

DORIS JANE (HEATHMAN) SWATMAN AND LEXA (SWATMAN) O'BRIEN

- Wayne: I'm Wayne Summers and this is Julie Peters and we're here on May 31st, 2019, and we're interviewing **Doris Swatman** and **Lexa O'Brien**. Why don't you start out, Doris, by telling us a little bit about when and where you were born?
- Doris: I was born right here in St. Johns [June 12, 1923, to Harry & Dorothy (Hall) Heathman]* and I have four sisters--
- Lexa: Well, there were four girls.
- Doris: --and two brothers and we had lots of fun. It wasn't a family that had problems with kids, you know. We could have as many kids come in the house and play and do things. My mother didn't care. We had a cat; name is Cream Tail. It was a black and white cat. So anyway, we had a wonderful family.
- Lexa: You always say you had no money but you didn't need it. You just had a lot of fun together.
- Doris: My dad did a lot of things with us kids where a lot of dads are so busy, but of course, we were poor back then and there was a lot of us. My Dad took any job he could get to make some money. He worked in a restaurant and he was a painter. He was really talented in drawing and all that stuff, making things. He could, if you wanted something made, he could make it and it looked nice. We just had a nice family.
- Wayne: Where in St. Johns specifically did you grow up at?
- Doris: I grew up right down on Ross St., a block north of the railroad, and we got really educated on that. We ran up across the road to the railroad track pret' near every day when we were little, or not real little, but big enough to do those things, and counted the cars. That's how we learned to count. The older ones knew how to count and so us little kids, we learnt and just things like that. We had a truck that went by the house every day with ice. If you wanted ice, you put your sign up in the window. Back to the train, they let the hobos out, you know. What do you call the building?
- Lexa: The depot?
- Doris: Yeah, the depot. They stopped there and then we were only two blocks from that. If we had something for 'em, we put a sign on the tree in front of our house and then they would stop and sit down on our porch or the steps. My mother would bring 'em out some stuff and they'd eat it.
- Lexa: I never heard that story.

Doris: Then they'd go back up at the depot, I suppose--I don't know really--and get on the next train, probably hop on it.

Lexa: That was Ross St. How old were you when you left Ross St., cause you were the 4th girl, 4th child born of six?

Doris: Well, then's when we moved up on Lansing St. So that's a long time. I was a teenager then.

Lexa: Corner of Lansing and what's the first street across there?

Doris: So I lived there a long time, we did. My dad, he had a paint store and he called it "For those who care."

Lexa: It was called, Heathman's Paint, but on his truck his slogan was, "For those who care." He painted.

Doris: I'm old.

Lexa: I know. She's 96 or will be in a couple of weeks, but he painted. Tell them about all the painting he did for the town.

Doris: Oh yeah. He painted all the street signs, every one of 'em in town. That was, of course, way back then.

Lexa: And then the water tower, you've got right here. (Referring to a book of memories Doris had written for her grandkids.)

Doris: The water tower. Yeah and--

Lexa: --rugs.

Doris: Yup. People would bring in the old rug that's been pret' near worn right thin. He'd lay it out on the grass and then he would paint the rugs on his hands and knees. Us kids would all sit around him and watch him. He did that at home where he needed more cleanness, I guess. My dad worked out of a store building down in the north end of town. It wasn't as big as this room even. It was across from Dean's.

Lexa: Hardware?

Doris: No. It was down on the corner just north of the railroad tracks.

Lexa: There was a little building that you'd walk over, right, when he was painting? She wrote in here that she thought it was a treat but her mother was probably sending her off for a little peace and she'd go and sit with him and help him. He was so happy when you'd walk in the door. He always made you so happy. Here's a picture of him painting with the little kids all sitting around watching him.

Doris: He would paint anything to make money.

Lexa: Wasn't it jars or something you said he would--

Doris: He tried real hard to have enough money for all of us.

Lexa: "He would never go on welfare," you said. He'd do whatever it took.

Wayne: This was during the depression?

Doris: Yeah. The people that did welfare came to the house and they said, "Harry, there's no reason you can't collect from this," and he says, "I'll do everything I can before I put my kids in this," and he did.

Lexa: You remember that story probably. How old were you when he opened up Heathman's Paint and Wallpaper and then the building next to it he also owned?

Doris: I was old enough to work in it then. First, my older sister started working. While my dad was out painting, she would be in the store. The store wasn't much bigger than this room. Then that sister would go and get a better job because there wasn't any pay in this job for Dad. So then, the next oldest would go and work and then they got down to me, of course. Then the two boys were big enough to help a little bit and my dad sold the store to the two boys.

Lexa: What did you do while you were there--waited on customers, and what else did you do?

Doris: We had wallpaper. We had to take the wallpaper upstairs and then cut it and bring it back downstairs.

Lexa: Then the next building over, he had kind of a toy store. So I was really spoiled rotten with that 'cause of the new Barbies. That was the year of the new Barbies and the clothes and the hula hoops. I mean, probably we were the salespeople because we would bring home a hula hoop and other kids would see us playing with it.

Doris: Then someone would see the hula hoop and go down, buy a hula hoop. That's how it went then, you know.

Lexa: No advertisement needed.

Julie: I bought my first Barbie there and still have it in the box. I think it was a dollar and a quarter.

Lexa: In the box?

Julie: In the box.

Lexa: Mine is well-loved. A lot of the cute clothes that were from there--

Doris: The kids , they played with that. The neighbor kids, they had one, you know,

Lexa: Kathy Cronkite had one. I don't know if you remember Kathy. She had the works!

Doris: We went through the store. Then the boys took it over. That was dull for them so they sold it.

Lexa: You worked there. Where else did you work?

Doris: I worked at the bakery.

Julie: Who owned the bakery?

Doris: I was just trying to think of his name.

Lexa: It's in here somewhere.

Doris: Ferd Gresley(?) had the bakery. I sold baked goods and ate 'em.

Lexa: What did they tell you right at the beginning?

Doris: "Eat whatever you want." That doesn't take long on bakeries and you don't want any. I ate what I wanted and pretty soon I never even ate one and today I don't care for 'em. I worked with Betty. She was Betty Walling. I don't know if you knew her. Her and I worked together.

Lexa: Oh, and then up at the park. You were a teenager 'cause Dad worked there too, didn't he, at the little ice cream place?

Doris: Oh yeah. I worked at the park--at night they'd have ball games up there--for Knight(?). They ran the park. You just came up and bought an ice cream cone or candy or something and went down, ate it and watched the game.

Lexa: You liked that job.

Doris: I worked in the dime store too. Who was that? I don't remember right this minute. I liked that one too. I liked to work. I bought a bedroom outfit when I was working in the dime store and I'd go pay a dollar a week or when I had pay day. I'd go right up there and put that money on that so when my boyfriend at the time--he was in service-- and when he got home, I had several big pieces of stuff.

Wayne: Can we go back and maybe talk about going to school? What school did you go to?

Doris: Rodney B. [Wilson High School]. I started out with North Ward School and we walked both ways no matter what the weather was. When I started in kindergarten, we had to take a spoonful of castor oil, I think it was. Everybody had to stand in line and have a spoonful of that every morning.

Lexa: Once a month or something. Can you imagine?

Doris: We built things with wood, like buildings and things, in the kindergarten room, about as big as that, but it was things we could build. It was probably 20 of us in there, good size. We stayed right in that school until sixth grade, I think it was, we moved into Central School. That was a long walk, but we walked that every day.

Lexa: --and probably came home for lunch.

Doris: We came home for lunch, walked home, walked back, walked back home, so there's a lot of walking. That was another thing on my dad. He was a fireman also into this. He had his money just right. He watched his money good. The shoe store, he got all his money he allotted for us kids' shoes, 'cause we had cardboard in the bottom of our shoes quite often. There was something else that he allotted for. I can't think of it right this second.

Lexa: You or Dad talked about putting soles in at the shoe store. They would, or maybe that was Dad's dad, that he would do it himself for the kids. He would put the soles on till you outgrew the shoe. Then, you know, the next person would get them—it got passed on.

Doris: That's how he operated his stuff. In the high school, graduated from Rodney B. [in 1942]. Who was our principal? That I couldn't tell ya right now.

Lexa: Your prom for the senior year, the boys were all off to service. You said a lot of boys quit school and left, you know, during the war, after Pearl Harbor.

Doris: That was kind of bad. Well, not kind of bad, it was bad, I mean, to see these young boys--they were just about 17, 16—go off. It just made the room different.

Lexa: A lot were gone probably.

Doris: There was a lot gone.

Wayne: Did you do a senior trip?

Doris: Senior trip? Let me see. I don't think I did. No.

Julie: Did you have a favorite teacher?

Doris: I probably did, but--

Lexa: It was your Home Ec. teacher you wrote in this book. It's in here somewhere with her name.

Doris: Yeah. She had lot of the patience, you know, to take a bunch of girls. The boys had manual arts and that type of stuff. One of my sisters took that. They switched and let

the boys cook and the girls had manual arts. My sister could put a floor plug in, you know, and fix it. It was really important. I was wishing that we could have it but they only did that one year. I don't know if they had too much trouble with it or what happened there. We still did them but not switching.

Wayne: Do you have any other special memories of your school years then, any special things that happened?

Doris: We had the normal games that we went to, basketball games and football games. A lot of us was working, you know, by then. You had to get out of school to get to work.

Lexa: Here you said there was an ice cream store called Pappas's. It was run by a couple from Greece.

Doris: They're remodeling it now.

Lexa: Everyone used to go there for ice cream. Also, Matthew's Dairy was a fun place to go and the drug store. All had ice cream counters. You sat on a stool up to the counter and ordered a soda. (Reading from book.)

Doris: My sister and I, we went to the Congregational Church which wasn't that far from home. Mom would always give us, I think probably, 10, 15, 20 cents.

Lexa: Nickel, I believe you told us.

Doris: A little later we got a little bit more so then we started keeping it. We didn't put it into the church collection. We went down after church at Pappas's and had some ice cream. I shouldn't even tell that. My mother didn't know it. When she found it out, that ended our money.

Lexa: You've got on here too that your dad had a big wagon, a farm wagon, and you would all play on it and you'd put on regular plays and you'd charge a penny or a cookie for the other neighbors to come and see. When the weather is good, you are always outside and you played a lot of ball and croquet.

Doris: My dad played ball with us pret' near every night out in the road because he didn't see us much, you know.

Lexa: Plus, when he was a child both of his parents had died.

Doris: His parents both got killed when he was just as a new baby. Both grandparents wanted him. This is in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Both grandparents wanted him. One of them couldn't speak English but the other one could. They fought over him and they went to court over him and finally the Heathmans got him. When he got old enough, there was a boy that went down there to see some of his relation and met my father. My father wanted to come to Michigan because he had a lot of relation here that he didn't know.

So the two of 'em hitchhiked from Fort Wayne to St. Johns and met their family. It just turned out wonderful to have them here. So we all grew up in St. Johns.

Wayne: How did your parents meet each other? I assume it was here in St. Johns.

Doris: It seems that one of them that was in Indiana--he brought my dad back so he must of had family here that met my dad and my dad probably met his family that was here. I don't really know.

Julie: What was your mom's maiden name?

Doris: Hall.

Julie: She was from around here?

Lexa: Grandma was born here.

Doris: Yeah. How they met, I don't know. I probably heard it a hundred times.

Lexa: It's in here, I think, that he came with somebody, but I can't remember who the person was.

Wayne: How did you meet your future husband?

Doris: In church. Where else, the church had my money.

Lexa: After keeping it, you shouldn't have been so blessed.

Doris: Once a month they'd take the Sunday school kids somewheres for something special. So this time we went to Crystal Lake to roller skate. Forrest, being a country boy and always on the farm, didn't know how to roller skate. I showed him how and every time he fell down, I'd skate over there and help him get up, you know. So that's how we met.

Wayne: The question was, did he really not know? Was he pretending to fall down?

Doris: Well, I begin to wonder. It was getting kind of fast there for a while. No, but that's how we met.

Wayne: How long did you date before you got married?

Doris: Four years. Well, he went in the service and I waited for him.

Lexa: He was in the service four years and you met him before that. So six or five years from when you first met or whatever?

Doris: He was my first boyfriend. I think I was his first girlfriend.

Lexa: You mentioned being kissed by some other guy in here and going out on a date with some other guy in here.

Doris: Well, that was nothing. You could tell the difference.

Lexa: You knew a good guy when you saw one.

Wayne: What did you do while you're waiting for these four years?

Doris: I was working. That's when I was working in the bakery. Before he went overseas, he came home when he could. In fact, when we went down to Indiana, all of us, to see his family, he hitchhiked from wherever he was over to Fort Wayne and stayed there with us just for one day and then he hitchhiked back.

Lexa: When the war was over, didn't he walk in the back of the store or something? You were all working together and he didn't call. He arranged to have his sister help him buy a car and have that for him.

Doris: He didn't tell me he was coming home for good--this was for good. His sister, Eileen, lived in Detroit so he got dropped off at Eileen's house and told her to call his mother to send him so much money. He bought a car and then he drove to St. Johns and I was in the back room cutting window glass. He came through the alley here in St. Johns at my dad's store. It pret'n near knocked me over. So that was the beginning of everything.

Wayne: How long after he got back before you got married?

Doris: Two years, I think it was.

Lexa: Well, it wasn't that long 'cause, remember his parents were going to charge him rent so he thought he might as well get married.

Doris: Yeah, that's right. It was probably about a year though. He lived with his folks, naturally, and I lived with mine. His dad helped when he found out ..., financially. He got him a job the next day in the factory. His dad was working in the factory also and Forrest could work on any machine. It was amazing how smart, mentally, he was. He could fix anything. He didn't like factory work 'cause that's just machines, nothing, you know, so he bought the gas station on [M]-21 & [US]-27, Swatman's Standard Service. He kept hiring kids. If you came to try to get a job there, you had to have your hair cut. That's when they were wearing their hair long. "Nope, not unless you have your hair cut and [keep it] short." So some of those kids didn't get their job they wanted but he had so many kids that wanted to work there. Soon as he'd leave [for dinner] sometimes-- across the street was Schafer's Gas Station. That was the four-corner gas station at one time--

Lexa: --with the Dairy Queen or the ice cream was on the one [corner] out there.

Doris: The kids, soon as Forrest would come home to eat lunch, the ones on the other corner-- they had young kids working too—

Lexa: Doug Schafer.

Doris: --and they got so they was throwing a football back and forth over the highway. Of course, he had a fit and stopped that, but it didn't stop them. When he went to come to eat, they were doing it again. I mean, kids!

Lexa: They have come back, all those kids, you know, and she talks to them.

Doris: I have been out washing windows and a car will drive in our driveway. "Leave that alone. I'll wash it for ya." The kids that worked for Forrest all those years, I mean they just love that.

Lexa: And he was good. My brother would say, "You could put your phone by the car and say, Dad, what's the matter?" "Well, I think it's this." Sure enough, that would be what it was.

Doris: Some of these garages down here-- What's that one that was out on the corner? Anyway, they'd get a car in they couldn't fix it so they'd bring that car down to his gas station and he fixed it, things like that. On the window sill I've got a couple pictures just showing you that these were Santa Clauses that he made, about this high, carved. He did carving.

Lexa: Now he has Alzheimer's. It's hard to see.

Doris: I don't know of anything that he couldn't do.

Lexa: This is a funny story on Dad. I didn't know this one until I reread it. It says, "Tell us about a school principal you remember," and it was Clarence Minsky(?). "I was standing by the boys' restroom and somebody set off a firecracker in the restroom and a teacher thought I did it and sent me to the principal. He said he was going to expel me from school. I then went right down to the superintendent and told him I didn't do it. He believed me and that's the last I heard of that." That wouldn't have been Dad to do something like that to begin with but, how smart, and think how things can change for kids...

Doris: Right now my husband's got Alzheimer's out at [Hazel Findlay's]. You'd be surprised the people that come in there and Dad don't know 'em anymore. They'll say, "He was the most honest person I knew all my life." He worked for Bee's [Chevrolet & Oldsmobile, Inc.] after he sold the gas station because he had it 25 years and he was just getting tired of it, not tired of it really, but it took so much of his time. Before he even got his stuff out of there, what's-his-name from Bee's [Bernard Feldpausch] came down and wanted him to work for him. So he went there and worked 19 years before he retired.

Lexa: Retired from car sales. You always hear such wonderful things. Next door, Gary Becker says, "Nobody ever says anything bad about them." And you know, when I read these, it says "Whoever were you angry with?" "No one," and they just weren't. You either. It was like you just always got along or wanted to get along.

Doris: We built a house. After we got married, we lived in an apartment upstairs and then we had Brian, our first child [10 Apr. 1949]. Of course, he was creeping around and when you're in an apartment upstairs, you're going this way and down the hall to this room, you know, it's not a baby thing when you're creeping. One day I was in the kitchen and he was creeping out to it and a gun went off and I thought, "What in the world is that?" The kid downstairs and another kid was playing with their dad's gun. Also, the coal bins were side by side with a board between 'em. Our coal kept going down and we knew we weren't using that. They were using that so we built a house. We solved that story and built a house. They put it up and we did all the rest of the work ourselves.

Julie: Was that this house or was that a different one?

Doris: No. It's on Prospect St. on the corner.

Lexa: Park and Prospect. Red brick.

Doris: Red brick on the corner.

Julie: Brian wasn't near where the bullet went, was he?

Doris: He was, going down that hall and that's where, if he'd been probably from here to there further, but he was just such a little boy, just creeping and scared me to death. That made up our mind why we built then because it was further--. On the corner of Park and Prospect, two blocks up, was the new swimming pool. My old brain was a-going. Boy, there's a good babysitter! The kids learned to swim--

Lexa: --for a dime. Julie probably did too. We'd go up in the morning for lessons and then swim from one [o'clock] to five for 10¢ and then seven to nine for a quarter, so for 35¢ a day for each of us.

Doris: We weren't dumb!

Lexa: Then there was the ice skating that we'd walk up and barely be able to walk back from. It was a good location.

Julie: Who built the house?

Doris: Forrest & I. I can see them but-- They put up the brick part. Then we did the inside. It took us probably a year to get it-- Then our son--it had an upstairs in it--and he was still not really creeping, but he was wiggly on his walking good, fell off the upstairs down to the floor.

Lexa: Brian was always trying to get attention.

Doris: When he was two--

Lexa: When you are still at the other house?

Doris: --when we was at the apartment, there was other people in the apartment next to us. Conley's had that house and they rented out apartments in the house. There was a little girl, probably 3; and Connolly's had a boy, probably 3; Brian was probably 2 1/2, 3, and they'd just ride their tricycles --well, it wasn't really a tricycle but a scooter thing--back and forth on the driveway, and then there was a big hedge. We were sitting out on the front steps watching them. Pretty soon the 3-year old come and she said, "Bri Bri." His name was Brian, but she couldn't say it. She said, "Bri, Bri." So boy, we all wondered where Brian was. "Where is he?" She took our finger, took us beyond the shrub. There was laying his sweater on top of the fishpond that they had out in the back yard that wasn't protected at all. I didn't even know it was there because the shrub was high. He'd never been over there. I climbed in, slipped in the slime. Then one of the other mothers, she ran over. We all was there and I said, "Take him by the legs and shake the shit right out of him." She did and it did roll out of him. I've heard that and I never used it but I heard it. I had to have help getting out because it was too slippery for me to get out. He never would have made it. I mean, we had so many things that happened.

Lexa: The next day, what did the owners of the house do? Didn't they fill that pond in?

Doris: They filled that pond in yet that night or covered it. The next day they filled the pond in, never put it in again. I felt bad. I didn't feel bad because they filled it in but after I seen it, I thought, my kid--

Lexa: Brian, probably people thought was abused because there was a time he walked under a tree and a crowbar falls out and hits him...and you'd have the big bonfire. Someone threw a log over their shoulder, knocked out his teeth. He got hit by a car going around someone's drive on a go-cart.

Doris: Out in the country to one of his friend's house.

Lexa: It was always something.

Julie: And he still lives.

Doris: He still does things. It's just natural for him.

Lexa: We have a grandchild that does this too. It's like, how does this happen always to you?

Doris: We had an active life but it was nice.

Lexa: You've had a good life, a few scares along the way. Thinking back of changes, the TV, you got a TV. Dad had an outhouse through high school, right? When you went out there, you didn't like that, when you were dating him.

Doris: I was dating him when they had that outside toilet. To me, being a town girl all the time, that was-- They got a toilet in, not for me, but I know that helped.

Julie: Where was their farm?

Doris: Two and a half miles out on Kinley Rd. They came from Detroit and they lived there.

Julie: East or west?

Doris: West.

Lexa: School got out at 3:30 and he had to be home at 4:00, you know, to start all this work. They used to press apples for Beck's on the farm at that point.

Doris: They had, walking in their basement, cider, ...made barrels of cider, which was against the law, but--

Lexa: [reading from Forrest Swatman's book] What are some of the household chores he had as a child? As a kid he had to wipe dishes, had to get wood in the wood box every day so his mother could cook the meals. "I also had to get a 10-gallon milk can of water from our windmill or hand pump and carry it up to the house. This had to be done every day and it was about three quarters of a block distance. When I was 17 years old, we got water piped into the house. After I got into high school, I had to get home and work in our cider mill on Tuesdays and Fridays; also I had to help milk the cows by hand, do cultivating, also hand-husk corn and cut wood on Saturdays. I was not allowed to go out for any sports because I had to go home and I'm ready for work by four. We got out of school at 3:30."

Are you looking for those pictures? I think I put them in the other room. I'll look.

Doris: We had a real active, good life.

Wayne: What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in St. Johns over the years?

Doris: When Forrest got out of working for Bee's, we started traveling. We went to England; then we went to France; and we went to Germany; we went back to where he was stationed. I'm not good on names anymore. We went back to all the states around. The army guys--probably there was 14 of us--all got together and got a bus and we all went to these places together so that they could see where they were and the airplanes, and they could ride in one of them. Forrest said, "Oh, I wouldn't ride in that anymore."

Julie: He was a pilot?

Doris: No. He was a crew chief on the airplanes.

Lexa: Mechanic.

Wayne: He repaired airplanes?

Doris: Yes.

Wayne: My father-in-law did the same thing. He was in the Army Air Force.

Lexa: That was it. Army Air Force.

Doris: Where was he stationed at?

Lexa: He was in England, France and Belgium. Running missions over France, Holland, and Germany.

Wayne: My father-in-law was in England.

Lexa: England too. Right?

Wayne: What if they were in the same places?

Doris: The could have been. What's your name?

Wayne: My father-in-law is Ray O'Connor, 'cause he's still alive.

Doris: I don't remember his name on anything. I mean, they wrote their name all over everything. They lived in a tent all that time. Forrest made them a shower so that they could take their shower 'cause they got so dirty on those airplanes, repairing them, grease and oil.

Lexa: His airplane is in Washington DC. [the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum] "Flak Bait." They move things around, move different things in and out. He was the last one to work on it.

Doris: We went to Washington to see it. We heard that it was there so we wanted to go and just look at it. They had cut it in half so that you could see the back half, look in and see it. Forrest was telling me about this--everybody was looking around--what he did here and what he did there. Pretty soon people started standing around, listening to his story. We didn't even know they were there 'til later. We have had a wonderful life. Really, we have.

We had his dad one year. We had to take care of him after his mother died. I wrote in there, "Don't ever move in with your in-laws."

Lexa: And she says, "When I ask you to take me, say no." She's ready to say, "no."

Doris: She hasn't gotten me yet.

Lexa: 'cause she won't budge. She loves her house and her town. They have good neighbors here, really, very caring neighbors.

Doris: Then they took our driver's license away. That was the worst thing people could do to you, take your driver's license and your car.

Lexa: Dr. Messenger--

Doris: The doctor insisted that Forrest give his first--

Lexa: --but both the same day. His [problem] was memory; yours was vision. She's thinking of getting one of those little cars or those little scooters.

Wayne: My dad reminds me--he's 91 now--every time I see him that they took his driver's license. Every time!

Doris: Every time.

Lexa: Dad was playing golf two summers ago on a league but then all of a sudden he just couldn't remember.

Doris: He had to bother getting people to take him, pick him up, and bring him home because some of them want to stay and play cards or something like that. I'm running into the same thing. You can go out to Findlay anytime and sometimes I got time, I could run out there, but I can't. It's too far to walk. I could walk if I was in better condition.

Lexa: Well, that's why you guys are 98 and 96. You probably saw them around town. They used walk somewhere around town, two miles a day for years, and dance two nights a week for four hours a night.

Doris: That's the worst part of this stuff.

Lexa: Getting older.

Doris: Right now he knows me sometimes and the kids, very little anymore. Why do they keep on living? I mean, he's no good to himself and he's such a big worry. I shouldn't worry like I do, but I do. It was born into me, I guess.

Lexa: You're just not used to him this way, when you've got someone who could do anything, anything at all, to see him struggle, so it's hard for you, for all of us.

Doris: What else you need?

Julie: North Ward School was where Perrin-Palmer [School] was? They were in the same place, right?

Doris: Yeah. They built a new one. Now it's a church.

Lexa: Didn't you get all the way down there with "Spud" Edward Heathman? [Walking to school.]

Doris: My brother, we'd get all the way down there and then he had to go to the bathroom. He wouldn't go to the bathroom in school. I had to take him all the way back home. We were only about four blocks from school.

Lexa: You weren't very far, right? Not very far, annoyed though, every day.

Doris: We didn't get a chance to play with the other kids hardly, you know, 'cause I had to run him back. He was taking his time.

Lexa: You'd also walk down to go to the movies for about what, 10¢?

Doris: We started when Forrest got out. We went to the shows, probably twice a week. I think it was a dime or quarter. I don't remember. Then we shared a bag of popcorn for a nickel. We got a lot of movies in. That's Evelyn with my dad. [Shows picture.]

Back to my dad, he made and sold these model airplanes. Every Saturday he'd go out to someone's farm and have other kids that bought the airplanes from him come out there and fly their airplanes around. Sometimes they was all morning out there or all day. The kids just loved that. He sold a lot of airplanes too.

Lexa: Probably kites too. He would be out there with kites.

Doris: Oh yeah, we had kites. Kites never changed that much from the time that I was a little kid that I can remember. Of course, you made your own most of the time.

Lexa: Every Sunday night he'd make bowls for you from newspaper for popcorn, right?

Doris: He showed us, with a sheet of newspaper, how we could make our bowl at home. We had popcorn a lot because it filled us kids up, I suppose. Now we can see why. We had a lot of popcorn and we all liked it. We'd all set around in a circle and we'd all make this bowl and have our popcorn and then we could wad it up, throw it away. It was kinda getting wobbly anyway by that time, pulling out your hand in and out.

Julie: Did you put lots of salt and butter on your popcorn?

Doris: I doubt it. We might've had a little bit but that costs money. We didn't have the money then.

Julie: Which house was yours on Ross St.?

Doris: The corner.

Julie: Ottawa and Ross?

Doris: Yeah. It's all different now. We had a beautiful—well, it wasn't beautiful—but a nice porch to set on. Now they've taken that off.

Julie: So it must be the northeast corner?

Doris: Yeah.

Lexa: My grandmother cried when she had to move away from her friends, up four blocks to a much nicer house. To be that close to all your family and friends because they were all in town.

Doris: To the corner of Lansing St. from Ross. That's where my folks lived for--

Lexa: --til they died.

Julie: On Lansing?

Lexa: Corner of Lansing and Walker, white house, big front porch.

Julie: Your brother lived a block north of that at Higham & Ottawa.

Doris: When we moved up from the north end, across the tracks, up there, that was quite important at that time of our lives. That's probably why she cried.

Lexa: Moving up in the world or something. Didn't he have you all in the car and he lectured you?

Doris: When we drove up to this for the first time that us kids had even seen it. "Whoa, whoa, just sit still," Dad says. "Now I want you girls to get out of the car and act like civilized people, young ladies." Boy, we got out of that car just so important.

Lexa: Wasn't somebody in the neighborhood always tattling on you, so you rolled paper and put powder in it or something and walked along pretending you were smoking?

Doris: That was at the other house. She was always tattling to my mother what we were doing wrong so we rolled up a piece of toilet paper and put powder on it and rolled it up like a cigarette. Boy, she told my mother right away.

Wayne: You couldn't get away with anything.

Doris: You couldn't.

Lexa: You did that to get even with her.

Doris: Just to bother her. We played a lot of croquet.

Lexa: Anti-i-over; kick the can; croquet, croquet, croquet.

Doris: We played hopscotch.

Lexa: Roller skating with the key.

Doris: When we learned to roller skate, we had a round table in the dining room. This was all winter. We'd put those roller skates [on], skate around and around and around. You get four kids skating around on the linoleum, it didn't last very good.

Lexa: Big family gatherings there. They played a lot of Michigan Rummy--It had another name to it too--where they all would come back. Your other sister lived just down Walker St. and she was just up on Prospect.

Doris: "Buck."

Lexa: No. That was "Sis."

Doris: Sis was on Walker.

Lexa: She was in Mt. Clemens.

Doris: It's funny when you think about it, my mother's folks all lived in two blocks, just about, from each other.

Lexa: You lived pretty close, all of you.

Doris: **Everybody was together, seemed like it.

Wayne: Well, thank you very much for sharing with us today.

*Doris Heathman died June 7, 2019, one week after this interview, and Brian Dean Swatman died June 21, 2019.

**The following clarification was furnished by Lexa O'Brien on 31 July 2019: Mom's sisters, Fritz (Heathman) Thurston; Vianna "Sis" (Heathman) Bond; brother, Edward "Spud" Heathman; and Mom lived here all of their lives. Evelyn "Eve" (Heathman) Buck moved back after living in Mt. Clemens for many years. Brother, Roger Heathman lived here for many years before moving to Dansville. They were a close family, always getting together for cards, breakfast, and holiday celebrations. Mom spent many hours visiting her parents, and later on Eve, Sis, Fritz, and Spud in the nursing home. She was a blessing to all. That's why Hazel Findlay was so important to her with Dad the one she was visiting until she died.
