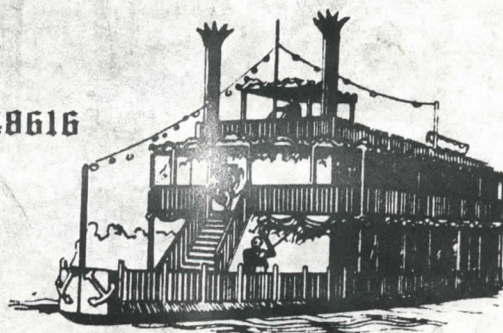


Chesaning Public Library

27 East Broad Street Chesaning, Michigan 49816

Phone 845-3211



I have been asked to participate in the Chesaning Public Library Oral History Project. I have agreed to a tape recording between a library representative and myself. I take this opportunity to assure you that these recordings are the property of the library and its historical collection, for use as the library sees fit, and I agree that no monetary consideration need be paid me.

Arthur L. Walser

June 3, 1976

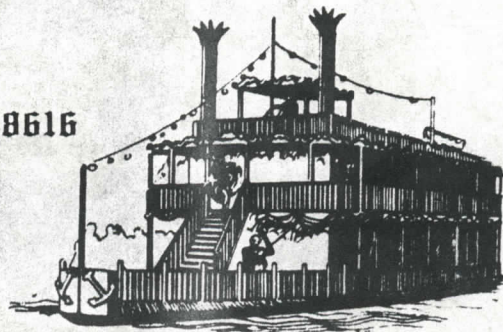
Witness:

Helen H. Frank

Begins about 19:50 on tape

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Lesne J. Walsen
6-8-76

Witness:

Helga G. Frink

Arthur Walser-- Graduated from CHS in 1913 class of 13
3 boys and 10 girls. Became interested in wireless ~~in about~~
~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ as a boy and when he was a sophomore in H.S.
Hayes Adams was the physics teacher. Mr. Adams took the
Sr. physics class up to the Walser home so that Art could
demonstrate and teach them what he knew about wireless. He
knew more than there was in the textbook. In 1917
everyone was required to dismantle their home wireless sets
because of the 1st World War. Crystal set?

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

There was a great deal of development in the field of
wireless during the war and after the war Mr. W. began to
build sets again. Now tubes had been invented and he built a
tube transmitter and got his second wireless (or Ham license)
He was heard in Australia and France and had 2-way conversations
in Nice, France. Then he changed the wave length for fun and
went on the air as WHBI, Chesaning Electric Company which
was a Class A Commercial broadcast licence. He got cards
from as far as Saskatchewan and all along the East Coast. The
cards always stated that the reception was "very clear and
distinct. This was just a hobby with Mr. Walser.

He and a friend, ~~Max~~ Max Judd began tinkering with
a Ford spark coil and kept on from there.

Another hobby was flying. About 1914 or 15 he also built
a biplane glider.

Mr. Walser paid \$15.00 for the first aeroplane ride he
ever took. They lit on Giesken's field.

He also collected coins --started a nine hole golf course
when he was on the village council. One day he went down to

the park to see how the work was going and there was an
 where they were making a green
 arrowhead teed right up ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~. That got
 him started on archaeology. He worked with Mr. Dustin from
 Saginaw ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ discovering Indian Sites. He thinks
 he found about 35 of them.

He wired the first Showboat and for the first 18 yrs
 he brought the boat down.

Ferne Walser

Tells about her girlhood in Chesaning, and there are many interesting pictures of life at that time. How they raised a Shetland colt each year and one year used the money toward a piano. How she and her sister pooled their allowance of 5¢ apiece to buy their first grapefruit and how sour it was. How she went to Ypsi and became a teacher. Some of her experiences as a teacher. She taught the Westfall school for \$50.00 a month. Later she got a school at Poplar Montana and was paid \$150.00 a month, but when she came home for summer Art persuaded her to stay and they were married. Later she went into the insurance business.

Well now Mr. Walser, will you tell us your name.

Arthur L. Walser

And tell us a little bit about who your parents were and when you were born, if you don't mind.

Well my father was Frank P. Walser and I was born in Saginaw Sept. 17, 1898.

Where did you go to school?

When I was two (they tell me that I was two), we moved to Chesaning. In the meantime we had been in Nashville, Michigan. It could have been a short time though, I don't remember too much about that. We did live at one time in the house where Charlie Cheney built, and from that wooden house we moved to where George Kinch lived, then they built the one that is there. But we did live there, I don't know how long. Then we also did live in what they called the Mudge House - that was Dr. Mudge. We lived there when my father was building the house. We also lived a short time in part of Ad Hayden's house, if you know where that is. So I think it must have been 1900 or early 1901 when we came to Chesaning, when I did. I know they always said I was two when they came here and I've been here ever since.

How old were you when you started school?

I wouldn't remember, 4 or 5, I forget how old.

And where did you go?

Chesaning School, I always went to, well that's all there was. Tisn't the one that's there now. I mean the old school. And I graduated from there in 1916. There was 13 in the class, three boys and 10 girls.

Tell us some more about your school experiences. Can you remember anything interesting that happened?

Well....

That you dare to tell.....

I can remember that when I was a sophomore that when the seniors took their physics that Hayes Adams brought the whole class up to my father's basement and I taught the class on wireless, because I had been in wireless about from 1914 on, so what little there was in the physics book on wireless was very little. So I always had stayed with wireless and kept building a better set, and then in 1917 when we went into the war, - at that time I was working at Curtis Aeroplane - and my father had to dismantle it during the war. You wireless you mean? You had to dismantle your wireless?

Right. You see in those days, ^{we'd send messages to,} oh yeah, that had to be dismantled. Well of course when I finally got out of Curtis - I was there when the War broke out - and I finally got out and came home and they had closed all enlistments, but then later on, quite late, they opened enlistments if you could pass a certain exam in Detroit, motor mechanics, and there was **four** of us went

about 1911

down and we passed, then we came home and sat here ~~and waited~~ until they called us and we were supposed to be trained in what we went in. We were sent ^{right} directly to Long Island, the overseas camp. In fact, we were to leave on the next boat. I was transferred to the 107th Aerosquadron replacements. They were in France. I remember Wayne Perrott was transferred to the 45th Handy Paige, which was in England. Well we never got there, so that's about. You never embarked? Didn't you go overseas at all?

No, no we were there on the island yet and the Armistice came. Then I was discharged December 10th. No we never got across. We simply went through quarantine and ^{then} they ~~creed(?)~~ ^{pre} tested us. They give you a little ^(check?) depending on what you was getting. The wireless party was oral, but the rest of it, you actually had to do it, and I passed five. I was wireless operator, rigger (that's for assembling planes), motor mechanics, chauffeur, there was one more, I forget what that was, there was five. No, that's all I saw of the war.

Aren't you going to tell me about developing that stuff?

Well you see, after the war - there was much development during the war - the tubes came out so I built a tube transmitter and got my second wireless (or Ham) license. The first one was 8 AFR. The second one was 8BGG, and with that transmitter I was heard in Australia and France. I held two-way conversations in Nice, France. Well then later just for the fun of it, by changing the wave length I went on the air as WHBI, Chesaning Electric Company which was a Class A Commercial broadcast license the same as Saginaw or anybody's got. Well the cards I received from that ~~from~~ as far as Regina, Saskatchewan and all along the East Coast always had on there, "very clear and distinct" that's why I was wondering about that.

Yes, well that's true.

'Course, that was just a plaything, there wasn't any money in it far as that goes.

It was a hobby.

Yes, but it could have been money.

Yes it could.

If I had kept that, Milton Greenebaum in Saginaw had spent 15-20 thousand dollars with these people in Washington, the lawyers and the engineers, trying to get a license, see, and here I had it, all I had to do was keep it up, but there wasn't these commercials then where you got money back in. So we had to eat ^{you know} too. I had to work, so I couldn't be playing with that all the time. But we did broadcast the Episcopal Church services and that one winter they had the Lyceum Course here and we picked that up at the school-house and Carter McCormick who was in the wireless at that time, he was at the station and I was at the school, with a microphone and a booster. Then it went through the regular telephone line. The telephone Company left us

omit

connect it. So that went out; and I also broadcast the election returns, and I have dozens and dozens of cards from all around. There was one fellow in Saginaw that said he had a little one-tube radiola, and I was coming in loud enough so he could run a loudspeaker, and he said his uncle was Frank Martin. So he did hear quite a little. Well that's about all. Tell me Arthur, how did you happen to get started in wireless when you were a boy? What got you interested?

Well I must have read it somewhere, what to do, and Max Judd and I first used a Ford spark coil to send back and forth, so Max and I were, it was all code.

How far was Max from you?

Well the Judds lived, it would be east of the Lutheran Church, on that corner.

A half a mile, a quarter of a mile?

Oh no, it would be a good half a mile. Well then later on I wound a quarter kilowatt transformer and I got in touch with the boys in Saginaw and Fenton and all these places, and before I had a license you just signed A.W. (for me) and they did the same thing so I was on the air about two years before I really got a license. My first government license was in 1916. I think that was signed by Herbert Hoover. He was..... You asked me how I did. I don't know, we just did I guess.

Just kids, huh?

You know, really all we could hear in those days, the time signals used to come from Arlington and then this commercial code like Key West and other places, we could get it but it's all coded and we didn't know what it was, but that was about all. It was something new, we kept building it bigger and bigger until it got.... So that's about it.

Well you know, for the sake of people that don't know, you better tell us where Curtis Aeroplane was. Where was the Curtis Aeroplane Factory? Buffalo, New York

And you worked there?

Yes.

Well tell us about some more of your hobbies then.

Well flying was one and in about 1914 or 15 I built a biplane glider.

Well when I graduated I spent the next year building a real aeroplane, and I had that pretty well along and I went to where we were going to order the motor in Detroit, a Maxa Motor. Some fellow heard about me and wrote me and wanted me to come with him to Elyria, Ohio. He had invented the Martin aerodynamic stabilizer. Well when I went to Elyria they weren't ready to start and I could have had a job on the board - drawing board - and I didn't particularly want that. My Uncle Henry Walser was in Cleveland, it was very close, so I went to Cleveland, and then his head salesman said he had a

brother that had charge of the dynamometer room at Curtis Aeroplane, and he gave me a letter of introduction. He said, "As long as you're interested in this stuff I'll give you a letter of introduction and you go see my brother and he'll get you through the plant," so that's exactly what I done. When I went through the plant and seen what little I knew, I looked him up again and I said, "I want to work here"; so I took the first job they offered, ~~me~~, which was a mechanic at the garage, nights, and I was staying at a hotel then yet. But I didn't show up. I figured "I can't learn anything there" so I go back to the employment office the next morning and I said "What else you got?" and they said, "Well, what have you done?" I told them I'd done wiring and that stuff, so I went in as electrician's helper, and in three months I rated as a journeyman and had my own helper and it was hard to get out of there during the war. I had to get up some story about my folks being seriously ill and stuff to get out of there.

Why did you want to get out?

I wanted to get in the Service.

That's what I thought. →

So even when I got out, I think it was six, eight months before we went to Detroit and passed that exam, because our folks were giving us money enough (the four boys) to go down and see our Congressman to see if he could get in. Well, we went across from Detroit to Cleveland on the boat. When we got ~~into~~ Cleveland here it was headlined "all enlistments closed". But we had to spend that money, so we went to Washington anyway. I remember old Joe Fordney's the one we looked up you know, and he gave his,,, omit

Who was the one?

Joe Fordney from Saginaw.

Oh.

He was our Congressman or Senator, I forget which. Well anyway he gave us his Chauffeur and his Cadillac, and we went all around Washington you know, yet, but we didn't get in so...

Who were the four boys, you and Wayne Perrott and who else?

Harold Burke and Clifford Stewart.

Clifford who?

Stewart.

Oh.

You knew him.

Sure .

Well that was the four.

You had good time, didn't you?

Yeah.

Well then after the war was over, what happened then? You came back? You had to come back when your money was spent? *Begin*

Well you see this flying business had kind of.... There used to be money in it. These fellows would drop in here - I paid \$15.00 for the first ride I had. We lit out here on Giesken's field. Well, I was still interested in the aviation business, but I went ahead and started making radios 'cause that was new then you know, and I shipped out 15 or 20 and by that time I began handling manufactured sets, many different makes over the years, and that was really my business until I added some appliances like refrigerators and washers. We still had to eat you know, so I couldn't play all the time. These things were.....I just had too many hobbies, see. I've always collected coins and then in 1933 I think it was, I was on the Village Council here for about 10 or 12 years and they decided we'd have a nine-hole golf course down at the park. Well they'd been out now and throwing up the dirt for some of the greens and I went down there one day to see how things were coming, and here was an arrowhead teed right up on that, see. It had rained, and the soil will wash away and leave them. Well that got me started. So one day ^{was} in the store about 1933 I just got in the car and went out and looked at some of these sand ridges and soon I found stuff, so from then on I was quite an archaeologist. And I got acquainted with this Mr. Dustin in Saginaw, who probably was one of the best quoted ~~men~~ on Indians, other than Dr. Hinsdale at the U of M. So in the spring when they have their Arts, Science and Letters meetings I went down with Mr. Dustin and stayed there 2 or 3 days and we just attended the Anthropology section. *airplane ride Arrowheads*

Was that the University of Michigan?

Yes. We made Dr. Hinsdale's office our headquarters. He was on the third floor of the museum. Well then after that Dr. Stuart and I, every Sunday morning was out looking, and of course I discovered I think around 35 Indian Village sights, and they are all on the University's archaeological map. When I'd get a bunch of them I'd report to them, so I was doing quite a lot of that ~~then~~ for quite a long time, but then as I say we still had to eat. But I did enjoy it very much. There was actually 5 or 6 of us that started this Michigan Archaeological Society and we'd meet maybe once every three weeks at somebody's home. There was a Walter Schmidt at Pinconning. There was a George Allen who was in the Post Office in Bay City, and this Fred Dustin in Saginaw, and Ralph Strabel in Saginaw, and he was also a mail carrier in Saginaw. (He's long retired). So we did learn quite a lot. Each one was getting something to talk about see. I remember this Strabel, he was to make some pottery out of the clay and you have to mix so much tempering material with it, otherwise when you heat it, it just cracks all to pieces. Well he was heating them on his coal-burning furnace, you know there's always that little ledge there, and then we'd break it to see if it looked like the stuff we'd find, 'cause I found lots of pottery. The average person would just walk right over it - I did too - you'd never know what it *omit*

Go to p 8 Showboat

was, see. For several years now, you can see how far back that was, this Mr. Dustin never drove a car ~~ow~~ owned one. He came to Chesaning on the steam train, stayed all night with us and then I drove to Ann Arbor and we stayed there the two or three days and then we came back and he took the steam train back to Saginaw.

About what year would that be, do you think? About how old were you then, 30? 25?

No, older. In '33 I'd be 35, ^{it started in '33} so I would say it would be in the next five years or more, so ^{it would be} let's say somewhere between 33 and we'll say 43.

Then what was your next hobby? You must have had something.

Well yes, coin collecting.

Oh yes.

I've always collected coins from a kid on.

When were you and Fern married?

1922....!course fishing's always another hobby, you know. I went up to Lovells, Michigan trout fishing in 1917 the first time. Now Roy Smith and a Dr. Fainer, I think he had the drug store in Montrose or something. Anyway there was four of us went up to Houghton Lake Fishing. Roy said let's go up and catch some trout, so we went up to Lovell and stayed in the hotel and we didn't know anything about it, but I remember William caught a little trout (like that) and ^{he} hollered at me to see it, and it squirted out of his hand and went into the water, and I fished trout every year since. So that's about it I guess on the hobbies.

Well, you worked for AC Spark Plug too, didn't you?

Right. I went there in '43. That's when I quit in the business. You see, on account of the war ^{you} we couldn't get refrigerators, radios, any of that stuff, so it was bothering me and I quit and went up to the cottage till fall. And this Col. Ireland, he kept calling for me to get down to AC 'cause I was supposed to go out on the road where they were selling the bomb sights, gun sights and all the stuff we were making at the actual field where they use them, but you see by the time I got ready they didn't need them so much. So I went in the department that makes that stuff but that was purely....we worked on war stuff many years after the war was over. But then that department was the development department, and I was always in there. Places like Buick, Chevrolet and those don't even have a department like that at AC.

No I know.

It's because they make so many different products, 80 or 90 different things. ^{Questions} They were working on the moon exploration long ago, weren't they? AC I don't really recall anything about the moon operation.

Well, space.

6

The one thing at the end, they called it in the plant just the T-38. What it was was an anti-aircraft gun that's all radar controlled. It wasn't one that just shot once. It had a cylinder on it like a revolver, and it was 75 mm., but once this radar latched onto that plane, it made all the corrections and shot and shot and shot ~~and shot~~. And now we weren't building any of the actual equipment. We were building the equipment that tests each amplifier rack(?) to see that it was right. That's what we were making, not the product itself. I don't know where that was made, but most of that we were building was test equipment. Well then later on that was just plant development. We had to be all over. There weren't any plants in Flint. You see, everything that came into the plant that had anything electrical on it had to go through our department and we had to make the estimate, and it was things that's required that weren't on general stores, we immediately issued the requisitions right then. Then of course this went on through the mill, and when approved by the big shots why those requisitions to purchase all went out. So why we had to be all over was, every new machine we had to de-bug it, the electrical part. If we didn't design it, the electrical part, we had to prove the wiring diagram from the company they were going to get built at. When it came ~~time to~~ⁱⁿ the plant - the machine - why we had to see that it worked, so it was a very interesting department to be in, and I could never ask for anything better.

I would think it would be very interesting.

You never done the same thing twice, see? You'd get a whole roll of prints and maybe you couldn't understand them all and you'd have to go down to the tool engineer that drew it up and say, "Now what do you want this to do, and what's going to happen then?" and then you designed the electrical circuit that does it. We, that Col. Ireland that got me finally to come over there, during the War, he was the one that had charge of all the deferrments, and he stayed there after the War to get in his enough quarters for Social Security.

Was he working at AC? Was Col. Ireland at AC?

Right.

Oh.

Oh yes, he was at AC. Just as I told you, after the deferrment when the Army was over, he was there as an engineer.

I never realized that about him.

Col. Ireland had a list in the Army record of whatever you call all these B.C. and all.... He had a list that long.

What do you mean, Medals?

No, Different degrees of stuff he had. He was a graduate of Michigan State, a graduate of Ann Arbor, he was a graduate of Massachussetts Tech. Some of

that he took while he was in the Army, but during World War I he had charge of all transportation in Europe, so he was a Colonel then. Of course after the War they were all demoted 2 ranks, but you see during the time after the War he was back up to Colonel and when he was getting this History of Chesaning he was still a Colonel you see. But you know, down in the cafeteria every day, he'd slide up ^{you know} to me ^{and then}..... Not only that, he'd come here at night and stay till nine, ten o'clock, and I had to get to bed because I got up around 4:30. I always had riders - that is in the early part - and they all had to be to work at 6:30. ^{as I did} So at that time I was going in at seven and later on I didn't go in till eight, so then I had to get rid of the riders.

Yes I know all about Col. Ireland, he was a very nice man but he got on that genealogy stuff. He was determined you know, that he was going to trace Howard's lineage and he did.

And you know he came here every summer and spent the whole summer here. I know.

And like Decoration Day, you know where he was? Up to that cemetery all the time.

And Howard didn't care particularly whether he traced his lineage or not you know, I mean he was satisfied with himself the way he was, but he got his lineage traced anyway. Well he was a nice fellow.

Well we knew his brother awfully well. That's how we got going to Lovell, Will Ireland. And this Will Ireland had that one elevator here in Chesaning at one time.

I've heard Mrs. Goetzen speak of Will Ireland.

He used to write me cards and put down all the reasons why I should come up there, you see.

And he could get more on a postal card than anybody I ever knew.

You know I have one that's quite rare, because it has a postmark of Lovell. Well, you want to keep it.

Oh yes I have it. There's a lot of them up there would like it. You know there's so many towns that had post offices. Now all the ones that have closed, I know where they all were, in Crawford County.

Do you want to tell us some more about anything?

All right you talk awhile, about Showboat.

Well the first year of Showboat, I think, well I know, we came down with just one lighting plant, and that lighting plant I had taken out of the cottage and brought down just for that. Yes, I wired the first Showboat and I done a lot of the wiring back of the grandstand, what little we had there for the first year, and then for about the first eighteen years I brought the boat down, so I was with it from the very beginning. I never will forget that opening night when Joe Swartzmiller blew pretty near his

foot off. So we didn't have Joe the first night nor the rest of them. He was in the hospital, but of course that thing kept growing and growing and by that time I was working at AC. Even then I was still bringing the boat down. Well it was getting too hard for me to be up that late and then get up at 4:30 to go to work so I quit.

Tell us a little bit about how that first Showboat worked. How was it built? How was it floated?

On oil drums, 90 some odd oil drums, and that wasn't enough. We soon found that out. We did that night. With the people all getting on this one side, some were standing in water that deep, about 4 inches, so the next year we added five or six more drums on that side. But that boat used to have to be taken apart and taken out of the river, and they had to build one each year. Well then of course, during the war they quit on account of the lights and everything. So then they built the new boat after that and that had these large tanks on each side that ^{were} ~~was~~ made by Wickes Boiler, I think, in Saginaw. Now maybe it wasn't Wickes, it's the one Dave Perrott was connected with. Well anyway, they are two large cylinders about 4 ft. in diameter, and fifty foot long. There is one of those on each side of the boat, and then from the center of the boat forward there is one more that isn't quite as long. So now it's quite a lot easier, and you don't take anything apart on the boat. Well then Roscoe Rice really found out how to make that smoke. That is Titanium Tetrachloride, it's what they use for skywriting fluid. So that's what the smoke is.

What do they do, use chemicals?

It's a chemical, and all you do is pour it in the dish and it goes.

Oh.

There's nothing to it. Some nights when there wasn't any draft, we might have to put one of those smudge pots that they use on the highway in there, and that little heat creates draft enough for that to go out, but that's the same thing they use for skywriting. I even had some fun with that in the plant. One of these big control panels from one of those machines you know, when they get ready to try it, why I sneak around and put a little of this stuff in the panel, see. Well they start the machine up, and all at once they notice smoke coming out of the panel and they thought..... so I had a little fun with that even. Yeah Roscoe's the one that got onto that. Then of course the whistle was blown by two tanks of CO₂ gas every night, and it would freeze up on you. So we had two 50 ft. coils of copper tubing in the water under the boat which helped, and the two lines came up and fed that big pipe that went up to that - that was a genuine old freighter whistle - and it takes a lot to blow it. Even with the two tanks, you can't blow it properly. So it does blow and it did use two tanks of that gas a night just to do that. Oh I don't know, the show kept improving, and we were learning

all the time, on the people parking and all like that, we learned the same way, and it just has grown to what it is today. But at first it was sure something.

I know it. It was a lot of fun wasn't it?

I'd bring my outboard motor even down for that.

To help the boat go down you mean?

Yes.

How were the first boats run, with outboard motors?

Oh yeah, I think just two in back. Then later, on the newer boat they built this well right across, inside the cabin, and there were four, and then we added one forward, just inside the cabin. It helped much better for steering. Dick Volkmer used to run that one. He couldn't see nothing out anywhere, so I made a diagram with the lights, and out where you steer the boat I had a selector switch, that if I wanted him to turn I would light that light see, and I had it all right there. That motor helped greatly in landing, see. You've got to come in like this, and make a real sharp turn to come up to that thing. 'Cause the river is here, and the stage is not here, it's like this. So that's about all I know about Showboat. I was there from the beginning.

You know, this has been wonderful. This is a very, very nice thing.

You've told us so many things that nobody else has ever done.

Oh yes.

Well you have! You know most people don't do these things. They just - they don't have those interests. Not everybody has all these interests. I certainly appreciate it. Is there anything more you want to tell?

No.

All right then.

FERN WALSER

You want to tell us your name and when you were born?

I'm Ferne Johnson Walser, and I was born out on what has always been the Johnson Centennial Farm three miles and-a-half east of town, on what used to be known as the old Center Road, but now is known as M-57. I have lived a very uneventful life, but a very happy one, especially as I reminisce I think of what a wonderful childhood that my sister and I had. We were poor farmers, ^{I guess} ~~that is~~ so-to-speak, but had many, many good times. We had our Shetland pony that my father traded with a horse trader that went through in those days. I remember ~~that~~ he had an old grey mare that he traded for this pony, and every year we would have a little Shetland pony, and the money that we sold the pony for, which was \$50.00, went into a piano for my sister and I. The Greenebaums, who used to be here bought one of the ponies, I remember, that was black and white and quite outstanding. Another

thing that as I think back, I was quite advanced because when things didn't go right to suit me, I used to get angry and I'd go in the old stone chicken coop and sing to the chickens, and believe it or not, that week my mother always got more eggs. And today why they put radios in the chicken coop. We didn't have much to do with in comparison with the children now. We had a nickel a week and my sister and I would drive the old pony to town and one of us would buy the Bulldog edition of the funny paper and the other one would get a nickel's worth of candy; until one day we were in Cummings and Sandborn's Grocery Store which was at the far western end of town, and now is the (what do you call it?) the Dairy Cup Center? (MALT SHOP) They had a grocery store there and we saw some big grapefruit, so we decided to pool our two nickels and buy one. Well our dime was gone, no funny paper, no candy, and when we went to eat the grapefruit, probably the first ones in town, it was so sour and bitter ^{that} we couldn't do it. So we didn't do that trick again!

Where did you go to school?

Well, from 4 years old I used to run away and go to the Frink school, which was about a quarter mile, and Nora Volkmer was the teacher, and Julia Burroughs Brainerd was another one, and of course Ellen Carson was there for several years. She'll be well-remembered here in Chesaning for her teaching. Then another thing that we used to do at the farm was we did our own ceramics. We had blue clay on the farm. We'd gather that and we used to make - we had our ~~old~~ playhouses in the old corncribs - and we used ^{to} make all kinds of dishes and ~~would~~ bake them in the sun. We used our initiative instead of having the TV's and radios and so on. We did have a phonograph. I remember the night my father brought that home, with its colored horn and the cylinder records. "Redwing" was my favorite. I used to play it over and over and over. Well when I was in the seventh grade we moved to town and I went to the old, old schoolhouse and graduated from Chesaning. I went to Ypsilanti to school and became a teacher, and I taught the first two years out at the Westfall School, walked $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles each way, and taught for \$50.00 a month and got \$5.00 for the janitor work. From there I went to Montana. I joined an agency on Michigan Avenue in Chicago and got a school in the West for \$150.00 a month. Then I taught there a year and came home in the summer. I was always chumming around with Art before I went, and he persuaded me to stay here, but I had intended to go back to teach. Then I got a school in St. Charles. We were married, Arthur Walser and I were married in 1922, and I've always lived in Chesaning. I taught school 4 years in St. Charles and 3 years in Chesaning, where I fell into the insurance business, first selling automobile insurance for the Valley Insurance Company which was an organization of Saginaw men, George O'Brien, Ed Knute, Doug Nelson, and I sort of liked that work and gradually got into life insurance by dog-birding for an insurance agent, and

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one morning I decided I knew how to sell a policy and went out and sold a \$10,000 one, which was very unusual at that time because the average policy was \$1,000, and I went immediately to Saginaw and demanded a contract of my own which was in 1929. And I stayed in the insurance business until 1954. Since 1954, why I guess I've just been enjoying myself. As to hobbies, I was always interested in going to see the older people and I've done that up until this year, when I really haven't been able, but I have many, many older friends and I'd say people were my hobby. I love people and like to do for them and that's what I've been interested in. Probably if when I was younger, I would have been a nurse if I could have had my way. Here I am sitting now, rocking away enjoying reminiscing of the very happy days that I've had the rest of my life.

Can you think of any real interesting experiences that you've had, well for instance, let's go back to Montanna, did anything interesting happen there that was different from here?

Well, yeah, I had an awfully good time and that was once in my life I was very popular, because there was about 15 fellows to one gal. They'd gone out from Minnesota, mostly all Swedish or the Norwegian extraction, and homesteaded. They used to come along with a sleigh, covered sleigh, and someone would move all the furniture out of the house and we'd dance all night. There was many a time that I didn't get back from the dance till just in time to go to school to teach, and I used to be so sleepy that I'd say to the children, " It's rest period, let's put our head on the desk," and I'd take a little snooze.

How many children did you have in this school?

Oh there was about 15, all grades.

When you were teaching in Chesaning and St. Charles what did you teach?

I taught the first grade, and enjoyed it immensely. I liked teaching very much. I could relate quite a story how I nearly got fired because I smoked a cigarette and someone told the Superintendant, but probably that would be better not told.

But you couldn't teach after you were married, could you?

Yes.

Oh you could,

Oh yeah, I taught after I was married, See I was married in 1922 and I taught nine years.

When I came on to the scene, once you were married, you were out. Now have you some interesting experiences in your insurance business that you, things that happened to you. You don't have to name names.

Well, I think I was a fairly successful agent. I made ten conferences, so I really went all over the United States to these conferences.

Now explain that just a little more.

Well, if you sold a certain amount of insurance, you had your expenses paid on these trips, and they were very lovely. I went to Banf, Lake Louise, Jasper, Quebec, Florida, St. Andrews by the Sea, went up through the Laurentian Mountains by boat, very wonderful trips.

Did you sell all types of insurance?

Yeah, I finally had a general agency, but life insurance was what I liked best.

What do you do in the summertime when you go to your cottage? What type of things do you enjoy?

Well, I do a lot of swimming, and flowers, I planted water lilies, colored water lilies, in the lake, and some fishing, and a little Bridge now and then I always got in. We used to go to Grayling to the Grayling Bridge Club. Oh another thing that I was quite active in was the Episcopal Church, and I became interested in that through Mary Tubbs Bauer, and when I was going to high school she ^{really} had me believing that they couldn't have Sunday School unless I was there, and I never missed. Then after I was confirmed in 1913 I worked a great deal. In fact, I have the Silver Cross from the diocese of Michigan. Did you have any more ^{interesting} experiences that you can think of?

Well, the first time that I was ever on a Pullman was when I went to Chicago and West, When I saw those flimsy curtains in front of me why I took my rings off and put them on my toes so no one could steal them. And then I'd always heard about the Mississippi River, and so I told the porter to waken me when we went across the Mississippi, and I was so afraid that he wouldn't that I took my pillow and put ^{it} in the window and had the window up, and of course it was in the days when they burned coal, but I saw the Mississippi River which I was very disappointed in seeing, it was so small at the place ~~where~~ we crossed, but when I went to the dressing room in the morning I was just as black as the porter! So I'll never forget that. I began scrubbing.

Were the schools in Montana different from the ones here?

No, I taught in Poplar, Montana. There was a big Indian reservation in that town. One of the main highways going to Yellowstone goes through Poplar at the present time. What I had to get used to was, there were no trees, but I loved it there. I froze my neck. I remember it was 40 below zero, and it didn't know it until it got good and sore the next day.

Well this has been very interesting.

FERN WALSER - II

Fern Johnson Walser, I have lived a very uneventful life, but a very happy one, and I would say that I have lived in the best years of our life, though oft-times I wonder whether I was born fifty years too soon, with all the inventions and various things that I've seen develop throughout my lifetime. I was born $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles east in Chesaning Township, which until last year was a

Centennial Farm. When I was born the neighbor came in, who acted as a midwife, and that week the Chesaning Argus, which as I recall was run by a Mr. Miller, had an announcement that the June Johnson estate had increased in valuation a thousand dollars. A daughter was born. However, throughout most of my childhood I was my father's boy. I went to Frink School, and I recall that the boys and girls as we went home from school in the spring time was always looking for dandelions, because the first one we saw, we could take off our shoes and go barefoot for the remainder of the summer. That held no matter how cold it got. The neighborhood within a mile always had picnics in the woods. There was a great big flat stone, which we used as a table and we'd hollow out the stumps and have those for our toilets. My dad traded an old gray mare for a Shetland, ^{pony} which was old Babe, and with a cart my sister and I would drive to town and fasten the lines, turn her around, and she'd go home without us, and then we would ride home in the surrey with our folks. Saturday was a ^{big} busy day in Chesaning. All the neighbors were there doing their shopping for the week, taking in their butter and eggs and so on. I had 5¢ a week for my spending money out of the butter and egg money, which bought me a Bulldog edition of the Detroit paper. We moved to town when I was in the seventh grade. I graduated from high school, and Bebe Ellsworth was the superintendant and Hayes Adams was the principal. I went to Ypsilanti Normal and came home and taught at the Westfall School. Then I went to Montana to teach for one year and I recall when I got out there - of course I was as green as the grass - and the boys took me out horseback riding and I didn't know very much about it and I bounced up and down in the saddle, and the next morning I could hardly walk. And all the rest of the jokes that they could play on a greenhorn. I came home in the summer and secured a position teaching in St. Charles, and from St. Charles after teaching three years, I taught in Chesaning three years. And then I gradually got into the insurance business, which I liked. I was married in 1922 to Arthur Walser, and in 1931 Patricia Ann came to gladden our home. She is now a nurse and has two children and lives in Cadillac. When we were first married we paid \$7.00 a month rent for a half a house on Line Street, and in 1929 we bought the Jackson home and have lived there ever since. We've remodelled it, because each room was of octagon shape, put in hardwood floors and did all the necessary things that we thought ^{that} would make us comfortable. I kept on working, and the insurance business grew, and I had a general agency which I sold in 1954. I've had an excellent and happy life, and feel I was very fortunate to live in this era. As a kid in high school I always worked, and I had money to go to Normal with. I picked beans, and I was a printer's devil for Ische and Ingalls. The first automobile ride that I ever had was in Cantwell's Buick. There was a big 4th of July Celebration in Chesaning, and he gave rides for a nickel, from

Cantwell's, which is now Bert & Joe's corner, to the depot and I believe he was the first one that had a car in Chesaning. And the first airplane ride I had was in 1924 in California, when we took a motor trip there with the Jacksons, never driving over 50 miles an hour, and we drove 10,000 miles and went to all the National Parks. As I remember we had \$500.00 to go and we came home with \$100. and was gone ten weeks. I've had many accidents. Practically all the different bones in my body have been broken, and sicknesses, but throughout all of them I've come out on top, and I hope to live many more happy years.