LOUVA WATERMAN – May 11, 1989
Interviewed by Marian Hines

MH: You said you were born in Delta, Ohio because your Rowland family farms were there as well as in this territory.

Louva: We moved from Delta, Ohio to West Branch, Michigan. My father wanted to take advantage of opportunities he thought was there. He worked on the good roads and he was a well driller. Later when my grandparents left their home to move to Detroit, we moved on their farm which was seven miles from West Branch. (We) lived in the log cabin. It had a barn. It had a corn crib and we made a playhouse out of that. We put slats across and had our toys out there. One morning, my mother went out to pick raspberries and this bear loomed up in front of her and she motioned for us to go to the house. That alerted her. Then she went looking at our playhouse. The bears had been circling the playhouse. I suppose we had left food or something there.

MH: While you lived there, your mother didn't want you to go to school?

Louva: Yes. Not only because of the wild animals. I had to go through the woods, about two miles to the school. She didn't want to send a six-year-old girl through the woods to buck wild animals. Besides, there were some ruffians in the neighborhood. She keeps me at home. I didn't go to school until my younger brother was old enough. He was five and I was seven when we went to school. When I was eight years old, we moved to Northwest Territorial Road, at Gottschalk Road to my grandfather Rowland's farm. There we had dairy cattle and pigs up on the hill across the road. Farming went pretty well but not enough income, so my father then decided that he'd give up on the farm again and move to Plymouth. When we moved to Plymouth, the place we finally lived the longest was on Mill Street. That was our third move. First, my father worked at the Conner's Hardware on the corner. It still has its name on the building. It's a ladies' dress shop now. The pay isn't very good for clerking in a hardware for a large family like ours so he went to work on the railroad. He worked long hours. He liked his work and the pay was good but eventually he thought he'd accumulated enough that hew anted to settle into his own place. That's when we moved to Waterford. I lived in the house that Charles and Barbara George now live in. It was depressing. In Plymouth, on Mill Street, we'd had electricity, plumbing, a heating system, a basement, and plenty of room. When we moved to this little house, there was no water, no heating system, no plumbing the only thing we had was electricity. We had to carry water for eating, drinking, and laundry from the spring that was down the hill from the home near the railroad. Of course the other neighbors were carrying their water from the same spring because they didn't have any more conveniences than we had. The spring would go dry and then we'd have to stop what we were doing. Our plumbing was these outdoor two-seaters. Ours was (in) back of the house near the line fence and treated with chemical. We had a coal-burning stove in the living room. We had oil stove in the kitchen. My sister and I did the laundry, which were huge piles of laundry, on the weekend, on the washboard, with a wash tub. We had to carry the water from the spring, heat it on this oil stove, which took a long time, and then adding it to suds and trying to get enough water to rinse the clothes. What helped is drying them on the line, outdoors. They smelled pretty good, then.

MH: You were high school-age then?

Louva: Yes, I was tenth-grader.

MH: Where did you go to school? Was there a high school there?

Louva: No. Only a little country school here in Waterford. I had been attending Plymouth schools and I continued until I graduated. Then I matriculated at Eastern College and earned enough credits through the summer to teach in the country school that I had attended on Northwest Territorial Road. I was eighteen when I went there to teach. Calvin Hearn, who was sixteen, had been my classmate when I went to that school earlier before moving to Plymouth. We managed to graduate him from the school.

MH: You met your husband then?

Louva: I really met the neighbors before I graduated. Dorothy Waterman who was a sister of my husband, Claude Waterman, was in the same classes at school. We, of course, carried lunches. Jo and I walked the railroad tracks. We didn't have money for the streetcar. We started early in the morning and hoofed it to school. Claude would drive his sisters in and he picked us up and he always had chocolate-covered peanuts in his pocket and we were always hungry when we got out of school.

MH: You taught at Cooper's Corners?

Louva: For only one year. There wasn't enough pupils and school was closed so the children then went into Plymouth schools. Then I went to Newburgh School and taught there three years.

MH: That was at Ann Arbor Trail and Newburgh. Then you left teaching for a while.

Louva: Yes. I had started my family, so I left teaching and stayed home until my girls were in junior high. I decided to leave the country schools and go full time for one year to Eastern Michigan to get my degree so that I'd have a permanent certificate for teaching. I spent a year at Eastern Michigan earning the degree in 1954 and continued carrying courses until I also got the Master's degree.

MH: When you went to Northville, did you go as a regular classroom teacher?

Louva: We worked it out when Mr. Amerman interviewed me. He said that I'd had a good recommendation from my instructor at Eastern for the special reading program. He didn't doubt but what I was well qualified however a weak place was in primary teaching so he requested that I take a second grade class and get primary experience because it was anticipated that the reading help would have to be from beginners through the twelfth grade. Second graders are wonderful. They're so loving and precious. I transferred to Amerman School and had a second grade there for six months. I was changed from teaching at second grade level to the reading program. The first year at second grade level was at Main Street School. I had a downstairs room that emptied out the back door onto the playground.

MH: Who was the principal then?

Louva: I think Mr. Pregetser was there, and then shortly after (it was) Harry Smith. Those are the only two principals I remember at that school. Do you know who was Secretary (at Amerman School)?

MH: Winnie Proctor?

Louva: When he left, it was Winnie but somewhere along the line it was Marian Zayti. I remember because she was animated and you could hear her all the way down the hall. At Moraine, it was Evelyn Zooner.

MH: Were you the first one to be the reading specialist?

Louva: As far as I know. I would see children for individual help for a period of a half-hour, three times a week. Then the other two days you'd work on accepting new referrals, writing up records, and assembling new materials every other day.

MH: You also supported a lot of other programs in the school.

Louva: The year I retired, I was assigned to get referrals with the instructions to help the people who were taking over the reading programs. (We went) from one little box of materials to these material centers.

MH: They would have you introduce the new material or equipment. There was the feeling that you were supporting the rest of us.

Louva: That was what Mr. Amerman wanted me to do. I've seen some workshops on T.V. Now they're trying to go back to the way we did it in country schools, to have all the levels right there, within. They think it's wrong to move children out of the regular classrooms. Some of the children couldn't focus. You couldn't get their attention. Sometimes I wonder, is there anything new under the sun?

MH: You were listed as a moderator at the Waterford one-room school house in 1926 and '27. You were very young. That school building was up near the present Meads Mill.

Louva: Yes, it was closer to the neighborhood then. It was a one-room school. The water had to be carried in. The lavatories were the chemical kind.

MH: Were they outside?

Louva: Inside, like closets, but no water for flushing, so you used chemicals. Of course it had a furnace but it was like pioneer living.

MH: In the 1950's, a lot of these one-room schoolhouses were wiped out in the consolidation effort. Why would the citizenry give up their one-room schoolhouses?

Louva: I was on the board (and) we dealt with it. We had to get this community ready to understand it (and) cooperate. All communities were doing the same thing. They were bringing their rural schools in but sometimes you had too many children in the school for one teacher. Jesse Wilson had too many. Iva Meinhardt was one of our teachers and Ada Watson was one of our teachers. Some of them were overloaded and then they'd get all these other problems of the non-learner that you had to cope with in school or the handicapped child who was a source of distraction and entertainment to the other pupils and who experienced some child abuse from inconsiderate children. It gets to be overwhelming for one country school teacher to take care of. That's about the time that busing came in. That's how I could return to teaching. I no longer escorted my (own) children to school. I used to walk with them in the morning and watch them get to school, but by the time they got o junior high, they need to practice some independence, anyway.

MH: You spoke of this house, here on Reservoir Rd. (When) you decided to live here, was there a building on this property?

Louva: No. Mother and Father Waterman had decided to share their property with their son. This 50 by 150 foot lot was Claude's side. We decided to build a house but we didn't have the wherewithal to do it. It was very difficult to get materials because the war effort was on then. We started with a lot of second hand lumber (and) whatever we could find.

We positioned this house where it now stands, thinking that we'd live in it temporarily and then it would be the garage. We soon realized that it was in such a poor position that if we built the house in front of it, we'd be out in the road. That's when we decided to make this the house and worry about the garage later on.

So this very small, tiny cottage with a bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen was jacked up and we excavated under the house and put in the basement. Then we let the house down on the basement. What an ugly time that was. We desperately needed more room so I took the cooking and eating down into the basement.

Of course we had a furnace then. Jessie Wilson's husband sold us our furnace. He was an engineer (and) she was (a) teacher. They lived in Plymouth for awhile, but then they came over here on the hill. We lived in that ugly condition with half a house over a full basement, then we built out over it, making the living room larger and adding a little bedroom. What had been the kitchen prior to having a basement (put in) is now my bathroom.

Then we were reasonably comfortable but when my mother died at age 53, she left my youngest sister, Ardith, and Murray behind. I decided to take my youngest sister to live with me so then we did need the room up here. She was eleven at the time and had appendicitis and had a bad time at the hospital. She was practically an invalid for a matter of months.

We had no plumbing. The Plymouth water supply was coming from the springs from Beck Road (and) it was pumped into this reservoir. That water was shuttled through to the water tower in Plymouth. It was for Plymouth use. Little by little, other people go to tap on. They had water rights from Father, John Waterman and it goes diagonally across my property. Finally I was able to tap in. Now it's no longer the water from the spring. The reservoir is dry.

My father tried to drill a well for me. He got part way down. Harvey Whipple, across the way, insisted that he drill his well, so my father left my well without finishing it, and went over to drill for Harvey Whipple.

If you drill a shallow well, it would go dry (and) never would be adequate. My father went more than 200 ft. drilling for Harvey Whipple. It's sad to tell you (that) it wasn't fit for drinking (and) wasn't fit for watering his iris garden. It wasn't fit to use. He'd gone into the salt mine and it was bringing salt. So he never came back and finished my well.

MH: Before you tapped into the reservoir, where did you get water?

Louva: I carried it from Mother Waterman. She had a shallow well, but it would go dry so that it hardly took care of drinking and cooking especially when we added another household to that supply. They had a good-sized cistern. The rainwater back then was clean and usable. Bless Mother Waterman. She shared with me until we could hook in and get more water.

They used to come up and measure the reservoir every day. Mr. Redeman did that. Hazel Redeman taught with me at Newburgh School. She married Henry Grimm.

MH: Does Joe Rowland, your brother, live around here?

Louva: Joe Rowland passed away about seven years ago. I was so angry, I could hardly contain myself. How dare he! It wasn't his turn! I'm the older one. Didn't he know we were taught to take turns?!

MH: You were married and you lived in the Waterman house here on the corner of Reservoir Rd., but where was the Waterman property?

Louva: When the Marshalls, the Pattersons, the Whipples, and the Clarks came out they wanted the land on that side so they worked out a trade. The Watermans wanted to do market gardening (and) this lent itself more to market gardening.