

DIXBORO

A Happy Place to Live

“Canter Your Horses, Please...”

Bruce E. Avis

5031 Warren Road (at Dixboro Road) Superior Township

His voice. It was something about the quality of his voice that showed enthusiasm, encouragement and instilled confidence. Any 4-H horseman or a member of the Fleming Creek Riding Club recognized the hearty and comfortable tones of Bruce Avis over the P.A. system at area horse shows and fairs. “Canter your horses, please. Canter your horses,” he would instruct the riders in the ring. Bruce was a horse owner and he and wife Doris’ two sons Bruce E., Jr. and Charles W. (Chuckie) also raised show animals. A jovial, robust man, his voice now echoes in the heavens since he passed away in 1987 at the age of 73.

Opening the Church – Cleaning the Chandeliers

Lee G. BeGole

Helen Schmid BeGole

5045 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

It was a nice that a Dixboro Methodist Church family- Lee & Helen Schmid BeGole- moved into the former church parsonage at 5045 Plymouth Road, next door to the Schmid homestead. When washing dishes they could peer out their kitchen window and see the church steeple. Helen was a petite, meticulous housekeeper and a long-time member of the church Altar Guild. She was devoted to accentuating the attractiveness of the sanctuary, especially for weddings, and would fearlessly stand atop a tall ladder and hand wipe the lattices of each chandelier. Lee was of medium build, studious looking with a deep voice, and wavy silver hair. He faithfully followed a Sunday morning routine of unlocking the church, starting the coffee percolator, making sure the furnace had fired and the printed bulletins were folded. Lee was an extraordinary handyman and he earned retirement income by sharpening all types of blades in his shop off the garage. Lee and Helen were a lovely couple who were in love with each other, their family and their church.

Fist-a-cuffs & Harleys

The Robert P. Bentley Family

3366 Martin Drive, at Church Road, Dixboro

On the Bentley lot in Dixboro during the 1950s sat a two-story, small-frame house, assorted Harley Davidson motorcycles, supped-up cars and replacement parts for both. The family members were Robert P. Bentley, his wife Elizabeth Grundy Bentley; their children, sons: George, Robert, Jr.; Leon and Gary; and daughters, Carol Jean and Emily. I can still see George seated proudly on his large Harley, motoring east on Church Street, past the Dixboro School yard, *with* a human pyramid of family members and friends stacked on his shoulders. When Mr. Bentley, Sr. left a smoldering cigar in his coat pocket, it filled their house with smoke. The only Bentley happenstance to be chronicled in the Ann Arbor News was a rumble with their in-laws

and business competitors the Grundy family. The combatants reportedly used fists, picks and shovels in the family upheaval. But the only wounds were to each family's pride.

A Strong Believer – The Voice of Experience

Madeline J. Black (Mrs. James Black)

3362 Beaumont, Dixboro

I delivered a guest sermon at the Dixboro Church that questioned the integrity of the born-again experience. Afterwards, a long-time parishioner, Madeline Black said, "Dale I understand why you feel the way you. But you have a lot of life yet to live." Madeline Black was a dedicated, hard-working Christian woman whose faith showed through her discipleship of word and deed. She and her husband Jim were loyal members of the Dixboro United Methodist Church. When the congregation mulled the hiring of a painting contractor, the Blacks suggested that the members of the church use their brushes. And they would be the first to volunteer to help paint the church. It was an inspirational thought that was difficult to refute. Madeline seldom had a hair out-of-place and she fussed over the appearance of her granddaughters when they accompanied their grandparents to church. No one is irreplaceable but Madeline Black's passing in 1984 created a void in the Dixboro congregation.

"Dixboro's Tragic Story"

Albert J. and Carol Savery Bradley

5098 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

Multiple Sclerosis placed a heavy burden in the body of Al Bradley and upon his immediate family. The disease reduced an intelligent, well-groomed loyal husband and father of two, into a helpless, shadow of a man who suffered over 30 years of pain and discomfort. Carol and her mother Edith Savory were at his bedside for many years until his deteriorating condition required nursing care. Al was a loyal Michigan State University alumnus and he was thrilled by the Spartan's mid-60s successes in football, especially in wins over archrival Michigan. Their offspring, Jim and Stuart, both excelled in sports, the latter scoring a record 52 points in a single game (1961) for University High School in Ann Arbor. Al Bradley passed away in 1983.

"A Walk on the Emmaus Road"

Judge Loren William Campbell

In reviewing the 20th century, the changing character of the Dixboro United Methodist Church will be attributable to the leadership of Rev. Loren W. Campbell. A native of Traverse City, MI, Loren graduated from Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in 1943 and in 1949 received his Jurist Doctorate from the University of Michigan Law School. It was his ten-year ministry (1946-56) at the Dixboro Methodist Church that was productive and is fondly remembered. He guided the church through a novel "Lord's Acre" farming project to help raise funds for a major "Church House" addition to the church. When the "Church House" was dedicated in 1951, it doubled the size of the church and was debt free, due to thousands of hours of donated labor by parishioners and friends and the financial support of Harry B. Earhart, a local philanthropist. Loren started the Church Altar Guild, developed and raised the chancel and arranged for robes

for the choir. Enjoying people and demonstrating a sincere concern for their welfare guided him throughout his life. He was elected Probate Judge in 1978 and served to 1985. Loren and wife Gladys and their family lived 40 years at Shalimar Farm in Superior Township. This compassionate servant passed away in August of 1996 at the age of 83.

She was always in the picture

Belle Carter (Mrs. Walter Carter)

7060 East Joy Road, later
7110 Plymouth Road, Superior Township,
her daughter's (Grace Judson) home

"Sure, I can extinguish the candle..."

Nettie E. Gibb (Mrs. Emmett Gibb)

Cherry Hill at Plymouth Roads, Dixboro

Belle & Nettie were born and died within a few weeks of each other; they were 93 at their passing in 1985. At first blush, these two long-time Superior Township residents would appear to have little in common. Belle Carter was petite, very modest, and lived most of her life on an area farm. Nettie Gibb was a full-size woman, an extrovert, and with her husband Emmett, served as the proprietors of the Dixboro Store in the 1930s and 40s. The Gibbs lived next door to the store. (At one time, Emmett was referred to as the Mayor of Dixboro, a non-elected, anointed position.) Both women shared a love for their families and affection for the Dixboro Methodist Church. In almost every 20th-century Dixboro photograph of a church project you can pick out Belle Carter at work in the background. Nettie loved to tell her story of the three-member family who struggled to blow out a candle. After the first two siblings awkwardly wrestled with the flame, the third family member contorted herself, stepped to the candle, took a deep breath and pinched the wick with her fingers! Nettie's one-person skit was repeated at church talent shows even though 90% of the audience knew the outcome.

New Pews for the Church

Hattie I. Frederick

1640 Green Road, Ann Arbor Township

In 1964, the 107-year-old Dixboro Methodist Church needed a face-lift for the next generation. The solid wood church pews, products of the church's first century, already had their usefulness stretched with a coat of white paint. What to do? Hattie Frederick, a charter member of the church Altar Guild, and whose husband Edward had passed away two years prior, graciously established a memorial by providing beautiful new pews for the sanctuary. Hattie died in 1984 and the church pews remain a lasting tribute to her generosity. A stanza of one of her poems reads: "Must this be the hour of reckoning, for the way we lived our life? See the setting sun is beckoning. Yes, those are the red rays of our strife. Now soft darkness settles over. All is still, the air is rife. Faith alone must give the answer to, will there be another life?"

No two men ingratiated themselves in the hearts of Dixboro and Superior Township residents more during the 20th century than **Glen A. Freeman** (1901-1989) and **Emory L. Mulholland** (1897-1988), both were born into, raised and resided in the community.

“He was a symbol of the community.”

Glen A. Freeman

5107 Church Road, Dixboro

Glen Freeman was a tireless community servant, characterized by Carol, his wife of 57 years, as simply and sincerely “interested in the community.” He had the broad shoulders of a community leader; he was unheralded but highly respected. Glen helped charter Boy Scout Troop 30 and later served as its Scoutmaster for over 60 years. He logged innumerable miles walking behind a lawn mower at the Oak Grove Cemetery and long evening hours in the freezing winter creating an open-air ice rink on the Village Green. The community was able to reciprocate in 1974 when it lobbied the Ann Arbor Public Schools to rename the Dixboro School: the Glen A. Freeman School. “He was a symbol of the community,” eulogized Dixboro pastor Rev. Charles Marble upon Glen’s passing in 1989 at the age of 88. Glen was an active member of the Dixboro United Methodist Church. In his twilight, he stood on a bench at Scout camp and humbly said, “I’ll come to camp with you boys for as long as you let me.” Glen Freeman was a fixture in the hearts of the Dixboro community.

“Superior Township Supervisor for 31 Years”

Emory L. Mulholland

His residence was on Harris Road, between Cherry Hill Road & Vreeland Road
Superior Township

In 1919, 22-year-old Emory Mulholland began an unprecedented 47-year career of public service to Superior Township. He served as Treasurer, Highway Commissioner, and then Township Supervisor for 31 years (1935-1966). The name Mulholland became synonymous with Superior Township. During his tenure, he helped maintain the township’s rural character and helped found the highly respected, volunteer fire department. His over 40 years of marriage was divided between his two wives who preceded him in death, Pauline Phillipp (1927-38) and Una Kruger (1950-1981). He also outlived seven brothers and sisters. Mulholland was acquainted with Harry Bennett, Henry Ford’s alter ego, who lived in a castle-like home at 5668 Geddes Road, in the township along the Huron River. Bennett would supply Mulholland with work passes to the Ford River Rouge plant. One pass fortuitously fell into the lap of Richard Leslie, through Mulholland’s friendship with his father Clinton Leslie. A job at the Ford Motor Company meant good wages and a chance for advancement. Emory Mulholland died in 1988 at the age of 90.

Friends While Building or Fishing

Andrew J. Gale II

5091 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

George J. Staeb

5087 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

They were brothers-in-law, next door neighbors, business partners and best friends. In the 1940s and 50s, when a house was built in Dixboro- or a grave dug at the Oak Grove Cemetery- it was usually the handiwork of Andrew and George. The pair earned a reputation as talented and thorough craftsmen; the houses they built represented the highest quality of workmanship. Andrew and George, in their highly recognizable flatbed stake truck, would roll down the highway with their rubber-tired cement mixer in tow. Everything a carpenter, plumber, electrician and painter could need was on the truck or hanging from it. And they always honked and waved. Andrew was known as “Hi” Gale. Andrew and George donated a major portion of the 6,000 hours of labor for the construction of the Dixboro Church fellowship hall. George survived his longtime companion Andrew by 17 years (d.1973) when he passed away in 1990 at the age of 84.

A Wedding Bell in the Belfry

Charles V. & Catherine Hagler

3401 Berry Road,

(An 18th Century Greek Revival home, listed on the
National Register of Historic Places)
Superior Township

“Ding, dong, ding dong” peeled the bell once again from the roof of the Dixboro Schoolhouse on the Village Green. It was July 21, 1984, and the community celebrated the 96-year-old school building’s entry onto the State Register of Historic Places. The gift of a farm bell- a wedding present to Charles and Catherine Hagler almost 30 years prior- was mounted in the school belfry. Charles Hagler was the president of the Michigan Historical Commission and was instrumental in the school designation as an historic place. Tragically, within six months the Haglers would succumb to illness. The Dixboro United Methodist Church is a Michigan Historic Site and is listed in the National Registry of Historical Buildings and Places.

"What I meant was..."

Oscar H. and Alma V. Bolgos Koch

"Koch" as in a restaurant "Cook"

5071 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

Oscar found his dream girl just around the corner and up the hill. The Koch homestead was on a farm on Earhart Road (at Warren Road). Oscar’s future bride, Alma, was raised on her family’s dairy farm (later Bolgos Dairy), at 3601 Plymouth Road (the present location of Cleary College) *which* is less than two miles from the Koch residence. So, the offspring of two well-known farm families- Koch and Bolgos- were united in marriage on June 30, 1924. Over the next 41 years, until Oscar’s passing in 1965, their mutual admiration and love served as a community role model. Oscar’s warm friendliness dovetailed nicely with his earned reputation as the community’s furnace repairman. He would usually begin a sentence with, "What I meant was..."

Oscar crafted the unique, deep metal eve troughs that carries the rainwater off the large roofs covering the Dixboro Church complex. Alma outlived Oscar and also one of their three sons. Her husband's namesake "Junior" (Oscar, Jr.) succumbed in 1976 to a long illness contracted by sitting through a cold and rainy Michigan football game. Alma passed away in 1983 at the age of 81 but I remember seeing her on a dance floor rock 'n rolling near her 80th birthday.

The Bolgos Family: William H. Bolgos and Lydia Kapp Bolgos: Sons Alton Bolgos, Carl Bolgos, & Russel Bolgos; Daughters Alma Bolgos Koch & Louisa Frederica Bolgos Steffe (Leah Steffe).

"I have his handshake..."

Clinton J. Leslie

5365 Church Road, Dixboro

Clinton J. Leslie unassumedly attracted many friends. Why? Perhaps it was his strong work ethic or his quiet example of faith and obedience to his Creator. Clint and his wife the former Leola Quackenbush were active members of the Dixboro Church. They usually sat in the same pew each Sunday and Leola proudly sang the hymns of their faith. In the 1920s, the Leslies operated the Dixboro Store and later moved to a farm on Church Road. Clinton Leslie was an excellent house and barn painter, a talented carpenter (he helped build his two son's first homes) and a fervent player of the drums. In 1949, he supervised a host of volunteer workers who logged over 30,000 hours in building the fellowship hall addition to the Dixboro Church. When questioned whether the project Treasurer was bonded, he replied, "No, but I have his handshake." He was a true man of his word. Clinton Leslie passed away in 1974 at the age of 81.

A Selfless, Tireless Worker

W. Dale Parker

112 N. Dixboro Road,
Superior Township

October 21, 1935, in the bride's home in Ypsilanti, the late W. Dale Parker and Grace E. Sanderson began a fruitful, Christian marriage that would exceed 50 years. Dale's sister Bessie had married Grace's brother Harvey. The Parkers and the Sandersons remained very close, literally, including over 50 years as next-door neighbors. An artist with a hammer and a saw, Dale also played a hep set on the saxophone in the Parker Orchestra. They were a dance band for the community gatherings on the second floor of the Dixboro Store. Dale and Grace were active members of the Dixboro Methodist Church. Their two sons became Methodist ministers and their daughter chose to become a Registered Nurse. In 1979, Dale's thoroughness and attention to detail showed as he staked booth space for the Dixboro Festival; he painstakingly measured each one to assure the booths were exactly the same size. Dale Parker was a selfless, tireless worker who sought no accolades for pounding a straight nail or a flawless saxophone performance.

"He Could Jump Higher Than a Tree"

Ivan W. Parker

1825 North Dixboro Road

"He lived his life just as he hoped to," observed Holly Craig of her father-in-law Ivan Parker upon his passing in 1995. Ivan enjoyed his life, whether it was in conversation with Henry Ford or a Dixboro friend, at work at the U-M reviewing scholarship requests or calling a square dance

in a town hall. He was born May 20, 1913, the eldest son of Floyd W. and Myrtle Hitchcock Parker. Just like his father, he attended the one-room Dixboro School and was the only student in his grade. Ivan and his sister, Leona Parker Bunnell who also attended there, returned later as teachers at the school. In 1939, he married Elnor Coles and they raised a family of three boys, including a set of twins who both became ordained ministers. Popular with the children in the neighborhood, he grabbed their imagination by telling them in three days he would jump higher than the big oak tree in his front yard. When the day came, with great anticipation the kids gathered in the Parker front yard. They revited their attention on Ivan as he jumped just a few inches high. Then, he challenged the tree, "O.K. tree, now it's your turn to jump."

"Why, a belt sander could hang from the ceiling."

Arthur Christian Reiff

Hertha (Hattie) Reiff

Plymouth at Ford Roads, Dixboro

A finer finish carpenter was not to be found in the area than Art Reiff. A genius with wood, he created hundreds of beautiful pieces of custom furniture in his small quaint shop next door to his home on Plymouth Road. As an example, he created a handsome, fancy settee, built according to a magazine photograph, and the cabinetry of no fewer than four pipe organs. Grandpa Reiff designed his own belt sander that could be conveniently pulled down from the shop rafters. A visit to the shop was not complete without hearing a Reiff reminiscence. His face would brighten as he culled with intrigue stories from his 80-plus years as a husband, father, carpenter and avid hunter and fisherman. Reiff's Kennels was where Hattie, his wife of over 60 years, kept a watchful eye on all sizes and shapes of dogs in a penned and sheltered area behind their home. She also mastered the art of caning chairs that is replacing the cane in the seats and backs of chairs. She would soak the sheaves in water so that they could be stretched and pulled to form a strong chair seat and back.

"A person's best quality can sometimes..."

Fred C. Schmid

Ruby I. Schmid

5164 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

The Rev. Charles Robert Marble eulogized Ruby Schmid in 1986 this way: "A person's best quality can sometimes work against them. Ruby's life centered around the Dixboro United Methodist Church and she assumed the lives of others did too." An earlier Dixboro pastor had named Ruby "Keeper of the Keys" and the wrath of Ruby was upon the unfortunate souls who might leave an outside door unlocked or a light burning in the church. Fred- her faithful husband of 57 years- was the most senior alumnus of the hamlet one-room schoolhouse. At the schoolhouse centennial (1988), he crossed Plymouth Road to the school - just as he had 79 years earlier in 1909- from his family's homestead. Fred's late brother, Herman, had operated a blacksmith shop in a narrow shed next to the family home. Fred & Ruby, fellow Dixboro resident Harold Zeeb and a teenage boy, Dale Leslie, would travel to Detroit in the 60's to attend professional Big Time Wrestling matches. On the way home, they would stop at a White Castle for a midnight snack.

Try “Pin-Head” On for Size

Suzanne Marie (Galpin) Smith

6820 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

If you spent a weekend with Garvin and Suzie you could learn a nickname, play a pick-up softball or a touch football game, water ski, shoot baskets through the rafters of the storage barn and/or drink volumes of Pepsi Colas while singing “Oh Susanna” with a ukulele on Suzie’s knee. Whew! She and Garvin were high school sweethearts. They were a fun-loving, popular pair in education and coaching at South Lyon High School. Suzie affectionately and abundantly used nicknames. Let’s see, she called one close friend “Pin-Head.” Everyone admired her inherent ability to share a lesson-of-life conversation with a student, an athlete or a relative. Suzie was raised on the Galpin farm, which had been in the family for generations. In the 1960s, Garvin, Suzie and son Ron purchased the landmark and it became the Smith home. Suzie Smith passed away in 1984 from cancer at the age of 46.

“Dance Lessons for the Leslie Boys”

Millicent Henrietta Willits

In the late 1930s, Leola Leslie decided her young sons Richard and Clinton (Bud) needed round dance lessons (slow, close to your partner) and she had just the teacher in mind. Millicent Parker Willits, a 24-year-old young married, was fun loving, quick to giggle and loved to play the piano and dance. There could be no better teacher. The brothers knew the steps to square dancing but there was no promenade in round dancing. After two sessions, which young Bud felt was “two too many”, the duo debuted at a public dance, probably in the upstairs of the Dixboro Store. Everyone survived. Millicent had wed Eugene Raymond Willits, June 26, 1926. Her twin sister was Millie Frances Widmaier. Gene’s sister was Carol Freeman, the Dixboro historian. An active member of the Dixboro Methodist Church, Millicent and Gene raised their children Joyce and Douglas within a short walk of the church in their home on Plymouth Road in Dixboro. She passed away April 25, 2000 at the age of 93.

“Where the tires met the road.”

Nelson E. Woodside

4910 Warren Road, northwest of
Dixboro

Take Nelson “Woody” Woodside seriously? This man in motion found humor in life’s daily events. I can picture Woody wheeling his light blue and white high van bulging with tires and automotive supplies into Potter’s Service. It was an era before discount tire stores and service stations sold tires. Woody would scramble to the roof rack on the truck and sort through a pile of tires. Plop! He would throw one down and then- whoops! it was the wrong tire. Woody would laugh and up top went the tire and his dig started anew. Nelson’s smartest decision was asking Evelyn Martin to marry him in 1940. They raised three personable daughters on their Warren Road farm, surrounded by love and horses. Woody was a founding member of the Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Department Mounted Division. He was fun to be around and lived life to the fullest. He passed away in 2000 at the age of 81.

Cletia E. (Cal) Edwards
Pastor, Dixboro Methodist Church
1918-21

Mrs. Edwards wrote, "Our charge (also) included Free Church (Gotfredson at Plymouth Roads) and Northside Ann Arbor."

Rev. Edwards drove a Model T Ford to his appointments and the rural route was hard on its thin tires. When the car's weight broke the frozen potholes, the sharp, icy edges would slice the tires. Another victim of Michigan's inescapable spring freeze and thaw.

Mrs. Edwards recalls, "By the time Cal made it to Dixboro all four tires were riddled. At morning prayers they presented their problems to the Lord."

In the mail at 11 am was a letter from a Masonic friend in Detroit. The writer said he had been thinking about Cal and his new work. And said, "I think I would like to help."

So he went to the office of a mutual friend and after a short conversation said, "I have \$50 dollars to send to Cal, would you match it?"

Out of the envelope dropped checks for \$100.00. A farmer took Cal into Ann Arbor in his horse and buggy where he bought four new tires for his Model T Ford. Cost: \$95.50.

Mrs. Edwards writes, "We felt like Ezra and Nehemiah, that the good hand of my God was upon me. So we thanked the Lord and took courage."

**The Graf Zeppelin
Over Dixboro**

Thursday, October 26, 1933

Children on the Dixboro School playground were awe struck by the foreign object they saw high in the sky.

The mammoth Graf Zeppelin, the Trans-Atlantic German dirigible, flew over Dixboro enroute from Chicago to its U.S. home in Akron, OH.

"Graf Zeppelin Passes Over Ann Arbor," read The Ann Arbor Daily news headline, October 26, 1933.

"Flying at an elevation of less than 3,000 feet...the midday sun shining on its aluminum-coated fabric (it) passed over the heart of Ann Arbor at 11:45 this morning."

It was also reported in the Daily News that "thousands of persons lined the streets for a glimpse of the ship that once flew around the world."

"Dixboro was in the flight path too," recalled teacher Ivan Parker. The memory of seeing the large airship would last a lifetime.

If you have a Dixboro memory you would like added to the above, please e-mail it to Dale Leslie at daleleslie@comcast.net *Dixboro: A Happy Place to Live*