

LUELLA KEHRL (and daughter MRS. ROY)

Luella, when you were young and lived in Northville. Now, were you married when you got to Northville?

Yes.

Now where did you live in Northville?

In the Parmenter flat. Between Dr. Snow and Dr. Atchinson. The upper flat.

Now what street was that?

Linden Street.

Now, while you were living there, were your children born there?

No, I didn't have any children there.

Now, were you just at home, or did you have an outside job?

I taught school at Thayer. That is a fractional district. It's... I had students from Northville Township and from Salem Township. Thayers were a very well known family. Now apparently they had given this property for this school. They were Northville people, no, that was their farm and that would be Northville Township. And the school is right in the corner and then Thayer Cemetery is right by it.

Now, what grade did you teach?

Well, it was a country school, all eight grades.

That was a job!! How many pupils did you have?

Ah, well goodness. Looking at this picture, there were four eighth graders, two seventh graders, two sixth graders, two fifth graders, two fourth graders, six second graders, three first, and one kindergartener.

You had twenty-two pupils. That was a roomful wasn't it!

That was the first year. And then the next year I didn't have quite that many. And then the third year it was even less. They grew up and went to other schools, and high school.

Now what year was this when you started teaching?

1927, 1928, 1929. From September of 1927 until June of 1930, I taught over there.

Now, what section of town was this school in, did you tell me?

On the corner of Six Mile and Napier Road.

Is it still there?

Oh yes, it's still there. There's people living in it. It's not a school anymore. They made a home out of it.

And you were a teacher there.

(Mrs. Roy speaking)... There's more to it as far... as far as our family goes. My father went to school there. And when it was a wooden school, my grandfather, that would have been Grandpa Kehrl, he went there and I went there when I went to school. I graduated from the eighth grade in 1947.

I don't know if he (Grandpa Kehrl) would have gone there because he was teenager. But anyway, they was sixteen before they got out of the eighth grade, a lot of them. Then they would do whatever high school was in the vicinity.

(Mrs. Roy speaking) And we are now offices of the Thayer Cemetery Association. We help keep it up. Yeah, we have some endowments. My husband is President, my mother is Secretary, and we have some other people who don't live in the neighborhood.

Now, that cemetery is still having burials.

Oh yes, it's basically just for those that have family here and those that live in this area.

Now, that's a lot of history I hadn't heard before. That's all news to me.

That's not the city of Northville, it is in the township.

You taught in 1930. Now what caused you to stop? You decided not to teach anymore?

Yes, I was ready for a vacation. I was skinny and tired of the day to day. Oh, I taught more, but not right then.

And then you had one daughter, and your name is Dorothy. You stayed here until she was a year old.

But we didn't stay in that house. She was born in 1932. We lived on Orchard Drive then. In Northville.

Now you stayed there till when?

We lived there one year and then we moved to Dearborn. She was seven years old when we moved back to this house. This house was built in 1939 and we moved in. We've been here fifty years since.

And you have lived here ever since then?

Yes.

Your husband died when?

July, 1983. He was eighty-three. He lived here a long time.

All this time you were a member of the Baptist church in Plymouth?

No, in Northville.

And where were you born?

In Lenawee County, near Adrian. And the first twenty years of my life were out there. I met my husband at a PTA meeting. My husband always dated teachers.

And you were a teacher then?

Well, it was sort of the social center of the district. The kids that went to school there, their parents were, you know, they'd have parties and it would be just the people in the district.

And that's how you met him then?

Ice cream socials. They were much more social then. His parents had moved out of the district then, to Salem, and he would bring his mother. She liked the social part. To PTA. To see everybody. I was the T of the PTA.

Now were you and your husband married here?

In Ypsilanti.

Now when you were teaching, can you remember any of the doings, what they did for fun?

Oh, you mean what they did. Well we thought we were pretty well taken care of. We had a slide and some swings, for the little ones. And the older ones just played catch or whatever.

Did they have any school functions, like proms or football games, or anything like that?

We would have a Halloween party and we'd put on a Christmas program. That was rather interesting.

You did everything!

Yes, we did everything by ourselves. I swept the floors, I built the fire. We burned wood in the stove.

(Mrs. Roy speaking) Even when I was there in the 40's, we still had the potbellied stoves.

The eight boys, we had water churn type of thing, the eighth grade boys carried the water from the nearest farm every morning. And I swept the floor each night before I left.

Then you didn't even have running water?

(Mrs. Roy speaking) Not even when I went there in the 40's. Not at first. We had a well outside, but we still had outside facilities.

No, we didn't have a pail and a dipper. But a lot of schools at that time did. We had the crock with the spigot on it. It was like a little fountain.

And tell me about the Christmas program that you had to head up.

Well, before I was there, Roy Terrill was the, well, he was well-known in the Northville District, he was the milk inspector at that time. He travelled all over. And he was on the school board. And they wouldn't have found me if it wasn't for him. Anyhow, his wife, she was a member of the Catholic Church in Northville and was a very prominent person. And she would dress up as Santa Claus, and she would be Santa. And then she got to that age where she couldn't anymore. So someone else would always dress up as Santa. We would do a whole Christmas program. We would sing songs.

Now who would make up this program, did you have a book to go by, or did you make it up?

Oh no, just by myself and from ideas from the magazines teachers used to get.

You were the only teacher in the building.

Oh yes.

Now, did someone come around and check how things were going?

Yes. There was a nurse would come from the county. At that time, all of the schools were under a county commissioner. And he had for the different districts... this won her in the northwest corner... she came once a month to observe what was going on. And we had to go to teacher meetings.

Now where was that?

And we didn't get a day off. We had to do it on Saturday. The meetings were at the different schools. Whoever had volunteered to be the host for the day. At that time, one by Starkweather and others. I think I was the farthest out. And we all went.

Were the roads paved then?

No, this was just dirt when we moved here. You know, out in the country. Farms were all around here. Most of the students were farmers.

Who were the farmers in this area, who lived around here?

The Young farm on Six Mile, near Napier Road. The Sealy farm, Ray Terrill, and then the Angel farm, and this was the Kehrl farm.

How many acres when you started out?

A hundred acres. Fifty on each side of the house.

Who did you live with, while you were teaching, before you were married?

Well, I lived with the Van Sickles, which was right straight across from the school the first year. And then the second year, I went to live with some people named Fendt, down the road. I got so cold walking a mile every day. Of course, the kids did too. So I went to live with Ben Suberichs. And that house is still there. It's the dump now. BFI still use it as an office.

There's a big hill there now.

Arbor Hills, the same old dump.

How has the town changed since you came here? What have you noticed that has made it really different?

In Northville. Since the Northville '79 plan, why everything has changed. A lot of buildings, some are gone, but the rest are changed. No, I was thinking of where the flower place is now... On Dunlap and Main Street... that was the C&F Grocery store. It was torn down. The theater was around earlier. It was over the grocery store. A skating rink or something. I can't remember exactly. You could find out looking in Northville – The First Hundred Years to find out for sure. But there was something up there. Schrader's was there. They lived in the home that is now the funeral home. Casterline started afterwards. When Schraders gave up the funeral part and just kept the furniture store. Did you know that they were brothers? The one in Plymouth, and both brothers had a funeral home and a furniture store. When their Northville brother died, the first Nelson Schrader, the family just weren't that interested in the funeral business. They closed it after a few years. The Schrader in Plymouth closed his furniture store. So Schrader's furniture business has ended, but the Schrader funeral home still goes on.

Did Mr. Schrader in Northville die?

No, the son wasn't interested, was it Gregory or Tommy? It was Tommy in 1984, he would be the fourth generation of Schraders, didn't want the furniture store.

Now, the Casterline funeral home?

Now, Ray Casterline had worked for Schraders. It's the same building. It's been enlarged. He's the third generation of Casterlines. What's in where the funeral home that Schrader's had? It was a post office for awhile?

(Mrs. Roy Speaking) Oh, that's where the Starting Gate is now.

Oh, that's where the other (original Schrader) funeral home was?

Always, the funeral home and the furniture store were together on Center Street.

It's just store now, where the funeral home was?

Yes, there's the tavern. And then the post office was there.

Now, about that church that's on the same block, when was that built?

The old Methodist church, that was always there. They've moved now. The Presbyterians are still there and the Baptists are still there. The Methodists are out on Eight Mile Road and Taft. They were the only churches. I don't remember any others. Not in the city.

Can you remember any outstanding thing that happened, any catastrophe that stands out in your mind?

Well the grade school burned, but I can't remember... Which school was that?

It was... you know where the old high school is now... the school for the handicapped. Right on Main Street, that's where she (Mrs. Roy) graduated from. On that block, then was a side street, and the elementary school was behind the high school, so that was the school burned. And they built the one where the board of education office is now. Old Village School. But that's where she went to school, where the handicapped school is now.

How did you get in there from here?

(Mrs. Roy) They were running a bus the year I started, was 1947. There were two of us who graduated from Thayer together. The other girl went to Plymouth and I went to Northville. You could go to either one. And then a few years later, the district consolidated with Northville. And the buses, it was just the Northville bus line run by Henry Biddle. His bus garage was right across from here the Northville State Hospital is now. He came out with a bus and I had to walk to the corner the first two years, and then the last two years, my junior and senior years, I just walked across the street and they picked me up. There were no school buses, this was just a Northville bus line.

Did you have to pay to ride this then?

No, the district paid for the children who were picked up.

Now, when you were teaching, how did the children get picked up then?

They could go to any high school they wanted, and it was up to the parents to get them there. But the tax money from this district paid the tuition. They had to have tuition. Now the boy who lived over here, they were renting from my in-laws, he was the eighth grade the first year I was there. He went to, he took himself of course, the boys usually had some form of transportation, to Plymouth.

So he drove?

Yeah, he drove to Plymouth High School. And then his sister, she was in the sixth grade my first year, she went to Northville.

So you could just decide whatever one you wanted to?

You could pick as late as '47, whichever one to go to. They consolidated around 1950.

But the children in your school, when you were teaching, did they walk to school?

Oh, yeah, they were close enough unless their folks brought them. Now the people next door, they had two boys, Wilfred was the beginner, the first year, and Willard was second grade. She always brought them to school and went home at 9:00. Very punctual.

What did you do when you had children misbehave? How did you discipline them?

Oh, the kids weren't really naughty like they are today. If they didn't do their work, they had to miss recess. They couldn't go out and play. They had to do their work. Really, I had no problems.

And with all those different grades, and you didn't have problems?

No, I would insist, the older ones were busy doing their arithmetic or whatever. While I helped the littler ones, and I had handiwork for them... things to color... We didn't call it kindergarten then, we called them beginners. And they learned to read that first year.

And they came to school for first grade, they didn't have kindergarten?

They could go home early. They brought their lunch and they stayed until after first recess in the afternoon. And then they could walk home, then if their parents didn't pick them up. Or they could play outside until the older ones were done for the day.

Well, how old were they when they first came to the first grade?

Well, they came when they were five and they were the beginners. I was trying to think. I started when I was five and I graduated when I was eighteen, so that must have been like kindergarten. The first, second, and third grade could go at the afternoon recess. Maybe they just lived down

the corner or across the road and there wasn't any traffic like there is today. The roads were all dirt roads then. There wasn't a paved road here.

And you had the example all set, the older ones behaved, the younger did as they did.

And then in the afternoon, from the recess until school was out at 4:00, we went from 9:00 till 4:00, with an hour at noon. With fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes in the afternoon. I think that was how we did it. And then I just had them in the afternoon. The little ones were either playing in the corner or something or if it was nice weather, they played outside. Until the older ones were done, and they would walk home together.

I know you had the PTA for social events, did you have any other events, like potlucks or movies?

No.

Well, how then did your husband court you?

Well, there were movies for just a quarter. We could go to Tecumseh, we lived six miles from Tecumseh. They had a theater there. And my neighbors, I took care of all the neighborhood kids, I was the oldest in the neighborhood... they used to take their kids and they used to take us along. And I think we went for a nickel. On Saturday afternoons, special movies, all of the funny ones.

Any ice cream stores where you could go?

Oh, well that's where I earned my money. I used to dish ice cream at a drug store while I was in high school. That wasn't around here though.

Did you go to college to get a certificate to teach?

I got a life certificate at what is now Eastern Michigan now.

Is that a two or four year degree?

At that time, that was all you needed. Two years, I got it in two years. But the next year, after I started, they changed it to three years. Well, even during the '40's, if I hadn't gone back for any more training. I taught at Whitmore Lake for four and a half years during the war in the '40's. The life certificate was all that I had, but I was still using it then. You had to go four years to get a degree, and then to teach several years. Now Betty Garlech taught down here at Northville, she was a distant cousin, and she had four years of college, and she had to teach three years before she got her license. And I got mine in two years. Now, I couldn't teach with it, I couldn't teach anyway. But at that time, that was all it took... but even before that, they had what they called a county, well that was in Blissfield, you could go teach for a year. It was just a temporary. It was just getting so people were going for two years for the certificate in the '20's.

Your husband's occupation, did he just farm?

No, he worked at Ford's. Five dollars a day. At the Rouge Plant and at Highland Park for eighteen years.

Then he had a long drive to go, didn't he?

That's why we moved to Dearborn. He had worked in Northville at Ford's too. Then he was transferred to Highland Park. Then he would ride with four others. He would pick them up and they would all pay a little. Fifty cents a day or so, I don't remember.

Did he work the farm too?

No, we rented all the acreage out.

Do you still have the hundred acres you once did?

No, it's down to twenty-seven acres. My grandmother, (Mrs. Kehrl's mother-in-law), back in the '50's, we used to have a garden until we sold off the homestead and with it, the garden spot. They was there when your (Mrs. Roy's) great grandfather bought the hundred acres back in 1886. They came from Germany. Her grandfather was nine months old when he came to this country but he was a teenager when the family moved to this area. When my husband left Ford's, he went to work for the Washtenaw County road commission. There are five houses here now. When they moved here, there was only one. The house across the street is the one my father was born in. It was built before 1900. And this house was built in 1939. The other two houses in the last ten years. The fifty acres was sold in the '50's. So it hasn't been in the family for quite awhile. This is the land that has the gas wells too. We have a gas well here. They started drilling in the '30's. We have had free gas since. We have to maintain the pipes around here, but as long as the house remains in the family, the gas is free. The gas we actually...is from Texas, I believe. But the gas from the ground is used as you can see, on Napier, there are some large tanks that store it. They pipe the gas here as storage now.

My husband was always appreciative of the free gas. We couldn't have afforded this big house. What with heating and cooking and water heater. The man who put the gas lines in from the well to the other houses was named Mr. Potts. He lived over in Farmington, near Seven Mile and Middlebelt. He lived where Livonia Mall is now. His house is where Sears sets now. There was nothing else there but this little house then. Mrs. Roy can remember going to that house.

Now do you see why we want to get these memories down now from people, because everything is so changed now.

(Mrs. Roy speaking) I can remember when you angle parked in downtown Northville. There was never much parking problem. It was just a little town then. There has been parallel parking for a long time now.

What were some of the things when you were growing up the youth did for entertainment and some of the mischievous things they did?

(Mrs. Roy speaking) I was here in the country with nobody. Matter of fact, I just ran into a classmate from back then. I was talking to him and I said that the kids didn't accept us, kids coming in from the farms to high school. Unless you were a real extrovert and wanted to get involved with things, you just went to school and then went home. That would have been in 1947. I had some friends, but I wasn't that tight with the kids from town. I didn't participate in any school events. Of course, I had to catch a bus back to the farm after school too. It was the country kids and the town kids. I was in the town after I graduated because I worked at the bank for five years.

Now which bank was that?

Depositors State Bank then. It's where Manufacturer's Bank is today. That was Depositors State Bank. I started out at the bakery, the Sally Bell bakery, it's Holloways' now though. I graduated in June and started work at the bakery the next week. Then in September, one of the girls from Salem was going to college and she had worked at the bank during the summer. I went in and got her job. They didn't know she was going to quit.

You had a little inside information!

I went up to Mr. Clark and said, "Beverly is quitting, can I have her job?" He said, "She's quitting?" And I got her job. So I worked in the back there for the next five years. Then I lived in Grand Rapids for eleven years, and then my husband and two sons decided to move back here. We added on enough to this house to make enough room. Added on a living room and some bedrooms and we've been here ever since. My sons both graduated from Northville High School, one in '83, and one in '84. One is still in college after three years in the army, and the other is starting to work now after getting out of Lawrence Institute of Technology. They like living in the country. They are both planning on getting married in the summer, and both plan to live in the area.

Can you remember anything big happening when you were growing up or in school?

(Mrs. Roy speaking) No, nothing really, except for a neighbor boy down the road having polio as a boy and being bedridden. I don't remember when that was. Probably in the early '50's. he went to school all his life, paralyzed from the waist down. He moved to Florida since then. They were the next farm down from us. They were like family. The only other thing I can recall was when my father's sister worked at Ford's at Phoenix and there was a really bad storm one year, and the whole area flooded. Phoenix is on Northville Road by Five Mile. It's now the sign shop for Wayne County road commission. That's about the only thing I remember growing up.

That used to be a Ford Plant. She worked in the tool crib there?

You couldn't get to Plymouth, the water was so high. My aunt had pictures from then. The river (Rouge) flooded, and the whole area by Five Mile was flooded. That's the only big thing I remember from that time. Nothing else really stands out. Just the flood, and Dale having polio.

Did your family have any hobbies, wood carving or knitting?

(Mrs. Roy speaking) My father just worked and when he came home, he had work around the house. Working outside with the road commission, he was tired when he got home. My husband and I are very involved with our church.

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