the home is

Q: Allen Terrace.

A: I remember one boy being killed on that hill. His name was Boyer (?). He was coming down the hill on his sled and somehow it tipped over and the back end of the runner hit him in the stomach and cut him open. You wouldn't dare ride down that hill now, not with the traffic around here.

Q: You've had a pretty busy life with your farming, working in town, and everything. Are your children around here?

A: One lives in Brighton and one lives in Pinckney. We have two boys. They, we, are thinking about selling this. We have 60 2/3 acres and we don't need that land, we just pay taxes on it. One wants us to move near Pinckney and one wants us to move near Brighton. So, we don't know what we're going to do.

Q: You probably hate to leave Northville having grown up here all your life.

A: That's it exactly.

Q: Do you go downtown quite often?

A: Yes. In fact, we were downtown for breakfast this morning. We eat out more than we eat at home. We go to Guernsey's, they have a pretty good breakfast there.

Q: Did you have animals, a garden, and things when you were younger, here?

A: We had a bunch of chickens, we had ducks, we had pigs, but we never had any cattle or horses. We did buy one cow, but she died so we didn't have any more. (Mrs. Lyke) I did a lot of canning and still do can things.

Q: You have a little garden?

A: Up until last year, it was the first year we didn't have a big garden. After I retired, I had two acres of garden every year. Of course, I have a tractor, disk, plow, and everything. I have a nice rototiller. We put the garden in and then give it to everybody in the country. We never got a penny out of any of it. But, we like to see it grow. I don't know if we could live in town. We have lived here so long and it's so quiet, there's nobody on either side of us and as long as we own it, there will never be anybody on this side and the other side has two hundred feet that Edison owns, and nobody will ever build on that. (Mrs. Lyke) We are spoiled rotten.

Q: It's unusual to have stayed in one place so long. So many people move.

A: (Mrs. Lyke) We moved here in 1942. We were in Wayne County, but we were the City of Novi.

(Mr. Lyke) It's kind of mixed up here. We live in the City of Novi, our address is Northville, we vote in the Northville School District, and for the presidential elections, we go to Novi to vote.