

IRENE EDMONDS

Q: Where were you born and when did you come to Northville?

IE: I was born in Caro, Michigan, 77 years ago. I came down here when I was nineteen years old, settled in Plymouth, lived there a year. Then I came to Northville, and I've been here ever since. Our first home was on 349 First Street. We lived there a good many years. My husband was a barber in Northville and was located on Main Street for many years, and later on Dunlap. I worked at Maybury San. Eight years and a half. I used to have some fabulous good times out there and good friends. And after leaving there, I went to Plymouth to work for awhile... Manufacturing Company. I was there, I believe, five years.

Q: When you first lived in Northville, you lived upstairs, I understand.

IE: Yes, in the old Elliott Apartments. Now that's history.

Q: Where would that have been?

IE: What is now Spagnuolos and I think there's a camera shop.

Q: How many apartments were there?

IE: Oh, there were two, I believe. I'm not sure.

Q: The entrance was from Main Street or from the back?

IE: Both. And we lived next door to Mr. Spagnuolo, who owned the confectionary there for a good many years. Then we moved, had a chance to buy this home on First Street. And at that time, everything was mortgaged. It was, you know, during the hard times. We had a chance to buy this home for a minimum price, and that's where the two of us, we raised our children. They went to Northville Schools. We just had a good life down there. They both graduated from Northville High.

Q: You talked about the park, they were building the parkway at that time, when your children were small.

IE: On First Street, when we first came to live there, it was all gravel. Nothing was paved down through there. And we lived right across the road from the park. My memory is just real good about Mr. Martin, an old gentleman, who used to live farther down on First Street. And he would go over in the park; then it was just pasture land. And he would get his cow and walk it down the street to his home and milk her. And he'd gently walk her back to the pasture land. Then the park was made, and that was in, well it would be 55 years ago. And things changed rapidly. Then they eventually hard topped First Street. Then we just had a joyous time with our children. That old school up on Main Street was just full of action. And I remember very much some of the old

teachers. Miss Ida Cooke was here for years and years. Well, I shouldn't have added years, but she was. She was just a great person, and our children had, I think one of the great educations.

Q: Well, I think a school was named after her, so they thought a lot of her.

IE: Yes, yes, yes. She was a great... and I could just go on... Grace Powell, many, many good teachers. But it was a great, a more personable touch because the school was smaller. Then they attended the Methodist Church. And I spent many days helping out there in the kitchen. We used to have some great times there too. The old church, that is. It was on Dunlap Street. And then, let's see now, where do you want me to cut this? Where can I go from here?

Q: Well, you could talk a little bit more about the church if you like. You helped in the kitchen, you said?

IE: Yes, mostly kitchen. My cherished memories are of some of the older people that we worked with. Then it just seemed like everybody knew everybody, I mean we knew everybody. It was just a great place to be.

Q: Now, you worked at Sessions Hospital.

IE: Yes.

Q: What kind of a job, or what were you doing?

IE: I did aide work at that time.

Q: How many patients would they have had?

IE: Oh my goodness, oh Claudine, oh, dear. I would say thirty, but I could be dead wrong. I wouldn't want to be reinstated on that. It was two floors. It was an upstairs floor, I remember. It was a nursery. I'd say thirty when it was full capacity. Maybe I'm high on that.

Q: Were there often more babies born there than say, surgeries, or was it a little bit of everything?

IE: Everything. It was a general hospital. And it was from there I went to Maybury.

Q: What did you do at Maybury?

IE: I was working in the children's unit at Maybury.

Q: Now the children's unit was out off by itself as I remember.

IE: Yes, yes. And filled to capacity as I remember.

Q: And were there, like, three cottages?

IE: Well, yes. But not for the children's unit.

Q: I'm just thinking of the children's unit.

IE: Well there was just one, I believe. The children's unit was the first driveway in, and that was full to capacity most of the time. Of course now they don't have that because of the cures they have found.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the treatment of the children and what you would be doing, your actual work.

IE: We just kind of prepared the food for them because they were all on different diets. The cooks had quite a time too. There were children who couldn't have eggs, children who couldn't have ... it was kind of interesting to prepare. Of course, there were a lot of children that could have just a general line formula. Then there were those that had to be very specified.

Q: How young was the youngest one that you can remember?

IE: Well, there was awful young ones there. I would say, oh my goodness, I don't think we had any a year old, but I would be safe in saying two years old. And younger too, but I can't just pinpoint it. And they had a great staff out there in the children's unit, some of the best nurses and doctors.

Q: Was it mainly bed rest was the treatment at that time?

IE: Yes. They were all in bed, cute little rascals. And they were on medication and that was the thing.

Q: Did you take precautions yourself against getting TB?

IE: Yes.

Q: Like what?

IE: Well, when we first went to work out there, our supervisor just told us the safety part of it. I never wore my clothes at home after I got home; I took my uniforms off. We never went from the place where they do the dishes, we never mixed the two personnel; we were very cautious that way. It was kind of up to us. If you knew something was there. It's like things we have nowadays. It's up to you to guard yourself. But you know what to do. Those were good days out there. And we felt like it was just a challenge to be with those youngsters.

Q: When Maybury was being closed, what happened then?

IE: I am not quite sure. But it was not a self paying, I mean it was not paying, as I understood it, because it just sort of went down, down, down. Of course the buildings needed some replenishment too.

Q: Do you remember when the buildings went up?

IE: Oh, my uncle built those buildings.

Q: Well, tell me about that.

IE: My uncle, Neil McClellan came from Bad Axe originally. And he came down here and was supervisor of the Wood Construction Company. He built the training school too. I should say they built, Wood Construction Company. And they laid all the pavement and everything. We used to watch it go up, Wayne County and Maybury both. And then he did some nice buildings in Detroit too that we used to go see. And his daughters were all nurses but one, and they used to work out here. Then after leaving there, I decided to leave institution work for awhile, and I went and interviewed for a job at ... Manufacturing Company. I won't go into detail there, but I was everything. I was first aid, I was ...

Q: It would be more in the health field though?

IE: Well no, I did manual labor there too.

Q: What did they manufacture?

IE: It was a job shop that did little things. But you know, I made good money there, and that was what I was after.

Q: It was over in Plymouth?

IE: Yes, yes. Nice people to work for. And good money. Well, the reason for me quitting there was because I was not going to work anymore. You know, you get to thinking, well I'm going to be my own body for awhile. Then before I know it, I was back to work at St. Mary's Hospital, and I worked in OR there. I had the sterilizing end of it... all the instruments for the doctors and nurses. I was over there three years and a half and enjoyed that because it was a new hospital then. I got in on the ground floor. Nice faculty and nice doctors, nice staff members. Then I came back to Northville and was going to stay home for awhile. And then Marilyn called me... Marilyn Gunsel Grant. And I went up and helped them out for three years and a half. I probably would still be working, except Jim was real, real mad. On Sunday he had one day off and would be in town and would say, "I'm not sitting home while you're working." But in between that, I've done some nice things, some part time jobs and helped raise my family. We've had some good times together. My daughter was a beautician in Detroit and we were inseparable. And Dick, too. We've always been close. He went away to Korea for three years, and I think I was ... every, every day. I was glad to see him come home.

(Interviewer's question not recorded.)

IE: Yes, I can remember the fairs, honey. We used to have some fair. One time, I took Jean. We always took the children, but it was always crowded. I had her right beside me and I turned

around and was looking at something and I turned around and she was gone. And I'll tell you, I really, really shed some. And all at once I heard a loudspeaker saying we have little blonde curly-headed girl up here that says her name is Jean. I'll tell you, I couldn't get fast enough to that stand. Those were great fairs and I was sorry to see that go.

Q: Did you enter any of the events?

IE: Oh yes. Jean was in the baby contest. She was kind of pretty when she was little. She came out a few times, not the first, but in. Of course I'm real proud of my children. I don't know if I can tell this or not.

Q: Sure!

IE: Our daughter always lived here, graduated from school, went to Methodist Church. She was married up here, big wedding. And she and her husband live in St. Petersburg now. They're the head of the Salvation Army down there. And Dick, Richard Allen, has always been right here, excepting the three years he spent in Korea. He and Nancy have worked around here. They taught for a few years in California, and then they came back to Indianapolis and then here. I don't think I need to say that Nancy works up here at the Hole in the Wall, and Richard is a... man, a field man, he's been with them years. His territory is surrounding different places close by. I guess I've always been just kind of a plain old mom. We have five great grandchildren and six grandchildren. And when we all get together, which is not as often as it used to be because half of them are south now and a few here yet. All in all, it's been a great life here, a great life. And I have no complaints at all. Have made a lot of friends down through the years. You know, so many of my friends built retirement homes up north. I'm still here, but they're scattered all over. But I wouldn't wish to live any place else, but here. I look out and I've got these old morning glories here, and they stare me in face... and different little things like that, you know. I get kind of sentimental. What else, Claudine? I'm trying to think of that policeman's name.

Q: Tell me about that policeman while you try to think of his name.

IE: I am so disgusted. How could I ever forget it? Bill... his name was Bill, just a great guy. He rode the motorcycle, always wore black boots, those tight boots, you know, just a real generous man. I lived uptown at that time, and I was always losing my car keys. He would never ask who they belonged to. He would just come down the street holding them. He knew they belonged to me. And after you go, I'll think of his name. Well, Bruce knows, anybody that knows Northville knows his name, but it just doesn't come to me.

Q: What about some of the other stores there in town that you remember?

IE: Oh yes. It was just a joy. The Lapham's store, that was a real good personal shopper for me. She owned the Lapham's, that was the mother. I'd watch those boys. That store has been here for years. In October, I would go in and I'd say to Beth, "Now, I'm in here to do my Christmas

shopping, “and I would name off my family. But she knew them all, my men and my women, and she would advise. Very, very smart, wise. And then Freydls, of course, they’ve been a great comfort to me. And then we used to have the old Brader’s store. Did you remember that? And Jean would say, “Mom.” But that store was great to all of us. It was a place where you could go in and get just anything, and it was a working person’s store. But Jean would say, “Mama, don’t get my dress at Brader’s.” Because she’d go to school, and see one or two just like it. Dick always said, “Mom, I never had too many clothes. Jean got them all.” That wasn’t so really. Of course, there was Gunsells, and I guess that we’ve had a series of restaurants in Northville, little restaurants. We had some cute places, the Old Bean Pot. Of course everybody knew the Bean Pot, and I know they’ve mentioned that a thousand times. Used to be a place where you could go in and get a good hamburger and probably a bowl of bean soup. Well, let’s see. I forgot to say that I bowled on three leagues for a long time. I bowled for Twin Pines. We just had a good time, and the bowling alley down here was going good.

IE: My son played Varsity football, basketball, for practically all his years in Northville. I was always on those old bleachers down there right when it was at Ford Field. See they didn’t have... in football down below the bank there. And for basketball, we were always up in the bleachers in the old schoolhouse, Cooke School. Oh such times. We would scream and holler and yell; we’d just get so uptight.

Q: Didn’t they used to have an all-school fundraiser in the spring? At the Community Building?

IE: Hmm, you know, I don’t remember that.

Q: Maybe it was more Elementary.

IE: You know, maybe I should go back on this. I can remember during the War when they had shelters for the kids.

Q: Oh really?

IE: Oh yes. I’ve got pictures of them... the shelters. And they called for, this is a little bit funny: they called for tins and aluminum to pile up on the four corners up there during the Second World War to fight the enemy. It’s so funny now, when you think of history. So funny when you think of the way it’s evolved. We all took our pans up there, probably better pans than I’ve got now, and we’d heap them up on that pile.

Q: Oh, really? I was thinking you meant tin cans.

IE: Well, no, cooking utensils. I don’t know who remembers that, but I do. I don’t know if there’s anybody living that remembers that or not.

Q: The fish hatchery was a business going years ago.

IE: Oh, that fish hatchery was really going full blast.

Q: Would you go down and look or see?

IE: Not too much. I think I'd been down maybe a couple times, but it was a busy place. I think we were all sad to see that. Of course there was the vanilla factory. There was never a dull moment there. They were sending vanilla all over. Of course, that endured for quite awhile, as long as Mr. Langfield lived. And then when they had the Memorial Day parades, they would all gather there, and Con would treat them with ice cream. And it was just a ritual, a ritual. See, when I first came here, the railroad tracks were still in, the streetcar tracks.

Q: Oh really?

IE: Yes. And I can faintly remember them digging them up. It wasn't too long after we came that they dug them up. But the old interurban used to come here, the old streetcar used to come in here. I think Bruce mentioned that, so this is not new. It was the Biddle family had the old bus that would run from here to Five Points. Our only means of getting into Detroit really was to ride that bus and then take the streetcar from Five Points. And I don't know how I ever did it, because it would kill me now. But we must go to Hudson's. That was a must. And so I would have one here and one here, and we would... especially at Christmas time... we would go down, and that was the real Santa Claus. We would stand in line for eternity to see Santa. And then we always went to Hudson's restaurant to have our dinner, and then return at night. It was an ordeal, but it didn't seem that way because it was so much to look forward to. And now I go to Detroit and I think it takes an eternity to get down there. And when I get down there, I don't know where I'm going.

IE: I still can't keep track of that cop's name and that bothers me because I had so many encounters with him. I had so much fun with him. Mr. Denton was the one...

IE: Dick was bound to go into the service. And I said, "No, you're not going, you're going to go to school first." "Now, Mom, I'm going to go and get my War time in, and then I'll come home and go to college." I said Dick, "You just won't do it." But he said, "I'll tell you, if you don't let me go, I'll go anyway." So I had to go off teary-eyed and sign him up with Mr. Denton. He knew me real well. He was not of age yet. But he didn't have to go off to someplace else to sign up. He was right here. His induction center was in Detroit. He left from Detroit. I said to one of the boys, "Here's a camera," because I was working and I didn't want to go with them anyway, because I was with him until the last minute. But I said, "Here's my camera. Take it and get some good pictures down." And the guy was so nervous, when he came home, he didn't have Dick's head on them.

IE: Oh, I don't know, Claudine. After sixty years, there's so many things, probably things I should have told you. I should have just kind of jotted a few things down. But anyway, I'm just living retirement. My husband retired a year ago last April, and we do, not extensive travel, but we just kind of go here and there. Tomorrow we're going over to Three Rivers and call on some friends. We love our home in Florida, but it would be awfully hard to depart and leave

Northville. I love flowers. I've had some of the most beautiful flowers this year I think I've ever had. We've had ample rain. And my hobby is just being right around my family. So that's the way it is, I guess.

Q: Well thank you. It's been interesting.