

Interview with Irene Voegtline
11/26/98
Interviewed by Ashley Voegtline

Me: This is Ashley Voegtline I am interviewing Irene Voegtline on November 26 1998.

Me: What is your full name?

Irene Voegtline: Irene Helen Gross Voegtline

Me: Did you have a nickname?

Gram: No

Me: What do family members call you now?

Gram: My great grandchildren call me "Mimi" a French word for grandma but my children call my "Ma".

Me: I laugh

Gram: laughs

Me: Where and when were you born?

Gram: Diorite, Michigan August the 17th, 1915

Me: How long did you live in Diorite?

Gram: About 3 years.

Me: Do you remember your grandparents?

Gram: Yes I remember my grandmother Gross and my grandmother Giou. That's my mother's mother and my father's mother. The rest of them were dead.

Me: What do you remember about them?

Gram: They visited us. There's not really anything else.

Me: Was there a chore you hated doing as a child?

Gram: No because I had no brothers and sisters so I didn't have to baby sit.

Me: Do remember your family discussing world events and politics?

Gram: That was in 1915 and we didn't do any discussing we just worried about each other having enough food to eat and having clean clothes.

Me: What do you consider to be the most important inventions that have been made in your lifetime?

Gram: The car was just starting it wasn't really going much and the telephone Uh let's see. Now were talking way back. That happened in a period of eighty-three years. Home appliances. Coffeepot, toaster, dishwasher and washing machine and dryer.

Me: How was the world different from when you were a child?

Me: Has the crime rate gone up?

Gram: Yes and there are lots of crimes and a lot of people not dressing good. They dress very little to show their anatomy. Laughs

Me: laugh

Me: What helps you remember yourself when you were a child?

Gram: I remember I had a pony. I remember that. She replies very excited and happily.

Me: What was its name?

Gram: Oh I don't know.

Gram: It was brown and white. I had a picture taken of it. (Me and the pony.) I don't remember what happened to it after that. I suppose we moved away and had to leave it.

Me: Did you have a favorite nursery rhyme?

Gram: That someone taught me?

Me: Yeah.

Gram: I don't remember because I taught myself to read. I was reading at five years old.

Me: That's good! My sister is seven and she still has problems reading.

Gram: I went to the library they had across from where we lived they had a machine, the phonics machine, it would say something and you would have repeat it. I was eight years old then.

Me: Do you remember not having enough food to eat because times were hard for your family?

Gram: Well during the war we had to ration quite a bit, I was married then, we had to have coupons or tickets for everything we bought, except vegetables we grew our own in gardens we made.

Me: What were your favorite games as a child?

Gram: Oh um Jacks and hopscotch on the sidewalk.

Me: Who did you play them with?

Gram: Friends and I had cousins that lived next door.

Me: Did you have a best friend?

Gram: I don't think so.

Me: What was school like for you?

Me: Did you enjoy it?

Gram: You're getting pretty far back (She laughs)

Me: How many years of education have you completed?

Gram: I completed twelve years. (Junior high school and senior high school), at that time that's what they called them.

Me: Do you have a college degree?

Gram: No I went to Northern for nursing.

Me: How many years did it take to become a nurse?

Gram: 1 year

Me: Now it's probably a couple of years.

Gram: I think it is. I think it is. But that was Licensed Practical Nurse for only 1 year.

Me: What were some of the fads that were most popular during your time?

Gram: You mean styles and stuff?

Me: Yeah

Gram: Bobby socks and saddle shoes. Butterfly skirts they called them by that time. They were all different colors, like a rainbow, and they wore them with angora sweaters. White angora sweaters I remember.

Me: How old were you when you first started dating?

Gram: I was 14 years old. She laughs and so do I.

Me: Can you describe your first date?

Gram: We didn't go out dating like they do now. Everybody went together. If you had a special friend and she had a special friend and she had a special friend. We all got together we never were apart. We were always bunched together and never went anyplace otherwise. Until I met your great grandfather.

Me: How did you meet the person you would later marry?

Gram: I met him at a basketball game at Republic. Champion was playing Republic. We all went to that basketball game but I didn't go there with him or leave with him I just met him there. She laughs.

Me: How long did you know him before you got married?

Gram: I knew him for 2 years.

Me: Why did you get married?

Gram: He said he loves me and I said I loved him and we got married. I don't know the reason or not but in those days when you loved somebody you loved them.

Me: Where did you have your wedding?

Gram: It was at home at my mother's house. It was quiet on summer day in the backyard.

Me: What it a smaller wedding?

Gram: yeah Just my family, my father and my mother, my husband and there two attendants.

Me: How long were you married?

Gram: Before he died?

Me: yeah

Gram: 19 years

Me: How many children did you have?

Gram: I had three boys.

Me: What are there names, birthplaces and birthdates?

Gram: Their names are *Olivier Spalding Joseph Arthur Voegtline, Carl John Voegtline, and James Paul Voegtline.*

Me: birthplaces?

Gram: *Olivier and Carl were born at home at Champion and James was born at Bell Memorial Hospital.*

Me: So when the two were born at home did a doctor come to your house?

Gram: Yes Doctor Van Riper of Champion.

Gram: I had a midwife too. We didn't go to hospitals. Very seldom.

Me: So the midwives knew what to do and everything?

Gram: Yes she had taken lessons like a nurse.

Me: What were their birthdates?

Gram: **Olivier- October 20, 1933, Carl- June 26, 1935 and James- November 18, 1941**

Me: What did you find most difficult about being a parent?

Gram: There wasn't anything difficult about it. It was just a blessing I thought. It's more difficult now.

Me: Yeah I know.

Me: As a child what did you want to be when you grew up?

Gram: A nurse!

Me: What was your first job?

Gram: It was at St. Mary's hospital in Marquette.

Me: What was it like for you?

Gram: It was interesting and lots of work.

Me: When you first began nursing what kinds of machines and tests did they have to aid patients?

Gram: It depended what floor we were on. The first floor was regular nursing. It's hard to say because they were well furnished. Everything had it's own room. If you wanted to have a x-ray you went to the x-ray room. They had a x-ray technician. Whatever the doctor told us to do we would do it. I didn't really pay attention to things. I've been out of the hospital for 20 years now so I don't really no what things are like.

Me: So did they have tuberculosis tests and diphtheria tests?

Gram: Yes. They had special hospitals for that. Around here it was at Escanaba. It was called Morgan Heights. It's still there.

Me: Do you remember the first time they had tuberculosis tests? When all the kids had to have tests taken.

Gram: Well No not exactly.

Me: What do you remember about polio?

Gram: It was very crippling disease. Very sad. One of my friends little girl the only child she had was stricken with polio. She died in a matter of two three weeks. They brought them to a hospital and it only had one room for them but they had no special machines or anything.

Me: So they had not yet had the polio vaccine?

Gram: No and that was in 1933 or 1934.

Me: And the polio vaccine was not invented until 1956 or so.

Gram: With polio they had a high temp and they just tried to get it down. They didn't really know what they had until the child died and then they looked in different books and researched it. After awhile they knew what they had.

Me: What kinds of illnesses were people hospitalized for?

Gram: Besides surgery they didn't go to the hospital often because it was costly and they couldn't afford it. Most went for surgery and if they were having babies which was really more around the 1940's. Now people go to hospitals for the least little thing. Then they didn't because they couldn't afford it. Mainly surgery.

Me: What kinds of medicines were invented throughout your nursing career?

Gram: Penicillin and a lot of other antibiotics I don't remember. Now penicillin isn't so prominent. When anybody came to hospital when I was nursing the doctor ordered penicillin right away for a period of five days. Now very seldom do you get penicillin you get other medicines which are supposed to be more effective.

Me: How old were you when you retired?

Gram: I was sixty- one and a half.

Me: What wars have been fought during your lifetime?

Gram: WWI, WWII, The Korean War, The Vietnam War, and The Gulf War

Me: Did you have relatives that served in the war?

Gram: No. My father had his notice but the war was over by that time.

Me: Was he drafted into the war or not?

Gram: No

Me: How did you feel about the wars?

Gram: I think it is a terrible, terrible thing and a waste of humanity.

Me: So you had to do a lot of rationing and victory gardens and did you have war bonds?

Gram: Yes war bonds and victory gardens. We started victory gardens when we had poor times and after that the Second World War started. Then people had money but a lot of them got killed.

Me: What church do you attend regularly?

Gram: St. Augustine Catholic Church in Republic.

Me: How has the church changed since you first began going there?

Gram: When we first started there were many people going to church, quite often.

Me: Was religion different back then, then it is now?

Gram: Well our church is pretty poor now and not too many people go. A lot of the people are old and can't go to church. The young people just don't go.

Me: When exactly did you begin nursing?

Gram: In 1956.

Me: So how long were a nurse?

Gram: Until 1979 I think.

Me: Can you describe the cars back then?

Gram: There are very modern now they go faster. They ride better and are more luxury. Then it was a vehicle to go places but now it's real stylish. They are made better I think.

Me: How has doing laundry changed?

Gram: When it first started I remember we had to haul our own water and heat it up on the stove before we could wash the clothes. I washed clothes with a washboard. Rub a dub dub! I hung them outside on a line in winter or summer rain or shine. Then it changed to machines and we had a machine

that had a wheel that we moved with our hands. Then they got regular washing machine with an agitator. Then we got automatic machine. Don't forget the dryer.

Me: Yeah because then you don't have to hang them out in the winter.

Gram: I still hang them out in the summer to get a fresh smell and save energy.

Me: How has plumbing and electricity changed?

Gram: When it first started we had to haul water and we had an outdoor toilet. What do they call those?

Me: Outhouses!

Gram: Now we have flush toilets with water.

Me: How has the electricity changed?

Gram: We use electricity for everything now lights, heat, cooking, baking, back then we didn't.

Me: How many presidents's have you lived through?

Gram: Well there is Wilson, Coolidge, Hoover, Harding, Kennedy, Roosevelt, Truman, Nixon There were 2 or 3 more but I can't remember there names.

Me: So when Kennedy assassinated was that a big thing?

Gram: Yes that was very, very big and irritating and sad because he left a wife and two children.

Me: Especially when his brother got assassinated a few years after.

Gram: Yeah but that was political mostly but Kennedy's brother was heavy in politics. He stepped on too many toes as the saying goes. He was kinda on the wrong side of the street most of the time. Kennedy would have made

a real good president but he wasn't in long enough. Now we have Bill Clinton but we have a good life. I can't remember much more.

By Ashley Voegtline