

INTERVIEW WITH BERTHA PANGBORN
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN
JULY 26, 2006

SUBJECT: G.I. Ville, circa 1948.

MAGNAGHI, RUSSELL M. (RMM): Ok, interview with Bertha Pangborn, Marquette, Michigan, July 26th, 2006. Topic, life in G.I. Ville, circa 1948. Ok, Bertha, you don't mind if I call you Bertha.

PANGBORN, BERTHA (BP): No, I don't.

(RMM): First, let's start with what is your birth date.

(BP): My birthday is May 8th, 1921.

(RMM): And could you tell us a little bit about moving into G.I. Ville? What precipitated that, your husband was in World War II, and how did you get into G.I. Ville and how did you get to Marquette?

(BP): He had previously gone to Northern for three years and he had been called into the military.

(RMM): Was he from Marquette or the UP?

(BP): He was from Munising. He finished his time in the military, I think it had been close to four years so, in the meantime, I lived with him in Presque Isle, Maine for a couple of years, and we came back and had the two girls and moved into the Quonsets.

(RMM): What was your husband's name?

(BP): Wayne, Wayne Pangborn. He was called Beanie in college.

(RMM): So he came back to pursue his studies?

(BP): Yeah, to finish his last year.

(RMM): And then you moved into the Quonset huts. Could you tell us a little about what the process was to get the rental space, the costs and some of those things?

(BP): Well, all I remember was our rent was 90 dollars a month. That included the utilities. I don't know what else.

(RMM): How many people were there, I think there were seven buildings down there?

(BP): There were quite a few, I can't remember just how many. But, there must have at least been 7 or 8 and there were the doubles.

(RMM): How much space did you have in there?

(BP): 10 by 20, I remember that vividly.

(RMM): The whole place?

(BP): Yeah, 10 by 20. We had a couch that we opened up for bed for ourselves. And the girls were on the other end, so we lived in this one room, of course though you had this bathroom and a shower on the end, and that's all we had.

(RMM): So everything was in the one room?

(BP): Oh yeah, we had a little table and chairs. There's no refrigerator, oh yeah.

(RMM): That was crowded.

(BP): That's what we had for one year. Others had it for much longer because they came back and had maybe two more years of college.

(RMM): Now, did your husband get into the G.I. Bill?

(BP): Yes, we did, of course. That was the only way we could afford it.

(RMM): What was it like being in that, how did you feel about in terms of the two girls and yourself?

(BP): Yes, it was interesting and we got to know all of the other families, some had children and some were single. Yes, we would get together and have little parties outside and little barbeques and so forth. It was a fun time, but one year was enough.

(RMM): We have this picture from the encyclopedia. Could you tell us a little about the names of everyone in the picture, the two girls, and a little about them what we see here in the crib.

(BP): The crib was just a regular crib and my husband got some lumber together and made a crib below it and he made some holes in the little corner posts so that the crib on top would fit into those holes because we had to have the railing for the one that was sleeping up above so she wouldn't fall so this became very low so we wouldn't have to worry about her falling out. We did it for a whole year.

(RMM): And your daughters?

(BP): That would be my daughter Diane. I am standing with my daughter Kathleen.

(RMM): Kathleen, with a K or a C?

(BP): K.

(RMM): Where did you do your laundry?

(BP): We, I don't remember. I think we had laundry facilities right on the college. I don't remember that.

(RMM): I think they set up laundry in the basement of the science building.

(BP): Yes. I think it was in the basement.

(RMM): You had to climb stairs up?

(BP): Yup, oh yeah, you had to climb the stairs up.

(RMM): Then you had a story about your daughter. One of your daughters was left up a building?

(BP): Oh yeah, somebody opened up the, she was like three, three and a half, gone up the stairs, and somebody evidently opened the door and when they went out, they let her get in. The Dean of Women came down holding this little girl and he said, "Does this little girl belong to you?" I was so embarrassed. I said, we've been looking all over for her.

(RMM): Which daughter was it?

(BP): Dianee. Her name was Dean Carey.

(RMM): Where did you used to shop?

(BP): There were grocery stores and stuff, of course, we didn't have a car, but there were grocery stores up and down Presque Isle Ave.

(RMM): There used to be a co-op down two or three blocks.

(BP): Yes, there used to be what's called the Bulling store.

(RMM): That was around until a few years ago and then Northern bought it. And then tore it down, it was kind of a nothing place, but everyone went in there. It had all the magazines and newspapers, beer, wine, even hard liquor. I'd go in there for lunch, something fast, it was a great place for a quick bite. It was a campus institution. So you'd shop there?

(BP): Oh yeah. Whatever we did, we had to walk, we didn't have a car.

(RMM): So that was pretty difficult for you then?

(BP): We didn't think anything of it, we were young. When I look back, I don't regret it.

(RMM): Didn't you have a Waldo Street address to get your mail?

(BP): Waldo Street was on the side there and Presque Isle was in front and Waldo was on the side there and the Quonsets faced Presque Isle and went around the corner and faced Waldo Street.

(RMM): Do you remember the big gateway that's on the corner of Waldo and Presque Isle?

(BP): Gate?

(RMM): Seems like a fancy gate or iron fence that trees have grown up around it. It's the entrance way into campus from that end. Might have been that it's just so common, it's just there. I'm asking some of these questions because we are still trying to find information about these things. That one I found, a student told me about it from the newspapers and his paper, he found it by accident. So some of this stuff is a question mark still. I think I asked you earlier, you don't have any recollection of that mystery mosaic that has just been uncovered?

(BP): No. That would have been where?

(RMM): Right on Waldo Street, just down the hill. It's a big wall and then they put cows made from pieces of common stone, and it's well done, it's just like gray stones put together to form the cow. They pulled out four of them now. Maybe two horses. They are obviously there, they went in 1939, 1940, 1941. That's it. That's why anybody that was down there, they became so common and people didn't think, and you have stuff around your house today you just don't think about.

(BP): You remember John D. Pierce School, I went to school there until the 8th grade, and then I went Gravette.

(RMM): Oh, so you were a Marquette resident?

(BP): Yes, when we were kids we used to go down that hill in front of that college and roller skate.

(RMM): Oh, roller skate? Oh, ok. I've heard people going down in toboggans.

(BP): Oh no, we didn't do toboggans.

(RMM): Ah, but you did roller skating, oh ok. So what are your memories of Pierce School? Did you enjoy classes there?

(BP): Oh yes. And the rest of my family went to Gravette. So after I got there, well, that was where I go to go too.

(RMM): Then, did you attend Northern?

(BP): No I didn't. I didn't go to Northern.

(RMM): And then your husband went into the service in 41?

(BP): We were married in 42, so yes, he went in 41. We married when he came home.

(RMM): So then you lived in Marquette during the war?

(BP): Yes, we took the train to Presque Isle, Maine and that's where he was stationed.

(RMM): So did you live there?

(BP): Yeah, lived there for about 21 months. Then I had to come back home because he was being transferred to Newfoundland. That's where he stayed until he got out of the service.

(RMM): So all in the north-country? Newfoundland?

(BP): Right, yeah. It was barren country, in all of the planes came in there and fueled up in there so that was part of his job, being the officer to take care of it. Clark Gable stopped in that one time and they got to see Clark Gable, it was quite a thrill for him. He never got out into the war itself.

(RMM): And then you were with him?

(BP): No, not in Newfoundland.

(RMM): I mean in Maine.

(BP): Oh yes. Cold country. They have it 20 below.

(RMM): Worse than here.

(BP): Yes.

(RMM): Ok, then what did your husband go on to do?

(BP): When we left here, we went to Baraga, and he coached there for nine years and then we moved to Lansing and he taught at a Junior High for while. And then a new school in that area was being built so he went over there. He did until he retired.

(RMM): And then you stayed in Lansing?

(BP): Of course, we've been there for 53 I think. Couldn't have been. 9 years in...

(RMM): 59.

(BP): Yeah, must have been 59. Been there ever since. And I'm still there, living in the same house.

(RMM): Now you had a son after that?

(BP): Oh yeah, we have three sons.

(RMM): Oh, three sons? So this is just the beginning of your family?

(BP): Oh yes. Yeah. My husband came along.

(RMM): What are the names of the three boys?

(BP): Gary, Claude, and Dennis. Dennis passed away. And Diane. I've lost two of them and a husband.

(RMM): Now you come up here in the summertime?

(BP): Oh, spend all summer near Lost Lake, near Munising, do you know where Lost Lake is?

(RMM): No.

(BP): I don't see who does.

(RMM): We live over on the Sand River, so we're in Alger County.

(BP): Oh, that'd be beautiful. So we get back for two months and then go home. And all the family come and see me. Nine grandchildren, 13 great grandchildren. Youngest is 4 months. Big family. And they all love the UP.

(RMM): That's sort of the problem. People will love to be here year around, but the job problem. If you can make it in the summer, then everybody tends to come back.

(BP): Right today, her husband was out on the stream fishing. He loves it up here. My husband loved it up here too.

(RMM): All right, that's very helpful. I do have one more question about the area here, not that you might have gone there, were there any restaurants, or coffee shops, or anything? They talked about one being on the corner of Kay and Presque Isle.

(BP): There's one on Third Street. Tip-Top Café.

(RMM): Oh, the Tip-Top.

(BP): We went there for a little while when he was going to college. I can't remember what he was doing then. Tip-Top Café. Is that still there, I wonder?

(RMM): No. They closed it and then they moved it to another place, and then that burned. So where it ended up was the Sweet Water Café. The building is still there, I think it's a tattoo shop or selling skateboards or something like that. So the building is still there and then there was the old Marquette Bakery, and now that is a tattoo shop. And then next door is the Sweet Water Café. And the fellow that owned the Tip-Top put that up and sold the whole thing. There's no link to the past. I remember going to the Tip-Top, then it became known as Ten O'clock Charlie's. Everybody used to go there, you'd go there different times of the day and you'd have different clientele. If you go there at noon, you'd get the lunch crowd, go there in the afternoon, they'd have milkshakes kid would come in for the milkshakes, evening had a fish fry. And the beer drinkers, and after dinner drinking. Eventually they had music in there as well, they had something for everyone. As soon as they opened there was a clientele that filled the place.

(BP): They were always busy.

(RMM): I didn't know it went back that far into 1948.

(BP): Oh yes, Tip-Top Café, I remember that place quite a bit.

(RMM): So your husband worked there?

(BP): Yeah, part time, when he was going to school, to earn a little extra money.

(RMM): So you went on the G.I. Bill. How much did your husband get to go to school?

(BP): Oh, it wasn't much more than 90 dollars a month. I don't know what it was.

(RMM): So you had accommodations and then some money for school?

(BP): You didn't need money for school, the G.I. Bill paid for that, how much it was I don't remember that. I know we had roughly 90 dollars a month. That was quite a bit.

(RMM): So you had to do a lot of scraping and pulling money together, and keeping together?

(BP): Mhmm. Definitely. It was a lot of fun at the time.

(RMM): Ok, well thank you for taking your time, I appreciate it.

(BP): No problem.

(RMM): Go over that again.

(BP): He played basketball at Northern for two years and then he was cut because he was shorter. Not as good, I imagine, so he joined the band, and played in the band for two more years.

(RMM): Now your husband went to Northern for two additional years?

(BP): One year. He had one year left.

(RMM): He played in the band though?

(BP): That was before, that was before we were married.

(RMM): Ah, so after you were married, he didn't do any of that. So two of his years on the basketball team, third year on the band.

(BP): Right. Yeah, he didn't do any of that when we came back.

(RMM): Then he was working part time.

(BP): He was too busy. Used to go up to the school to study. You can't keep your children quiet and study.

(RMM): So you had a radio for entertainment?

(BP): Radio? Oh yeah. He loved that. He loved his music.

(RMM): Just to go back, that was difficult being in that small space, doing the studying and just living and so on.

(BP): Yes, definitely. But we survived. We had a little stove there we cooked on, it was all there in one room.

(RMM): In this one room?

(BP): Yes, in this one room, 10 by 20. All we could afford. Spent three years going to school before he left.

(RMM): So that was really a tremendous celebration when you he graduated?

(BP): Oh yeah, got to move into an apartment. We lived 9 years in Baraga, small town community, but I loved that.

(RMM): Ok.