

Oral History of Pearl Stephens

(OK, what is your name?)

Pearl Stephens.

(OK, go ahead and tell me a little; where do you live and tell me a little bit about yourself.)

Right now we live on Horton Street in Northville. We've lived here all of our married life, for 41 years in the same house, which we built before we were married. I was born on Seven Mile Road near the I-275, where the I-275 expressway goes through. There was a large farm there, and I was born there and lived there I think about a year and a half. After that we moved to the little village – it's called Waterford – out near Six Mile and Northville-Plymouth Road.

(Oh, is that Waterford Bend there?) Yes. (You know part of Hine Park now?)

Well, it's closer in. It's where the, what's that school, Meads Mill School there. And there used to be a little country school there. That little area, those homes, there was quite a little settlement there – it was called Waterford. And there was a Ford factory there, which is now something else, I don't know what the name of the factory is, but it was a Ford factory there.

(That would be around Six Mile and Northville Road?)

That's right, uh huh.

(Now, if you'll pause just a moment, I'll make sure this is recording. Now, you were saying that there was a little country school there? And how old were you when you moved there?)

I was eighteen months and at that time my father worked for – on a farm called Farm Crest. It was a thousand acre farm, and it was owned by the Grennan family, and my father was superintendent of it. And we lived in the little village of Waterford for about 6 months until a home was prepared further down Six Mile, where Northville Commons is now, that area in there. (That's East on Six Mile?) Yes, going toward Haggerty. And that was all the farm in there, a thousand acres. It's now Northville Commons, and there's a St. Mary's Emergency Care, and Lakes of The North (the Lakes of Northville) and all of that. (That was all your farm?) Yes, it was all the farm, and then they also had property that went down Six Mile, and also had property closer to Beck Road. It was a big area in there, and they called that the ranch because my dad built a huge log cabin back there just like a western ranch. And you drove back off the road and went back in there. It was beautiful. (Like west of Six, all the way out?) All to Beck, and I don't know how many acres were back there, but a lot. And it was – Mr. Grennan was a very wealthy man, and it was more of an estate than a farm. And they had a, and off the – behind our house on Six Mile where we first lived, there was a huge field, and they turned it into a polo field. And Sunday, every Sunday, they would have polo matches out there. And also on Saturday's they'd have fox hunts. And they'd take and they would lay a scent, you know, and they were all dressed up just like the – in their red coat and the ladies rode side saddle. And they'd have the fox hunts. There were so many beautiful woods back there.

(Now where was the site of the fox hunt – near Beck and Six?)

No, no, right where Northville Commons is now – right off of Six Mile. It would be between Five and Six Mile Roads, and there was a big woods there. And they'd go along with an old burlap bag, where they had a scent on it. And they had the fox hounds they kept at the farm, they raised the fox hounds, and early Saturday morning they'd go out there. It was very – it was lovely to see. And there was a lady lived near here in Northville, Her name was Mrs. Rollie Brown. She was very dignified lady, and she always rode side saddle. And they'd go right through our yard and back into the woods. The old hounds would be barking and yipping, you know. And then they would come back. Then on Sunday would be the polo matches.

(That is very interesting, very interesting.)

And you go there – a very good friend of ours lives out there. In fact his house is built on Winchester, and when they built the house and moved in, and he's a wonder gardener and built this ... what in the world does your father have out there? He says; "everywhere I dig, I hit wire." And I said, "Well, where your house is, there was a barn, we called the wire barn, and my dad stored wire in there, all kinds of fence and things." Well, when the subdivision people came in, they just took a bull dozer and bull dozed everything, and he just bull dozed the barn and all the wire. And Bill is digging it up trying to plant his roses. But – it's rather sad because I said every house I ever lived in has been knocked down for what they call progress, you know.

We lived on the south side of Six Mile for about fifteen years, I guess. Then we moved just across the street. It was still all the same estate, but Mr. Grennan said he thought my mother would like the other house better, and we moved over there. It was a beautiful home and we lived there until I think I was about nineteen or twenty, and the War – it was getting to be war years, and you couldn't get anyone to work the farm because it was not what they called a producing farm. And so it just started to fold. We did have a big dairy business out there, but then, they didn't even recognize that as a necessity. So the men couldn't get deferred to work the farm. My dad was trying to do most of on his own, but his health just about broke because it was such a load. So then, he was approached by the Ford Motor Company asking if he would be a plant protection man here in Northville, which he did for a little while.

Then the mayor of Northville, who was Carl Bryan, Carl Bryan spoke to my dad and asked him if he would come on the police force. They needed someone really bad. So my dad said OK he would. He was only on it a few weeks when he was made Chief. When he retired, he was Chief of Police at that time.

(Do you recall how many officers Northville had back then?)

Not very many. They always said Joe Denton and Mary Alexander, who was the Clerk, ran the town. And they knew where everybody's address and everybody's phone number and every... Um, let's see, there would be my dad, who was the Chief and I think he had three officers. I thought three, four at the very most, but I believe three. They had, of course I know it was a different situation than it is today, but I mean there were no problems because the youngsters respected my dad a great deal, but they had fear in their heart too 'cause they knew they weren't going to get...you know, just a slight tap on the finger.

(One of the other people that I interviewed mentioned a light on a pole – not a traffic light, this was before traffic lights – mentioned a light, a light system somehow at the corner of Center and Main ... that the office always knew how to contact you dad.)

Yeah, if that light was on, it meant there was trouble. My dad started what they called a junior police organization for the youngsters here in Northville. And it became, he became quite well known throughout the country because of this. He had write-ups all over the country about his organization he started for boys, just for boys. Well, one day some of the girls came up to the house, the Allen's little girls, and said; "Why can't we be members too. We'd like to." And my dad said, "I can't see no reason why you can't." So they had both boys and girls. But they called them the junior police. He bought t-shirts for all of them. At Christmas time he gave a party for them in the theater. They'd have cartoons and popcorn and a little sack of something to take home. The first few he did on his own, out of his own pocket, and then a few people said, "Well, look Joe, we'd like to help you." So they contributed and that went on for years, even after Dad retired.

(Now, so we'll get this recorded, your dad, the first Chief of...I mean Chief of Police was Joe Denton. We forgot to mention your maiden name – that will all be on the biographical sketch.)

He did a little park down on Seven Mile, is that Eaton Drive, it's called for Joe Denton Park, which they dedicated, Dad was still alive. In fact Mother was still alive also. The Garden Club more or less took over and did that.

When he retired, they gave a retirement party and surprised him. They used to have a carnival at the school, called P.T.A. Carnival. So they figured at the P.T.A. Carnival, there would be so many people there, and they'd give him a "This is Your Life" deal, and he did not know about it. A couple of the children, oh, one was the Mueller boy and the Kuhlman, Becky Kuhlman, I think was the girl – they went up to the house and talked to my Mom about it, they said, be sure and don't tell him. Mom said, "Well, I won't tell." But they said, "We've got to get some things – we want his World War I uniform and all..." These kids worked so hard on that and then at the carnival, they announced everyone was to go into the Community Building there on Main Street, it's still there. Everybody went in; they didn't know what was happening. My Dad thought there was problems so he went and they said, "Well, Joe – this is your life." And he just – he was just stunned, and Frankie Mueller came out in my Dad's old World War I uniform. He said, "He's got my uniform on." That was fun and the kids really worked hard on it and they did a lovely program for him.

There was a funny thing happened on the – the Junior Police. Dr. Atchison's son was very active in it. He really enjoyed my father. So he said, "Joe, I want a title – I want a real job." My Dad said, "Well, I'll tell you we don't have a dog catcher – we could use a dog catcher." Well, one day he came up to our house, and I don't know how many dogs he had, but he'd just gone out and collected all these dogs, you know, and they had a lot of fun with that one.

Then another time those kids were out, they heard about some money or something that was stolen. They went out by the Northville dam, wasn't it, and they found something out there. They were really good kids, and they took things seriously, and worked hard, and respected what they were doing.

(What year was that, what years would that have covered? Do you remember?)

Oh now, let me see. He retired in '59, so it would be between '50 and '59. Right in there. I was trying to figure, we were married in '47, well, and I'd say even '47 – '59, right in that area. But, we were – after I talked with you the other day about coming up, you know, I said to Carl, “gee, I don't know what I'm going to tell this lady,” but we were coming down Seven Mile Road at the time near Haggerty, and I said, “Maybe she'd like to know I was born out there,” and my brothers, there's 11 years difference in my oldest brother and myself; and my Mom evidently told him to take me for a ride in the buggy. I was just a baby. So he was going down to his boyfriend, Wilbur Lute who lived on Newburgh Road and Seven Mile, so he was going to push me down there. Of course it's a dirt road, Seven Mile was a dirt road, and there were farms. Well, he got me about half way there, and the buggy tipped over. So he thought, we'll she'll just sleep until I come back. Now, I said, “Who can imagine wheeling a baby buggy down Seven Mile Road today, tipping it over, and leaving it,” you know. But the dog was with him, and so the dog went home. Evidently the dog let my mother know something was wrong and my mother looked out the window, and she saw the buggy, wheels sticking up in the air. Envision those things happening today, you just couldn't do it with all the traffic and everything. Of course, that house was knocked down too; I say everywhere I ever lived has been knocked down.

(Now, where did you first attend school? You mentioned a small school?)

I went to a country school in Waterford for just a very short time. (Again, we're speaking of Waterford there that we know as Six Mile and Northville Road.) Yes. (Because there is another Waterford.) Yes. No, this is a little village; it's near Bradner, between Bradner and Northville-Plymouth Roads really. It's just that little settlement in there. I attended school (Now, the school was where?) Right on Franklin, I believe that road now is called Franklin, and it's pretty close to where Meads Mill School is – it sat up closer to the road though. I don't know – did they knock that down or move it somewhere?

Carl Stevens – I think it's gone now. It used to be for – they had it for awhile for Northville Township.

Yeah, it was the Northville Township Hall for a while. (The school was?) For quite a while, and had a lot of teachers. There was a Northville kindergarten through, I believe eighth grade. I only attended a few weeks, a few months at the very most 'cause my brothers were much older. My brothers were older and they couldn't attend there, so they were going to Plymouth School because at that time you could go to Northville or Plymouth for there were no buses or anything. You had to form - have your own transportation. My brother decided they wanted to go to Plymouth Schools. So my Dad took us; and he said as long as you're going there you sister is going to go too. So I had to go to Plymouth School. I attended Plymouth School – I graduated from high school in Plymouth.

(Now, you said that little one-room school had several teachers though?)

Well, over the period of years I mean. One at a time. And some of those women are still alive that taught in that school. I think Jessie Wilson is still alive – I never heard of her death. And

there was another one, and I'm not sure of her name – She's Betty May's relative. She taught my brothers and the last I heard she was still alive.

(Now, I'm wondering about another thing. You said that that was known as the Farm Crest Farm? Was that any relation at all to what became the bakery?)

Yes, the same owner – Phil Grennan. He had the big bakeries in Detroit and this was his estate out here. It was really a - they raised real fancy pigeons. Had a big pigeon house (Racing pigeons?) No, just fancy show pigeons, you know. He used to take them to the Northville Fair, and always have them in there, and of course they were famous for their Jersey cows. They had a beautiful barn.

(Wasn't there a Farm Crest Dairy also? Was that right...?) Right, at the farm. (Back when I...I seem to recall that building was a low yellow building. Back when I first moved to Northville, that's why I wondered if it was the same thing?)

Yes, the same thing. They started that when they found out they couldn't have the men exempted from service to work the farm – they were trying to keep something going. So then they started a dairy business. We had hospitals that they delivered milk to – to make it like a necessity thing, you know. But we still could hardly swing it during... I had to work there. I worked there after school, and on Saturdays and Sundays it was always open. We had customers come from all over the place – from Detroit; they'd come out – everywhere – and get the milk. We had a very large business, and then after my Dad left, the farm – they did keep it on for a while. But that big, huge barn was all full of Jerseys – filled with Jersey cows. When it was fair time in Northville that was the big thing for those - the young people in Northville. That was the main thing of the years was the Northville Fair – we all look forward to it.

(Oh, tell us about that.)

Oh yeah, that was the Northville Wayne County Fair. It was down where Northville Downs is now. That was the Fairgrounds and, the carnival type rides would come in, and it was a nice fair. The farmers in the area would take their livestock and show it; pigs, lambs, cows, horses, chickens and rabbits, everything. Similar to your Saline or some of the smaller county fairs. (Did they also have the carnival aspect if it?) Oh yeah, and we had horse racing. Horse racing, and quite often they'd sell tickets for several weeks before the fair and give away a car. One year they had a marriage down there – who was that? Herb Ware and his wife got married down there.

(I want to find out an awful lot from you later too – so don't say... referring to Carl Stevens.)

Something happened one year at the Fair that was quite comical. I mean it would never happen today. They had quite a large amount of horses brought in, and we always – I always schooled horses, so I had my horse down there, and some other ones, and they didn't have quite enough stalls. But in the cow barn they had a couple of extra stalls so they put some horses in there. This friend of mine and I were there walking through, as we were walking between the aisle, this horse turned and grabbed me right on the shoulder and bit me. Of course I screamed. My dad was there, of course we had a big showing of cattle, and he said, "What happened?" I said, "The horse bit me and it really hurts." He said, "Well, don't worry, Doc's here." I said, "Well

where?" he said, "Well, he's down in the horse barn." What he meant by Doc was Dr. Cabell, the Veterinarian. He said, "Go see Doc and he'll fix it up." I went to see Dr. Cabell and said, "Dr. Cabell, this darn horse bit me here on my shoulder." He said, "Don't worry honey, we'll fix that up." He got out a bottle of horse liniment, I guess, and put it on. It hadn't broken the skin or anything, you know, but we laugh about that because today you just wouldn't do it. I was fine, nothing happened. Well also had a very very good horse show. We had horses come from Bloomfield Hills and all over for the show, and had a big ring, umbrella tables all around the rig for the spectators to sit under.

(Now, what can you tell me about the Denton family, like your grandparents – were they from around here?)

No, my parents came to this country after World War I. My mother and my father and my two brothers. They were all from England, and my Mom was from St. Peterborough, not Saint, but Peterborough, England, and my father was from St. Ives-Huntington. There were two St. Ives – one in Cornwall and one in Huntington. Dad's from Huntington, and they came over here and they went to Walkerville, Canada. He had a job there which the British government had arranged for him. But my dad – he just wanted to leave England. So the government said, "Well if you want to go, you should have a job." And so he got a job with the Walkerside Dairy, which was owned by the Johnnie Walker Whiskey Company, and he worked there for a while. This man by the name of William Booth approached my Dad and asked him if he would be superintendent of his farm at Seven Mile and I-275 where I was born. Daddy went there, but unfortunately, he couldn't afford to operate that farm, and Mr. Grennan heard my Dad was going to leave and he came over and spoke to my Dad and asked him if he would manage his farm. So then we just moved over to Six Mile, and that was back in, I think, 1925. About 1925 because I was born in '23 and I was about a year and a half, two years old maybe, when we moved to Six Mile to the Grennan Farm. Then we stayed there until we came to Northville, we lived on the corner of Linden and Randolph in the house that sort of sits up on the hill there. Yeah, we lived there all that time. (All the time that he was with the Police, you lived right in Northville?) Yes. (You didn't have residency requirements then for police?) No, not really, no because at that time it wasn't a city even, was it? I don't think it was. It hadn't been incorporated as a city yet.

In fact, when we first came to Northville, at that house, it's like the garage but it's an original carriage barn. I think it's about the only one left in Northville. (And that's where again?) At the corner of Randolph and Linden. (It's still there?) Yeah, it's still there. And I still had my horse, and I think I was the last one to have a horse in the City of Northville because Dad fixed one side of the garage for his car and the other side of the garage for my horse. I had it right there, and then my dad got the idea – he wanted some chickens – I don't know why – but we got some chickens and we fixed the top of the garage up, and we had chickens up there. We used to give the neighbors eggs. Now that was back in the '40's. Then it got to the point I really didn't want a horse any more. I just did not have the time, and I didn't want it, so we rented a stall at Northville Downs. I rented a stall down there for a few months, but I finally told my Dad, I said, "I just don't want a horse anymore." I didn't have the time, you know. I was working and everything, I had no time for a horse. But I believe, I bet we were one of the last people to have a horse in Northville, right there.

(Now, what can you tell me, and I'll be wanting the same thing from you (Carl), what can you tell me about the changes that have taken place in and around you since you've lived in this same place for how many years?) Sixty-five years. (No, in this house.) Oh, in this house – 41. (You've lived in Northville for 65 years? What did the town consist of then – have you any, probably your husband when I talk with him would have a better knowledge of the population and that kind of thing, but were their red lights, were their lights in town, traffic lights or anything at all forty years ago?)

Oh, yes, just about the same as we have – almost the same – in the immediate area of the town. But this area up here, of course, Carl's dad owned this whole strip through here. Carl was living next door as a young boy, and then we built here, and there was one house down at the end. This was all vacant and all those homes on Clement Road – none of them were built. In fact, I mean when they started saying they were going to build houses here, everybody laughed. They said how could they build houses there with that drop off and everything. I mean there were just no homes up here. We had quail and pheasant going all through here, you know. Bit by bit it was sold off, and of course built up. Carl, you can tell about your old shack up in the woods, but it's mostly subdivisions gone up and that's the biggest change.

(Now, what about your own family? How many children do you have?)

We have two children – our son, Carl. He's married and lives on Fairbrook, and has two children – Peter Denton Stephens and Victoria Jean Stephens. We have a daughter, Mary, who is single. She is a nurse at St. Joe's Hospital in Ann Arbor and has a condo in Novi. They both attended Northville School. They started kindergarten in where the – on Main Street, and then they went into Junior High in the old building right next door. (What school on Main Street, what is now the school's offices?) Yes, and then they attended the high school. Our son attended Eastern University, has a degree in Fine Arts. Our daughter, she went to St. Joe's School of Nursing.

I have two brothers – my brother Carl passed away two years ago, and my brother Ray, lives in Florida. They both worked for Farm Crest Bakeries. (All their careers, did they?) Yes. My oldest brother was a master baker, and he worked his way up to Vice President of Farm Crest Bakeries. Then when they started to sort of fall apart, Mrs. Smith's Pies approached him, and he joined that organization as Vice President. Then Kellogg's bought Mrs. Smith's Pies out, and he worked at Kellogg's as a Vice President for a few years. My other brother also worked for the Farm Crest Bakeries in the production end of it.

(Now what, you said earlier something about you were working and didn't have time for the horse. What did you do?)

Well, I worked for Ford Motor Company. (The one in Northville?) No, the one between Northville and Plymouth, is called – it was Phoenix, near the Phoenix Lake. It is now the Wayne County Road's Commission building there. It was all women. It was almost an honor to work there. I had planned on going to college, but the War was on and my dad said you shouldn't be going to college. You should be doing something worthwhile like donating blood and working. So that's what I did. I went over there and worked, and I was going to go to college when the War was over, but instead I got married.

(Have you worked since you got married?)

Yes, I worked for twelve years for the Northville Record. (Oh, is that right?) Yes, just part time. I didn't work – I worked like – well, it started out I was going to work eight hours a week, and then it got to twelve hours a week, and then it got to twenty hours a week, you know, a little more and a little more. So then I finally cut back about two days a week. I worked for them from I think about 1969, and I worked for twelve years. It was very enjoyable because we were good friends with Sligers and knew everybody that worked down there, you know. Then again, the paper at that time was still a small home town paper. (I was about to ask you about that – tell us what you remember about the paper. You're holding up your hands as that size – was it the same size as it is now?) Oh yes, it was the same size, but, you know, it was homey. They had the little afternoon tea column in the paper that – you know, little homey things that went on. Women would call up and say they were having a party or a luncheon, and they'd have the column in the paper tell about it or something was coming up, and they'd – you know – you could phone in The Record, and they'd put it in the paper for you. The lady that worked there for years, her name was Hazel Boyden. You'd call Hazel up and tell her about it, and you'd get in the paper, you know. It was fun to read because you could keep up on all your friends and know what they were doing and share their fun with them. Everything was done at the office at the corner of Main and Center. (Where it still is?) It still is there, and everything was done upstairs. We just did everything up there, and I mean everybody pitched in and did a little bit of everything. It was fun. (It was a weekly then too, was it?) Uh, huh, it was a weekly. I mean when one person was behind on something, you'd go over and help them. I didn't know anything about newspaper work when I went there. I mean, I went in as a proof reader, and bit by bit you picked up on everything else. We used to go in on Saturday mornings sometimes and help Jack Hoffman on his book that he was doing on Northville. If we had a few hours, we'd just go in and help Jack on it because, you know, we enjoyed the work, and we were interested in it. And it was almost like one big family, really. Working was fun, but then it got to the point where it was just getting to be too much and they were gonna move the offices and everything, and I just didn't want to work anymore – I just didn't feel I wanted to do anymore of it, so I quit. I haven't – I don't do anything – I just stay home. Go back and forth Up North.

(Do you, as most of us I'm sure, but do you regret or are you sorry about all the changes you have seen?)

Yes, very very sorry. In fact, I said not long ago we were going down Nine Mile Road or down Center Street to Nine Mile Road and I said to Carl, "What in the world used to be around here?" And then we stopped to think, you know, whose farm was where. I think it's very sad that they have not put their thumbs down firmly and said no more condos, no more shopping centers. I think it's very sad that the children don't have the woods to run in and can't experience the wild life in their back yards, and just the openness of everything. I'm glad that I had it, and we never had – my Mo never had to fear that – if I wanted to ride down to the woods and pick a bunch of flowers and go get some nuts or something, she never had to worry I wasn't going to come back because we just didn't have those things happening in those days. My girlfriend and I – we'd quite often pack a sandwich and go down to the woods, and we had beautiful wild flowers in the woods – you know, just sit down there and enjoy them, and bittersweet, oh just so much beautiful bittersweet that you don't find anywhere anymore. It's all been plowed under now. I think it's a real shame.

When we were at the farm, behind the bar, there's a lake back in there. We used to call it Waterford Lake. We used to have picnics there on Sundays quite often. (Now where was the lake, can you remember?) It's right behind, you can see the falls on Northville-Plymouth Road. (I've seen that.) Yeah, OK there's a big lake back there and I think that's why they probably call it Lakes of Northville, is it or something? It used to be Waterford Pond, but now, they've put those condos and things in there, but there is a big lake back there. That was of course all Mr. Grennan's property. On Sunday, we'd have big picnics back in there and they'd have a truck come out and played records and they'd have big grills set up for hot dogs and you could swim. What he'd quite often do, he'd have'em for the bakery – the men and women that worked at the bakery. You know, bring them out to the country for a treat. Here were all these beautiful woods back in there. You know, they could walk through and the lake, it was really pretty. Of course the fields – the pasture and all those cows and everything in it, and then the gorgeous riding horses, the jumpers – the horses there. It was just picturesque, but not. There was a while I could not go down Six Mile Road – I just couldn't stand it because the houses had been knocked down, the fences were down, everything was plowed up. I thought it was sick I really did. Of course it's that way everywhere, you know. But I try to tell our grandchildren, you know, about - our little grandson will ask about different things and we'll try and tell him about it – the way it used to be. It's even hard for the children to ever imagine you know the way it was.

(Where was the Northville High School site then? I mean, I'm talking about when you first came – moved to Northville? Was the site the same – up on the hill?)

No – (Oh, was that the high school there too? You told me your children went to -) but by that time they went to elementary school, which is now, I believe the office – the school offices, the Board of Education. Then right next to it – that was Junior High, but that was high school (to Carl), wasn't it? (Carl – right). Then they did build the high school up there. In fact, I'm not sure which year the school was built up there. They did not have the swimming pool when our son was up there – the swimming pool wasn't in yet; and he graduated in '68. But when our daughter went, there was a swimming pool up there.

(Now, you mentioned also, and when I'm talking with your husband, maybe you can find some of them. You mentioned some pictures that the Society may be interested in.)

We could have copies made of them. To Carl – your father's store.

(That would be nice. Now, I'm trying to think – can you think for instance – you have really given me so much very very good information. I'm sure if you sat and thought, you could think of more things. I think the fox farm to me is the most interesting – the fox hunt.)

Well we – you see they had a lot of horses out there. Mr. Grennan was horse crazy and had a lot of lovely horses – Jumpers, and of course my dad was an old British cavalryman, and he was with the Bengal Lancers. On Sundays we'd have cars going – I don't know, I guess Six Mile Road was paved, but I can remember when it wasn't. They'd set up the pro matches, and then sometimes my Dad would be practicing with – he'd have this lance, and he'd put a peg in the ground, and then he'd ride really fast and with his lance he'd pick up the peg and pull it up. They used to do that out in the fields along Six Mile Road, and we'd have car's stopping

watching us going on, you know, used to have a real show out there on Sunday with the horses. I guess people could really never understand I did not like riding horses – it was just not my thing, but I was forced to do it. My father thought it was – should be done, and I always think myself lucky that I had beautiful horses to ride. And I think one reason I didn't think it was fun was because he'd usually ride behind me, and he'd say, "Straighten your back, pull in your knees, do this, do that." And I mean you were just, you were really riding, you know. It wasn't jump on the horse and away you'd go for fun. But the countryside was much different in those days than it is now. It was a fun – the neighbors down there – we were all very close. I mean as far as helping one another was concerned. And then of course during the fall when the thrashing season would come, dad had a huge farm. The other farmers around here had smaller farms, but they'd all bring their horses and teams. Then when they had to have their thrashing done, well dad would send like five teams of horses over there, and all the men would clean off real fast. And I helped my mum – my mum always would feed the men – first the thrashing, and have the big meal at noon, and they'd all come, and we'd be cooking all morning for it.

(Are we talking about wheat or oats or what?)

Wheat and oats – both wheat and oats. And then during the war, couldn't get any help, and so my dad would say you gotta come and help. You've got to run the bagger which was a thing where they put the burlap bag on the thrashing machine, and all you did was turn a handle, and it would send the grain over into that bag. When that bag was full, you put a bag on the thing, pushed the handle real quick and filled that one up. And he'd say, "You can run the bagger." And there'd be a man there that would lift the bag and put it on. And then when they had to bale hay, there wasn't anybody to thread the wire through the baler, and he said, "Well you can do that."

And well I'll tell you something you might be interested in. When we had this ranch up Six Mile toward Beck Road, well in the spring they had beef cattle, and we'd have to take the cattle from Six Mile, the main farm, all the way to Beck Road. And when we got 'em down there, it was like a round-up. And my dad and I would take these cattle – I'd be on my horse and dad would be on his horse. And we'd take all these beef cattle down Six Mile Road over Northville-Plymouth Road, right down to Beck Road. (About how many are we talking about – hundreds or -) Oh, well probably fifty or sixty cattle. (You didn't have to contend with traffic of course, did you?) No, but one year I had to contend with bees. We were going along and my dad had told this man, whose name was Mr. Helm, that he could keep his bees in this one field, and he had a lot of – the places where the bees make the honey. And a couple of the darn cows got over in there. So my dad says, "Go in there and get 'em." So I went in, and oh, the bees came after my horse and I. (Did he bolt?) Oh, did he bolt – I – we got out of it O.K., but – anyway he finally got the darn cows down to the ranch, and oh, I used to hate those episodes, I'll tell you, but I don't think they'd be probably doing it today – they probably wouldn't be taking cows down there today. The ranch – I don't know who owns it now. I understand it's still down there, but my dad and the man (Six Mile and Beck?) Yeah, it's – would be just east of Beck – there is a driveway that goes in – that goes way back. And it was a beautiful place, just beautiful. When my dad was sixteen, he ran away from home in England and went to Western Canada. He just loved it out there. And so he knew how to make all the knots. He had all kinds of fence held together with ropes and knots and things and special kinds of gates that you didn't have to get off

of a horse to open 'em. And it was quite a place, but as I say, I don't know anything about it anymore. It was more of a weekend retreat for the Grennan family to go back there.

(Were the Grennan family long-time Northville residents?)

Yes, they – well Mrs. Grennan died very young, and in fact they all died young – very tragic deaths. Mr. Grennan, he died at a young – he was quite a young man. And then the daughter, Evelyn, carried on the farm for quite a long time. And then she died at a comparatively – The only one left is Mr. Grennan's granddaughter, and we talk to Patty – her name is Colgrin. She lives in Florida and also up north. We keep in contact and very friendly with her. And also, the Grennan's son, Paul, who was my age, is still alive; however, he was born retarded. But he's really the only one left.

(Now, one thing because obviously, there is overlapping between your interview and your husband's and between yours and some else's but would you prefer your husband to tell me more about what sort of businesses were in Northville back then, or do you remember the stories better than he does?)

No, I think he does because his dad had a store. The one thing in the town of Northville that I remember as a little girl – that I used to look forward to. My mother would come into town to get her hair done, and a lady named Mrs. Tufant, and he daughter's name was Buckley, Mrs. Laura Buckley. And they had a beauty shop – there's a beauty shop there today, isn't it? (Carl – There's a beauty shop there now – right next to my dad's store.) Yeah, I don't know what it's called. It was called Margie's, but now it's called something else. It was right there on Center Street. And they were the nicest people, and I always wanted to go with my mom to get her hair done because she had a big candy jar on the counter, and she'd always be very generous with her candy. And then next door was a jeweler shop – the Blake, it was Lucius Blake's. And whenever you needed jewelry or (?) or something, you'd go in there. Then there was a gift shop further toward the corner. The lady that lived – that worked in there - her name was Mrs. Holmes, and also Carl's mom worked in there. And she used to have the dearest little whatnot things to set around – little dogs and little dolls and all kinds of cute little things. And sometimes my mother and I would go in there and look around.

And another couple that we were very dear to in town that were storekeepers were Jerry and Frances Woodworth. They owned a dime store. They were just such nice people. I can remember one Christmas – I don't know how old I'd be, I wasn't very old – I might have been seven or eight. And I wanted to get my mom something for Christmas. And I don't know why I had this idea that I should get her a dish – some sort of a dish. And so I went to the dime store, and Frances was – she said “I know just what you need.” She took me – two little – matching candy dishes that I bought for my mother for Christmas. And I still have them. I have them in my mother's china cabinet. But, you know, it seems like that when people were so kind and took so much time with you, you really remember it.

I can remember my dad telling – even when we were still out on Booth's farm on Seven Mile Road. Then, this probably part of this may even have happened before I was born. But they'd get the truck, and they'd put the farm hands in it. They'd come into Northville on a Saturday night, and they'd go to Jim Spagnuolo's ice cream shop, and see who could eat the most banana

splits. (Was that the forerunner of the liquor store owners?) Yes, that would be, well, Joe's father and Jimmy's grandfather. (Was the site of the ice cream shop the same place where the liquor store is?) No, it was closer to Center Street, wasn't it? (Carl – no you see it's where that lady has that fabric shop now.) Anne's Fabric – and they'd go in there and see who could eat the most banana splits. That was the big thing on Saturday night, I guess.

But mostly the changes, as far as I see them – my younger days were all in the township. The biggest changes have been the springing up of buildings, you know. You just could never imagine that that was going to happen – just couldn't imagine that. (Well, in the short while I've lived here, I could never imagine that huge homes – the expensive homes that have gone up in the area.) Yeah, that's very difficult for us to imagine too because at the time that Grennans were the family of the area, they were millionaires and they were – But nowadays, (Where did they actually live – there?) Oh yes, they lived there- they had a beautiful home. It burned. And then they had a home on Boston Blvd in Detroit – a winter home. We used to go down there a lot, too. (Boston and what?) (Carl – it was between Woodward and Second, I think.) I can't remember. I'm quite sure the Fisher home was across the street – it seems to me. And I said someday I'm going to go back down there and see if I can find it. But you know, as far as the township – the area where I lived – there's very few of it – well, there aren't any of the old families over there. They're all gone. The farms have gone, the beautiful farms have all gone. Our next door neighbor was John Crump. And that's all been knocked down except his daughter built a little house there, and that's still standing – the little white house. But the Crump farm, and then across the street was the Aldea farm, and that's all gone.

Oh, at one time down there – let's see that would be the north side of Six Mile and before Haggerty – there was a little house in there. And it was a blind pig. And it was quite a notorious place. He ran that for a while, and then I don't know he got run out – he went over on Five Mile and Haggerty area and opened up, had a little restaurant in the front, but the blind pig was in the back. But at Six Mile, he didn't have a restaurant – it just looked like a house.

(To go back just a little bit k- talking about your father. One of the other people I interviewed told me about an incident where this child went to school and mentioned the fact that a brand new washing machine had been stolen from their back porch over the weekend – was telling the teacher about it. Do you remember this, did your dad ever tell you this?) No. (Oh well, I don't want this to be my interview because it's on his tape – well I'll tell you about it on the tape anyway. And they were very, very upset about it because they were so thrilled to have this washing machine. And in the same classroom the same day, I believe it may have been not "show and tell", but anyway, they were talking. The same teacher heard this child say – oh, a wonderful thing happened to us – somebody brought a new wash machine. So the teacher called your father – he got the washing machine back. I guess there was no one ever prosecuted for it anyway. It was just to show you what a small town ---).

He'd take people out for driving tests, you know, and he usually would bring them up that Center Street hill, and there wasn't that much automatic drive in those days – you had to shift gears. And you'd time it just right to get up that hill so the car wouldn't stall. But that used to be the test drive to go up that hill there by the light, and stop there, and shift gears and go through.

But the town, I realize it wasn't as large, but it ran smooth, and people knew that when they needed help, it was there. And of course, Casterlines had the ambulance service. You could call the ambulance service any – it was there in a hurry. It was well run and well maintained. And we had our little hospital here in town, you know where the nursing home is. Both of our children were born in that hospital. And I had my tonsils taken out in that hospital. (What was the name of it?) Sessions – Sessions Hospital. And the women, the nurses were so kind, and the doctors were Dr. Holcum and Dr. Snow. Dr. Snow lived right next door and had his office in the little house. And then he lived in the big house on the corner. And then Dr. Holcum lived on Wing Street. He was our, both of those were – worked together more or less. They were our family doctors.

(Did you know the Snow children?)

Oh, Betty's my best friend. She's married to Mike Allen. Betty and I are very close. In fact they live right next door to our son and his family on Fairbrook. And her brother, Buzz. We all more or less grew up together.

So, the biggest changes that I can see and the biggest disappointments that they cut down all the trees and put up a lot of condos and houses. But there's nothing you can do about it – not now. It's happening the whole world over, I guess. But it was fun in those days, lots of fun.

(I'm sure it was. Thank you very much.)

Thank you.