

Oral History of Richard Lyon

Edited March, 1995

Q: Richard Lyon, a long time resident of Northville, and owner of the C. Harold Bloom Insurance Agency on Main Street. Mr. Lyon, what are your earliest memories of Northville?

A: Well, my earliest memory would be coming here to visit my grandfather, Walter Lyon, who lived on Cady Street. He retired here in Northville when he retired from Wyandotte Chemical Plant, and I used to come here from Bay City and visit him for the summers, or at least part of the summer. So my earliest memories would be coming here on the train, spend the summers with him, and... I can remember downtown Northville when it had angle parking instead of the present parking we have now. I remember going to the theater with my grandfather, the movie theater, and we had ... they weren't regular theater chairs in the back, what were they called in the back? They had wicker chairs in the back, but you couldn't sit there as a child unless you sat with your parent or an adult. My grandfather used to take me to the theater on Saturdays to see the western, and we'd sit in the back in the wicker chairs, which were probably the first three or four rows in the back of the theater.

Q: What was the point of the wicker chairs? And they were the only ones? The rest were conventional theater seats?

A: Right. (Do you remember, Dad, why they had wicker chairs?) They were there when I started going with my grandfather, so I have no idea why they had wicker chairs in the back, but I remember that quite vividly, being able to sit back there with my grandfather.

Q: About how old were you then?

A: Oh, seven perhaps. Probably seven or eight. That was summer after summer until I moved here in probably 1948. Some of the other memories that I had from those days were the old Scout building on the corner of Rogers (Ed: Dunlap) and Hutton, which has been torn down now, of course, but that's where the drive-in bank building is now. It was strictly a Scout building.

Q: Was there more than one Boy Scout troop in Northville at that time?

A: I don't believe so, just the one.

Q: What sorts of activities did you do there?

A: Oh, Scouting activities, regular Boy Scout troop activities. We had a platform, I remember, outside, a wooden platform several feet high that we'd go up there and practice semaphore signaling, and more signaling, but other than that it was just mainly the Boy Scout building where we met, did troop activities.

Q: Do you recall who your leaders were?

A: No, I don't ...

Q: Did you have any special friends in scouting at that time?

A: Just the people that I later met when I moved here permanently, who are now... some of them are still in town. It was Dick Koolman, Bob Freydl... the two that are still in town. Both those boys are native-born Northville people.

Q: You were born in Bay City?

A: No, actually, I was born in Detroit and eventually my parents moved to Bay City. The most of my growing up was done in Bay City until I moved here.

Q: And what year was that?

A: When I moved here? 1948.

Q: Was that after you had graduated from Michigan State?

A: No, no. I was a senior in high school when I moved here. I finished my senior year in high school here, and started college, and then went into the army for three years and came back and finished college.

Q: Where did you serve in the army?

A: Two years in Europe; '51, '52 served in Europe. So, during the year of 1948 and '49 I was in high school here. Member of the band and member of the track team. Only one year of high school so you don't get involved in too many things, but I was in the band and was on the track team.

Q: So you came back from service in about 19...?

A: Well, end of 1952, beginning of '53. I waited until I didn't make the winter term in time to start college again, so I had to wait until spring term. Then I went back to Lansing and finished my degree.

Q: In business?

A: Company administration. When I graduated from college, I worked for two and a half year for the City of Detroit.

Q: In what department?

A: I worked in what was known as the Civil Service department, where we were in charge of hiring the people who worked for the City of Detroit. I made up exams that other people had to take to get positions for the city. And then, two and a half years after that, I married my wife, Martha Bloom, and came into business with my father-in-law. That was 1959.

Q: So your wife is in Northville... native?

A: Native Northville.

Q: So where did you live then? You said that you had lived in four different homes in Northville.

A: I lived with my aunt, Maria Lyon, at the time, who was librarian here in Northville. We lived on Cady and Wing Street. When I got married, we bought a house on Yerkes Street, in which we lived for about seven years. Then we moved up to Ely Drive, on the north side of town, and we lived there maybe five years. Then we moved up to our present house, which is my wife's house here. Her great-grandfather built the house.

Q: Who was her great-grandfather?

A: Clyde James Beatty.

Q: So that's an old house.

A: 1890.

Q: And I assume you've restored it?

A: Well, it didn't take much restoring. It was in good shape when we got it. We did a few minor things in the house, but no, house is in good shape.

Q: And you are still living there?

A: And we're still living there.

Q: I assume that when you left Civil Service in Detroit that you came back here and went to work in the insurance firm?

A: Right.

Q: Starting at the bottom?

A: Didn't know anything about it when I came in. That's thirty years ago, almost. Now I have a son who is an agent with me, perhaps another son. It's been a good thirty years.

Q: In what year did you become the owner?

A: 1970.

Q: So it's getting close to twenty years.

A: Yep.

Q: We talked about a number of things that you have been involved with during your years in Northville, and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about your role in the Chamber of Commerce.

A: Well, I first went on the Chamber in 1973, and the last year, 1976. I was president of the Chamber. Strictly, it was just the normal Chamber activities. At that time, the big fund-raising project that we used to put on was the circus that we held down at the Downs, which was always a big job.

Q: Was that the year the Chamber of Commerce was organized back in 1973?

A: No, I'm sure it was organized probably closer to 1960. I don't recall exact dates, but thinking back to the people who were involved in it, it would have had to have been closer to 1960 that it was organized.

Q: But you came in 1973, and you were president in 1976, And did you say you had served another term as president?

A: Right, I'm just finishing up three years now. I came back in three years ago. This is the last month of my tenure on the board.

Q: What can you tell me about the growth of the chamber in Northville?

A: Well, we've increased our membership quite a bit in the last three years, probably doubled our membership in the last three years.

Q: Under your term?

A: No, well, I was on the board, but I can't take credit for it. We hired a manager and she has been ... her name is Laurie Marrs... she has been really the person who has gone out and increased the membership. She's done a fantastic job, actually. But we've increased it, probably doubled it. It's not as active as we'd like to see it. There is a merchant's association in town.

Q: Is that duplication, pretty much?

A: Well, it's a loose-knit group of the merchants in town, strictly merchants, as opposed to the chamber which takes in all the businesses, and they put on several festivities during the year. They meet when they feel they have to meet. They've been successful at what they've done so it's sort of been an area where maybe the Chamber should be the one that's doing this, but the merchants were the first organization that was in town of that nature. So, they've just maintained what they've done, and there probably should be more information passing back and forth between the two of them, as long as we're going to have two of them... once in a while, the Chamber isn't doing more of these things and taking it off the shoulders of the merchants. Most of the merchants are members of the chamber, so they sort of wear two hats.

Q: There is duplication.

A: There is duplication. The Chamber actually represents the City and the Township of Northville, and the merchants are of course strictly downtown merchants, so there is a little different there.

Q: You've also built your own building. Where did you used to meet as a Chamber before you built the building on South Main?

A: The offices of the president, usually, we've met in this office. We've met in various members' offices when we didn't have a place to meet. Then they built the building. Oh, I'm not sure when they built the building exactly, but I would say ten years ago, and we've met there ever since. It's fine for the board to meet. There's not a large building, so you can't get a large membership meeting in there. When we do want membership meetings, we usually hold a luncheon meeting or dinner meeting and get as many as we can out. We had a couple of offices that we had just for a secretary to sit in to hand out information to the general public when they came in. One was, I believe, we had at one time, where the little bookstore is on Main Street, Bookstall on Main, and then we had an office, I believe, in City Hall at one time. Then we built the present building that we have now.

Q: What sorts of activities does the Chamber sponsor?

A: Well, we sponsor the Christmas Walk, but then again, it's difficult sometimes to divorce the merchants from ... but it's the Christmas Walk, and we have the garage sale, we have the Farmer's Market, we've had a few social events that have been money-raising events, but more social than business, such as the mystery dinner that we held down at the historical village. These are mainly what we do. We have ... Farmer's Market is on every year, and the garage sale is every year.

Q: Most of your income would be from memberships?

A: With membership dues, and then the Farmer's Market brings in money.

Q: Is that right, they have to pay for their stalls.

A: They have to pay for their stalls, and the garage sale's the same way; people pay for their spaces on the street. But mainly, probably those are the three main money-making projects that we have, plus membership dues. I think our annual budget is around \$40,000.

Q: And you put that back into the community?

A: Right. We advertise, like at Christmas time, by radio advertising. We advertise in the Northville area. We buy ads in some of the travel brochures that are put out by the State and around the State showing Northville as the place to come.

Q: There's been a tremendous increase in the number of people coming in from outside Northville proper. I sense that when you see big buses ...

A: I have to give credit where credit is due; a lot of those buses are due to Genitti's restaurant. They're quite active by themselves in bringing in tours from around this part of Michigan and from the close Canada area. Tony and John have brought these people in. They have lunch at their restaurant but they shop up and down town. But a lot of those buses are due to the Genitti's efforts and not the Chambers. But yes, we're getting quite a few people in. We've got a nice selection of shops now in town.

Q: Well, it's such a pleasant place to stroll.

A: I know there was some controversy when the city first put in the trees and the new sidewalks, but I believe when you see the town with the flowers in bloom and the trees are out, it's very very pretty. I think it's helped the city.

Q: Undoubtedly it has helped the city. I think the merchants would probably have a greater awareness of the impact of that than possible the Chamber.

A: Well, not being a merchant per se, I don't see the shoppers, but I don't hear too many merchants complaining so I assume that they're doing all right.

Q: Has the Bloom agency always been at this location?

A: Yes, this has been, since about 1940.

Q: You moved to this location, which is what number on West Main?

A: 108.

Q: 108 West Main. You are also involved in Rotary.

A: I belonged to Rotary, but I haven't belonged to Rotary now for maybe fifteen years. I was in Rotary. I was president of the Rotary. You have to make-up Rotary meetings if you don't make a meeting. You have to maintain a certain percentage of meetings in order to be active; I found that I was missing too many meetings, being away for vacations and whatnot. I just was missing too many meetings, so I didn't think it was fair to not make them up and it was a little difficult to make them up. So, I decided perhaps that for the Rotary Club, it would be best if they didn't have a member who wasn't keeping up the membership requirements.

Q: So then you are not involved in getting the well to produce water again?

A: Well, the Chamber's involved. We're selling tickets that, if you are a fortunate winner, you win a night at the new bed and breakfast and, I think, a dinner at MacKinnon's. So the Chamber's involved in that aspect. There are a number of people-organizations working for the well, but the Rotary is the main thrust with that, that was always their project.

Q: Perhaps we should say that the famous well on South Main in Northville recently ran dry, and that there will have to be a new source of water found. They will have to dig again?

A: They'll have to dig a new well. It's the second time they've had to do this since I've been in town. Both times that the well was cut off, there was always water running. Didn't take too many people long to figure out where the water was coming from. They are in the process of digging a well, which will then be hooked up again. The water has always run in that well, whether it came from the well, or it came from the City of Detroit.

Q: It's always been a very popular spot for out-of-towners to come out to Northville and get water.

A: Yes, people always coming, and they did all the way through the time when they were picking up Detroit water. We never said anything to them. But that came from the old Silver Springs well water system out there which, if I recall, I believe when the old Orange Crush [editor: Nesbitt Orange Soda] soft drink... they got their water from the Silver Springs out there.

Q: Is that the secret of their unique flavor?

A: It could be. They got it from there for years. I suspect they'll have the well here within another couple of months.

Q: You've been active in the Masons?

A: I was active in the Masons. I was an officer in the chapter. I went through the chairs in the chapter, and when I got through the chairs in the chapter I wasn't as active as I was up to that point. At that point, when I got through being in the chairs, this is when my family started to come along, and it was just too much time involved away from them to go back and be one of the officers, so I became more or less inactive as far as meetings went. For about ten years, I was very active in the Masons.

Q: Are they a force in this community?

A: No, not really. As a fraternal organization rather than a service organization, their thrust isn't mainly for civic improvements. They tend not to get involved in anything unless it was a necessity and they needed it. It's a fraternal organization, and it's always been my feeling when I was on that when I was active in the Masons, there was always some amount of argument going on as to why members didn't show up for meetings like they used to. Times have changed. Fifty years ago, this was the place to go to have social interaction between the people in town, potlucks and whatever else went with it, and as more and more things came along, the town movies and then television and automobiles and places to go that you couldn't get to before, I don't believe the fraternal organization really fared that well after these modern innovations came in; the need was no longer there. It's still an excellent organization, it does well. But if you wanted to compare it with another fraternal organization, that brings up the Elks. The Elks have a lot more to offer as a social organization.

Q: In Northville?

A: Well, we don't have one in Northville, but if you go to an Elks Club, the nearest are Plymouth and Farmington, then they have a restaurant; they have dances and that sort of thing that the Masons don't really have. So, the Masons are maintained, though, but I don't think that they're a force in town... the influence they had at one time is not as great as fifty or sixty years ago. Most of the people in town who were merchants or council members were probably Masons and if there was any type of influence they had, it would probably come through something like that. That's not the case anymore.

Q: You've also served on the Northville School Board.

A: One year, it was an interesting year!

Q: When was that?

A: The latter part of the sixties. I can't remember the year. It was the year that the Superintendent was Alexander, and the board removed him and hired Raymond Spears at that time. It was quite a controversial year. The Superintendent Alexander was a controversial figure. The thrust was on to replace him, so for that year, that was it seems to me the major ...

Q: You were elected to the board?

A: Elected to fill out an unexpired term.

Q: Do you know whose term that was unexpired?

A: Can't remember.

Q: So that was a very busy year?

A: We had a lot of meetings. Those were the days when you could still hold the Sunshine laws weren't in existence, and you could hold meetings in your houses if you had something to discuss. I think the present laws are probably better for the community.

Q: You mean no secret meetings?

A: No secret meetings. We would get together as a Board at somebody's house and thrash out a thorny issue, and then the night of the Board meeting we would present a united front, because we'd already thrashed it out and talked at the meeting about how we were going to do it, so it all looked smooth in front of the people, but there were some stormy sessions.

Q: Was that a rewarding time for you to see the Board through that transition of the Superintendent, from one to another?

A: Yes. It impressed me. I was on the faction that wanted to replace the Superintendent.

Q: By then you had children in school?

A: Oh, yes. We were living, at that time, up on Ely Drive. So, it was a busy year. It was a lot of work involved, being on the Board of Education, more so than most people think. You get a big packet of information once a week that takes a lot of time to read through and understand, and then hopefully go up and do the right thing. I've always felt that a board, no matter if it's the Board of Education or the Council of a city, if you hire a Superintendent or a City Manager you hire them to run the system. You really shouldn't sit back and second guess them. If he's doing a bad job, then that's when you step in and do something to clear it up. For the most part, I think, if you hire someone who is supposedly the expert in the field, you've got to go along with them. You hire them, go along with them, till he does something wrong. There always seems to be an awful lot of things that you want to get involved in that I don't think we should have spent out time, which we do. That's my opinion of how things should work.

Q: You have also served on the parking authority here in town, which must be a pretty difficult ...

A: Well, it's probably just as difficult today as when I... I was on the first parking authority.

Q: And when was that?

A: That would be in the sixties. I was up on Ely then, too. There were five of us. I can't remember all the names now. I think I'm the only one left in town now that was on that board. But we sat down and handed out the first parking authority regulations. Pretty much the thrust hasn't changed that much from what we decided should be done.

Q: Was that a volunteer organization?

A: Oh yes.

Q: You were not elected?

A: No. We were appointed. We met once a week. Frank Olendorf, I believe, was the City Manager at the time. I remember we decided when we first met that we would meet from eight to ten. We wouldn't stay there after ten o'clock. It used to shake the City Manager up because he would come in at about quarter to ten and we'd be having a discussion on something and at ten o'clock, we'd close our books up and get up and walk out. He learned quickly enough that if he wanted to talk to us, he had to be there before ten o'clock and have it all done before ten. The philosophy behind the parking today is what we had then; it's pretty much the same. The parking that the city owns is not necessarily parking forever. There's a parking area now that could be better utilized as a commercial building. If the City would see that it would be so for the commercial use.

Q: And in tax revenue.

A: Right. And in turn that person would have to buy new parking or put up the money for the City to buy a new parking area somewhere else, which is why the controversy across the street has some up. Can't come up with enough parking or they would do that.

Q: That's the southwest corner of ...

A: Main and Center.

Q: Exactly.

A: And that was, I guess, as I read the paper, that seems to be the big stumbling block there, was the parking. You've got to come up with a certain amount of parking, especially when you start building around areas where parking is now; you've got to replace that parking. I know there's been controversy in the past that there hasn't been enough parking on days when we have people in town. When people park in a small town like Northville to shop, they want to park right in front of the store they're going to shop. They'll go out to the mall and they'll park two blocks away from the door and not think a thing about it. So you've got that problem all the

time. As the first parking authority, it was interesting. You get five people on the board, I knew two of them. The other two were people who hadn't been in town that long, and I didn't know them up until the point we met. But you get five people together and hammer out a philosophy and some regulations that the Council accepted. It was interesting. I enjoyed that. I served on the Board of Review for three years, which reviewed taxes. At that time, it was Russ Amerman, who is still in town... and Charlie Carrington, who is deceased. It's an interesting time on the Board of Review, especially when you got people you know come in to complain about their taxes, and you have to take a stand that isn't necessarily what they want to hear. But most days, there wasn't a great deal of animosity between the Board and people who came in. Today, I understand, the representative from the county is there, so it's easy to pass the buck to him and let him make the decision as to set the assessment. That was, I wouldn't say, fun, but was interesting. We met twice a year when it was review time.

Q: Well, you certainly have contributed a great deal to this community.

A: Some, but I'm sure there are people who contributed a lot more.

Q: Did your family move down from Bay City because Northville was where they wanted to be?

A: No, no. My move was always a personal thing on my part but I won't go into that long story, but I moved to live with my aunt and my grandmother at the time. I lived with my aunt, with the exception of about a year; I lived with my aunt from '48 to late '59, other than the Army.

Q: And probably your years in college.

A: Yes. Well, I would come back on weekends and work, and I would stay at home. But there were times when I rented a house or rented a room when my aunt was married. I rented a room in a couple of different homes in town here. For the most part, I consider Northville mine. I've been in Northville longer than any other place, so Northville's home. I think back to what the town looked like when I first came to town, back in the forties, to what it is now. It's a big difference. The town isn't that much bigger in geographical size than it was then, although in those days it was a village rather than a city. I can remember voting to incorporate the city. But there was a day when I could walk downtown and know just about everybody you'd see on the sidewalks, which is impossible today. You walk down the streets today and maybe not see anybody you know, but in those days, you know everybody.

Q: It's still a delightful place. How many towns are there where you can stroll on the promenade and buy an ice cream cone?

A: That's true. If the city can keep its downtown area, the downtown, the shops, then I think it's going to stay viable for the people, as long as the town itself is. We're fortunate in Northville that the people who live here have been proud of their homes and kept them up. Maybe that's because there's been more money in this town's income than in other towns. Plymouth has done well, and maybe perhaps a little better than Northville as far as their downtown and building it up, but they've got a bigger population. Towns like Northville and

Plymouth have been able to keep their downtown area, which is really nice. Livonia doesn't have a downtown.

Q: Nor Novi.

A: Nor Novi. So there isn't anything comparable, and people who come to town, you hear them on the streets saying how pretty the town is. It kind of makes me feel proud.

Q: As I observe it, there is such a key interest in living in the old homes in the City of Northville that their value must have increased by a great deal.

A: Well, it's a limited market. An old home takes a lot of care. You've got to maintain it all the time. Yes, there's a lot of nice old homes in town that have a lot of premium.

Q: They don't stay on the market very long.

A: No, not normally.

Q: There's so much restoration and preservation going on.

A: Well, you got the historical, whatever they call it, in town, which can be a little bit of an irritation if you want to do something to your house, and they don't want you to. Our house is not in the district. It's outside the district, so I've never run into that. I have had friends who had wanted to do something in their house and weren't allow to, because the Historical Commission didn't want them to change their house, and I think that's a little more than the person should be able to, if they want to put a picture window in their kitchen looking out over the backyard, they ought to be able to do it. We've had guests come in from out of town and they have been quite impressed with the older homes in town and how well they're kept up and how much they've worked so Northville is unique in that.

Q: They really are attractive.

A: We're proud of our home. The kids are the fifth generation in the house.

Q: Is that right?

A: The ten of us, the fifth generation in the house. Well, they've moved out now. They're married, but when they lived there, they were the fifth generation to live in the house.

Q: Would you recap that in five generation for me?

A: The names?

Q: Yes, who were the first owners?

A: That would be James Beatty, he was the first owner. And then it was his daughter that married Charles Bloom. So, the Beatty daughter married Charles Bloom. Then my father-in-law here, Harold Bloom, was the next generation, so it was Beatty, Bloom, Bloom, and then myself,

Lyon, who married Harold Bloom's daughter Martha, and then my two sons are the fifth generation. I don't know how many homes in town do.

Q: That's quite a boast. Do you know when the house was built?

A: 1890.

Q: Oh, you said that earlier. Thanks. So it's almost a hundred years old?

A: Close. It'll be a centennial home. Hopefully, we'll be living there in 1990, and we'll make the application.

Q: That's not very far to go, a year and a couple months.

A: I don't know what month it was built in town. I could look it up, but I suspect it was built in the summer time. It mentioned in the book by Hoffman, it's mentioned there. The building permit from that time was taken out. Like all these old homes, you've got to maintain them, keep at them. Most people are doing it. I think it adds to the town.

Q: Listening in on this interview is Mr. Lyon's father-in-law, C. Harold Bloom, who is visiting here from Florida, so it must feel like being home again, if you are staying in that house.

A: (Richard) That's his home when he's here.

A: (Harold) I was born in that house.

Q: You were born in that house?

A: (Harold) They didn't have hospitals in those days.

Q: Right, well, I was born at home.

A: (Richard) My wife was born in what is now the convalescent home on Main Street. It was Sessions Hospital in those days.

Q: Oh, how long has it been Wishing Well Manor? Do you know anything about that?

A: It's now called the Star Manor of Northville.

Q: Oh, it's no longer Wishing Well?

A: No, they've just changed hands here in the last several months. The new owners call it the Star Manor of Northville. It's been a convalescent home, I would say twenty years, anyway.

Q: And before that, it was Sessions Hospital.

A: I guess all the doctors in town in those days used it. Dr. Snow and Dr. Holcomb used it. Both those doctors are gone now, and then Dr. Atchison's clinic used it as a hospital. It was a hospital, a regular hospital.

Q: And that was there while you were... from your earliest days here?

A: No, I don't remember. If there was still a hospital when I first came here, I don't really remember.

Q: But the building was there.

A: Oh yes, my wife was born there. That's a number of years ago, I can remember the doctor's clinic, Dr. Atchison's clinic, on the second floor at one time, and they had rooms up there for patients. But, I don't think they operated there. I think they did the operating, it was over at... I can remember my aunt and my grandmother were up there. I can remember going up there to the second floor to visitations, the one that's now that bed and breakfast.

Q: What is the address of that bed and breakfast where the Atchison clinic was? Do you know that?

A: No.

Q: On what corners?

A: (Richard) On the corner of Dunbar and Rodgers. Dunlap, I mean. Dunlap and Dubar (Ed: Linden), 501 Dunlap is the address, and I guess Dr. Atchison's father... Did he live there, when he was a doctor? Russell's father?

A: (Harold) Atchison? Yes.

A: (Richard) That's when he started. Russell Atchison's father was the doctor who started the clinic, and then Russell went to medical school and came back and took the clinic over. Then Dr. Robinson and Dr. Weatherspoon came in about 1947, '48. Both of those doctors are now retired down to Florida. That was the biggest medical clinic in the town. There were probably doctors, but they weren't the three doctors who had the largest practice in town. Let me think if there's anything else I can remember. I graduated from school up here on Main Street, which is still there. It's now the special education program. We graduated from there in those days. I think our class was 77 strong. We all had all our football games down at the Ford Field.

Q: Is your picture in Northville Charlie's?

Q: Yes, it is. Class of 1949. In fact, I think my mother-in-law's picture is there too. I'm trying to remember the things... I can remember when Seven Mile didn't come through where it is now, by the race track. It cut off from Northville Road, come by the race track down there. That wasn't there when I was a kid. You used to be able to walk down there and then walk through into the park, because that cut-off wasn't there. So, when you came into town from Seven Mile, you had to come in like you do now, by the Ford factory, around that way. Seven Mile wasn't connected. I can remember working at the Training School... it was the Northville Wayne County Training School out there.

Q: Was this during the summers?

A: Yes, during the summers, and then I would come home on weekends and work. Work in town. That was a growing concern right there.

Q: In what capacity?

A: I was called a child care attendant, which was supervision. That was quite a beautiful place at one time when it was in its prime.

Q: Do you remember the Maybury Sanitarium?

A: Oh yes.

Q: How far was that?

A: Well, it's where the park is now, what may be considered Seven and a half mile, halfway between Seven and Eight Mile, way back in.

Q: That was a TB sanitarium?

A: A TB sanitarium. A friend of mine at school and a good friend of Father's, Dr. Howard, was the chief medical officer and director of the san. There's still a doctor in town who worked out there and retired.

Q: Is that right?

A: He lives up on Center Street here, Dr. Klopfenstein. I can get you his address if you like. But he's retired from there and as far as I know, he's the only one left of the old gang from out there.

Q: Did that close because they so-called conquered TB?

A: Right, fewer and fewer patients, so it just became redundant, it was just an extra surplus piece of property. That was quite an operation in its time. When I worked for the City of Detroit, I had to go out there and, I had made up an exam. I had to have it checked by one of the doctors that worked out there. It was quite a medical facility. I don't know how many people you've talked to that remembered the convalescent home or rest home that was up where Allen Terrace is now.

Q: Was there a nursing home up there?

A: (Richard) Was that a nursing home up there, Dad? Up where Allen Terrace is? Was that a nursing home, or just an old people's home, so to speak?

A: (Harold) That was another TB sanitarium.

A: (Richard) On the top of the hill?

A: (Harold) Originally.

A: (Richard) Originally, but I think it went to a nursing home eventually. It eventually became a nursing home because I remember going up there, caroling and that sort of stuff at Christmas time, and they weren't TB patients there.

Q: So, that was torn down to build Allen Terrace?

A: (Richard) I'm trying to think of the name of it, but it just slips my mind. I can't remember the name of it. That was quite a big old home. I can't tell you about it, but there was an old opera house here in town.

Q: On Center Street.

A: I'm trying to think of some of the older people in town that you should talk to. You should talk to my aunt, really, about the library.

Q: That is Maria Lyon?

A: Wilcox.

Q: She lives in Plymouth?

A: Right. I'll give you her telephone number after we're all done.

Q: Yes. She would be a valuable person to interview.

A: I'm trying to think of people in town here. Well, you must have quite a list of people anyway.

Q: We do, and of course, the way we get many of them is because people we interview drop these names, like you mentioned Dr. Klopfenstein, which would be a good source to pursue.

A: I was trying to think of some of the old teachers who are still around town. You talked to Russell Amerman, but there's Charles Yahne, he was the teacher in town for years and years, and he still lives in town. Elroy Ellison. Of course, he was a teacher for some years and then he went away and went to Farmington, but he's around. And then, Mrs. Gellnen is still around, or Miss Gellnen. I think she lives on Randolph. I'm not sure. Charles Yahne was... he's an English teacher. He lives up on Eaton Drive. He would know a lot about the school, too. I'm pretty sure he taught all of his teaching life here.

Q: We've interviewed Margaret Zayti (Ed: Marian), who was the attendance officer, I guess, for twenty-five years.

A: Right, but Yahne would have pre-dated her. Chuck must have been retired for almost twenty years. He was in school for all of the forties, probably, and even maybe some of the thirties. I can remember all kinds of things about downtown, the buildings that are gone now and were here. There were houses along Main Street that were dwellings. The only one that is left now is Dr. Lovewell's house and clinic, next to Long's.

Q: Next to Long's?

A: There's a white house, right next to Long's.

Q: Oh, it's set back.

A: Not really, almost on the side.

Q: I think of Long's as being between a parking lot ...

A: And a church.

Q: Well, there's the church, the parking lot, Long's and then there's a house.

A: There's a house, and then there's a hair salon, and there's Crawford's, and then the parking lot.

Q: And who lives in that house?

A: Victoria Lovewell. She's an osteopathic doctor.

Q: Oh, is that a single family dwelling?

A: Yes, she lives there by herself.

Q: And she's been around ...?

A: How long has Lovewells been there? As long as I can remember. It'd be back in the forties that they'd have come to town, but there were other homes along there.

Q: She she's still practicing?

A: Well, she might take care of an old patient, but yes, she would still practice, but she's got to be in her seventies. Very cute lady, she could tell you a lot about things.

Q: And she's lived in that house for years?

A: Both she and her husband were doctors. I'm thinking of the little stores that have changed hands and have changed locations.

Q: Well, we're going to see that right now, with the D and C moving out.

A: That's kind of a shame.

Q: It's a shame! People enjoyed the D and C.

A: The fellow who is president of the D and C is a Northville boy.

Q: Is that right? Who is that?

A: Bob German. He's a Northville boy. I don't know if he was born in Northville, but he graduated from Northville. His father used to be police chief. Wasn't Dutch a police chief here? Dutch German? He was the chief of police here, and Bob went to school here and went on to college and became... of the D and C, and is now president of it.

Q: Well, that's one of the things that the tours enjoy is the old-fashion dime store.

A: Yeah, right, well they first couldn't find a place that they could afford the rent that's the problem. Black's is moving down there now, of course.

Q: Who owns the building the D and C is in?

A: I don't know the lady's name. She is not a Northville resident. I believe she lives in Ann Arbor.

Q: Do you know who's going into Black's?

A: No. Barbara Black was just a little while ago, she owns the building. I saw her in town here a few weeks ago.

Q: She's up from?

A: She lives in South Carolina. So I have not heard what's going in there, though I understand Black wants to retain some of the back of that building and the basement. I think back, as a kid running around downtown, about all the stores. Of the two drug stores, only one of them left now.

Q: The one to the west of the parking area, that one?

A: Right. That's the only one left. The other one was right on the corner here, Williamsburg. My days as a kid here, both of them had soda fountains in them. We'd go in there and have normal sundaes and malteds or whatever you wanted, hand-dipped ice cream. There used to be a dairy down on the corner of Cady and Center Street.

Q: A dairy?

A: You could get hand-dipped ice cream in there, or packed ice cream in the package for you.

Q: Cady and Center?

A: Right across from the bowling alley. Whose dairy was that? Who owned the dairy down at the corner? (Ed: Guernsey) As a kid you don't think of names, you just think there's a dairy you get an ice cream cone from. They did a lot of business out of there. I was just a little teeny building, you'd line up, and in those days, they would hand-pack ice cream in the quart containers, and you'd run back home with a quart of ice cream. There was a riding stable down on the corner across from the racetrack. It's a parking lot now. There used to be a riding stable

there. You could go riding hoses out of there. I'm trying to think of the things that we did as kids that I wouldn't be ashamed to tell you.

Q: Where did you go to ice skate?

A: Usually one of the gravel pits. Take a shovel and your skates and do down there and shovel off the ice. We did most of our skating down on the gravel pit behind the cemetery behind Northville Laboratory, which may be gone now. I don't know. There was a big gravel pit there that we used to skate on. We used to swim there in the summertime. One of those old deals where as kids, you went down at summertime to go swimming and skated in the wintertime.

Q: So there's no such thing as the gravel pit. I'm thinking of the one between ...

A: When people say gravel pit now, they usually think of the one at Thompson's out there on Beck Road or the big one over there ...

Q: The one between Griswold and Silver Springs?

A: Yes. We never went to there as kids. We always went out to the one behind Rural Hill Cemetery, strictly the boys' gravel pit. That's where we swam and that's where we skated. When you only had 77 in your class, those days, everyone knew pretty much everyone in town. We had a good group of boys. We didn't get in too much trouble because everybody knew everybody else, so if you did something...

Q: Word got home before you did.

A: We had a good police chief in those days, Chief Denton. He was a colorful character,. He was an Englishman, Cavalry officer. He kept us pretty much in line. Really, back in the good old days people talk about, I guess those are the good old days as I remember them.

Q: That's interesting.

A: You'll have to talk to my aunt. I told you, my grandfather moved here and ran the first milk condensary.

Q: And his name is ...

A: Walter Lyon. My aunt could tell you more about... she was not born at that time, but she would have more memories of him speaking about it than I do. As I understand it, the plant was up around Orchard Drive somewhere. If you can get a hold of her, you can get a lot more, on the library too, because she was librarian for years.

Q: So, your sons probably graduated from Northville High School?

A: Both of them.

Q: That probably isn't terribly unusual, is it, to have more than one generation?

A: I can remember having teachers that taught two or three generations of kids. No, but there is a lot of new people in town. Of course, if they stay here long enough, they might. I guess it's getting down to the point where there are fewer of us left that the parents went to school, and the kids went to school. In our circle of friends, we're the only ones that can say that. I can remember Gordon had the same Kindergarten teacher that my wife had, that his mother did.

Q: And who was that?

A: (Richard) Grace Pollock. Martha had her, I understand. It was that kind of a combination that we had. Was Ida Barley Cooke teaching when you were in school?

A: (Harold) Yes.

A: (Richard) She was a teacher when he went to school. She was a teacher when I went to school.

Q: Well, then it isn't uncommon to have.

A: From the older residents of town, but there are fewer and fewer of those left. Cooke School up here is named after the teacher that we talked about. Ida Barley Cooke. I think back to old teachers that we had in those days and figure that they were here long enough to teach parents, that's a small town. We took students in when I went to school from Farmington Road and Seven Mile in Livonia. We went that far away to get students and we took the students from Salem at that time, and Novi. We still only had 77 people in our class, all that Livonia country out there was farm land.

Q: But there were no school buses then.

A: Yes, I think there were.

Q: I talked to Amelia Johnson. Do you know Amelia? She lives on Northville Road across from Cass Benton Park and King's Mill and that area.

A: Oh yes, I know who you're talking about.

Q: She was born on that property.

A: Most of us, of course, lived in town, but those that came in, there weren't that many cars, I think there was, Dick Koolman and I were talking about that the other day, he said there was one bus he remembered, only one bus. It ran all over, picking up people. But I don't remember, now that you ask me. The lady across the street here owns the ERA Realty, Bobby Simpson was her name when she went to school here. She lived out as far as Farmington Road. I don't remember how she did get to school, but she was always there.

Q: Amelia said that they walked, and on a rainy day, her father would drive her to school.

A: I can't remember how these kids got in from Salem, from Novi.

Q: Maybe the parents were responsible.

A: I don't know. I don't remember. Dick remembers one bus when he was in school. Can't seem to remember there was a bus, but I lived a block from school, so I didn't have to worry about getting to school.

Q: Never was a problem.

A: No. There were lot of people still in town from those days. Too bad this wasn't done some years ago. People like Van Valkenburgs were around.

Q: Yes, it is, and we'd really like to get the people who are considerably older.

A: (Richard) Father can tell you a lot about when the school burned down. What year did the school burn down?

A: (Harold)

A: (Richard) Were you still in school then?

A: (Harold) Yes.

A: (Richard) So, it had to be in 1919 when that school burned. There was a hotel across the street, was there, right on the corner?

A: (Harold) Park House.

A: (Richard) Park House. The old interurban train came into town.

Q: I've heard about the interurban, those five cent rides.

A: Carl Johnson has some pictures in his office of the old tower in the middle of Main Street and Center.

Q: Well, this has been very interesting and I'm sure it will be valuable to people who want to research this period in the history of Northville. I appreciate all your time and I'm sure that the library and the historical society do, too.

Interviewer: The Dad or Father frequently addressed in this interview is C. Harold Bloom, the founder of the insurance agency which Richard Lyon heads. Mr. Bloom is up here for a week from Florida and he too is a native of Northville, but declined to be interviewed.

Transcription done by Caroline Curtiss