

Elizabeth Vandersnoek (Nate Smith House)
Interviewed by Nidia Flores & Daphne Vick (2005)

My name is Elizabeth Vandersnoek. My nickname is Betty. That's why I like Betty Boop! I collect Betty Boop memorabilia, so I have all kinds of dolls and things. I have seven daughters and three sons. My ten children are Kathy, Kerry, Michael, Patricia, Gerald, Veronica, JoAnn, Alice, Betsy and Joseph.

I was born in Schenectady, New York in April 7, 1930, so I'm 75! My mother's name was Mary, and my father's name was Percy. Schenectady was like it is here, but more rural. My brother owned chickens, and my father had a big garden. I lived with my mother and father and two brothers and two sisters. My brother Larry was two years older than me, my sister Ida Mae was two years younger than me. My mother had five children and we all had two years between us. I was the oldest girl in the family, and I was a very obnoxious child. I did everything I wanted to do, but I also got along well with people because I liked people.

I went to school from the first to the eighth grade and graduated from eighth grade. Then I went to high school and graduated from there. No, I didn't go to college. All of my children did, but I didn't. I graduated from high school and got married when I was just eighteen. My first husband's name was Casimir. That's a Polish name. I had my first baby when I was nineteen.

Well, in school there were basketball games and dances. They use to call them sock hops. Did you ever hear of that? I always tried to behave because I didn't want to embarrass my parents. They let me do pretty much what I wanted to do.

When I was a young child, I played with my brothers and sisters. We played with the other kids in the neighborhood. After school we would play Red Light/Green Light. You had to run across the street and they'd try to keep you from getting all the way across. I did like school, but also, believe it or not, I skipped school in the fourth grade! I went across the pond and played with the pollywogs.

Yes, I had chores to do when I was a child. Every Saturday I had to clean the front room and the dining room, and my bedroom. I had to do the dishes, too, things like that. When I was a teenager, the best job I ever had was being a soda jerk. Do you know what that is? I worked at the little drug store near my house where they had a soda fountain where we served sodas and sundaes.

I lived a little way outside of town, so I got around on my bicycle. When I was a teenager, I liked to ride my bike and chase the boys. I would just get on my bike and ride down about two miles to the drug store — that's where the boys hung out. Then I'd have an ice cream sundae with my girlfriends, and just talk to the boys. When I was a teenager, I was a brat and I was very bossy. I use to have all the boys chasing me, and I would chase them. I had one girlfriend that I went all through high school with,

and I'm still friends with her today—two of them, actually. One lives in Schenectady, and the other lives in Texas.

One story from my childhood was that we had ghost on the train that went by. They use to call it The Ghost of Hogan's Pond. What it really was that at night in the summer the steam off the pond use to come up, and when the train would go through, the light would make it look like a ghost on the train. Everyone in the city use to come down and watch that train go by.

My favorite season is Spring. That's probably because I lived more in the country, and you could see everything coming out in the Springtime. Music, I like so many kinds. My son-in-law is a cellist — you should hear him play! I also like country music. My favorite song is Autumn Leaves. My favorite color is purple ... purple is for royalty! I like it because I look good in it. Or, so they tell me.

Oh yes, I was a Depression baby, born in 1930. My mother use to have to be very careful with the money, so we didn't get any new clothes. The Second World War affected me because I use to go out with some of the soldiers who were stationed at the barracks near my house. Then, I got married in 1948 and had my first baby a year later. Then I had my second child right away.

I got hit by a car when I was young, and I have scars on my head to prove it. No, I don't drive. I was afraid that I might kill somebody just like somebody almost killed me. The first time I got up on a plane ... it went up and down and up and down because we were in a storm. It was scary. The farthest I've traveled from home is California, and I also went to Rome. I was there on Palm Sunday when I was 70 years old. I was about fifteen feet from the Pope. It was very exciting.

No, there's nothing I wish I had done. I did it all! The hardest thing I ever had to do was throwing my husband out. What gives me the most happiness I have in my life now is my children. And, the best advice that I would give to you is to always do what you think is right. If you think it's right, it usually is.