

WARREN MALKIN

Wayne: This is July 6, 2022. I'm Wayne Summers and today I'm interviewing Warren Malkin at his home in Victor Twp. Warren, why don't you start out by telling us a little bit about when and where you were born?

Warren: I was born in the city of Laingsburg at home, and I've lived in this area all my life, except for, I don't know, four or five years in Holt. When we first got married, we lived in Lansing, in an apartment. Then we bought a house in Holt.

Wayne: So how did your family come to live in Laingsburg?

Warren: Well, both my mother and father was from the area and my uncle married the daughter of the family across the road to **Coverts** and that's how I ended up buying the farm across the road. Then when we come out here, I talked to **Herb Stichler**, who owned this farm and, **Arlo Stichler** finally convinced him to sell the place to me, so I've been here since the sixties.

Wayne: What did your father do for a living?

Warren: He worked at Motor Wheel, and he also farmed. He raised peppermint on the **Hollister** farm. We lived just east of Meridian Road and Grand River Road or Round Lake Road, and he raised peppermint on the Hollister farm years and years ago, but he did work at Motor Wheel.

Wayne: Were you on the Shiawassee Co. side then?

Warren: Then, yes, just across the line.

Wayne: When did your family originally come to this area then?

Warren: Well, my dad lived on Chandler Road in Victor Twp. That's where my grandfather lived. That's where he was born and my mother lived on Hollister Road, just mile two miles east of here, so they were close.

Wayne: Do you have any stories that they told about coming in this area or what life was like for them?

Warren: Well, they lived just in Shiawassee County. I think they were in the city of Laingsburg when I grew up, Meridian and Grand River Road or Round Lake Road then. They said there was Indians in the orchard when they bought the place. That's all I remember about that place.

Wayne: Where did they come from before they came here?

Warren: Well, like I say, Dad was born--

Wayne: But before they came to Michigan, did they--

Warren: The Malkins? They came from England. My aunt did a lot of genealogy. I talked to my cousin, Rodney, and he said that they came from England--Henry Thomas and Thomas Henry and William J., and

they always kept those same names all the way through, He was a cook in the army. That's about all I know about my great-grandparents way back when.

Wayne: So, you grew up in the town or at least your early childhood was in Laingsburg?

Warren: Yes.

Wayne: You attended schools there?

Warren: High school; graduated in '57. I got an associate's degree from LCC; worked at General Motors for 35 years or Oldsmobile. I think it's Oldsmobile, but they changed the name several times when I worked there.

Wayne: Do you have any particular memories of attending school in Laingsburg?

Warren: That's where I met my wife. Came home on the bus but I had a car. I don't know why I wasn't driving to school. Probably Dad wouldn't let me, but anyway, I told a friend, **Rolly [Rolland] Nickols**, that I'd pick him up and take him to the game. The game was an away game, basketball, and **Phyllis Curtis**, she sat behind him on the bus. We was in the same grade, and she says, "Well, I'll go too." Rolly lived over on St. Clair Road and Phyllis lived Alward, so I picked Rolly up and picked Phyllis up. We went to the game but after the game, somehow Rolly got **Janet Heil**, my wife, to come home with us. She was a cheer leader, and I don't think the cheer leaders or the sports people were supposed to. If they took the bus, they're supposed to ride the bus home. I have no idea how Rolly got her to come home with us but we went to Rolly's house. His folks weren't home, so he didn't have a car. We took Phyllis home and then we went back to Rolly's house and Rolly's parents still wasn't home so when I took Janet home, that started the relationship right there. We were married 64 years.

Wayne: Oh, long, long wedding.

Warren: Yes.

Wayne: Were you involved in any activities in high school?

Warren: I played baseball. I was 97 pounds probably in high school. No, I wasn't into sports. I was vice president of the junior class. That's when I got kind of into politics. I liked that.

Wayne: Why don't you explain how you got into politics?

Warren: I bought the farm and boy, the taxes went up, and so I took LCC college credits. That's when I got started into the assessing and I just enjoyed, you know. Accounting was my good subject in school. Like, didn't do sports so it was book work. When I ended up at Olds, I was an estimator, senior construction estimator, and I also did supervision and skilled trades weekends. I worked weekends too. I ran against **Bob Remus** twice and then he resigned at the second election and then they appointed me because I did have a license by the state to do the assessing and the board appointed me supervisor and that started 31 years in politics.

Wayne: All at--

Warren: Victor Twp.

Wayne: At the township level then? Were you involved at all with the moving of the school?

Warren: Yes.

Wayne: Why don't we just talk a little about that?

Warren: The park director--they used to hold their meetings at the township hall--he would explain what they were doing at the park afterwards or before the meetings and he mentioned they were gonna tear down the school. Some of the people that went to the Dennison school heard about it. That's when **Mike Rogers**,-- he was a senator at that time--and we talked to Mike and we put a plan together where we would take the school and the shingles that they had and any money they had. He worked that all out and we got **Gene Williams** to move it there and that paid for the foundation. Then I had court-appointed people that had to do community service, some, and we put the shingled roof on and paid for the foundation and setting the school in place.

Then Oldsmobile had jobs-bankers, skilled trades people that they didn't have work for, so they loaned them out. I happened to know **Art Baker**. I used to cut his hay and he was the shop committee foreman. I never talked to Art, but I did leave word on his machine and asked him if we could get some jobs-bankers to do work at the township. That Friday I had union and management sitting at the township hall and Monday I had my first jobs-banker. So had 'em, I don't know, a couple years. We built Station Four at Lake Victoria, a fire department, and we finished the station here, Station Three. They did an awful lot of work inside the hall and in the cemeteries, the jobs-bankers, and when we moved to school, they finished-- Well, the floor was in bad shape. The rain got through the roof--painted it, fixed the blackboards. They were skilled tradesmen and they finished it all.

I also got guys from the county jail. The chimney--well, I asked for a brick layer. Everybody volunteers because they didn't wanna set in jail all day. They wanted to get out. He never laid a brick after he got through putting that chimney up but, if you look at it, he did a very good job and that's the way things got done down there is volunteer. They were volunteers. Same way with other kids, court appointed. They worked in the cemetery. They had to put 40 hours of service, so they had to do something.

Wayne: These were high school kids then?

Warren: They were out of school I'm sure, most of them. They just got in trouble someplace, somehow. One kid was there three different times, but he said he'd never make a fourth. He'd learned his lesson finally, but he was a good worker.

Wayne: Was there a lower level put on the school?

Warren: Yes, we put a basement under it so we could store things, display things, but nothing's happened. It's still a shell.

Wayne: Is there a plan moving forward of what you hope to do with the building?

Warren: They did away with the historical society so it's strictly up to the board and vandals have done more damage to the school and it's too bad. They need cameras to check everything down there to the town hall on the township property,

Wayne: 'cause it's not that far away from the-- It seems like it's a fairly open area that it's in.

Warren: Yes, it is. And the vandals, the last time somebody took a maul and smashed in the north door, and they've gone into basement and did a lot of damage down there. We've got a lot of the chairs or benches or whatever out of the courthouse. Prosecuting attorney, **Mary Pino**, she helped us get stuff, preserve stuff from the courthouse that's in the basement of the Dennison School.

Wayne: Besides some courthouse items, are there other items that are being stored there?

Warren: From the Blood School, which was on Jason Road and Hollister Road, the **Greens** have donated some records from that school, and we also have some records, I believe it's the Alward School, which is on Hollister and Alward Road. We got some of those records.

Wayne: What do you know about the old Reed Church building? Is that what it was called?

Warren: Well, the Reed Church.

Wayne: Do you know anything about the history of that?

Warren: My father went there. That's all I can remember him talking about it, but there used to be a shed to the west where they could put their horses in case of rain or bad snow. Then there was the wood shop or woodshed or a coal [shed] on the south side of the church to keep it warm, services or whatever. But yes, Dad went there with horse and buggy.

Wayne: What's the building used for now?

Warren: There's weddings. I had guys from the county jail come down. We took all the lath and plaster. The roof was leaking. There was coon and rodents up in the ceiling. We took all the lath and plaster off and then the guy that lived on Shepherdsville Road, he had a plaster company and they plastered it for us, donated everything for the historical society. We used to have Christmas decorations every winter, but that's all discontinued.

Wayne: Who actually owns the building?

Warren: It belongs to the township.

Wayne: If someone wanted to use it, they would need to contact the township.

Warren: Correct.

Wayne: Is there anything stored in there or is it just basically empty?

Warren: No, there's pews. I mean, they use it for weddings. My grandson, he got married there and I got another grandson getting married this month in the church so there's a little history from the Malkins.

Wayne: How many can you seat there?

Warren: Over a hundred, I believe.

Wayne: It doesn't look like it's that big of a building, but maybe you can--

Warren: There's pews down the center and then on both sides. The pews are quite long and I don't know the size of it.

Wayne: Maybe a little bigger than it looks from the outside.

Warren: Yes, it is.

Wayne: Is there a lower level of that too?

Warren: No.

Wayne: Because I notice you, you take steps going up into it, but there's nothing underneath.

Warren: No, it's just rocks supporting the timbers. It's balloon construction.

Wayne: You said you worked for General Motors for a while. Oldsmobile, right?

Warren: Yes.

Wayne: Did you say how you got that job?

Warren: Well, the supervisor or whatever of education and training put on a presentation at the gymnasium in Laingsburg High School. They were looking for workers. I was 17 when I went in there, so I couldn't work in the plant, so I was a messenger, which meant I carried mail, final assembly. That was my first job, was a messenger. From there, I went to Stores-S. That was the stationary stores and I went to printing and circularizing. One of the things I did when I was operating the printing press was the obituaries for **Vic Sutherland**. He was a sales manager for Oldsmobile at the time he passed away. Then I went into plant engineering and that's where I retired from, plant engineering.

Wayne: What kinds of farming have you done on this place over the years? What kind of crops?

Warren: Kind of interesting, because we started out with a moldboard plow, plowed everything. I used to have cattle. I raised a hundred head of beef and probably 2 or 300 head of hogs every year. So corn, soybeans, wheat, and rotated some hay in between. I sold an awful lot of hogs through Chesaning, Farmer Peet's. Dad would take a load of hogs up there about every week and made good money, so I put up the grain set-up and today it's mainly no-till. I don't raise any livestock other than a lot of deer and turkeys, but corn, soybeans, and wheat.

Wayne: I heard that at one time you tried doing some beekeeping. Is that correct?

Warren: Yes. I had bees for quite a few years and I had 'em back in the woods. The skunks were bothering the bees, so I set a trap back there probably 20-30 feet from the hives. I caught the skunk; went back there to get my trap and the bees stung me and my arms swelled up so that was the end of my beekeeping. I was allergic to the honeybees, I guess, because I've been stung since and hasn't bothered me.

Wayne: That one bee anyway.

Warren: Yes.

Wayne: I understand you also are into woodworking.

Warren: I used to do a lot of work for the Sawdust Santas. We'd make 25 projects and those projects would go to the fourth grade students in four different schools: doll buggies, wheelbarrows, rocking chairs, several projects for **Pete Eisinger**. Yes, we enjoyed that.

Wayne: Which schools?

Warren: Laingsburg and I think there was Owosso, Perry. I'm not sure which schools, but I know they were in this area though. Yes.

Wayne: But you don't do that anymore then?

Warren: No.

Wayne: Because **Glenn [Ernst]** was saying something about a band sawmill.

Warren: Well, I have a Wood-Mizer mill. It's across the road. I've done a lot of work for Meridian Twp. Historical Society. The plank road, I cut those timbers. Their Parks and Recreation had the walkway in Meridian Twp. and they had some extra material, but they were like 3 X 12's, 20' long, and they wanted 1-1/2" X 8', so we cut them down for them and I made some other projects for them and cut a lot of lumber for the barn that's over there, which happened to be the Unruh barn, which **Henry [Unruh]** still lives on Round Lake Road now so there's a little connection between Meridian Twp., Victor Twp., myself, Unruh's, so I like to help 'em out.

Wayne: This is the historic village that they have down in near Okemos-Haslet area?

Warren: Okemos. It's Marsh Road.

Warren: They've got a great historical society.

Wayne: How did you become interested in getting involved with historical societies?

Warren: Well, they stopped and wanted to know if I'd do some cutting lumber for 'em and because I like the history. I mean the school, the church. Yeah, our family's been here for years. I'm working with

Norville—can't remember his last name right now. Anyway, he drives back and forth all the time and stop ask if I do something. "Sure," so I do.

Wayne: What other changes have you seen in Victor Twp. over the years that you've lived here?

Warren: As a kid, I worked for **Fred Trumble** and he taught me a lot. I mean, the **Homers**. Fred's got a lot of hills over there and they'd have a "B" John Deere and "M" International, chain between to pull the baler up and down the hills. **Dale Trumble** and I would unload the wagons and the Homer boys were up in the loft putting the hay away. Then **Jim Austin** got a Case tractor when Lawrence Dix had a tractor dealership there on [US]27. He bought a Case tractor with a baler and the strings were on the side instead of top and bottom. Seemed like every time the plunger came back, there was a bale of hay. That tractor didn't hesitate going up and down those hills either. Then I worked for **Ralph Courtright**. He was the peppermint king of Clinton County when I was in high school. You'd put a hoe at one into the field--it was 80 rods long--and you could hardly see that hoe. It takes all day to hoe two rows across that field on your hands and knees. When they first started to grow, Rolly Nickols, **Bill Jorae**, myself, and Ralph-- Well **Ross Courtright**, he came later. I knew the peppermint well back then.

Wayne: But you didn't grow peppermint here?

Warren: No. Well, Ralph, just next door and then **Maurice Courtright** was east of here. He would plant roots and my folks, they planted plants. We planted some plants too for Ralph, Rolly Nickols and I, because Bill Jorae would pull the plants down here at his property and we'd take 'em down there and we'd put 'em in many years ago.

Wayne: When the [Sleepy Hollow] State Park came in, how did the local people feel about it? Was it something they saw positive or did they see it negative or kind of mixed feelings about it?

Warren: Well, I was pretty young back then '60. I'm not sure when. I do remember **Bob Koonter's** barn. That was hand-hewed black walnut. The timbers in there used to be a church is my understanding and **Dick Beardslee** had a crane and he tried to push it over and couldn't do it, so then he had to cut the braces in order to get it to fall. My uncle **Clarence Pierce**, he got the chicken coop and they pulled that down the road. **Bob Dennis** had a "60" John Deere and Uncle Clarence had a Ford. It took both tractors to pull that shed down the road with skids. It went from Jason Road down to south of Hollister Road or on Hollister Road, south of Alward. That's kind of the start of Lake Victoria many years ago. I was married then 'cause some of the knee braces was Ponderosa pine and I made a workbench in the garage at Holt. That's where we lived at the time.

Wayne: Where the lake currently is, were there homes there at one time? Was that mostly just swamp land?

Warren: There's **Bob Koonter's** and **Carroll's**. That's the only two that I remember. Used to trap that Crick, Alder Crick, for Bob Koonter. Bob bought fur and I trapped around the railroad tracks, Laingburg Drain and then west where Dad used to raise peppermint, trapped all that.

Wayne: What kind of animals did you trap?

Warren: Mink and muskrat and we got a coon once in a while. I caught **Bill White's** sheep one year; forgot to pull a trap. He reminded me of that when I asked for permission to trap the next year. "Make sure you pull your traps, Warren." He was very nice.

Wayne: Are there still quite a bit of mink around?

Warren: Yes, I got a hunting shack back here and I don't do much hunting or shooting, but I did see a mink chase a rabbit and pretty soon the mink walked back. He didn't catch the rabbit 'cause he wasn't gone that long he'd have time to eat it or something, but yes, they're still around. **Chuck Nelson**, he now traps this. He usually gets 30, 33 muskrats every year and a mink once in a while.

Wayne: Now I know the Dennison school was moved, but the Grove School, I believe that was torn down.

Warren: Yeah, state tore that down and some of the people were up in arms that went to school there so that when the Dennison School--

Wayne: Because I remember seeing the Dennison School where it used to be, where you kind of had to take several paths back there, the old road and --

Warren: Well, the state moved the Dennison School.

Wayne: Well maybe where they had moved it to, I guess.

Warren: It went across the road. We got it. **Carl Hill**, there's a lot of brick missing and the windows. The kids or somebody had vandalized it--and he bricked it all up so we could move it because Gene Williams wanted it sound in order to move it.

Wayne: I know I remember seeing it in the state park. It wasn't what I would consider in a good location.

Warren: You couldn't see it.

Wayne: You couldn't see it and it could be easy to vandalize because no one can really monitor it and so I can understand why they wanted it moved.

Warren: To get rid of it.

Wayne: For safety purposes.

Warren: Well, it's the same thing here. It does set kind of away. It's kind of hidden. People can vandalize it.

Wayne: Nice little grove though. It looks almost as if it's always been there even though it hasn't.

Warren: I think we did a good job. I'm glad we've preserved it and I hope it's maintained.

Wayne: Well, I hope so too. I hope that they find that they can get groups in or use the space so it's not just something to look at from a distance or--

Warren: Living next door to that, you see a lot of people stop, take pictures. When I had keys, I'd let 'em in. They could really look around. Same way with the church. There's people that come out and wanna know the history and there's people from out of state that has got relatives buried either in Reed Cemetery or Blood Cemetery or Stilson, and I've helped them out and I got some thank you notes when they get home, and it means a lot.

Wayne: Is the Blood School standing at all?

Warren: No, no. That was gone.

Wayne: Because the last pictures I saw of it, it was in very bad shape.

Warren: Yes.

Wayne: Is some of the structure standing at all?

Warren: The foundation is still there. That's all concrete or stone, but there's no wood.

Wayne: What's the history behind Lake Victoria then?

Warren: Well, it used to be Blood Lake. I mean that was originally a lake. There was a lake there and they just dammed up at Price Road and created a lake. I was married and lived in Holt, but yes.

Wayne: The original lake was much smaller, I assume then?

Warren: Oh definitely. Yeah.

Wayne: It was more of a puddle or a pond?

Warren: Jason Road went right straight through, and Blood Lake was south of that and so when they dammed up Price Road there, it raised it quite a bit. I mean, 'cause it flooded the road. Yes, it created quite a body of water. They get a lot of use the picnic pavilions down there.

Wayne: So the picnic pavilions originally came from the state park?

Warren: Yeah. They said they couldn't move them but the state had a lot of money so they put up steel structures. They're nice. We went over there for the dedication, wife and I, but those came right straight from the state park in 20 minutes.

Wayne: Looking at the facilities, with the sports fields and things like that, it certainly looks to be far better than your typical rural township.

Warren: Yeah. I'm happy with what's happened but it was kind of a struggle with the board. They were kind of reluctant back then to do some of the things. The parking lot, I mean I'd walk down there to the

office and do the job and there was kids. It was a gravel parking lot and they were doing wheelies out there just throwing gravel everywhere. I got a license plate number and **Sandberg**--he was the road patrol--and he went over and gave the kids a ticket and told them to come down here and rake in the ruts and sweep off the sidewalk. I happened to be going home when they're out there working, and they wanted me to fix their ticket. I just chuckled at 'em. You've learned your lesson, but it happened another time and the deputy didn't do anything. He was about ready to retire and he didn't wanna, but yeah, those kids learned. Then again, there's been kids out there in the soccer field doing wheelies and **Ron Arthur** caught 'em and he followed 'em all the way home and they opened the garage door before they got there. When they started pulling in, they lowered the garage, and they ruined the garage door and the deputy wouldn't do anything with them either. He said it'd probably cost them enough, but it gets vandalized a lot.

Wayne: Were these all local people then?

Warren: No, not necessarily. There was kids in the cemetery one time around Halloween, I think. They had a dealer plate on it and the next day, I chased them out. I think there's three couples and I chased them out, but I didn't-- Back then you don't record license plate numbers or anything. I didn't, but I was chasing cattle the next day. I had three locks, a chain, and a bolt on the gate on the cattle on the north side of the road, north end of it, and they were all loose. I got them over here. They were on Pratt Road, Jason Road. I think it was 26 head I had to get back home, but they'd let those cattle out. I know it was those kids, but nothing you can do.

Wayne: Gotta start taking down license plate numbers.

Warren: Yes. Well, now your phones, you can take a picture and real quick. Oh yeah, it's permanent and you know, it's them. They're in the car. It's the same way. There was kids down there. I got a pond behind the town hall, and I had **John Buffington's** boat over there and they put it in one time and it was fine and the next time I go over there and they'd fill it full of rocks and they put two holes in the bottom of the boat and it was kind of sinking. "Oh, we've never been back there." I know it was the same kids. I haven't seen them since, but I'd like to. You never know.

Wayne: Well, thanks a lot then.

Warren: Alrighty. Thanks.