

DEAN SWEET AND SUE HAGERMAN

Wayne: This is Friday, May 27, 2022. I'm Wayne Summers and today I'm interviewing **Dean Sweet and Sue Hagerman** at the Bath School Museum in Bath. Dean, why don't we start out with you? Tell us where you were born and a little bit about how your family got to come to this area.

Dean: I was born in Grandma's house right up here on the corner. What was the question again?

Wayne: Well, you were born here. Did you have like a doctor that came to the house at the time?

Dean: Yes, sir.

Wayne: Do you remember who that was? I know you don't remember, but do you remember hearing?

Dean: I have no idea who it was but grew up in the town of Bath until I was 11 years old. Mother and Dad [**Dean Sweet, Sr.**] owned a little grocery store down here on Main St. Dad was a roofer and mother run the store; went to school in Bath all my 13 years. The old high school's gone now. Bath exploded back in '27 [May 18], but that's the high school I went through, graduated out of this school, which happens to be the middle school right now, in 1962.

Wayne: The store that your mother ran, what kind of a store was it?

Dean: Grocery store. Nobody went hungry. If they didn't have any money, they had food. That's the way my mother and dad did it. If you didn't have any money this week, but you gotta wait until payday, Dad would write it down on a piece of paper and put it in little file box. If you could pay next week, okay. If you couldn't, don't worry about it.

Wayne: Put everything on the tab.

Dean: Basically, everything was on the tab, in cash, of course, for those that could. I was 11 years old. We moved out of town. I had two younger brothers and Dad could probably see the writing on the wall by living in town, so he moved us out on a farm at 11 years old. We got 25-acre farm that we grew up on. One of the biggest things that I remember after moving out of the store was people coming out to the house and paying their tabs after the store was closed. If you needed a bottle of milk or a loaf of bread, you got it. That's the way Mom and Dad were.

Wayne: When did your ancestors first come to Bath and which ones?

Dean: The farthest back anything goes, Grandma and Grandpa Sweet. They lived out on Sleight Road, a big old dairy farm. There was 10 or 11 kids. One of 'em passed away when he was very young with an abscessed tooth. Never met that person, but they had a big dairy farm, and they were raised out there.

Wayne: Sue, how about you? Where were you born and how about your family background?

Sue: I was actually born in Ionia. My parents lived in a house in Portland at that time on a farm with my mother's parents. They had always lived with Mom and Dad and our ancestors owned the Webster farm up there on Webster Road. Dad worked at Motor Wheel at that time, and he kept getting laid off,

so they moved back out here to the farm when I was three and we've been there ever since. I grew up there; my dad was raised there; he grew up there.

Wayne: Do you know when the Websters first came to this area?

Sue: We actually have ties back to the Mayflower. Somebody came across on the Mayflower, but **Alonzo Webster** settled here in Michigan, in Bath, in 1837, and they built a log cabin. He was married to **Lucetta Wilson**, and they raised--I don't remember how many kids they had. I should have brought my little green book. Anyway, they raised their family there. My grandma, **Ruth Webster**, was one of their children. She was my father's mother. She married **Francis Eschtruth**. They were also from Michigan and Grandpa and Grandma raised nine kids out there, my dad and eight aunts and uncles. They had sheep and they had horses; they raised crops. All the kids went through the school that blew up. My dad [**Raymond Eschtruth**] graduated in 1937.

My dad, two aunts, and an uncle were actually in the school when it exploded. I had an aunt, Lucetta, who was in the Methodist Church practicing for commencement. My dad was buried alive there. When he came to, he saw a little peephole of light and that's all he could see. He felt somebody laying across his legs and later found out it was a body. Then he started calling out to the janitor for help and nobody came so he just went in over in his mind everything he had done that morning: they got up; they got breakfast; they did the chores; they got cleaned up; they walked to school. By that time, somebody came to help, and they got him out. He had a broken leg. He didn't realize it then. He was all covered with plaster and dust and shrapnel and everything that you get from an explosion.

My two aunts, one of them, had a radiator pinned against her chest and my other aunt--they were both older than him. He was in the third grade and my one aunt was 11 and the other one was 13. The other one had a broken arm. My uncle was either in kindergarten or first grade and his area of the school was not damaged, so he was okay. My aunt that was in the church was okay, but they took my dad out, set him in the yard against a tree. He was sitting there and one of his friends came out, one of his classmates, and Dad asked about his brother, and he says, "Well, he's still in there so I guess he's dead." Then [**Andrew Kehoe**] blew his car up and the noise scared my dad so bad he jumped up and ran across the road to an aunt's house, not realizing he had a broken leg. He ended up being in the hospital about 14 days, I think. My aunts were in for a little while, but everybody recovered.

Wayne: Dean, I think your father was also in the school at the time. Is that correct?

Dean: Yes, sir.

Wayne: Could you tell me what you remember him telling you about that?

Dean: Not much. He wouldn't talk about it. I guess I'm fortunate that I got on this committee because he begged me and begged me and begged me to do it. Back at the time he begged me to do it, I had nineteen other things I was doing. He finally got me talked into coming down here. After about the third meeting I showed up with him--he and I rode together 'cause we only lived 200 yards apart--I finally started asking him some questions in the car and he started to open up a little bit to me. He was in the explosion. He was just like Sue's kin. He was covered in plaster and a bunch of junk laying on him and whatever and they pulled him out. I guess they took him to the hospital like they did everybody else. He had a metal plate in his head because part of his skull was crushed, and he had one down in his

shin because part of his shin was crushed and lived that way all of his life. He was in the hospital for quite some time. I can't tell you exactly how long. I know it was a long time, at least for him, and he wasn't really getting too much better. The doctors just come into his room while his mother and dad was there and said, "Take your son home; put him in his bed; let him die to home." He remembers that quite clearly. So they took him home and, put him in his bedroom, and he lay there and lay there and looked out the window and looked out the window every day. I don't know if it was winter or cold. Anyhow, they hadn't started doing their crops yet. One day he looked out his window and he saw his dad out with a team of horses, plowing the fields, so he got up and put his boots and pants and shirt on, went out and started picking up rocks. His dad hadn't seen him yet 'cause his dad was still going south and Dad was behind him. He turned the team around and saw my dad down there and so when he got back to where my dad was, he asked him, "What are you doing out here in the field?" He says, "Well, isn't it my job to pick up the rocks after you plow?" His dad said, "Yes, it is," and took off with the team of horses to keep on plowing and my dad did what he had to do. So that's the way it went. He was supposed to die at the age of 15. He lived to be 92.

Wayne: Doctors aren't always right.

Dean: That's true.

Wayne: How did you both get involved with the Bath Museum here?

Dean: Like I said, I was in to help. Dad had invited me to come down here.

Wayne: When was this?

Dean: Oh geez. It was before you.

Sue: --before me and I think I've been here about 10 years.

Dean: I've been here a little longer than that. It was just one of those things that, after your dad asked you so many times and you just refused to do it. It's been a long time. I worked for the bank at the time, and I joined the committee in about ---. After three meetings they wanted me to be the treasurer. The gal that was doing the job, she didn't like it in the first place, so she asked me if I'd take over. I said, "yes," and I'm still here.

Sue: --and still treasurer.

Dean: Still treasurer. It's probably been a good 15, maybe 20 years.

Wayne: Had it been in place longer?

Dean: I know it's gotta be 20 years because I was working at the bank, and I worked for the lab for 25 years after I retired from the bank. It's been a few years.

Wayne: Was that when it had gotten started, or had it been in place before that?

Dean: Oh, it had been in place before that it. When did this start?

Sue: 1984.

Wayne: How did the rather substantial collection you have here, how did it come about?

Sue: **Jim Hixson** was the principal at the elementary school at that time in 1984 and somebody at the school was cleaning storage areas out and there was all of these items there and they threw 'em in the trash. They didn't have any use for 'em and Jim Hickson saw them and salvaged them and they were all the artifacts. That's how the museum got started with the artifacts that he rescued. Then he went to the school board and asked if they could use the all-purpose room in the elementary school for the museum. As it's called all-purpose rooms, it was used for all purposes--the cafeteria, the gym, school programs, everything. Every time the museum wanted to have an event for the public, they had to unbox everything, set it around in the all-purpose room, then at the end of the day, pack it all back up and put it all away before school started the following Monday. They did that for probably 9 or 10 years. Then the auditorium here in the middle school was built and the elementary school needed the room where the elementary was. They needed to expand because the school was growing and so the school board said, "Well, the auditorium lobby would be perfect place for your museum. We'll let you move into there," so in 1993 we opened in here and we've been here ever since.

Wayne: What would you say are some of the main highlights of the collection that you have here?

Dean: It's gotta be the girl and the cat.

Wayne: What's the history behind that?

Dean: The girl and the cat?

Wayne: Yes.

Dean: When the building over there was rebuilt, there was a collection of pennies. People were donating pennies, donating pennies. Somebody got a hold of a sculpture--in that case down there we have all the information on the sculpture--and wanted something to commemorate the kids. His daughter was holding a cat one day, I guess. He seen that and it come to him that that's what he needs to make. Is that bronze?

Sue: Yes.

Dean: Story was that all the pennies that were collected was melted down to make the statue. Well, it's a bronze statue. It's not the pennies. That's right there around the corner, if you want to see it, but that statue was made. In the high school, which was rebuilt, they put the girl and the cat in the hallway. When you walked through the main doors, that's the first thing you saw was the girl and the cat. It stayed there until we moved over to--

Sue: I think she went to the new high school. I don't think she was ever in this school.

Dean: I think she did go to the high school. It wasn't left in the elementary school. Anyhow, once we got down here, we put it down here. I can remember as a kid in high school, I'd come in in the morning and come through the front door, I'd touch the head of the cat every morning.

Wayne: Was that pretty typical? Did others do that or was that--

Dean: I don't know. I can't say I noticed anybody ever doing it, but that was my ritual in the morning when I walked in the building.

Wayne: Do you have any other memories, either one of you, of going to school here?

Dean: Not that I can tell.

Wayne: --that you're willing to tell?

Sue: I started in the elementary building in kindergarten. When I was in fourth grade, I started in the James Couzens Agricultural Building. That's the one that replaced the one that blew up. I went from fourth grade to eighth grade and then came here to high school, which is now the middle school, and then I graduated from here. I remember in the fourth grade we had a clock on the wall that was one of the old Roman numeral ones. I think we've got one down there and I remember when it would get up to the hour, you could hear the hands click the last second before it touched the 12. It would go click, click. I remember that sound. I don't know why. Then we had band down in the basement, one of the little rooms down there. The fifth graders through the seventh graders, we met down there and just a little room. The lunchroom was in the Quonset, which was right behind the James Couzens building, and that's where the cafeteria was, so if you bought your lunch, you went over there. They also had classes over there.

Wayne: Was that a Quonset hut from World War II?

Sue: I believe so.

Dean:--based on the World War II Quonset huts.

Wayne: I know like Michigan State had a lot of Quonset huts at one time.

Sue: I think that's where we got it.

Dean: That's basically where we got it from.

Sue: It was always there when I was there. I don't remember really paying attention to the little girl with the cat. I just didn't think about it, I guess. Like growing up, like all the other survivors of the explosion, they never talked about it. Even growing up, my dad never really talked about it. I mean, she was there and --

Wayne: It almost sounds like they treated it like a lot of World War II veterans did where they didn't wanna talk about their time of the service.

Sue: No, no. They just closed up and moved on with their lives.

Dean: The only reason I knew about that statue is that's one thing that my dad told me, was about the statue. Now at the time I was not told it was brass. I was told that pennies were melted down and so

that's how I learned about it. I later learned that the pennies weren't melted down, but my dad told me about the girl and the cat. That's the only reason every day, every morning—

Sue: Most of what I know is what I've learned since I started working in the museum. Mom and Dad were two of the original people that worked in the museum along with his dad. They had the 50-year alumni reunion every year back then and Mom and Dad would be working at it every year. I had my three kids at home, and I was busy with my own life, but I would notice Mom and Dad would come home from that at the end of that day and they would just crash in their house. They were so exhausted 'cause they were probably--I wanna say they were older, but they were probably what my age is right now.

Dean: Sue. be careful. Now you know why.

Sue: Yes, I do, but they would be so tired, so I just started going out and just helping out with them. That was after this museum was in here, so that would've been in the '90's. It had to be before the 90's that I started helping because--now I don't remember. Anyway, **Jack Brown**, who was the principal at the middle school in 1975, had done a project for his class at MSU when he was going. I think it was for his dissertation or something. He did a slide program on the explosion. That year at the alumni reunion that was in the auditorium I sat in there and watched that with my dad and it was so real. He had sound effects to it and sitting there with my dad, it was like I was going through it with him. I think that's the first time I really connected. After that is when some of the survivors started opening up more. It just kind of opened a door for all of them. After that event, I was so impressed with the whole thing and how people reacted and the slide program, I wrote an article—I was going do it as an editorial for the *Bath-DeWitt Review* and--

Dean: You were right the first place.

Sue: I know, but this is recorded. I just wrote how well done the whole thing was and how impressed I was at how well everyone did and the results of it and the slideshow and the results of the slideshow. I commented that, "It's really important that this event get out to the public 'cause it's part of our history and people just shove it under the rug. They don't wanna talk about it 'cause it's so horrible. Oh, don't talk about horrible things, but it's part of history and it's our history that here in Bath. We grew up with it even though we didn't really understand any of it growing up because no one talked about it." I said a special thanks to my parents because they worked so hard for it but the last line I wrote, I said, "I hope some younger person will take the flame and just keep it burning about this and keep it going and get it out there," never realizing that I was gonna be that person. It wasn't too long after that--Mom and Dad were both gone before I actually joined. I think Mom passed away in 2006 and it was after that I actually joined the museum. I'm still learning new things about the schools and about the explosion that I have never heard before.

Dean: And we probably will continue to learn about it because people will be people. We lost our last member a few days ago. [**Irene (Babcock) Dunham** died May 1, 2022.]

Sue: One thing relating to that, I did an interview with Channel 10, on May 18th, the anniversary of the explosion. I had mentioned the story about my dad and how he was calling out for the janitor. A few days after that, I got a phone call. This woman--didn't know her from Adam. She said, "This is kind of a strange phone call, but I saw your interview on Channel 10 and you mentioned your dad was calling out

to the janitor.” She says, “That was my grandfather. He was the janitor there at the school then. He had one arm and they called him the one-arm hero.” Don't know his name; she never said his name; Dad never said anything about his name; he never said anything about him at all. I never heard mention of him at all in anything, any of the stories I've heard. There must be something somewhere, but just little things like that. It just ripples, like a ripple effect.

Wayne: Kinda wonder what other stories are out there that have been passed down in various families. Right? I know you both have been working on the Bath school reunions so can you tell a little bit about those?

Sue: Every year, the Saturday closest to May 18th, which is the anniversary of the school explosion, and it always ends up to be the third Saturday in May every year. We have a 50-year alumni reunion starting with the class of 1927 all the way through the current year. This year, it was the 1972 class that came in. We have it catered. We have it here in the gymnasium in the middle school. They come; they have to register, of course. They come in; they mingle and that's all we want them to do, is just mingle, share, get to know each other again, then walk through the museum. We have a really good time. We put a lot of effort into it, a lot of work. We really enjoy doing that. I love working on that.

Dean: She does. It wasn't for Sue, I'm sorry. We probably wouldn't have a committee today.

Sue: I'm sure there would be, but--

Dean: You know how I worry about it.

Sue: We really enjoy that, and everybody has such a good time. We get a lot of good comments on it, and they all appreciate it. My son, actually, has in the last two years I think he's been on here now. He started joining in 'cause he's very interested in the history of Bath. He actually owns the farmhouse that was homesteaded that my dad grew up in, that I grew up in. He and his family are in that house and they live right next door to me so that makes it even better.

Wayne: You're recruiting your replacement.

Sue: He is very involved in the park. He has a heart for it. He has a heart for the museum and moving it forward. I'm real pleased about that. My mom and dad would be so proud.

Dean: Yes, they would, and he's got a wife that--

Sue: Yes, very supportive. She's actually a member now too.

Dean: --Very, very supportive.

Wayne: That helps.

Wayne: When are you open to the general public or is it by reservation? Do you try to have regular hours?

Dean: Yes and yes. We just started, well a couple months ago now in May. In May, we're open from 10 to 4 on Saturdays, hoping that we get some interest and people will come and visit us. I haven't seen

the interest yet. I mean, there has been like two or three people maybe each day that we're open. We're open by invitation or if somebody calls the school, wants to know how to get to see the museum, Sue or I will get a call from the school saying, "Here's so and so's number. They need to know how to get in." Either Sue or I or somebody else will come in and go through the museum with them. I don't do as much as I used to 'cause I'm getting a little older than I was and thank God for Sue and the rest of the committee. They're holding me up, but like Sue said, we need more interest in younger people. I worry very, very much about that if it doesn't-- We're all getting elderly and if nobody shows up to take over, are we gonna end up in a dumpster again?

Wayne: I hope not, but I know that all historical kind of societies have that concern. Will someone take over?

Sue: One advantage of being here in the lobby, every time there's a function in the auditorium, the public is in here and they wander around the museum, so they get to see it.

Wayne: --which is, I think, is a real advantage as opposed to being a place where you're not gonna see it unless you specifically go there for that. Since you have both lived in this area for quite a while, how has it changed during your lifetime? What are some of the things that are different, maybe some of the stores that used to be here that aren't here anymore.?

Dean: What do you want me to tell you? That I used to ride horse and buggy and I saw the first rocket go to the moon?

Wayne: Sure. Go for it.

Dean: Wasn't me. I was thinking of my grandpa though. He worked for the railroad

Wayne: --when the railroad was still going through here then?

Dean: Oh, we had an elevator and the whole nine yards.

Sue: We had a depot out here. People would come to get on the train to go places.

Dean: His part of the railroad was between Bath and Lansing. He was responsible for the rails between Bath and Lansing. I look at him in awe because he did go horse and buggy. He did see the first landing or the first astronaut step off. I didn't see all that. I know some of it because I was told. What I seen, it was from pencil and paper to where we are today with technology. Because of my age, I'd rather see pencil and paper. I have no interest in technology whatsoever.

Sue: He didn't need to have a computer.

Wayne: You're not part of the computer age.

Dean: No, but my daughter is. No, I'm not. That's one of the reasons I retired from the bank. When I did, it was because they were bringing computers in. I got no use for computers, so I retired. Then I went to work for a lab, picking up, delivering to different dentist offices. All I had to do is drive a car. I know how to drive a car, so I wasn't worried about that. Growing up in this town, I had what I consider

a great bringing up. I had two great parents. I had neighbors in this town that knew what I was doing, where I was and when.

Wayne: Can't get away with anything!

Dean: Couldn't get away with nothing but that's the way it was back then. Today, I cringe. I didn't go through the bombing, but when I see on television what I saw three or four days ago, bothers me. I'm on the school board, been on the school board for almost 30 years. I'm here for a reason. I'm trying to repay my people, my township to help raise me, trying to repay 'em. Never gonna happen. I'm never gonna be able to repay 'em.

I come home from work where my dad has been sitting in his chair when he was still alive and they had that big shooting in Columbine. I come in and I go into his house, and I stop there every night on the way home because of their age, and my dad is crying like a baby. "Dad, what's the matter?" I look on the TV. I know what the matter is. I said, "Shut the damm thing off. You don't have to watch it." I don't watch it anymore. I see what happens now. There's a lot of controversy. I don't wanna watch all that. It's getting political now. I don't wanna watch all that. I lived the best time of anybody's life that I've lived because it was a quiet neighborhood. Everybody knew everybody and I had a lot of parents in town. I've lived a life I'm happy with. Do I wanna live longer? Yeah, I wanna live longer. I'm shooting for my dad's age. Whether I make it or not, I don't know, but I'm shooting for it. I wanna see the hundredth anniversary. I wanna see that. If I see that, I'll die the next day happy.

Wayne: Only have five more years.

Dean: That's right. That's the way I'm looking at it.

Wayne: Do you have particular memories about how maybe the area has changed or--

Sue: It certainly has moved forward a lot. Growing up on the farm, we all had our chores, did what we were supposed to do. We played outside all day in the snow. We were always outdoors. We didn't have a lot of animals. We had a cow that we used for milk. We'd have a steer we'd raise for butchering. We had chickens and turkeys and just stuff to support the family. My dad, at that time, worked at Motor Wheel still. There wasn't enough production on the farm to be able to make a living off it. It was quiet. If we wanted to, we could ride our bikes up. We lived a mile north of Bath. If we wanted to go up to the store, we would get on our bikes and ride up, not worry about anything, not worry about a car flying by and hitting us or somebody stopping and picking us up. We had two stores. One was a grocery store with a meat market in it; across the road was the variety store who also had some groceries; there was a post office; there was the gas station and a hardware store. I don't remember what--

Dean: --and a barber shop, and a bank.

Sue: --and a barber shop and a bank and that was it. My brother and I would ride our bikes up to the store to get a candy bar or whatever, walk into the back room where the comics were and look through the comics over in Ewing's store. It was quiet. It was safe. We only had one car so all our years growing up. My dad had the car at work. We pretty much just stayed on the farm or rode our bikes somewhere. There were a lot of big changes. I graduated in '67 and got married, and moved out to Long Beach. My husband was in the Navy out there. When we came back in '70, there were a lot of changes. It wasn't so

quiet anymore. Our road got paved so now people are flying by all the time. It's not really safe to ride your bike on it anymore. Television was a lot different; people were starting to get computers; cell phones hadn't come around yet; technology was moving forward; microwaves were starting to make speedy meals because Mom and Dad both work now. Growing up, I remember the elevator. My dad used to go up there and get grain for the animals and the train was still there.

I don't know if it was the late 70's or the early 80's when the trains quit going through. They probably quit before that, but the tracks were still there. I remember when those went out so that changed everything. That changed the direction of the routes of people going into Lansing because, once the train track went away-- over here on, Webster Road, there used to be a hill right by the Baptist Church. You go down and that's where the train track was. Well, people started petitioning: Let's open that up, just make the road straight 'cause right now, just to get to there, like to get to the Baptist Church, you had to come up Webster Road, go down Sleight Road, go up Walnut and then back up and back around, kind of go around the block; so open it up and make it a straightaway. I think that's probably when downtown started dying because the main traffic went right straight through. You don't go through downtown anymore actually, unless you want to. And then the malls--

Dean: I go get a haircut once in a while.

Sue: The barbershop is still down there, but the malls opened up; different grocery stores opened up, so people were going there. Big changes. I miss it.

Dean: Well, that's when your small-town groceries, like the folks, they closed up because your bigger box stores.

Wayne: Was the bank you worked for the one here in town?

Dean: I worked for in Lansing, Bank of Lansing. That's what it started out as. It's Co-America now.

Wayne: Think they've all changed names at different times.

Dean: Co-America changed age 14 times before I retired. No, it wasn't 14, but it was four. The highway goes through now. It was never there.

Wayne: Sue, why don't you tell us a little bit about the history of the Bath School District.

Sue: There was one room school buildings all around the county way back, early 1800's on. There was a log cabin school building at the site where the James Couzens building was, the site where the school explosion was. In 1875, I believe it was, they decided to build a bigger school, consolidate it from grades K through 10. It was a two-story building and it was brick and it was one of the most modern, the best one around the whole area. Then they decided that it'd be even better if we could get rid of all the one room school buildings. All the kids could go to one place; they would be safer; they wouldn't have to walk through all the winter and the weather and everything to school and home every day all throughout the whole countryside. So, they added onto the brick one. They added around that building, just built right around it and it was two-story building. The Bath Consolidated School it was called, and they had from grades kindergarten through 12. Because it was through the 12th grade, teachers had to have more extensive training to be certified and so the teachers were better. It was

better than some of the other schools 'cause they didn't have such extensive training. The kids were all together, all through school, same kids, the whole time. That building that was built in 1922. That's the one that blew up in 1927 and then they rebuilt it as the James Couzens Agricultural Building and that was K through 12. It just kept progressing after that.

Dean: The reason it became James Couzens is because there was a senator, named **James Couzens**, donated \$75,000 to build that building. Back then that was a lot of money.

Wayne: What was the total cost of the building?

Dean: I have no idea. I worked for Co-America Bank. I can't remember what year he retired now, but the last part of my stay at Co-America, James Couzens was a senior officer in our home office in Detroit. James Couzens was going to retire. I received a phone call wanting to know if we could donate something to James Couzens from the school, knowing what he did. I don't know if we got them from out here or what. I said, sure. I can find something; talked to Jim Hickson and Jim says, "Well, let's give him a couple of bricks." Okay. We got some bricks down there right now. I said, "Let's do that." So, we got a couple of bricks and we put 'em in a shoebox and I sent him off to his boss 'cause they were gonna have a retirement party for him and that's what we did. We donated two bricks to James Couzens.

Wayne: --From the building that he helped build.

Dean: --That he helped build.

Sue: I guess I hadn't heard that story.

Dean: It's been a long time ago. It's been probably 35 years at least.

Sue: I also had read--I don't know where I read it just not too long ago--that because of all the kids going to the hospitals and they're being so overcrowded that the Sparrow Hospital had been working on a project to have a new wing built for a children's wing and after the explosion, with all the money that was coming in from donations and stuff, they were able to actually build that. I believe, James Couzens gave money to that too.

Dean: It wouldn't surprise me a bit.

Sue: I guess I wouldn't quote that, but I'm sure I read that he gave money for that too because he gave money for a lot of things in Michigan but that was kind of cool.

Wayne: Interesting, interesting stories.

Dean: Therefore, James Couzens School District; there's James Couzens Agricultural School; therefore, now James Couzens Park.

Sue: Memorial Park.

Dean: Memorial Park. Excuse me. I keep forgetting it's Memorial.

Wayne: For somebody who didn't live here, he's made a major impact.

Dean: Yes, he did.

Sue: One of the people that toured through here on our Saturdays asked if Bath was in his district and I googled it and I couldn't find any information at all.

Dean: I don't even think he lived here. Oh, in his senatorial district. I would've thought probably.

Sue: I don't know either. I would've thought so, but I don't know.

Sue: All I could find was that he was a senator, and he did this and he did that. Maybe that's where I read that he gave some money for the hospital.

Dean: When they tore the building down over there—I think it was '75, '76--there was an uproar in town 'cause there was a lot of people that were still living at the time they tore that down. I didn't know why when they did. I mean, I was younger. I know my dad was upset and things like that. I listened to him but didn't ever bring it up again. I said, "Do you know the reason there was that they're tearing it down?" "No, they're just tearing it down. Just tearing it down." Well, I heard much later that the upper floors had dropped three inches. That's why they tore it down. Now whether that's true or not, I don't know. I don't know who said it, why they said it, where it come from.

Sue: I always heard it wasn't safe and so that's why they tore it down.

Dean: People say, "Well that could have been a museum." Yeah, it could have been a museum but then I also heard it would cost just as much to repair it as it would to rebuild.

Wayne: That's the problem. You can repair almost anything. But the cost sometimes--

Dean: This building, the elementary building, and the high school building down on Clark Road is all on the property of the **Wilkins** family. All the properties that these buildings are built on was their farm. All the property was donated. [**Doris M.**] "**Granny**" **Wilkins**, I remember her.

Wayne: How many acres did she donate?

Dean: I have no idea.

Sue: A lot. Must been quite a bit because from here--

Dean: --down on Clark Road's another--

Sue: --almost to Center Road.

Wayne: Did she not have any children?

Dean: She was a teacher here.

Sue: She had children. **Richard [Wilkins]**. I can remember him, but I can't--

Sue: **Gene [Wilkins]** was one of hers, wasn't he? Wasn't Gene **Richard's [Wilkins]** brother?

Dean: Different Wilkins family. Oh see, that's a different

Sue: She was married to Howard.

Dean: Howard wasn't married to Mrs. Wilkins.

Sue: Oh gosh. All these years I thought her husband was **Herbert [Hubert [Wilkins]]**.

Dean: I lived out here. **Howard Wilkins** lived up on Clark Road.

Sue: Where Barb lives.

Dean: Well, but where Barb lives.

Dean: Two different Wilkins. that's right. But she was a teacher here.

Sue: --was a great teacher. Loved her. Everyone loved her.

Dean: In her later years she was still teaching or librarian. She only lived down here half a mile or so. When she drove, everybody stayed out of the way.

Wayne: Not the best driver.

Dean: Well, not so much the best driver. I mean, if she went 15 miles an hour, she was going too fast, for her.

Dean: But that lady, when I was in the fifth grade--

Sue: What I had her four was fifth grade.

Dean: --over in that school. Yep. School lets out at such and such a time. She sees to it every kid gets on the bus that has to get on the bus. Every kid that lived in town, she walked them home. We'd go out on the sidewalk. We'd start walking and whoever was closest, of course, got dropped off first but she'd walk all over this town--

Sue: Oh, I didn't know that either.

Dean: --til every kid got home. We lived right down here on main street where the restaurant is and things. We lived right there. "You don't go home without me walking." I don't know if she didn't trust us not going home.

Sue: Together or what? That was probably more that.

Dean: That's what I'm thinking.

Wayne: She knew you too well.

Dean: Everybody did in this in this town.

Sue: She was a wonderful, wonderful person. Everyone just loves her.

Dean: If you didn't have Mrs. Wilkins class, you never had anybody's class. When we owned the grocery store down here, Wilkins gas station was across the road from us. We'd have to go over there to get a bottle of pop and he had an old pop machine that they circulated cold water through it. You put your dime or whatever in the machine pulled that bottle back out and opened it up here; bottle of pop was cold.

Wayne: Even though you had a grocery store, you went next door to get pop?

Dean: Oh sure. We didn't have any pop in our store.

Wayne: I guess you kind of assumed there would be, if it's a grocery store, but—

Dean: Well, there was a variety grocery store across the road, Wilkins Grocery Store.

Sue: They owned it before Ewings?

Dean: I'm sorry, Ewing's Grocery Store. In fact, my dad before he had this variety store, worked for **Mr. Ewing**. He worked back on the meat market. **Mrs. Mead**, she was a postal--, whatever they called them back then. She was the head of the post office. I'm telling a little bit of story, getting away from the school and things, but she was in this store buying her weekly groceries or whatever and she went back to the meat market. It was a fresh meat market back there. She saw a tongue in there in the cooler, a cow's tongue. She looked at that cow's tongue. She looked at my dad and said, "Dean, what's this mean? What's that tongue doing in there?" "Mrs. Mead," he says, "that's a delicacy. Nothing better than tongue." "You don't know what's been in that cow's mouth!" He looked over the counter. He looked in their basket and says, "I see you got a dozen eggs." My dad told me that story.

Sue: Oh, that's funny. Oh, I loved cow tongue. Mom used to cook it.

Wayne: I never wanted to try it. It was the thought actually.

Sue: It was good.

Dean: Now that was with my mother and my dad. You never wanted to try it, but you will try it once and that kind of bothered me when I got married. We had my daughter, she was getting up where she'd eat table food and all that and we'd have vegetables on the table and I'd tell my daughter, "You need to try the corn or the peas or whatever it is on there." "Well," she said, "No, you don't have to do that." So I didn't say anything. After dinner and everything got all settled in, getting ready to go to bed and everything—my daughter was already in bed—and I said, "I'm not gonna argue with you in front of our

daughter, but she needs to try that.” “Well, I never had to!” I said, “but that’s not the way she’s gonna learn.” Her folks never made her try that stuff. We come to the conclusion, yeah, she should at least try. There’s isn’t a vegetable today that she won’t eat. Even though my wife didn’t like it, that doesn’t mean my daughter don’t. It’s just like my mother made liver. Friday nights was always liver night. Well, I don’t eat at home on Friday nights. Liver and onions, “I tried it, Dad. I tried it.” See, my dad loved fish; couldn’t eat fish, his stomach wouldn’t accept it. If he ate fish, it would come right back up on him, but he loved fish—just funny little quirks like that.

Sue: I miss those days. Those days they were so carefree and easy, and you felt safe. We didn’t have a lot. Mom was a stay-at-home mom until I was in high school. My brother was in junior high by then and we were the only two left at home. Then she went to work but she cooked the meals. We had a hot meal when we got home from school. We didn’t have a lot, but we were happy. We had what we needed and if we were without something, I never realized it. I just had a good life.

Dean: I always had clothes on my back. I had meals to eat.

Sue: Sundays we would get in the car and drive to one of our relative’s house every Sunday and go visit an aunt and uncle and play with the cousins pretty much every Sunday. People don’t do that anymore.