

Ruth Agnes (Shellenbarger) Acre

Interviewed by Jeanne Temple

Jeanne: [00:00:00](#) I'm Jeanne Temple and I'm going to interview Ruth Acre. This is November 17, 1983. I want your whole name.

Ruth: [00:00:20](#) My whole name is Ruth Agnes (Shellenbarger) Acre.

Jeanne: I'm glad to hear you say Shellenbarger [soft "g"]. I always want to say "Shellenbarger" [hard "g"]. When were you born?

Ruth: [00:00:40](#) August 26, 1899.

Jeanne: [00:00:45](#) And where?

S.. Ruth: [00:00:47](#) In South Branch Township, Crawford County.

Jeanne: [00:00:59](#) Is that near Roscommon?

Ruth: [00:01:02](#) Near Roscommon.

Jeanne: [00:01:03](#) And your mother's full name?

Ruth: [00:01:07](#) My mother's full name was Lucy Helen Richardson.

Jeanne: [00:01:12](#) And your father's?

Ruth: [00:01:15](#) Willis Shellenbarger.

Jeanne: [00:01:17](#) Not William. I've heard him called Will. At the time you were born, were you the oldest or the youngest or what?

Ruth: [00:01:34](#) I was the fifth child.

Jeanne: [00:01:41](#) Can you name them all? Give me their names?

Ruth: [00:01:51](#) There was Anna Belle, Lawrence Warren, Bird Ural, Ivy Avon, myself, Charles Morris, and Ray Rex.

Jeanne: [00:02:11](#) That was a big family and you were living in the time of the lumbering in that area, right?

Ruth: [00:02:22](#) Not In that area. That had all been lumbered off in the area where I was born years before. My grandfather and my great

uncle had lumbered earlier. In fact, my grandfather lumbered at the time that I was born.

- Jeanne: [00:02:44](#) Haven't I seen the name Shellenbarger in that museum?
- Ruth: [00:02:52](#) I think probably you have. My dad's picture used to be in it, along with Shoppenagon.
- Jeanne: [00:03:04](#) We're going to get to that later. The house that you were born in, was that where your father and mother set up housekeeping?
- Ruth: [00:03:16](#) My father built that house on the honor of my coming. My little sister, Ivy Avon, had left before I was thought of but when I was coming to town, my dad built this house because my mother had lived with her folks. She was her mother's right-hand man. She did all of grandmother's washing and ironing. Of course, everything was ironed then and laid away in drawers. We didn't have clothes closets like we have now. The clothes were ironed and folded away nicely in dresser drawers.
- Jeanne: [00:04:15](#) Did your grandmother Richardson and your parents live quite close together?
- Ruth: [00:04:23](#) At that time Mother and Dad lived in part of their house up until the time that my sister died. Grandfather Richardson used to help my mother make the soft soap that they had.
- Jeanne: [00:04:44](#) Do you remember how they did it?
- Ruth: [00:04:47](#) Yes. I remember how they did it and I remember what it tastes like.
- Jeanne: [00:04:50](#) We weren't supposed to eat it. You just scrubbed with it.
- Ruth: [00:04:54](#) My grandfather made maple sugar and it was in a big, what they called a hogshead, a real big barrel. He also put the soft soap in the same kind of a barrel and they were side by side. I'd been in the habit of, when my grandmother would go in to dip out her sugar, I was just tall enough that I could reach over and stick my fingers into the sugar barrel. Where the sugar was taken from, the syrup would run down and leach out in there and I'd lick them off. They put the soft soap in there, the same kind of barrel, and I didn't know but I stuck my fingers in the soft soap barrel and I knew it!
- Jeanne: [00:05:45](#) You knew right then.

Ruth: [00:05:47](#) Oh yes, and I remember how hard I cried, how awful it burnt. My grandmother picked me up. She washed my mouth out first and then she just filled me full of cream to take the burn away.

Jeanne: [00:06:04](#) because they made their own lye and it probably was--

Ruth: [00:06:08](#) Yes, they made their own lye. They leached it from the ashes and stirred it into all the culled fats they'd saved from the animals they butchered you know-- the intestinal fat and so on and so forth. All the fats were saved. Nothing was thrown away.

Jeanne: [00:06:27](#) While we're talking about the animals, did your father and grandfather hunt like we were just talking with Paul [Shellenbarger] who got a deer? Did they hunt pretty much too?

Ruth: [00:06:39](#) My dad hunted; I never knew my grandfather to hunt, my grandfather Richardson, but my grandfather Shellenbarger was a great hunter.

Jeanne: [00:06:48](#) I have no idea whether we're talking in a period before 1900, before you were born really, if they had the game laws they do now, or if they--

Ruth: [00:07:03](#) No, I was old enough to remember when the first game law came on protecting the deer. You couldn't kill but two during the season.

Jeanne: [00:07:14](#) Did the hunters then, like your grandfather and your dad and anyone else, recognize that fall was the best time to get deer? They weren't going to get them in the spring or didn't that--

Ruth: [00:07:26](#) You know, before the law came on, they hunted for game. They hunted for food. They took it when they needed it. After the law came on to protect the deer, why it was in the fall of the year and before the deer had to eat the cedar bows and things like that that were off-flavor. If you killed one later, as they began to eat on the cedar bows, why it didn't taste so good.

Jeanne: [00:08:05](#) Yeah, the meat was kind of strong.

Ruth: [00:08:07](#) It had that flavor to it.

Jeanne: [00:08:09](#) Do you ever recall any of your family or neighbors getting a bear?

Ruth: [00:08:12](#) Oh yes. I do.

Jeanne: [00:08:16](#) Do you remember eating bear? I've often wondered what it would taste like.

Ruth: [00:08:21](#) Yes, I have eaten bear. It tastes a lot like pork. What we call pork chops and the bear chops were so much alike you couldn't tell the difference, I would say, if somebody hadn't told you.

Jeanne: [00:08:40](#) We got to talking about pork chops and saving the fat from the animals. Then your grandfather or your dad or generally people kept a few cows or they had a few pigs.

Ruth: [00:08:55](#) A few.

Jeanne: [00:08:57](#) That was for--

Ruth: [00:08:59](#) their own use.

Jeanne: [00:09:00](#) They weren't milking and selling milk.

Ruth: [00:09:03](#) They were selling butter.

Jeanne: [00:09:06](#) Oh, the farm wife made butter and you took it into town and traded it, I'll bet. That's what they used to trade out.

Ruth: [00:09:15](#) I imagine they was traded more or less.

Jeanne: [00:09:19](#) Did they have chickens?

Ruth: [00:09:22](#) Yes, they had chickens.

Jeanne: [00:09:25](#) I think about that country being either quite heavily wooded or stumps still from the pine trees. I wondered about the animals like the coon and other things getting into the chickens or foxes or whatever.

Ruth: [00:09:45](#) Foxes mostly. I can't remember up there ever seeing a coon, but fox, yes. They were quite meddlesome.

Jeanne: [00:10:06](#) Chickens and eggs and the fox like that. While we're talking on chickens and eggs and having beef and pork, in general, families like yours and your grandparents ate pretty well. There was always food.

Ruth: [00:10:25](#) I would say we did.

Jeanne: [00:10:27](#) It was home prepared and you salted the meat or--

Ruth: [00:10:30](#) Salted it.

Jeanne: [00:10:32](#) Cured it.

Ruth: [00:10:33](#) Dried it.

Jeanne: [00:10:35](#) Now, did the ladies do much canning? We have ways of canning, but--

Ruth: [00:10:40](#) I'll tell you. They didn't can so much when I was little kid. Everything was put into crocks. Take your huckleberries, they used to what they called "uker" [?] them. That I can remember. Mother would measure two pails of huckleberries--that would be the 16-quart pail--and a pail of sugar. She used this very heavy pan when she cooked that my dad cooked on in our [grand]father's lumber camp. It was a huge thing that would fill a good-sized crock. I can't remember whether it was two gallons or three gallons. I think they were three-gallon crocks that she made enough in one batch. I know they were. Then to seal those, she'd lay a plate over the top. They had a wax. I don't know where it come from or where they got it, but it was a red wax and right around the edge between the crock and the plate. They'd seal that plate right in there and that's the way they preserved them.

Jeanne: [00:12:02](#) And I suppose kept them where it was the coolest part of your--

Ruth: [00:12:07](#) Oh yes. You know something? The houses were pretty cool then.

Jeanne: [00:12:11](#) Right. I'm sure they were. People dressed differently too in those days than we think we do nowadays. You just mentioned something I'm real curious about. You said your mother cooked in a lumber camp. Was that a Shellenbarger lumber camp or a Richardson lumbering camp?

Ruth: [00:12:38](#) My mother was Richardson.

Jeanne: [00:12:40](#) And she cooked then for a lumber camp. Oh my. I bet her stories about fixing food were great.

Ruth: [00:12:46](#) Yes. I know that she and dad both cooked in my grandfather's lumber camp. My Dad was a good cook.

Jeanne: [00:13:00](#) You also said your dad taught school, remember that you found out in later years?

Ruth: [00:13:03](#) I was young enough not to realize it.

Jeanne: [00:13:11](#) Someday we ought to maybe go back up to Crawford County and see if there are any old school records? What I mean, I'd like to know if he had gotten out of the eighth grade. Now they used get out of the eighth grade and teach. You wrote an exam and I wonder if that's what he did because it was done often.

Ruth: [00:13:34](#) I'll tell you, I don't think my dad taught out of the eighth grade but my dad studied to be a lawyer. He was well read and I don't know as he ever went to any graduate schools like that but he was well read. He studied his law books and he had this law library, this complete library. I think he had everything down pat in it.

Jeanne: [00:14:01](#) But never pursued it or something, whatever. Then--

Ruth: [00:14:06](#) He give that up when he got such a big family he had to earn a living some other way.

Jeanne: [00:14:13](#) But he taught school though before he was married or not?

Ruth: [00:14:18](#) Yes, he taught school before he was married and he taught school afterwards for a while. From the time I was born he taught school winters. They didn't have school like they do now. They had school so many months in the fall and so many months in the spring totaling about five months of school a year.

Jeanne: [00:14:35](#) Usually the winter session was for-- By then they were young men because they had to work. Don's [Temple] father was going to school in the [Rochester] Colony when he was about 18 or 19 because he only went that winter term. You needed every single bit of help on a farm in those days whether it was down here or up north because it took a lot--

Ruth: [00:14:58](#) My grandfather Shellenbarger was not a farmer. Grandfather Shellenbarger was in the war.

Jeanne: [00:15:07](#) Now when you say war, Civil War. What did he do then?

Ruth: [00:15:18](#) He was a major.

Jeanne: [00:15:20](#) in the war? But I mean, when he came home. You said he didn't farm.

Ruth: [00:15:23](#) He hunted and he fished and he guided on the river.

Jeanne: [00:15:29](#) What river are we talking about?

Ruth: [00:15:31](#) Au Sable.

Jeanne: [00:15:31](#) So people that long ago were going up there like a vacation almost and hiring a guide to take them where the--

Ruth: [00:15:43](#) Yes. In a lot of years of Grandpa's life, the richer people came out from Detroit and Bay City and they boarded with my grandmother quite a lot and my grandfather.

Jeanne: [00:16:02](#) That brought in extra income. Talking about how people managed there, did they have a garden? Were they gardeners? You always were a gardener and I was a gardener.

Ruth: [00:16:14](#) You know, up north in Grayling, there wasn't much gardening did. They had the perennial plants and things like that. I can't remember of anybody really having a garden. I was quite young and I didn't remember too much.

Jeanne: [00:16:39](#) Do you think they raised at least their potatoes, like root crops, somewhat?

Ruth: [00:16:44](#) They could have--beggies [rutabagas] and potatoes and turnips and I don't know about carrots. Carrots are something I never liked.

Jeanne: [00:16:57](#) We'll get to the fire that destroyed your home but you told about your mother or that time there was this big crock of sauerkraut. So somewhere you had cabbage, didn't you?

Ruth: [00:17:11](#) Yes, there was cabbage. Dad worked for a living and he did some work for a farmer and that's where he got the cabbage. He took the cabbage in payment, you know, crop payment.

Jeanne: [00:17:26](#) People did that all the time, don't you think?

Ruth: [00:17:29](#) Potatoes and stuff like that. He took them in payment for his wages.

Jeanne: [00:17:35](#) When you have a family like they did, that big, or talking about your mother and dad, clothes become quite an item for as many children as your mother had? My mother had a grandmother that lived with them and her grandmother sewed for them all the time. Grandma was one that made the clothes and taught them to sew. Now, was your mother a pretty good seamstress or your grandmother?

Ruth: [00:18:08](#) In my younger days my mother was a good seamstress until after she practically lost her eyesight. When I was young maybe she couldn't see to make clothes. I did make my own, but she always made my grandmother's clothes. Of course, there was not such a great extent of clothes in there. Maybe there were a couple of dresses and a very nice dress that was taken out occasionally for some state occasion, but that was kept away in mothballs, you might say. They wore their long aprons. They wore their dresses that came down to the floor. All of their aprons came down to there. I can remember when I was a kid, when my mother would go down to wash--I couldn't have been over four, maybe between four and five--but when Grandma put on her clean apron to get ready for mother to wash the apron she had on, I was always smelling that apron. It smelled so nice. Grandmother'd say, "Lucy, what ails that child?" I can hear her say that so many times because I was always wanting to go around by her. What they didn't know, it smelled so nice because my mother always--we have some now and then --a plant called, sweet Mary [probably sweet Annie]. My grandmother had a big bed of it. I got a root of it still growing. Mother would leave those sweet Mary leaves in those dresser drawers with the clean clothes and--

Jeanne: [00:20:01](#) I love that smell.

Ruth: [00:20:03](#) and Grandma's apron smelled just like that. I couldn't tell them. I didn't tell them what I was doing it for, what I was holding that apron for. I was smelling it.

Jeanne: [00:20:14](#) I suppose then we're talking about washing by hand, heating the water on the stove. In the summertime or when the weather was warm, did they heat it outside and wash that way or you don't remember?

Ruth: [00:20:33](#) In a big kettle inside.

Jeanne: [00:20:36](#) You talked about a maple sugar and maple syrup. This was grandfather Richardson? Was that something that a lot of families did every year?

Ruth: [00:20:50](#) If you're lucky enough to have a maple woods which my granddad had. We always called it the sugar bush and it's still there I just heard here last fall. The last time I was in there, probably 10, 12 years ago, that pan was still there by the old arch. My cousin was just telling me the man that bought that sugar bush took that pan and cut it in two and made two and said it was in perfect condition.

Jeanne: [00:21:36](#) For heaven's sake!

Ruth: [00:21:37](#) Can you believe that, Jeanne?

Jeanne: [00:21:38](#) No, because things rust out so.

Ruth: [00:21:40](#) I don't know what it could be made of but it was in excellent condition,

Jeanne: [00:21:45](#) Maybe it was copper.

Ruth: [00:21:46](#) It could have been copper.

Jeanne: [00:21:48](#) People had big copper boilers that they would cook apple butter and boil syrup down in. They had iron ones too but they used to have copper.

Ruth: [00:21:57](#) It could have been but I it never looked like copper.

Jeanne: [00:22:04](#) Your dad, as you said, built this house before you were born and they moved into that. You were born in that house. I suppose you've been told, was there a doctor available to be there at the birth or did grandma come or--

Ruth: [00:22:32](#) No, my uncle Charlie's wife, she was very handy and I guess she was what would say, kind of a midwife, and she delivered me. In fact, there was no one there when I was born. My dad was on his way after Aunt Minie? but when he got back I was there.

Jeanne: [00:23:05](#) You didn't wait. Were there doctors available for like a broken--

Ruth: [00:23:13](#) Yes, there was but I can't remember his name. I wish I could. I've remembered it for years.

Jeanne: [00:23:20](#) Would that have been Roscommon?

Ruth: [00:23:23](#) Not in Roscommon. You had to go to Grayling to get a doctor. And I can't remember his name.

Jeanne: [00:23:33](#) I know that my mother was born at home and same as you were.

Ruth: All of us children were born at home.

Jeanne: I think, I have to ask Mother again, that there was a doctor there when she was born, but I don't know. I know there was for Uncle Art because that was Grandma's first one, I guess. I

want to get into this Chief [David] Shoppenagon [1809-1911] a little bit. Tell how you knew him. What was his connection with your father or your family?

- Ruth: [00:24:07](#) I didn't really know Chief Shoppenagon. He died when I was about 4 or 5 years old. I knew his granddaughter.
- Jeanne: [00:24:19](#) What was her name?
- Ruth: [00:24:21](#) Nancy.
- Jeanne: [00:24:22](#) Would she go as Nancy Shoppenagon or did they choose another name or don't you know?
- Ruth: [00:24:32](#) I don't know whether she went by that name. We always knew her as Nancy Shoppenagon but I don't think that was her name. It could have been. I don't think it was. Shoppenagon had a son. His name was Tom and he used to hunt with my father an awful lot. Old Shoppenagon was never pleased with him, probably thought a lot of him, but they have a way of covering their real feelings, an Indian does, and he used to say, "My Tom no good Indian. He eat and hunt and go fishing all the time." That was--
- Jeanne: [00:25:30](#) Where did the Shoppenagon family live from you?
- Ruth: [00:25:34](#) Just across the bridge in Grayling. It's the main bridge there now. There used to be a wooden bridge across there and there was a walk bridge beside it. There was a dam just above the bridge. Now whether that dam is out now or not--I think it is-- that they used to run their logs above that dam. That dam held them back, you know, so the mill was right there. I've seen this Nancy Shoppenagon a good many times.
- Jeanne: [00:26:22](#) Would she be close to your age really, sort of?
- Ruth: [00:26:26](#) No, she was older than I. She was a young lady and I was just a kid.
- Jeanne: [00:26:33](#) Did Tom used to guide hunters and fishers too?
- Ruth: [00:26:46](#) Tom Shoppenagon? I don't know much about him. Only he used to hunt a lot with my dad. I've heard my dad talk about him. When he'd go out to hunt he always dug a hole and buried a round of powder. Their muzzle-loading guns, you know, they did it with wads, powder or shot or a bullet, whichever they wanted to put in. He always buried one round. It brought him good luck, he said.

Jeanne: [00:27:34](#) Do you think it did?

Ruth: [00:27:37](#) I don't know. My dad said one time, "He always buried it when he'd go on their hunting trip." Dad said one time, "After he buried it, I dug it up. Then he had unusual good luck and he began to tell about the Great Father seen that he had luck when he buried this round of powder and shot and so on and so forth." And he said, "I just pulled it out of my pocket. I said here, Tom. You know, he would never go hunt with me again. We never went hunting together again." I suppose he had in his eye, I imagine, that Dad was dishonest.

Jeanne: [00:28:32](#) Poking a little fun at him or something and he didn't appreciate it. You're talking about the Au Sable? I assume back in that time that the fishing was excellent at most any time, wasn't it?

Ruth: [00:28:47](#) There was a lot of fish called the grayling. I don't know what they were but I've heard them talk about it a lot. I think when the grayling were there that fishing was better. That was a fish! The old people, when we lived down on the 'Sable, my aunt and uncle, a couple of others, came down to go fishing with Dad. When he cooked the fish for dinner, they spoke on this grayling because that had been the fish that was mostly used at that time when they were young, you know?

Jeanne: [00:29:35](#) There is a fish that is called a grayling and it has a special Latin name but I think they're almost gone.

Ruth: [00:29:49](#) There was a lot of them at that time. The log drives down the river, cleaned out their beds or something in the-- They were fished real heavy.

Jeanne: [00:30:06](#) You told the story yesterday about the 40 acres that your dad had that was timbered and it had the little lake on it and when it was logged off. The lake disappeared because those systems have to balance each other. That may have happened along the Au Sable too although it's pretty heavily wooded.

Ruth: [00:30:29](#) It was supposed to be a government operation and they were supposed to be making turpentine, but they was really making gun powder.

Jeanne: [00:30:41](#) before the war.

Ruth: [00:30:47](#) They was to gather old pine stumps and anything like that and they supposed to be making turpentine. I can't remember the company that did it.

Jeanne: [00:31:12](#) There must be other people in Grayling that know that. Then how long did you live in Grayling?

Ruth: [00:31:31](#) Jeanne, I'm not remembering it.

Jeanne: [00:31:32](#) You said you were about eight when you went to Alabama?

Ruth: [00:31:39](#) Yeah.

Jeanne: [00:31:40](#) So this was before that.

Ruth: [00:31:42](#) We moved there when I was six in Grayling. The spring before I was eight we moved out in the country and from there we went to Alabama.

Jeanne: [00:32:11](#) I'm curious because my grandfather Ewer went to Georgia for a few years and now here's your father taking his family and going to Alabama.

Ruth: [00:32:28](#) He had a cousin that lived down there and he wrote home to Dad and told him what a wonderful opportunity it was down there for school teachers but it was just 50 years after the [Civil] war and the southerners were not just thinking of hiring a Yankee schoolteacher. There weren't very many schools down there and the nearest one was 25 miles from our place. So there's no teacher job down there. The lumbering--Dad knew lumbering from head to foot--but they weren't doing any lumbering either. So we was down there on a wild goose chase. After what little money Dad had run out, it was kind of a tough go.

Jeanne: [00:33:28](#) Were you out in the country?

Ruth: [00:33:30](#) Yes.

Jeanne: [00:33:31](#) on a little farm?

Ruth: [00:33:33](#) Not a farm, really It was what had been a farm before the war but there was no farming done down there in our locality where we went.

Jeanne: [00:33:45](#) It must've been hard going.

Ruth: [00:33:47](#) It was.

Jeanne: [00:33:48](#) And did all the children go or were some of your older ones—

Ruth: [00:33:54](#) My sister, she was married before we went down, my oldest sister.

Jeanne: [00:33:59](#) What I can remember, I think maybe that you brought back from the south, you're the first person I ever knew that raised okra.

Ruth: [00:34:09](#) I was? We had a little garden down there and it was wonderful. It was hot and you need hot weather to grow okra.

Jeanne: [00:34:19](#) Remember when you had the garden back up by the hill? You always had some okra. I don't know whether it did very well, but I know you--

Ruth: [00:34:28](#) After it got real hot in the summer it would bear and it had beautiful blossoms and sweet potatoes was a great crop down there too. Everybody raised sweet potatoes and sugar cane. We, for a while, was down close to Mobile Bay. We lived on that little branch that came off Mobile Bay. The tide used to come in and out there, you know.

Jeanne: [00:35:08](#) So then you had access to fish or shrimp and --

Ruth: [00:35:14](#) No shrimp. These blue crabs--they get them down south a lot. Dad used to get them quite often and the big turtles, what they call the loggerhead turtles. They were huge things. Dad set what they called trout lines. You had a line, oh probably 30' long, and set it from post to post and then they had drop lines from that about 18" long with their big hooks on them. It kept us in fish. It kept us in meat. We'd eat a lot of fish. He used to catch those big turtles. They were monsters. Us kids would get it on their backs and ride on, you know.

Jeanne: [00:36:12](#) Were catfish--

Ruth: [00:36:15](#) Oh yeah. There was a lot of it called the silver cat. They were wonderful meat. Of course, they had the mud cats too only there were larger. Dad used to catch those on those trout lines. He'd catch big silver catfish too and he'd cut those in steaks.

Jeanne: [00:36:44](#) Like salmon steak. I just happened to think of something, Ruth. How did you travel to Alabama? Did you go by train?

Ruth: [00:36:51](#) Yes.

Jeanne: [00:36:51](#) I'm just curious about that because you could go anywhere by train in those days. Now you can't go anywhere.

Ruth: [00:37:00](#) It was the only way there was to go.

Jeanne: [00:37:03](#) Then about four years you were down there because you said you were 12 and then Dad decided he had to go back.

Ruth: [00:37:13](#) We all came back in the latter part of June before I was 12 years old.

Jeanne: [00:37:22](#) And came up by train.

Ruth: [00:37:25](#) While Dad was down there, he killed this big rattlesnake. He went to step across this log and this rattlesnake was curled up and had his head stuck up. Dad has his broad axe that he had down there with him and he said, "I knew it was either me or the rattlesnake." He said, "I knew I had just one chance. If I swung that broad axe and didn't hit him, that would be it." They was deathly, you know. He cut his head off. The hide of that rattlesnake is over at Lansing in the natural museum. I saw it there. He skinned it. I told you he cut the head off but he skinned it and stretched it on a board. He sent it to my uncle. My uncle give it to someone that put it in the museum over in Lansing.

Jeanne: [00:38:18](#) Oh, for heaven's sakes!

Ruth: [00:38:21](#) The last time I was there in Lansing, I went down to the museum and was looking things over and that skin was in there.

Jeanne: [00:38:31](#) The rattlesnakes grow pretty big down there. Then you came back to Michigan and back to Grayling or--

Ruth: [00:38:43](#) No, back to a little log house that Dad had built. He re-roofed it and re-floored it and redone it for the chunks of plaster that fell out between the logs. We lived there until the time I was 14.

Jeanne: [00:39:05](#) Now you're 12 and you do go to school now. You did start school then?

Ruth: [00:39:14](#) When I was 12. I went to school five months there, I think; two in the spring, two in the fall. Then my sister wanted me to go home with her where I could have nine months of schooling. I never went to school a day. She just wanted somebody to (I hope you cut this out.) to wash dishes.

Jeanne: [00:39:43](#) Where did she live?

Ruth: [00:39:44](#) She lived down near Leslie, [MI].

Jeanne: [00:39:47](#) So you went home with her thinking you'd go to school at Leslie or--

Ruth: [00:39:52](#) I never had any schooling.

Jeanne: [00:39:55](#) You decided you didn't want to do that so then you went back home?

Ruth: [00:40:01](#) The next year my brother took me into Lansing with him and boarded me there with my cousins. I was in the seventh grade then. I didn't make all these grades. I took a test to figure out where I was going to be, you know, and I had about four or five months. I came home in February. I got a cough and the doctor there couldn't help me any. I just coughed all the time. They did everything. An old Danish lady, she did everything. She was a pretty good self-doctor, you know, So ? asked me if I wanted to go home. I said, "yes." So he put me on a train, sent me home, and Dad met me in a boat in Roscommon. My mother's cousin—he'd have been my second cousin--picked me up in Roscommon and took me down to Chase Bridge. Dad's boat was there and I got into the boat and went home in a boat. It was 15 miles by land to where we lived. It was about 25 or 30 miles by river.

Jeanne: [00:41:35](#) because the river goes quickly.

Ruth: [00:41:37](#) We got home at 4:00 in the afternoon and Dad fixed me a cup of hot chocolate. He said, "You better lay down." He put me in bed and covered me up and he woke me up the next day at four o'clock, but I didn't have any more cough.

Jeanne: [00:42:03](#) I can remember how black the snow used to be in Lansing when I was a kid and I think a lot of that might have been that pollution. You can't stand it.

Ruth: [00:42:14](#) It could have been.

Jeanne: [00:42:16](#) Did you go to school at--

Ruth: [00:42:18](#) Yes. That spring I had two months of school. I think, altogether while we was there, I had seven months of school.

Jeanne: [00:42:40](#) Did they have a high school in Grayling?

Ruth: [00:42:43](#) No. I worked for my board and I had the eighth grade and I got practically all of the eighth grade up until it come time to take the examinations. I took the state examination. And my

teacher said, "You take the state examination and don't pass, I won't pass you no matter if you passed my examination." I took the state examination. Then I quit school. I went home. In our district, you know, they had a couple months of school when I went home and then I went to school there, but I passed and the lady where I was boarding, Dr. Ainsley's wife, when it come time to take the examination in the eighth grade there, she come out and told me when it was going to be and said, "You be there and take that examination." but I said, "She's not going to pass me even if I do pass the state examination. But she says, "You be there and take that examination." She was on the school board. When they had it I went ahead and I took it and I passed that. So I've got two graduation certificates around here someplace. I thought that's a pretty good--- I had. I went back in the fall and I had high school four years. Dad moved and that was when our house burned. Dad moved into Grayling and we lived in with my Uncle Grant.

- Jeanne: [00:44:31](#) What was his last name, Shellenbarger?
- Ruth: [00:44:33](#) Uh huh, and then I went four months in high school.
- Jeanne: [00:44:50](#) in Grayling.
- Ruth: [00:44:52](#) Then I quit. I couldn't teach, you know. Before that you could teach. When you graduate from ninth grade you teach, but that year they changed it and you had to have six weeks of Normal [school]. I knew my dad couldn't afford to send me and I had no way of making it so I went to Lansing and got a job.
- Jeanne: [00:45:15](#) Where was your job at?
- Ruth: [00:45:19](#) [Michigan] School for the Blind. I saved my money and I put it in the bank. Then I thought I'll work until the fall, that school will start in the fall. I just went and then I thought I'll keep on working until I could get enough money to buy me some clothes, and then I met Mr. Acre.
- Jeanne: [00:45:48](#) Tell me about that because I know that was a blind date.
- Ruth: [00:45:53](#) It sure was.
- Jeanne: [00:45:53](#) Who arranged a blind date?
- Ruth: [00:45:55](#) Ella.
- Jeanne: [00:45:58](#) That was Orrin's sister.

Ruth: [00:46:00](#) And your Uncle Art, she got a blind date for him and a blind date for--

Jeanne: [00:46:10](#) Orrin.

Ruth: [00:46:10](#) Yeah.

Jeanne: [00:46:10](#) What about herself?

Ruth: [00:46:12](#) She had a boyfriend, the man she married. When I came in the office, they was sitting there. I thought, "Oh oh, if it's that little short fellow I'm going to sprain my ankle going down those steps out there."

Jeanne: [00:46:31](#) Now you're talking about Uncle Art, aren't you?

Ruth: [00:46:36](#) She introduced me to Orrin.

Jeanne: [00:46:39](#) How did he happen to be in Lansing?

Ruth: [00:46:41](#) He was working there in the shop.

Jeanne: [00:46:43](#) Do you remember which shop? I'm just curious.

Ruth: [00:46:46](#) I should know . He had a--

Jeanne: [00:46:50](#) There was Motor Wheel and there was--

Ruth: [00:46:53](#) Motor Wheel.

Jeanne: [00:46:53](#) He had gone over, probably for the same reason you had. He wanted to earn some money, cash money, hard money.

Ruth: [00:47:03](#) .He'd bought himself new clothes and a nice new suit. I can remember it yet and he looked so nice, you know. He sent the rest of the money home to his dad and he was to pay him back 7% and that's all he ever got. He got nothing out of the money. He bought me my first box of candy.

Jeanne: [00:47:26](#) Where'd you go on this first date?

Ruth: [00:47:29](#) We went to a show. I can't remember the name of the show. Maybe we went into the show and went to Sugar Bowl and had a banana split. I was thin then I could afford to eat then.

Jeanne: [00:47:48](#) Oh, dear. Then you stayed together as a group pretty much?

Ruth: [00:47:54](#) Nope. Ella and her boyfriend took off and we took off by ourselves. We walked home.

Jeanne: [00:48:02](#) Uncle Art and his date went somewhere?

Ruth: [00:48:05](#) They went somewhere else. I don't know where they went.

Jeanne: [00:48:08](#) Orrin would have known Uncle Art real well.

Ruth: [00:48:12](#) Oh yes. I think they roomed together.

Jeanne: [00:48:15](#) Could be.

Ruth: [00:48:15](#) Over there in Lansing.

Jeanne: [00:48:17](#) Uncle Art went there to work.

Ruth: [00:48:22](#) Oh. I remember Orrin wanted to kiss me and I said, "No, I'm saving my kisses for the man I'm going to marry." I wouldn't let anybody kiss me.

Jeanne: [00:48:37](#) What did he do, propose to your right then?

Ruth: [00:48:42](#) No, he didn't, no sir. Anyway, when we come up to the bottom of the steps, he gave me this box of candy and I put my face up and he kissed me. That was my first kiss. Well, it went a long, long time. It was after he went home and he came back. He came to see me and when he come back up the steps, he said, "You know, you lied to me." I said, "Did I? What did I lie about?" "You said you were saving your kisses for the man you was going to marry." I said, "Oh, did I?" but I didn't lie to him. I knew when I first met him he was the man I was going to marry.

Jeanne: [00:49:37](#) How long after that were you married?

Ruth: [00:49:39](#) I met him the 18th of March and I married him the first day of July.

Jeanne:: [00:49:46](#) What year?

Ruth: [00:49:50](#) 1917. I wasn't quite 18 yet.

Jeanne: [00:49:56](#) Mother and Dad were married six months after that. So you said you were married in July.

Ruth: [00:50:03](#) First day of July.

Jeanne: [00:50:03](#) And they were married the first day of January just six months later. Where were you married?

Ruth: [00:50:12](#) I was married at the home of my cousin, Marshall Richardson, in Lansing on Joy St.

Jeanne: [00:50:18](#) Did you and Orrin have an apartment in Lansing?

Ruth: [00:50:30](#) No. As I said, we were married Sunday and I went home Monday morning. I told my folks I was coming home and so I went home and I was home 10 days. Then I came back and I was going back to the school [Michigan School for the Blind] to work. You had to work by the day not by the month like we had before, but just so much a day, \$2.50 a day. That's quite a lot of money then. Orrin said, "Mother don't want you to go back to work." If I was working, I wasn't a dependent and they was thinking about Warren having to go into the service, you know. They thought if he had a dependent it would help him. I didn't know that, but I say, I found out afterwards that was reason that they was so glad he was married, but they didn't know he was gonna get married. They didn't even know he was going with anybody I guess.

Jeanne: [00:51:39](#) Then you came back to the farm on the river to live and Orrin didn't stay working in the shop anymore.

Ruth: [00:51:47](#) He didn't go back. We were going back that winter but then we figured it was best if he didn't go back.

Jeanne: So you lived with them in the house that isn't there, but I remember

Ruth:: [00:52:02](#) lived there until, I think, the first of January and then I went home.

Jeanne: [00:52:07](#) Home, we're talking Grayling?

Ruth: [00:52:11](#) No, they had moved down near Leslie on the farm down there.

Jeanne: [00:52:17](#) Your folks had, near your sister.

Ruth: [00:52:20](#) My folks lived down there and they moved down there. When I came back the second of April and Orrin built that little house for me. You didn't know I had a little house.

Jeanne: [00:52:38](#) Where was that?

Ruth: [00:52:39](#) You know where Warren Bridges lives? Right back down his lane is a -- maple tree. That little house stood right on the other side of that little maple tree. That little house across behind Spencer Martin's house--that was it.

Jeanne: [00:53:03](#) That was your own home. Did Orrin work for Goodrich's?

Ruth: [00:53:09](#) He rented it. Goodrich didn't own that farm then. Loomis owned it, Ed Loomis, and we rented that farm. He also had field of oats over on the Hall [?] place.

Jeanne: [00:53:37](#) Where did he keep his team?

Ruth: [00:53:41](#) In the barn there at Loomis's.

Jeanne: [00:53:42](#) He used the barn and buildings but you had your own little house because the Loomis's were still living in the farm house. That must have been like a honeymoon cottage over there, wasn't it? Were you living there when Paul was born?

Ruth: [00:54:01](#) We lived there until after he was born and then we rented the Gould place over by--

Jeanne: [00:54:10](#) I know where it is.

Ruth: [00:54:13](#) Down that little road. I can't tell you where it is, I know.

Jeanne: [00:54:18](#) I know where you mean. The Gould place, right? How long did you live there?

Ruth: [00:54:23](#) We went there in the fall. We lived until a year from that March. After Paul was born in October. Paul was just home from the hospital and we went there and lived there until a year from the next March 1st of March. Then we moved down here where Uncle Paul is. We went there in the fall. We lived there a year from March. Paul was born in October. Paul was born in the hospital.

Jeanne: Where, St. Johns?

Ruth: Uh huh.

Jeanne: [00:55:23](#) Then Lyle was born January 21. When is Elizabeth's birthday?

Ruth: [00:55:31](#) She was born in '24.

Jeanne: [00:55:34](#) and Leon?

Ruth: [00:55:36](#) Leon was born in '26. Ruby was born in '28. Ira was born in '30. Sidney was born in '32.

Jeanne: [00:55:49](#) Wasn't Sidney the one that was born right around the election time?

Ruth: [00:55:54](#) I think so.

Jeanne: [00:55:55](#) It seems like I can remember that.

Jeanne: [00:56:09](#) Then you lived down here. Was it called the Bradshaw place?

Ruth: [00:56:20](#) Yeah.

Jeanne: [00:56:22](#) And for how many years now? What year did you move up here?

Ruth: [00:56:26](#) We lived down there 19 years. We moved here in '30. We bought it in '37. Bakers lived here when we bought it. That was in the contract that they had it for one year. They had for one year. Then a year it lay idle and we moved up here in '39 or the spring of '41 or '40. I can't remember. I'd have to go back and look.

Jeanne: [00:56:58](#) I know it was right close to the time that Don and I were married because, as I said, that first Thanksgiving 1940, I know we were up here. As I told you, it was either on a Wednesday night or a Friday or Saturday. It wasn't Thanksgiving Day. Those two turtles we were talking about--now the kids were running around with those claws trying to be funny. I don't know who to accuse but it was Sid or Leon or my brother. You know, you'd cut off the claws. Oh, they were ugly looking things. I can remember that real well. Who lived on the old Bradshaw place between when you left and when Paul got it?

Ruth: [00:57:49](#) Alan Gibson.

Jeanne: [00:57:52](#) That wasn't very long before Paul got the place, was it?

Ruth: [00:57:56](#) No, not too long.

Jeanne: [00:57:58](#) As soon as he got out of service, wasn't it almost as soon he bought that place? He wasn't married as soon as I was because he was in service although he was married before he was out. It seems like the next thing I knew he was living on the place that I remember.

Ruth: [00:58:18](#) He wanted this place down here. If I had any brains, we'd have got it. He didn't want to give him-- He made up his mind he wanted \$9,000 for it. Paul couldn't see that other \$500, but that was all worked land. The woods was on it. Paul was bound he wouldn't give the other \$500 and if I'd thought quick enough we could've given him the other \$500.

Jeanne: [00:58:56](#) Yeah. And kept it.

Ruth: [00:58:59](#) It was much better farm than that down there but then they don't need the money now anyway.

Jeanne: [00:59:13](#) I'm sorry the old place on the river was burned because it wasn't a very old house and it was too bad, but then it would--

Ruth: [00:59:20](#) That was just meanness.

Jeanne: [00:59:22](#) The same as that big Armour house.

Ruth: [00:59:25](#) Was that burnt too?

Jeanne: [00:59:26](#) That was torched here three or four years ago before they had the new bridge in and the fire department had an awful time getting there. You know, the bridge north of us was out for a long time

Ruth: [00:59:36](#) Didn't they—I can't tell you who it was--live there when it was burned?

Jeanne: [00:59:44](#) No, nobody. That's why it was burned. It was empty.

Jeanne: [00:59:49](#) No, the Armour place hasn't had anybody on it for years and kids got to going in there and having parties and they tried to block the driveway and they tried to chain it and they'd drive up through the field anyway. Then finally, just one night it went right up in flames.

Ruth: [01:00:04](#) You think somebody owns it right now?

Jeanne: [01:00:07](#) No, the Pearls still own the place. The Pearl in Ann Arbor still owns that place.

Ruth: [01:00:17](#) Merrill?

Jeanne: [01:00:18](#) Merrill. O[tto] M. [Pearl] the 3rd, and they still own the place.

Ruth: [01:00:24](#) I was never so surprised by anything in my life. We went to a little school house one time, Orrin and I, for something going on, and he sat right beside one of the Pearl girls and they just talked continuously--things that went on when they was as a kid, you know. If I could have had something like that to tape that then, that would have been worth a fortune.

Jeanne: [01:00:47](#) Well, think how I feel. I never got Francis—**TAPE ENDS.**