

February 24, 1983, and I am interviewing Thelma Rule in her home in Elsie.

I was born in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, on Tweed Street in a house in which there were two just alike. And those houses are still standing today, 73 years later. I weighed 3 ½ pounds and I went in a little doll's cradle fully dressed. I have three names (I was really blessed.): Thelma, after a book that my uncle had read; Viola, after a young cousin of mine and they thought a great deal of; and Gertrude, after my mother's only sister. I'm still going by the three names although I use Gertrude primarily as a middle name and not Viola. When I was about 3½ weeks old, my father came home with smallpox and I had smallpox, a very light case, but I still have one little pox mark and that's all. When I was a year or two years old, my folks lived in a cabin up along St. Mary's River because my father was an engineer at the pumping station. My grandfather was what they called fireman and oiler and whatnot at the pumping station. So that is where we lived. My great grandmother lived with us and she was the one who taught me the alphabet. I had a handkerchief that they hung on the wall and it had the abc's on it. The way I was taught was: A was for Albert who was a member of our family; B was for Bert who was my aunt's boyfriend; C was for cat; and D was for dog; and so forth. That was the way I learned the alphabet.

You spoke of a pumping station. Was that in connection with the locks?

No. This was the pumping station about 2 ½ miles out of Sault Sainte Marie at Algonquin along St. Mary's River and it was for the water at the Soo.

The Soo and Algonquin both.

The first long trip that I ever took was with my grandparents and my aunt. We went to [?] an old town in Toronto by train. We had some very interesting experiences and I can still remember two or three things in connection with it. My father's folk lived at Blind River, Ontario, and all through my life up until after I was through college, I went to Blind River almost every summer. One of the things I'd like to mention in connection with my folks in Blind River was that my grandmother and grandfather McPherson owned a farm there and after they passed away no one seemed to want the farm. It just went back to the government. Where the house was, was where the first uranium strike was found in Blind River. My father was the assistant engineer when they built the third lock at the Soo. I sort of think of him when I look at the locks when we go up there each summer.

What year was that, do you recall?

I was about 3 or 4 years old so it would of been around 1911. When I started kindergarten I was just four years old. When school started and they thought that I was ready to go but the conditions were so crowded that there was not room for the kindergarten at the Lincoln School where I was supposed to go. There was one large room at an apartment building and that was where are kindergarten was. I went for about two weeks and they decided that there was still too many students in the kindergarten so I was sent home and I felt so bad. Nevertheless, I went to kindergarten the second semester and that was all the kindergarten I had. The Lincoln School to which I went, I was with largely Finnish and English nationalities people.

No French Canadians?

No, not at the Lincoln School as I remember it. But in the sixth grade I had to transfer to the Washington School because of the crowded conditions in the Lincoln School. Part of the sixth grade went to Garfield and part went to Washington. Up there it was "little Italy" and the greater percent of the children were Italian and English and some were Swedish people up there too. While I was at the

Washington School, I can remember one incident. I was never allowed to stay after school to play but this particular day in the winter time there was a nice slide on the hill back of the school so I stayed for perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes. Just in that length of time sliding down that hill, I wore the plush off the back of my coat.

I was in the 6th grade during World War I and the flu was a very vital spot during that time. I can remember going with my father down to the locks and looking out across where there were a number of tents in which the soldiers were living along the lock walls guarding them at the time. I can remember sitting in the park there and having soldiers come and talk to us occasionally. Then we had another interesting experience. There was a big oak tree across on the corner of our house and a couple of friends and myself used to sit over there and wait for the ice cream man to come. Many times, as we sat there and waited, these two soldiers came up and they would stand and talk to us and kid us whether or not we had an extra couple of pennies to buy them an ice cream cone. We knew where they were going and what people they visited on the street next to ours. Sometime later these two soldiers were found to be German spies. The way they were found was they went on Lark Road. They were escaping and they thought they would get away. They had the plans for the locks in the soles of their shoes and they went to people by the name of the Harveys. It was the next home from my uncle's. They tied Mr. & Mrs. Harvey up. They took their team of horses and their wagon and left. The Harveys got loose and they came down to my Uncle Aaron's house, told what had happened and they contacted the fort and they caught them. These were the two fellows that we had talked to many, many times on our corner.

Did you ever hear what happened?

No. The people that they visited on Young Street was questioned a great deal but they were not guilty. They were sons of some friends of theirs in Germany and they were not connected with them. They were told to look them up. They thought that, since they were soldiers, why they were being good to them. They were not chastised in anyway because of it.

When I was in the eighth grade in junior high, the junior high burned. That building was sort of a landmark there. Then we had to finish the year at the high school. When I entered high school we were still on half-day sessions because the new junior high had not been finished yet. In high school I was very interested in athletics and I belonged to the girls' basketball team and an indoor baseball team. We had a Colonnade Club that I belonged to in high school and when I later taught in the Soo, I was sponsor in the Colonnade Club.

Now what did that do?

The girls sold candy bars and icy bites and that sort of thing at the basketball games. And the money that they earned they used for something that they wanted to buy for the school. Something that they could [?] to the school. I was on the *Northern Life* newspaper staff and on the annual staff and on the National Honor Society. When I graduated, I was voted valedictorian of my class and I received quite an honor at that time because I was elected to have my name on the cup of '23. You were elected of that because of leadership, scholarship, service, and character.

Do you have down there the subjects you studied in high school? I was thinking were they different from today?

I had an academic course. The only thing I took that wasn't of an academic nature was two years of sewing. Everything else was the math and science, history and English, that type of thing. I went to Ripon College [Ripon, Wisconsin] The teacher that I had for a senior English teacher was a Ripon graduate and I valued her friendship a great deal. She did a lot for me. I wanted to go to a small college. My folks wanted me to go to the University of Michigan but I didn't want to go there. So I did go to Ripon and that same year [?] accepted a position at Ripon. I not only had her for senior English teacher in high school but I also had her for freshmen college which made it very nice.

You weren't so lonesome then?

No.

That was some ways away. That is in Wisconsin isn't it?

It is in Wisconsin about halfway in between Oshkosh and Fond du Lac.

Did you go by train?

I went on an overnight trip on a train. We usually sat up all night. I think just once when I was in college I did have a sleeper.

How often did you come home?

I went home at Christmas time. One year I went to Detroit at spring vacation. I never went to the Soo during spring vacation. I had a ride to Chicago and then I took the train from Chicago to Detroit. It was one year at spring time. I was only at Ripon for three years. My folks wanted me to transfer from there at the end of two years and go to the University of Michigan.

At the end of two I went to the University of Michigan summer school because I had an excess of credits because I was going to major in French. I had had two years of French in high school and you had to have all four years of French in college in order to major in it. They told me if I could pass an exam they would give me my first-year credit in French, which I did. Through this Erma Bagnall(?), I was on the *Crimson* staff there so I had quite a few extra credits in that way. I was able to graduate at the end of three years and two summers. I went to the University of Michigan at the end of my sophomore year. And I didn't like it at all. I said, "If I have to go back there I'm not going back to college," so I went back to Ripon. With that year at Ripon and one summer at the University of Wisconsin, I got my degree. I had \$200 dollars when I went to Ripon in September. My railroad fare was paid, but that \$200 had to do me for my tuition, my board and room, all expenses. I did cut hair and earned a dime or 15¢ occasionally, but that \$200 was what put me through the first term at Ripon. At Christmas time I had another \$200 when I went back. So \$600 a year was what it cost me at Ripon College.

Did you stay at a private home or in a dormitory?

I stayed at dormitory sorority house. I belonged to a sorority there.

Which one do you remember?

Alpha Delta Phi(?). When I finished at Ripon, it was right in the midst of the depression and jobs were hard to come by. I made two train trips to apply for a job and I just got back from one [where] they wanted a man. They should of told me in the first place but they wanted a man because he had to teach them phys ed. I just got back to Ripon and Erma Bagnall hollered out the window, "Thelma, hurry up. You have a call from Park Falls and it's about a job. So I answered and it was a Mr. Bruce who was the superintendent. He told me what the job was and he said it might be just a temporary job just for this year because he says, "We have more students than what we anticipated." He wanted to know if I would be interested. I said, "Yes. I would be very interested," because I had one class of sophomore English, one class of algebra, one class of business arithmetic, they called it then, and one class of sophomore English.

Where was this town?

Park Falls is up south of Ashland, Wisconsin, way up north.

As Wisconsin curves up?

Yes. I had to take the train up there. He wanted to know if I could be there the next morning. This was on a Thursday. I said, "If I can get a train out of Ripon this afternoon, I can be there in the morning. But if I can't get a train out, why I can't be there until Saturday." He said, "Well alright" but he wished I could be there the next morning. I got the train out and I was in Park Falls the next morning, and I taught that day.

What time of year was this?

This was in September. School had already started the first week of school. I didn't know what his rush was the Friday of the first week of school. I got a place to stay. I lived at the home of the president of the school board and he was also one of the officers in the bank. They were just lovely people. I was really fortunate to be there.

What was the main industry in that little town? Do you recall?

The whole area there was a lumbering company. In fact, they had Park Falls proper and then there was North White City and East White City where the people who worked in the lumbering company that had families lived. The bachelors lived out at the camps. I went with a fellow there who was secretary to the man that they called the lumber king, a Mr. Kisher. Through him we got to go out to many of the lumber camps that Mr. Kisher had. Several times we were out there during the noon hour and we were asked to stay and have our lunch. We ate off the tin plates as the lumberjacks did and you ate everything that was on your plate. Then you turned it over and you had your cake or pie on the back of your plate. Often times when we were not there during meal time--the cook was an excellent cook and he was making biscuits or something like that--he would ask us to come in and have some biscuits and honey or biscuits and syrup or something of that sort.

I'm curious. The story is that, when the lumberjacks ate, it was very quiet.

Oh yes. They're not allowed to talk. They may ask to have something passed but otherwise they do not converse. Otherwise, they would often get into a fight. The stove at that lumber camp was very interesting. I'm sure that it was 8'. It was just a huge thing. It went across the whole end of one eating room.

At the end of my first year of teaching in Park Falls, I saved enough money during that year to go to Europe. During the summer before that I had sold rail tours through the Canadian Pacific office, in Soo, Ontario. Being the depression times, there were not that many people that wanted to book tours. If I had sold ten, I would of had a free trip to Europe but I only sold four. The Canadian Pacific office was very good to me. They knew that we wanted to go to Europe this feeling[?] I was from Park Falls and so they gave us cabin-class space for tourist-class rate and they just treated us royally. We really got to do a lot of things. We booked out a tour just like a rail tour but went on our own. So we were not on tour. After we had toured France and Switzerland and Germany and Holland and then England, we went to Liverpool 'cause we were going to Ireland and Scotland. When we got to Liverpool, we were going to check our heavy baggage there and just take a couple small suitcases with us. They said, "Oh you're the two girls from the Soo in Liverpool, England." So you can tell how they kept track of us. I did attend a 3- week session at the Sorbonne. I had majored in French and I did want to have a little session there and I was able to do that.

What did you study when you speak of session? Was it like auditing?

It was almost like a workshop. I had done some workshops here at the University of Michigan and it was very much like a workshop. There were just five of us in the class. We just sat around a table with the professor and they would have us read and we'd talk. I was fortunate in that, when I took French in college, the teacher that I had was from Amsterdam, Holland, and her father had been in a government position and they had spent many years there. As a result she spoke French very fluently. She winded up to speak French in class. In that way I was fortunate because it helped me a lot.

You probably had a better accent then most students.

Yes. That's right. Then I had taught two years in Park Falls and then I went to Watertown, Wisconsin. When I went to Park Falls to teach, my salary was \$14,000. When I got the job at Watertown, I accepted the job at \$13,000 and was glad to get it because, as I said, the job at Park Falls was a temporary one. They didn't need me after two years because their enrollment dropped. I was very

happy to go in at \$13,000. During the next two years our salaries were cut back and my salary was cut back to \$11,000, but even glad to have that because this was during the depression.

Now there in Watertown did you board with a family or did you have your own apartment?

There again I was fortunate. A girl that had belonged to the same sorority that I had at Ripon and that had graduated several years before I went there but knew me, she knew that I was coming to Watertown. She and another girl had an apartment. She contacted me right away as soon as Mr. Field told her I was coming and asked me if I wanted to live with them. We had an apartment that was furnished by people from the AAUW, **American Association of University Women**, and that was the way they earned their money. One lady furnished the dining room set, the cutest china cabinet, and table, and four chairs. Somebody else furnished our gas stove. Somebody else furnished our bedroom outfit. We did buy a living room rug. One of the girls had a radio, one of these with a curved top, one of those old fashioned kind. She had that so I bought a little stand and it had magazine racks at the end and I bought a desk. The three of us girls together bought a new davenport but all the rest of the furniture was furnished by the AAUW and they charged us five dollars a month.

And then you paid your rent?

And then we paid our rent to the people who rented the apartment.

That is unusual. I have never heard of the AAUW doing that.

That was their way of earning money.

You've never heard of it around here.

They didn't do that at the Soo. No. I think everyone paid a little extra dues or something and so they had the extra money. I can well remember one thing about this apartment. We were cooks for a week at a time. The three of us took turns cooking. Then we had another girl that came and ate with us two nights a week. One week that I was cook I remember I went to the butcher shop on the way home from school and I bought steak. Margaret was going to eat with us that night so I bought four and paid 40¢ for the steak. I was afraid to tell the girls when I got home how much I had paid for the steak because that was more than we usually paid.

I had another interesting trip that was after I went to the Soo to teach. We took a trip on a banana boat, United Fruit Company banana boat. Telmaca was the name of it. We went to Cuba and that was in [?] days. The boat was docked at Cuba for several days. We had tours and enjoyed the life of the city during the day but we slept on the boat at night. We ate in the city though. Then we stopped at Costa Rica and there we were fortunate to be able to go to the shops not far from where the boat was docked. Goods were brought in there free of duty, a lot of things from China and Japan and places like that. We got some lovely things for very little money. Then we took a trip across the Isthmus of Panama and went to Panama City, Balboa, and saw the locks and so forth which was most interesting. We happened to be fortunate to be there on a day when it wasn't too hot so that we were able to travel around.

Another interesting trip that I took was up to Gaspé Peninsula. I was very interested in going there because when my folks on my father's side came from Scotland they came to Gaspé and that was where my Aunt Ann was born. My mother was born at the island of Jersey on their way over and then my Aunt Ann when they got to Gaspé. They lived there for several years before they moved to the Blind River area. At [?] we had an interesting experience. We had a little difficult time finding a cabin and most everybody spoke French. It was a different French that I knew as Canadian French but we managed OK. This little boy hopped onto the running board of the car and he wanted to know if we wanted overnight lodging. We said we did so he said, "I'll go with you." He directed us and we went up quite a winding road, up quite a high hill, and up there was a little restaurant and four cottages. We had one of them. And the man asked us if we would like to see the sunrise over Perc'e Rock? We said,

“Yes. We would.” He said he would call us about 4 o'clock the next morning and we would see it. It was a sight worth getting up to see.

Was this after you were teaching at the Soo?

Yes. This was after I went back to the Soo in 1940. I had been at Watertown for eight years. Then I went to the Soo to teach. The man that was the superintendent when I was in school knew that I was interested in teaching at the Soo. The reason that I hadn't gone there to teach before was because Wisconsin did not require that many hours in practicing teaching as Michigan did. I couldn't sign a contract in Michigan and I went to Fort Collins. That was an interesting experience too. I went out there. They said they were going to offer practice teaching. I had already taught two years at Park Falls and I think at that time I had taught six years at Watertown. At Fort Collins, Colorado, and I taught two boys college algebra in the summer and that was the way I got the additional hours of teaching.

That quite often happens. I ran into that after years of teaching and Michigan State requiring a whole summer of student teaching in a rather artificial situation.

They asked me if I could teach college algebra 'cause they had told me they definitely would have me. The practice teaching course and there weren't enough that wanted it. Here I had gotten all the way to Fort Collins, Colorado. So this is the way it ended up. The man that was observing me came in and he observed me for about ten minutes. We had double periods, two-hour periods and he observed me for about ten minutes. Then I went over to the place across the street and had a coke during the break. I said, “Are you going to observe me this next period?” He said, “No. You know more about teaching math than I do. Why should I observe you?”

When I was doing this after teaching for so long, what they did was assign me a girl who had no student teaching for her student teaching. I think I was supposed to be her teacher. Although I was getting student teacher credits, they just didn't know what to do with us.

When I finished--of course, this was before I was married--he said, “Miss Collins, we should be paying you to do this because we can't pay you and give you credit too.”

Another lady from over by Eagle that summer had to do her student teaching and our county MEA [Michigan Education Assoc.] had honored her that year for 25 years of teaching. She ended up in Eagle I think. You know where the two excellent persons Michigan state held here to student teaching. So you got into some weird situations.

[end side one]

...Wisconsin in 1940 and went to the Soo to teach. It was very different going back there than it had been during my high school days because there were still quite a few teachers in the high school that I had when I was in high school. After a football game at the end of September, the superintendent that had hired me and the one that I had grown up with died. The man that was principal became superintendent and things were a little different than what I had expected them to be. After a year there I began to get back in the groove again and begin to enjoy it.

About this time war broke out and the Soo was a very strategic place. The barbed wire fence was put up along the lock walls and you could no longer get over to the edge of the locks. You could get into the park but it was a little different. You couldn't have picnics down there the way you used to do and things of that sort. Many things during those two years that we were under siege up there. We had the [399th] Barrage Balloon Battalion. One day I sat down at our dining room table and we had a glass on the table and I could see 17 balloons in that glass. It happened that Everett, the man that I married, Everett Ruehle, was with the barrage balloons battalion up there. He was located at a balloon site up near the bridge that went over to Canada, railroad bridge. One morning, when I was on my way to

school, I got down to the lumber company. It was right near the Bingham Ave. Bridge across from wider part of the canal now and there was a soldier with a machine gun behind every post on the bridge. When I got across the bridge in front of the church and the funeral home, there were sand bags built up with heavy guns inside the little circle that was made by them. I wondered whether I should go on to school because if I went on I was going to be cut off from home by power canal and if I went back home I didn't know whether I would be able to get to school. I went on to school. One day not too long after that, I was giving a test--my room was a corner room on the second floor--and I thought I heard the sound of an airplane. Within seconds after that I looked out the window and there were two balloons within sight of the school, in sight of my room, and those balloons started going up in the air. It wasn't but a few minutes after that that our alert sounded and we all went to our stations. My home room girls had a spot that was in a corridor outside the swimming pool and right at the bottom of the steps from the freight entrance. Along the walls they had a lot of the mats from the gym hanging there. We felt quite fortunate because we thought, if we had to be down there maybe for a day or days or nights or what have you, we could use these mats to lie down and sleep on. We never did hear what happened. We were down there for a long, long, long time that day and we never knew whether there had been planes or what the situation was. Nobody ever told us.

At this time you spoke about earlier, about going to Blind River which is in Canada, if you wanted to cross then into Canada, were the restrictions against you traveling when you got to the Canadian border? Were they much stricter about who came in?

In a way. We went across on the ferry at that time. That was before the International Bridge that you can drive over now. We had to go across on the ferry. They did question us but not too much more I would say. On a New Year's Eve, Everett and I had gone over there and had gone to some relatives of mine. There was an hour difference in time. I don't know as we thought about it. I think we felt we had an extra hour. Instead we had one less hour. We were at my cousin's house and I just looked at my watch. Just like that I realized that it was time for the last ferry. Everett was in the service and he was supposed to be back so my cousin called the dock. He said that colonel so and so was there and had to get back. Would they hold the ferry? So we got to the ferry dock and I'm sure that that boat left the dock as soon as the back wheels were on. We didn't pay a fare on the way back because they were so anxious to get us on the boat but they didn't question us at all.

The barrage balloons were rather interesting. There were a lot of accidents with them. One time one got away and the cable swung around. It hit the third floor of the high school and knocked all the windows out on the west side. Another day, I was up in the bathroom at home washing some clothes and I heard this awful sound. I looked out the bathroom window and I saw some neighbors getting their kids and hurrying them into the house. I couldn't imagine what was going on so I went downstairs and outside. The balloon that was moored at the site nearest our house had come loose and it was up in the air. The main cable was intact but the guide lines to the balloon was half off so the balloon was up on end. There was quite a wind and it was flapping all over the place and the cable was flapping too. Everyone was afraid they would get hit.

Were there men in the balloon?

No. If they anticipated that there was a plane anywhere near in the area, then these balloons went up from their site. The cables were about 1½" cables and with those in the air, all of them--they were all over town and all along the locks and there were a few over on the Canadian side--if any plane came near the locks, they would strike those cables and be down. That was the reason for the balloons. They were manned at the site. Everett was at the one site and they had this big winch out there where they wound the balloon down. There was a cement bed. Then the balloons were tied down and they had

big blocks that fastened it down to the cement bed but as soon as any alert came why then those balloons went up.

What color were they? Do you remember?

Gray. They looked very much like these Goodyear balloons only they had no basket under them and the tail of them were different. They looked like great big elephants but there were a lot of them. Like I said, we saw seventeen of them in the mirror at our dining room table.

After the war when peace was declared, then the army came in and dismantled them?

Yes. A lot of people bought some of them that had been damaged. They bought the material because they made good boat covers and they were heavy, heavy blanket plastic. The men had packed those in great big boxes and they had those on some of the ships that went in around Italy when they expected planes in and they flew those balloons over there. The ones that were in good condition they took but the ones that weren't they sold very, very cheap.

What did you teach, I'm curious.

I taught math and English. We had a homeroom there that played a big part in your school day.

Had the ethnic population changed like from when you were a student?

Not too much. That one area to the west of the main street south of the bridge was still Italian and the Finnish people still live down in this area from the eastern part of the Soo.

And no particular group of French Canadians?

No. I don't recall that there were too many French Canadians ever that lived there 'cause, you see, the people could come across from Canada and work in the American Soo. Many of them came across and worked at the Carbide and then many of our people went across and worked at the steel factory and paper factory. They went across by the ferry every day. There was one train that went across every day too. During one of the summers, when Everett was in the service, I went down to Richmond, Virginia, and visited him down there. Two summers I worked in defense plants. I worked at the assembly plant in Detroit the first summer that I worked. I worked on small airplane parts. The second summer I worked at Zenith Carburetor and we packed carburetors for overseas.

Was that in Detroit too?

That was in Detroit too. After Everett got out of the service, we were married in the school on August 4, 1947, and then I came to Elsie and taught here.

Where did you first live when you came to Elsie?

Everett's folks had a large home and the upstairs had never really been finished. We made that into an apartment. We had a large living room and a large bedroom, huge dining room, and a Pullman-size kitchen, and bath, and two huge closets that you could walk in and walk around in. We lived there until we built this home in 1953. In Elsie I taught math, English, and Carolyn Goldrove(?) started the library with two bookshelves.

After Carolyn left and the inspectors came, they said that we had to have a larger library. So I went up to Marquette--I guess I had more credits toward that sort of thing than anyone else--so I went up to Marquette, Michigan, with some of the state library people in the summer. We had a workshop up there. Through what they called a "grandfather clause," I would be able to have charge of the library at the Elsie High School. At that time I had charge of the cheerleaders and I got the National Honor Society established here and the Future Teachers. Our Future Club here was named after Kate Finch who was a pioneer teacher in this area and one that was very well thought of. Later on I went back and did my graduate work in the field of guidance.

From what school?

I went to the University of Michigan first and then I went to Michigan State University. Through the University of Michigan and through a federal program, I got on what they called, Retail Counselor and Guidance Course. That was most interesting in that they placed us at different stores in Detroit. There was one group that got on the factory end of it but I wasn't interested in that. I was more interested in the merchandising end of it. We went to the Macomb Center through the University of Michigan two mornings a week and had our courses there. The rest of the time we were placed at stores in Detroit and I was fortunate enough to be placed at J. L. Hudson's. They put us through every department of the store that they could put us through. Then we worked too and got paid \$25 along with our program so it was very informative. It really helped me to help a lot of students who were interested in merchandising. I did my graduate work, as I said, through the University of Michigan and Michigan State.

Some interesting things that I did while teaching here at Elsie: At the end of the first year that I was here, I went on a senior trip with the class of '48. We went on the Noronic and went to Mackinac Island. A year later that boat burned. [The Noronic burned while docked overnight in Toronto on September 17, 1949, killing 139 people.]

Where did you go to get on the Noronic?

We went to Detroit. The boat was docked on the Canadian side for quite some time and then they came over to the American side and picked us up.

In 1952 I was sponsored by that class and we took two school buses. Irene Mead went along as cook. Mr. Sapensky(?) and Mr. Bench(?) drove the buses and we went to Washington and New York and all points in between, did our own cooking all of the time, except in New York, for 44 people.

Where did you stay nights?

We stayed at Gettysburg one night and we stayed just in tourist homes. That was the second night. The first night we had a group of cabins just after we got into Pennsylvania. I can't remember the name of the small town where we were but we had this group of cabins and we had chicken dinner that night. The mothers had cooked chicken and we had it packed in ice and we dined on chicken that night. Our front porch, before we started on this trip, looked like a small store because each student brought tomato juice or orange juice, or whatever canned juice he liked best, brought two cans of that, and we had a case of eggs, and bread and rolls, and quite a bit of canned goods. We took the big cans from the hot lunch kitchen at the school and we stopped in parks and did our own cooking. The first morning breakfast, I never will live to forget it even if I live to 100. We had rolls. The mothers had made homemade rolls. We had plenty of them and butter and just juice. We thought everyone was filled up and just for fun Irene said anybody that would like some pancakes. There was a chorus of yes! So we had pancakes because we had syrup along with us too. We had pancakes that morning along with the rest of the breakfast. It was a most interesting trip. One bus broke down when we were outside Luray. We were supposed to go through the Luray Caverns that night. This bus broke down and Mr. Sapensky stayed with the bus. Mr. Bench came back with the other bus and picked us up. I went through the Luray Caverns that night with one side of my hair done up and the other not because we thought we weren't going to be able to go. Then Dirk Gailhouse came from Washington with his car and took some of the people. We put as many suitcases as we could down the aisles of the bus and all the kids sat on those because everyone had to ride on one bus. Lynn Paltear and Mr. Sapensky stayed at Luray until the bus was fixed and then when they came to Washington. They took a taxi and went to the places we had already been and then they joined us.

Caught up with you.

Yes.

What was wrong with the bus? Do you recall?

The engine just conked out. It was an old bus and they had to put a new engine in it. We saved money because we figured we would have to pay for the engine but the board was very kind and said we didn't have to pay for it. So that class had money in the treasury for quite a few years. One of the members of the class, --- boy became blind and they gave him the rest of the money.

The class of '56 took a trip to Washington and New York. This was a train trip and the train got lost. They had side-tracked it and had forgot about it. We were supposed to be in Washington in time for breakfast and we didn't get in there until time for lunch because they had forgotten about us but we had tickets for our breakfast and tickets for our lunch. Some of the students ate breakfast. Then they turned right around and ate lunch.

I have written quite a few things. I have written a number of skits that have been put on. I wrote *This is Your Life* for Jenny Coann(?) and Ralph Stell(?) and Elsie Dance(?). I've written several poems for class reunions and retirements. I wrote the pageant for the Elsie Centennial.

I retired in 1970 after 39 ½ years of teaching. Since retiring, in travels that we've done, we've been to Florida once. We went to Arizona and California for winter and have been to North Bay, Ontario, and around in that area. We go to the Soo and to Wisconsin almost every summer. I belong to the library board; for a good many years belonged to the Elsie Literary Club. I would like to say that I was the one that started the Trading Post that has been help here at Elsie.

Maybe we should talk about that because that I didn't know. I knew there were a lot of things I didn't know. That prompted this?

I was supposed to coach a play for the Literary Club. This was my second year in Elsie and Everett had broken his arm and had been in the hospital for a long period of time. When they took the cast off, they found out that there were spurs that had grown. He was going to have to go back for surgery at the first part of January and I was supposed to start this play in January. My grandmother was still alive and she and my mother was in Flint and she was very ill. I was going over there every weekend to help take care of her. So Edith Smith, who was president of the Literary Club at that time, said, "Thelma, how are you going to do it with Everett going back into the hospital?" I said, "I don't know but I'm afraid, if I say I can't do it, people in Elsie would think that she just doesn't want to do it." She said, "Do you have any other ideas of something that we might do?" She said, "We've never made that much money on the plays and there is just a few people who participate." I told her of the trading post right across the street from our church at home. This one had it for two or three months at a time and then she would close it up. Then she would have it again in the spring and then in the fall. I said, "I've always thought that might be a good money-making scheme and some club could do it. So she presented it to the Literary Club at the next meeting they had and they said, "Let's try it." Joe Barte(?) had his garage down here then and that was the showroom at one time where the telephone office is now. It burned, you know, on the north side of the street. We asked him if we could use that and he let us. We had just a few racks and some card tables. I remember the racks that we had. We had umpteen fur coats. We made about three times the money on that first trading post as they had made on their plays. It was a winter one at that time in January and then we decided it was such a good idea we might have a spring one. So we had a spring one. From then on we had one fall and the spring.

What year was this, Thelma?

Well it was the second year I was here so that would of been in '49.

That one I remember you had them up over the Dancer store or somewhere.

That was the first year and then I think two years because we had it up above Hinkley's(?). You went up that center stairway, and then after Holichick's(?) groceries we had it in there. Then we had it up over the Dancer store until it began to become difficult to carry the things up there and for a lot of

people who wanted to work [and who] couldn't get up that long flight of stairs so we were able to have the Legion hall.

That stairway was not only long but narrow. I can remember if you were going down with anything the people at the bottom waited for you. You couldn't pass. That was very narrow but I remember being up in there. Now you should finish up what you're doing with retirement. We got side-tracked there.

I belong to [Delta Cappa?]. I was saying the things that I belonged to and the Esther Circle at the Methodist church and the historical society. That keeps me as busy as I want to be.

When you finished teaching when you retired, you were out at our new high school. Is that right? Going back to the first year you came to Elsie, we won't go further back because I think the comparison you can make, you were talking about seniors going on trips. It used to be quite common. Now it isn't, perhaps because of financial reasons. I have heard people saying it is becoming difficult to maintain a good standard of behavior with younger people.

I've been talking to quite a few of the students that have been on these trips. In fact--Wayne Robinson who is very ill up in the hospital now--Jerry Bart was up there to see him. They were talking about the senior trip. They all commented to Wayne's wife, Mary, that they just didn't know how we ever planned it, to take care of that many people and have everything go along smoothly as it did. They also said that now that would just be out of the question to take a trip like that because you couldn't trust the students like you could back then. They have different values now than what they had then. I know I would hate to take a group somewhere like that and maybe have them smoking pot or a few of them. It just takes just a few to throw a whole thing off like that.

I don't presume you had anyone who smoked.

Oh yes. We had people that smoked and we had people who drank but for the most part I think that we were comparatively free of it on the trip. I say, comparatively free, because I know of a couple instances since then where this did happen. At the time I didn't know it.

At least they were discrete about it.

That's right. Of course the class of '52, they had already graduated. To take this group now that has already graduated, I don't think you could govern those people like we governed those people because they would, no doubt, feel that you are out of school they have no jurisdiction over us now, but those people did not feel that way.

I know. It's a changing world. Well, I've certainly enjoyed this, Thelma. Are you sure we have covered everything now? You were going to tell me about your father and what year he died.

He built this house in '53 and in '55 he passed away. He helped draw the plans. We drew our own plans and then he perfected them. He was here the Christmas before he passed away.

And what year did your mother pass away?

My mother died six years ago this coming summer.

That would make it '77 wouldn't it.

Yes.

I remember her. I got to know her quite well. Was he still living in the Soo when he died?

No he was in Wisconsin. He worked with the aluminum goods there.

What town?

At Two Rivers.

After his death, your mother came this way?

Mother was here with my grandmother, you see. She was taking care of her and Dad went to Wisconsin to work. During World War I he worked in the ship yards there and then he came back to

Michigan. Then he went back to Wisconsin again because during the depression just no jobs here. So he went back to Wisconsin.

They maintained a home in Wisconsin?

They were there in Wisconsin for a number of years and then Mother came back here and took care of my grandmother, but Dad stayed on in Wisconsin.

You grandmother lived quite a long life then?

Yes. She was 81 when she died.

Well this is been so good, Thelma. I just really appreciate it.

I'm very happy to of done it!