

WAYNE & DIANA WOODBURY

SUMMERS: This is October 20th, 2023. I'm Wayne Summers, along Judy Williams, and today we are interviewing Wayne and Diana [Sillman] Woodbury in St. Johns. Wayne, why don't you start out by telling us how your family came to Clinton County?

WAYNE W: I don't know when my great-grandmother, but my grandfather, I think they all came from Pennsylvania, Ohio, because they settled here. You've been to the fairgrounds. Remember the fairgrounds? That's where my dad lived out there. That's where my grandfather lived. Basically, they weren't from the area.

SUMMERS: And your family or you?

DIANA: My dad's [Stuart Sillman] part Scottish.

WAYNE W: Roots In Germany. It was Zilman and they changed it.

DIANA: As far as I know, his mom and dad were in the U.S. My mom's family is German, strictly German far back.

SUMMERS: When did you get to Clinton County?

DIANA: I grew up out in Riley and we were in St. Johns School District so I went to St. Peter Lutheran School and Church through the eighth grade; came to high school here. Since I was the oldest one in my family, I didn't really come to St. Johns very much until I was in high school and I got involved in some choir and all that kind of thing. I didn't meet Wayne or start going out with him until we were outta high school for about a year. We dated nine months; got engaged. He had to do the six-month Army Reserve.

WAYNE W: I had to go to basic training.

DIANA: We got married the next September and we just put in 54 years of marriage. We had four children. In between all that time, I worked at the shop for homecoming, prom, Valentine's Day; delivered whenever they needed me, did daycare, and then I went and worked for Dr. Shane, who was from St. Johns here. He was an optometrist, worked for him for about four years and then, I think Wayne's brother, Brian, left the shop. He worked here at the shop and left and so then I came on full time after that. I'm not sure when that was exactly but probably in the mid '80s. Well, my daughter was born in '80, '80 probably in '89 or '90 and then we bought the shop in 1991.

SUMMERS: Why don't we back up then? How did the shop get started and who started it?

WAYNE W: My dad's grandmother used to have a flower garden and she grew vegetables in the summer, and she sold 'em up probably about where Allaby & Brewbaker [Insurance] is, had a market.

DIANA: At the head of Main Street then.

WAYNE W: She did that in summertime. Then she bought this building in 1911. Our building was a butcher shop at the turn of the century. Then they had greenhouses. The greenhouses were out on DeWitt Road. Remember those? He loved working at the greenhouses.

DIANA: And you had an uncle that worked for how many years here with him?

WAYNE W: My dad's brother, Norm, was here together--. My dad saw the value of selling fresh flowers, you know. Don't sell the junk and my uncle couldn't stand to throw 'em away, so he left. I mean, you want to sell flowers that are junk, that's what you'll get known for selling. That's one of my pet peeves.

DIANA: He moved away to Florida and started a shop down there, him and his wife.

WAYNE W: They started a shop down there.

SUMMERS: Originally, were all the flowers locally grown then?

WAYNE W: Yeah, they grew 'em. They had greenhouses out on DeWitt Road.

SUMMERS: When did they decide to close down the greenhouses?

WAYNE W: When the greenhouse blew up.

SUMMERS: Tell us the story.

DIANA: Do you know anything about that?

WAYNE W: Yeah, I do. I can't tell you what it was. I would've been a teenager. The boiler overheated and blew up, glass everywhere so then we started buying them. I can't remember how long ago it was. We used to get 'em in Lansing. Now they're closed and everything comes from Flint.

DIANA: They're grown now in Columbia.

WAYNE W: Oh, They're grown all over the world now.

DIANA: Canada.

WAYNE W: Most of the flowers come from Florida.

SUMMERS: there was no insurance on the greenhouses, I take it, to rebuild?

WAYNE W: Having greenhouses is like farming. You gotta milk cows twice a day. You had to stay on top of it. My dad really liked greenhouses but we wouldn't have done it.

SUMMERS: Lot of work.

WAYNE W: She was raised on a farm. She knows how hard farming is.

DIANA: I forgot to mention that.

WAYNE W: She was a farmer. She carried milk buckets up from the milk house.

DIANA: I liked it. I loved it. I didn't wanna marry a farmer.

WAYNE W: So she married a city slicker. Her dad always called me a city slicker. I'd help him out there and he'd look at me like, "What are you doing?" He'd carry those hundred-pound feed bags around, one on each arm, walking around with one-- Her dad would just throw 'em up there and carry 'em. He never let me drive his tractor. That's probably a good thing.

SUMMERS: Do you know anything about the history of the old butcher shop, who owned it or when it was built?

WAYNE W: No, I have no idea. That was 1911.

DIANA: No, I don't. We have that one picture on our wall over there, that's all?

WAYNE W: There's a guy standing out there. I think that's flower shop. I'm pretty sure it was.

DIANA: We were told it was.

WAYNE W: Right, but if you saw the picture, they had horse troughs out here. So guys come in, tie their horses up. That's long before my time too, because my folks had a ton of pictures. We have some of 'em. I know after they retired, some Sunday afternoons, they had nothing to do so they got the pictures out. We started to write things 'cause there's pictures there, I haven't got a clue, family members--

SUMMERS: That's the problem with a lot of them is that they're not labeled and after a couple generations, nobody knows who they are.

DIANA: I know. I just went through that. My mom just passed away two years ago. I am getting together with some of my cousins 'cause we all have pictures and stuff. It's like, you might as well pitch some of these because--

WAYNE W: --nobody knows who they are now. Her dad was from a family of 13 from Fowler. Her mother had a brother. My mother had a sister and my dad had a brother and sister so, compared to her father, we had small families.

SUMMERS: How has the business changed?

WAYNE W: Oh, the business? Oh, tremendously. I don't know how you put this. To me, it's the "me" generation now, instant gratification. It's all about me now. God, the pandemic years affected everybody. After we opened, the people were so happy we were open. Well, it didn't take long, a year or so, everybody's right back and they call you at 10 and want it before noon? Try to get your car fixed today. Ever tried to get your car fixed today? It's about two weeks if you're lucky. My car, the timing belt went out on it this summer and it was two weeks out. He didn't want me to drive it so I gave him the key and I said, "You park it out in the lot. I don't wanna drive it." So he had it for three weeks.

SUMMERS: What year did you say you started working?

WAYNE W: For my dad? I worked in high school probably in '65, '66.

SUMMERS: And then you took over the business in--

WAYNE W: --1991. It's the only job I've ever had.

DIANA: Didn't you work at a gas station or something like that?

WAYNE W: In high school, my dad made me go out. I worked at the old Clark Gas station. I worked at the old country club, went out in the morning and raked traps, emptied trash barrels, mowed along the crick. My dad wanted me to have somebody else telling me what to do.

SUMMERS: How about the types of flowers? Have they changed?

WAYNE W: Oh yeah. There's so much going on now.

DIANA: They breed all these different— Every three or four years, what someone wanted that they had ordered several years before, they've now upgraded it to something else and called it something else so it's really hard to keep up with that. A lot of the trends have changed. Used to be, when we started working, the only thing we sold was fresh flowers and plants, pretty much. Then the trend was you'd get into some more gifty type things, mostly for funerals, for sympathy type thing, lanterns. Over the years it's been many things, terrariums, and more gifty type things. Things fade, come, go in and out, so you kind of have to stay up with that to accommodate everybody, to get everybody to do business with you, basically. Things change all the time so we have to change.

SUMMERS: How about your busy times of year? Has that changed at all over the years?

WAYNE W: I mean, summer's is pretty slow as a rule.

SUMMERS: Even June?

WAYNE W: We used to do not a lot of weddings, but not so much in June. I mean, we did 'em year round.

DIANA: June's not so bad. July, August, even September is pretty slow unless there's funerals which you never know about that. Nobody knows about that. June, there's a lot of parties and graduations and end of school things to take care of.

SUMMERS: I guess I would've assumed that June would be a busy month because of because of weddings.

DIANA: We've gone through times. Well actually, when your brother worked here, him and I would go to do the bridal show thing so we did advertise to do weddings more. We did have a time when we did more weddings. A lot of people do their own now.

WAYNE W: Times have changed. Weddings are very, very time-consuming. They're labor intense. We've always laughed over, especially in the last three years, people come in here on a beer budget and they want a champagne wedding. A lot of times we're the last people they come to. I don't know if you've put a wedding on but we've put four on. When our son got married in Vegas, they wanted a \$30-a-plate sit-down dinner. Our daughter-in-law's mom says, "We're meat and potato eaters. There was 60 of us, maybe, went to Vegas?"

DIANA: There was only like 12 or 14 of our family. We just went to the buffet.

WAYNE W: We went to the buffet... and then we split the bill. People complain about weddings. We've put on four weddings. We've figured over the years, I wouldn't think we've overcharged for what we do. We've paid for photographers. We've paid for halls.

DIANA: Here's the other thing, if you commit to a wedding, you're committed, and suppose you have two large funerals that have to be there that day? Then you're there until two, three o'clock in the morning to do that. You get pretty burnt out after that.

WAYNE W: I'm pretty sure, the ex-daughter-in-law, I think I made her wedding bouquet at like two o'clock in the morning, and I think our daughter's I made--

DIANA: --it was late 'cause we had all the festivities we went to.

WAYNE W: Nothing but best for my daughter!

WAYNE W: You know, you're involved in the rehearsal and all that so we'd go to the rehearsal dinner and we gotta go back to work.

SUMMERS: Would you say funerals are what percentage of your business?

DIANA: It's less than it was. I don't know. What did you think? 60% maybe?... Things are changing.

WAYNE W: I don't know. If you check it back, we do, but a lot more cremations today; funeral at a later date, private ceremony. There was two this week. Dave Dunkel, remember Dave? David just died. He's 97. That was a private graveside service yesterday.

DIANA: That's what's happening and people live longer so therefore, their friends and a lot of their family are gone. They kept cutting it back.

WAYNE W: We used do a funeral on a weekend. You'd have visitation maybe Friday night, just the family; all day Saturday; all day Sunday; and then the funeral on Monday. When her mom passed two years ago, we had a visitation on Friday, from four to eight, and the funeral was the next day. That's how times have changed.

DIANA: Now they're only doing one hour or two hours before the service and they do still come to us for some of that.

WAYNE W: As far as other people sending things, it's not as much, although sometimes they'll send it to a loved one's house. Somebody will express their condolences by doing that. There is still some ways that they do send things.

SUMMERS: It seems to me some of the funerals I've been to recently, that there's seems to be more plants, rather than flowers. Is that correct?

DIANA: We've been told by our wholesalers that we sell a lot of plants in this area.

SUMMERS: It's like, take the plant home and they can kind of enjoy it for a period of time.

WAYNE W: The funerals we've had, like when she lost her mother, when I lost my parents, we live here so a lot of stuff that came was for us. Then my niece, my sister's daughter, wanted something and we said, "Hey, if we want it bad enough, we can buy it. We can find it. Just take it."

SUMMERS: How about things like Valentine's? Has that changed over the years?

DIANA: It's still a crazy busy time.

WAYNE W: But depending, like say when it falls on a weekend, you've got restaurants. A lot of motels offer a three-day getaway. It's changed.

DIANA: Valentine's is crazy busy. It does depend on what day of the week it lands on.

SUMMERS: What are the busy days?

DIANA: Busy days would be Monday through Friday, and if it's on a weekend, they'll do something else.

SUMMERS: You know to order less for a weekend?

W WOODBURY: If it's on Friday or Thursday, everybody wants to have it at the office on Friday. Make a statement.

DIANA: Guys like to be recognized for what they sedt.

WAYNE W: Now we're running, 'cause a lot of people work from home yet, remotely, so how do you deliver something to their office?

DIANA: So that has changed.

SUMMERS: Do they get deliveries at home then?

DIANA: Yeah, we do deliver at home but a lot of men, they like it delivered to them.

SUMMERS: My wife still works at home, so yes.

WAYNE W: Our next-door neighbor works for the state, answers the phones for something to do with Supreme Court. Sometime in the middle of summer, they had to go back on one Wednesday a month. She was livid, absolutely livid. She says, "I don't want to go back to work." Then she had the guts to tell me that downtown Lansing, there ain't hardly any people working downtown for the state any more. Had all these nice restaurants that they would deal with so they would call to order one day and she said they didn't have nothing. I says, "Why would that be Tammy? Ain't nobody there."

SUMMERS: So a typical work week for you, how many hours does that involve?

DIANA: For a lot of years it was just him and I, and one of our children would come and deliver, which we had two boys over the years that delivered a lot, and one of our sons worked here full-time for about 12 years.

WAYNE W: When we were younger, just the two of us, we worked fast and hard. We still work hard but not near as fast as we used to. I'd come down here at six o'clock in the morning. We might get outta here at midnight.

DIANA: That was rare.

WAYNE W: We have worked all night before.

DIANA: Yeah, but it's still a six-day a week job at least.

WAYNE W: Sometimes seven.

DIANA: And Sunday, if a family wants service on Sunday, then you do that too.

WAYNE W: I've worked Christmas day; I've worked New Year's Day; I've worked Thanksgiving Day. You know, the business is there, you gotta take care of it.

SUMMERS: Were you ever able to take vacations?

WAYNE W: Not really. We took it over in '91 but we would run the store before that. My folks had a cabin up north and they would go spend a few days and then they'd come home and say, "Well, you and Dianna take a couple days off. We'll run the store," but as far as taking an out and out vacation--

DIANA: No, I don't think so. I don't remember. We would go to the cabin, which is on a river.

WAYNE W: On the AuSable up there, just a long weekend.

DIANA: Our kids knew that's how their life was. That's how our life was. They knew where to find us.

WAYNE W: Her dad milked cows twice a day. They didn't get a lot of vacation.

SUMMERS: Anybody with dairy, you don't get vacations.

WAYNE W: When my father [Howard E. Woodbury] passed on a Friday, we didn't have visitation till Sunday. My mother [Jean M. Kaltrider] died and he married a lady [Marceda "Markie" (Shafley) Harper Woodbury Vail] that actually went to school with my parent, good friends, Tom Harper's mom, Markie. She just passed away in April out in Arizona. She was worried about me not being able to get the flowers done and I'm going, "Markie, your husband milked cows twice a day, so if he had a family funeral, he got out and milked and he went for visitation, and he had to go back home and milk cows." So I says, "I can think I can handle doing my dad's flowers." Hell, I've done everybody else's dad's flowers. My son Aaron helped me. Aaron was a good designer, very good designer. My dad was really impressed with him.

SUMMERS: I assume both of you went to Rodney B. Wilson [High School]. Do you have any particular memories of school life back then?

WAYNE W: Yeah, one our classmates!

DIANA: Well, looking back, it seemed a lot simpler back then.

WAYNE W: Lots simpler. Our daughter grew up. She graduated 2001. She had like four or five close girlfriends and on Friday nights they'd get together. Well, they all got cell phones and even five o'clock Friday afternoon there, "When you coming? What are ya gonna wear?" blah, blah blah!. They come to our house. Diana's raised on a farm. You didn't have a phone for how long?

DIANA: I was a senior.

WAYNE W: So her folks got a phone. She says, "If a guy wanted to go out with me on the weekend, I says, you'd better be here at five o'clock and be square," because we had to make plans. Life was a lot simpler then, wasn't it, Judy?

SUMMERS: Were you involved in any activities at school?

WAYNE W: I played in the band and she was in the choir.

DIANA: There weren't a lot of things for girls back then though.

WAYNE W: Girls had that GAA [Girls Athletic Association].

DIANA: But that wasn't a competitive thing with other schools.

WAYNE W: You'd have a dance or something on a weekend and remember, I used to play volleyball and gymnastics and stuff, and girls hosted. Look at girls' sports today. Band was a big part of our life.

JUDY: Music in your family was big.

WAYNE W: Musical. Oh yeah.

SUMMERS: I think I read somewhere that you were in scouts also when you were younger. Is that right?

WAYNE W: Yeah.

SUMMERS: Can you tell a little bit about that?

WAYNE W: Well, I didn't go very long. Fred Knight's mother was our cub-- I think she gave up on us, so couple years. We didn't pursue it. We didn't go to Boy Scouts. My dad was active in it. He had a classmate. He's been gone a few years now but if I heard it once, I've heard a hundred times that they had to go, like a polar bear, to get their award. They had to go out and sleep in a tent at below zero one night to get that award and I heard that story forever. Johnny Pierson here used to go deer hunting with my grandfather if I heard that story-

SUMMERS: Why don't you tell us the story then that you've heard forever? What's the details?

WAYNE W: For deer hunting, they used to go to Grayling in the horse and wagon.

DIANA: This is your grandfather or your dad?

WAYNE W: My grandfather. It got so bad one year they had to rent a box car, took a train down to Owosso. They were gone a month and Johnny Pierson-- I think Johnny here used to go with my grandfather. School was a lot easier then. Judy grew up half a block from the school. You could wait five minutes before the bell rang.

DIANA: I was just talking with our co-workers. The dress code, girls wore skirts or dresses. That's all. We were talking about the style of the jeans that the boys wore at the time we were in high school. The real skinny--

WAYNE W: Remember Charlie Fisher? He was a skinny-- I don't know how he got his jeans on, pegged real tight. I never did. In fact, I didn't wear jeans a lot until I got outta school.

SUMMERS: Do you have any other family stories that have been passed down that you'd like to share with us?

WAYNE W: Not really. We're just very lucky. We grew up with good parents. They got us where we're at.

SUMMERS: How has this area of Clinton Avenue changed?

WAYNE W: Oh, tremendously.

DIANA: Many times, I'd say. Judy [Williams] probably knows that more than I do.

JUDY: My mom--37 years at Harr's Jewelry.

WAYNE W: Now they're over on [old US] 27.

DIANA: It's been there for how long? How long has Harr's been there?

WAYNE W: Your mom didn't work there. Did she just work on Main St.?

JUDY: No. She retired right before that.

WAYNE W: Nice lady.

DIANA: It seems like there's a lot more boutique, gifty type things in town right now. I hope they all make it. I guess you have to try. There's a lot of people trying to get more business downtown, working on that.

SUMMERS: The old Steel Hotel was close to here, wasn't it?

WAYNE W: Up on the corner here. Yeah.

SUMMERS: Was this business affected at all when it burnt?

WAYNE W: Oh yeah.

DIANA: We were told to evacuate.

WAYNE W: It was on Good Friday, 1975. At the time we didn't know it, but these old buildings got firewalls between them. It was never gonna burn but we were working down here. It was Good Friday. Unbeknownst to us, probably about 10 o'clock people we didn't even know, anything that was in the store people took in their cars and got 'em right away. We had a big Wells Fargo safe so any important papers went in there. That wasn't gonna burn. Seven o'clock the next morning, everybody come back, never missed a beat. Well, I'll remember that fire.

DIANA: We were notified. We were on the lookout.

WAYNE W: We were here working.

DIANA: There was a lot of fire departments down here.

WAYNE W: They thought they were gonna lose the whole two blocks.

DIANA: I think they didn't really know or realize the structure of everything. I mean, who would?

WAYNE W: Heathman's was next here and they had all their--. The shoe store here had all their stuff that they worked on, shoes, some flammable stuff. Heathman's had all their paints and that could have got that -- Remember when Clinton Home Center went off? We were six blocks away. We could hear paint cans exploding from our house. That was right where the library is.

SUMMERS: Now the tornado went through this area too, didn't it?

WAYNE W: 1920. Yeah, but we had one go through when we were in high school,

JUDY: Down through downtown?

WAYNE W: No, it missed us. It stopped. Fowler got banged up pretty bad. Then remember, we were at something at the school. We had a dance or something that night. They made everybody go down in the basement. Remember? The hallways where the old band room and choir, all that was down there, and Home Ec was down there? The gym was down there.

SUMMERS: 1970 then?

WAYNE W: In the 60's sometime, but that particular storm stopped in Fowler; come down [M]21; went around us; got to Flint, and raised a lot of hell on the west end of Flint. We had trees down. We haven't had a tornado here in a long time.

DIANA: I don't know what you call what we had just had on our end of town. Anyway, we lost a lot of tree but they didn't call that tornado.

WAYNE W: I lost power. Blew that right off the side of the house. She spent the night with my sister in Williamston. They spent half the night in the basement 'cause of tornado warnings. I slept through the whole thing. I was sleeping on the couch. I remember waking up and it looked like lightning. Ah okay. About 10 o'clock at night, my next door neighbor's banging on the door. She called him and said, "I can't get ahold of Wayne." Well, I didn't have my cell phone. The phone's out. 'cause the cable's out. I got Spectrum. He comes over. I open the front door. Good God! Half my yard was a tree.

JUDY: Did it actually touch down here in St. Johns?

WAYNE W: They had 60-mile an hour winds.

DIANA: They didn't really call that a tornado. On Floral and Lewis Street and then down Clinton Street, there was a lot of trees down.

WAYNE W: The guys that hooked my electricity up said Grand Ledge looked like a war zone because that come right through there, followed [I-]69 right down.

DIANA: It was just in August.

WAYNE W: Just before Labor Day.

JUDY: That 1920s tornado, I think it came down Clinton Avenue but I don't think this part was affected at all.

DIANA: I don't remember.

WAYNE W: We weren't around in 1920.

SUMMERS: But you might've heard it from a parent or grandparent.

JUDY: You must not have been affected. I think it went out towards the train depot.

SUMMERS: It took the depot out.

WAYNE W: Her dad grew up in Fowler. When a tornado come through, they had the storm cellar. They'd stand out there and watch the funnel come across the field and then they'd go down. I remember him telling that. You didn't have weather channels to tell you there was a storm coming or snow. "Yeah. It looks like we're gonna get something. We'll watch it."

SUMMERS: Did snowstorms cause you any difficulty?

WAYNE W: Oh yeah. We were closed one day for three days, snow. We had three feet of snow in front and when we used to get the heavy winds, they'd come out of the northeast. I can remember you couldn't see out our back door. There was 10-foot drifts in the back of the store.

JUDY: Was that like '67?

WAYNE W: We were outta school for a week. Remember that in the spring? I was on the golf team. We didn't play golf for like a month. Couldn't get on the golf course.

DIANA: As far as delivering in the snow, that's always fun too. Sometimes you just have to be frank and say, "We aren't gonna make it out there today," and they'll say, "Well, we're just a couple miles off the highway." Alright, if I get stuck there, then my whole day is shot. People are pretty understanding about that.

WAYNE W: ... "We can't get out." "How are we gonna get in if you can't get out?" Dad had a couple friends that were crop farmers. They had four-wheel drive pickups and stuff. They used to deliver a lot for us. I did a lot of delivering. That's all I did in high school was deliver.

WAYNE: Ever have to get on a tractor to deliver to get through?

DIANA: I like tractors, but I would not deliver flowers on it.

WAYNE W: She was gone about almost a week and her dad called up and says, "You need to come home." (Three or four miles) She was walking in waist-deep snow for a few miles and then he come and got her.

DIANA: I compare that, back when I was 17, to somebody walking in the desert. It was not fun. It was deep.

JUDY: Yeah, I think that was '67.

DIANA: It was our senior year.

SUMMERS: I would think that, getting deliveries of flowers during snow storms, that you may not have them.

WAYNE W: A lot of our flowers are flown in from Miami and stuff and if a plane got delayed --

SUMMERS: --then you don't have flowers.

WAYNE W: Over the years, you get a snowstorm or they'll call you and say, "We're not coming."

DIANA: The family that might say, "We'd like this and this and this type of flower," and we'll say, "Unfortunately, we're not gonna be able to do that. If you wanna check around, you can. Or we'll just make the nicest thing we can do for you." Most people, when there's an emergency like that, they're pretty understanding.

WAYNE W: I got a pretty good-sized funeral I gotta do Monday for Tuesday. The funeral was supposed to be yesterday. Visitation would've been on Wednesday so I ordered all these special flowers for 'em to come Tuesday. I got 'em ordered. The family called me and it has been postponed for a week. Somebody got COVID in the family. I had all these flowers ordered. I mean, I'm in a pickle 'cause I had to special order them, but now they were fresh enough that I think I can still use them. I've had the flu a lot worse than COVID.

DIANA: A lot. Most people survive it.

SUMMERS: Most people survive the flu but not everybody.

WAYNE W: The year of the pandemic, that was flu season so you wonder how many people--You don't know. You've shipped all these people to nursing homes. She didn't see her mom for six months out here to Hazel [Hazel I. Findlay], couldn't get in to see her.

DIANA: One of the unfortunate ones that--

SUMMERS: I know you're preparing to sell the business.

WAYNE W: Yeah. We were hoping to be outta here last year.

DIANA: The young lady that's buying it has some experience. She came to us a little over two years ago now. Her name is Lori (Law) Wurm. Her last name is Wurm now and she had some experience. When she was right outta high school, she worked for Goff's Foods Market, which was in town here, but is no longer. Then she also did weddings for her sideline and worked at several insurance companies.

SUMMERS: She did flowers and weddings?

WAYNE W: She'd get them shipped right to her house.

DIANA: We have a wholesaler that comes twice a week. You can get 'em shipped to your house so she was doing that for her weddings. Anyway, she approached us and said it'd always been her dream to own a shop. She has worked now for us for a little over two years but she's very appreciative of what she's learned, our clientele, how you have to treat people, where to go for things, how long to keep flowers. She's very good with the public. Anyway, it's still in the process. It seems like it's been a while but she also has a family and stuff that she attends to and her mom's still with us.

WAYNE W: Her daughter's birthday was yesterday. Her daughter's 20 years old. Lori went to school with our son, Jason. Her daughter's 30.

DIANA: Lori's actually 50.

WAYNE W: Lori will be a grandmother.

DIANA: The daughter's expecting a baby. Anyway, we're very happy. It just takes time.

SUMMERS: What are your plans when this finally closes, for somebody who's used to working 50 hours a week?

DIANA: What are our plans when we finally close? It's gonna be hard.

WAYNE W: We differ on it somewhat. We're always traveling. Our one son lives in Lawrence, Kansas, so we try to get out there about once a year. Our daughter lives just south of Green Bay. She has three boys, husband. We just got back from there two weeks ago Tuesday. We go for a few days. My mom and dad had a cabin up to Grayling on the AuSable. She and I and my sister and her husband inherited it so we own that. My folks used to go up and stay for 10 days at the time 'cause I ran the store.

SUMMERS: Judy, you have anything you wanna ask?

JUDY: I'm kind of curious, 'cause I wasn't really here when this all happened, when Kmart went in, all of that, how you are still here and all of these other businesses aren't?

DIANA: That's a good point.

WAYNE W: Number one, we've always offered service.

JUDY: That's what I'm trying to get at.

WAYNE W: That's has been our drawing card.

DIANA: If we didn't have the delivery service, then we would not still be here, even though some days we only have three, four, five deliveries.

WAYNE W: You never know. This morning we had three things to deliver and he's already delivered two of 'em. They got probably Halloween stuff.

DIANA: Then the MSU game is also tomorrow. There's a lot in one weekend.

WAYNE W: It's at 7:30, not during the football game.

JUDY: It's a full day.

DIANA: So we'll see how that goes.

WAYNE W: We never know. I have no problem with it.

JUDY: So all of the changes-- I mean, like you say, there's just more boutique things.

DIANA: It's wonderful because we do have more walk-ins. We have more people coming in and looking around. Walk-ins, it seems to be a little bit better. I hope it's good for Lori coming up.

WAYNE W: The only thing remotely not different is Dean's Hardware used to be there. Now it's Gill-Roy's [Hardware], so they've always been there and us. I'm pretty sure we're the oldest business in St. Johns.

JUDY: Well, I can remember when we had three drug stores right downtown here. This was all booming. We had two jewelry stores. We had a bakery and all of it's gone.

WAYNE W: Had a theater uptown.

DIANA: I don't know, Judy. Things come and go for sure. There's a lot of new people in town that don't even know that this is downtown. They feel like where 27 is, where the strip is, where McDonald's and all that is, they

think that is St. Johns, and then they'll come down after five years and they're like, "We didn't even know you were here." There are a lot of new names and new people in town, I guess because there's more job opportunities or school situation. I'm not sure about that.

WAYNE W: Take our class, there ain't many people that graduated that are still around. Their parents are gone so why would they come back home? They have no family here. You remember Brent Law?-- Lori was a cousin-- that was killed?

WAYNE W: She never knew him. Brent was killed in '70. Duane Downing was killed in '69.

JUDY: So the fabric of the town has changed but you guys have still been here so that says a lot.

WAYNE W: We've seen a lot.

DIANA: We have, looking back, something you don't think about every day 'cause you're just busy doing it.

WAYNE W: I mean, we're not rich or wealthy. We're healthy. Our kids are healthy.

DIANA: You do run across some interesting people. 90%, 95% of people are very happy and good. Then there's some that you could do without but it's rare.

WAYNE W: There's some that come in there and just try to make your day and then you're going-- I'm sure, I'm not one of them.

SUMMERS: Have you ever had some that you refuse to continue to do business with?

DIANA: There are some that you do business with and you say, "It wasn't worth the grief."

JUDY: Do you see an uptick of that kind of thing?

DIANA: No, I don't think so. Most people are very appreciative.

WAYNE W: I don't know if I ever come to point somebody I'll never do business again or whatever.

DIANA: I'm sure we have people out there that aren't fans of ours. I'm sure there are some.

WAYNE W: I'm not too worried about it. I mean, you do the best you can do. Social media, like I told you, if you got a complaint about somebody today, you put it on Facebook. You tell the whole world instead of calling me up and complaining. Can we do something? You just put it out there for--

DIANA: Why didn't you, if you weren't happy, give us a chance to make it right, explain, if there was a miscommunication but that's a big downside to the internet.

JUDY: I'm kind of curious, growing up with your dad so involved, comparing how your life with the store and your dad's.

WAYNE W: Oh, different as apples and oranges. My dad grew up with my mom. You know her situation but never missed a beat.

DIANA: I don't know if we mentioned that your mother had polio since she was 24 so your dad had quite a care.

WAYNE W: Everybody said how much my mother was our family. My father held our family together.

DIANA: He was so even keeled.

WAYNE W: There was the three of us: me, Brian, and Rhonda. My mother actually had a miscarriage when she got polio.

JUDY: I didn't know that.

SUMMERS: So how old was she when she got polio?

WAYNE W: Well, I was born on her 21st birthday, which was Monday.

DIANA: You were four.

WAYNE W: I turned five in October. I started school, so between my fourth and fifth year she got polio. My grandpa and grandma raised us for a year out there on the farm.

SUMMERS: So she's like 25.

WAYNE W: Remember old Sparrow hospital over there? It was up on a hill where Sparrow is now but it was up on a hill and that was the year they had tuberculosis, polio. There was something else that went around, attics [disease of the ear]. That hospital got everything. That's where my mother was.

DIANA: So that was the early '50s.

WAYNE W: '53. The next year they invented the Salk vaccine. Remember when we used to go around and get those? Your folks probably took it. You got those sugar cubes.

SUMMERS: After you took the polio vaccine, then she was allowed to come back?

WAYNE W: No, we didn't have them until she came back. It wasn't contagious. Bob Serrine and Glenn Osgood or somebody from the [Osgood Funeral Home] would bring my mother home on a Friday night out to my grandparents and then take her back Sunday night. That lasted for about three or four months. She was in the hospital for a year.

DIANA: She was in a wheelchair from then on.

SUMMERS: How did it affect her? I know polio affects--

WAYNE W: She was not paralyzed. She had feelings but she just lost all her muscle use in her legs and then what really killed her was she lost half of her lung capacity so she got pneumonia. Last year my folks went to Florida, she got pneumonia. My dad called and mother had a cold and I talked to her for a minute. He called Saturday night. She got pneumonia; lung collapsed; had to put a trach [tracheostomy tube] on her in five minutes or she's gone. So we grew up with a trach and used to have to learn how to clean it out. That was not fun.

DIANA: They were married 50 years before that happened, before she had the trach put in. At the beginning she had trach also?

WAYNE W: She didn't get the trach until--Remember their 50th anniversary? My dad drove her home in a car with a portable ventilator. She had the trach then because remember we were gonna have the party but they weren't home yet and so we just took 'em out for dinner. Then we had the party the next weekend, best thing we ever did for my parents. They had a ball that day. Had it over here to Traditions across the street. What's there now? Swaney's?

DIANA: Your dad did retire. We bought it in '91.

WAYNE W: He would've been 62.

DIANA: He did retire early and they did some traveling. They took some trips out west and they went to Florida for the winter for a few years.

WAYNE W: They were in Arizona a couple years.

DIANA: So they did do some traveling then. It's a good thing they did. Your dad passed when he was 79?

WAYNE W: 75. Mom was, well, the last birthday I had was my 50<sup>th</sup>, so she'd have been 71.

DIANA: We've worked much longer than that but we are grateful for our health. 'cause we've both been pretty healthy.

WAYNE W: I got blood pressure medicine. She's on something, but it's a lot better than it was. What's the alternative?

JUDY: It was amazing to me that he did what he did.

DIANA: She was involved in the hospital auxiliary a lot. She taught piano lessons for many, many years. That was her thing. She had her own little income coming in.

WAYNE W: She taught two generations. I can remember, when we lived on Park Street there. Till she got polio, high school girls would come and they would babysit us kids. She ended up she would teach your kids piano lessons and course Ronda turned out to be very, very good. I can listen to her play forever.

SUMMERS: Do you play?

DIANA: You played cornet.

WAYNE W: I marched in the [Michigan] State band. I played trumpet. We had our band at the time, Walt Cole [Band instructor at RBW High School] -- Don't even go "maize and blue." I deal with that other crap. I got two sons like that. Dave Wall and I, we marched together over there. Walt was good friends with the-- Remember we used to march to all Michigan State music. When we tried out for the band, basically when we went over, we probably wouldn't even had to play 'cause he figured, if Walt Cole sent you there, you know what you're doing. Well, we could march with anybody but there was guys over there that were fantastic. I played cornet, trumpet.

JUDY: He was good.

SUMMERS: How many years did you do that?

WAYNE W: One term. I didn't graduate from State, if you wanna know. The only thing I enjoyed at State was they had a lot of parties on the Red Cedar, missed a lot of eight o'clock classes. She knows.

DIANA: I was not involved at the time. It wasn't me he was chasing.

SUMMERS: Did you go to any away games?

WAYNE W: Went to U of M; went to Notre Dame in South Bend. One of the Ohio State games, it was snowing so hard that you couldn't see the stands. We were on the field. You couldn't see the stands.

SUMMERS: You could do anything out there. They wouldn't know.

WAYNE W: Your band director would know. That was an all-male band then and if you screwed up on the game, on Monday—you know, they come out with a kick step. You'd kick step into the Red Cedar. They would let you take your billfold out, a watch, and if you had good shoes on. That was hilarious. I come that close. We went down to South Bend. Remember, used to wear those plumes on your hats? I'd bent over and it fell on the ground and I heard a guy behind me go, "freshman." Well, I didn't move and when I come up, I grabbed it. He said after the game, "That's the only thing that saved you." He says, "It wasn't your fault you dropped your plume but I couldn't save you because we were at attention."

SUMMERS: Can you still do the kick step?

WAYNE W: Probably not as good as I used to.

DIANA: I don't believe it.

WAYNE W: We went to the Rose Bowl January 1st. Back then you couldn't go two years in a row. In the Big 10, that's the only bowl game you went to. So got all these guys coming that first practice. You know, Gary Boyce was on it. Gary was the kicker there. Talked to Gary this spring. Gary Boyce graduated with us. He was Athletic Director at Grand Ledge probably 25, 30 years but he was an All-State football player for St. Johns. We used to have a big rivalry with Grand Ledge, one of the biggest rivalries around. He'd go to the game and 5,000 people there watching a game.

JUDY: He sat down. He looked at me and he said, "You don't recognize me, do you?" No, I did not.

WAYNE W: In fact, he came to our 50<sup>th</sup>, remember? He said he took piano lessons from my mom. He says, "You know, I took piano--." I said, "No, I didn't know that." He said, "Well, I did. My brother and I, we lasted about two sessions with her. She shipped us out." She says, "You two don't pay no attention." He was a kicker, then baseball player. He was All-American two years in a row. His problem was, he was about 5'8", 5'9"--short. If he'd have been 6'1" – 6'2", he'd have probably made it to pros. He was that good. He made the St. Johns Hall of Fame, first year they had it, and he's in the Lansing Hall of Fame too. He was a pretty decent athlete. Good guy.