



Ruth Weaver
ROBS History Project
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Her full name is Ruth Eleanor Glenn Weaver. Her mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Brown. Ruth's maiden name was Glenn. They had once lived on a farm. She described her mother as a good person who was a hard worker. Life was difficult because there was little to no money to go around. She had twelve children and Ruth's father was a farmer and the sole workforce on his family farm. She was fourth to the youngest in her family's children's birth order. Her father died when she was six years old. They all lived in the small town of Rome, Pennsylvania. As the boss man, her father worked long days every day. He had twelve cows, which had to be milked every day by hand both in the morning and again at night. Ruth's older brother helped him with that. It was mostly a dairy farm but her father also raised crops and though only six years old, she remembers him going off to the fields to plow, occasionally taking the younger children with him to ride behind the horse while pulling a plow. She remembers going with her father in the back of his wagon.

All told, there were eight girls and four boys. The oldest girl was Agnes, She became a teacher. The next oldest was May and she also became a teacher. She died very young at twenty five and was confined to bed as she suffered with arthritis. There was no treatment back then for the condition she had. Dorothy was next in

age, and she grew up to become a Buyer for a chain of Department Stores. When she tired of that and war broke out she thought she'd make a change by serving in the WACS during World War II, hoping to be sent overseas. Instead she was put in charge of the PX in Bainbridge, Georgia to make use of her experience as a wholesale buyer. She couldn't wait for the War to end.

Henry was next in line and the oldest boy. He went to college and when he graduated was employed for years by a bank in New York City. After Henry the college money was exhausted, so the rest of her siblings weren't able to advance to higher education. Her sister Hartie completed one year of undergraduate work before she dropped out for lack of funds. Ida was next. She got married but didn't go to school either. Bill joined the Navy and served in World War II. Her sister Catherine along with two other girls suffered from Retinitis Pigmentosa that resulted in their total blindness. Hartie was one, Catherine the other and Susan who was born after Bill but didn't lose her vision until she was about twelve. She was educated well because she was fortunate to be sent to the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There she learned typing skills and got an office job that was very good for her. She married a man she met in the office. Ruth was born after Catherine and when she finished High School worked for two years before entering training as a Nurse. She'd dreamed of becoming a nurse ever since she'd been a little girl. There were several more children in the family younger than Ruth. They were Susan, Montegue and Johnny. Susan also became blind. Johnny enlisted in the military and in 1941 survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor only to return, re-enlist and die in England when the jeep in which he was

riding crashed. Her brother Montegue, who was a year younger than she also died in an automobile accident while still a student in High School. At the time of her interview Ruth had six sisters and two brothers all of whom were still alive and aging. Ruth sees her sister Ida today more often than she sees the others who are spread out all over the country, because she lives in New Jersey near the shore. Agnes lives in up-state New York. She also has two sisters who live in Elmira, NY. One other sister was in a retirement home in Philadelphia, PA. Two of the boys, were still in the area of Towanda, PA. near where they'd been born. Her brother Bill who'd also joined the Navy, moved back to the area later in his life.

After her father died the farm was sold. Her mother couldn't afford to run it alone and had to let it go. It required too much of her to maintain. Her family had called Ruth, "*Ruthie*" but she got the name "*Rudie*" while growing up at about seven or eight years of age and it stuck with her all through her years of schooling and up to and during her Nursing Training.

Ruth and Fred Weaver have a son Phillip, who lives on Long Island and who they see quite often. Ruth described Phillip as a wonderful boy. "*He's always been thoughtful and has never given them much of any trouble*" He's married to Darlene and has one child whose name is Brook and who is their sole grandchild. She's described by her grandmother as a very bright child who enjoys many more advantages than she and her husband did when they were children. She's a busy little girl who is doing one thing after another and will be ten years old in September. Our interview took place on July 24, 1998 in the Sonderling Building TV Studio of Brentwood High School. Brook was preparing to enter fifth grade in the Fall. While both parents work, she participates in before and after school activities. She takes cello lessons and has been playing soccer and softball. Ruth told us that Brook was very involved.

Phillip grew up in Brentwood attending the Brentwood Public School system. He graduated from the High School and had expressed a strong interest in sports as had his father before him. He didn't have the height for basketball nor the weight for football but by the time he got to Middle School he had decided to apply for wrestling. His mother didn't exactly favor that but he did it anyway.

Ruth's daughter's name is Louise and like her brother Phillip was a graduate of the Brentwood Schools. She was a Psychiatric Social Worker living and working in Cincinnati, Ohio. They see one another about twice a year, during the summer and Christmas season when she visits. She's recently been Ruth's most loyal travel companion when they took two trips to Israel and to the Holy Land and Hawaii which they both enjoyed while Fred visited favorite fishing locations in rivers and streams familiar to him and to which he was happy to return

Ruth's own father whose last name was Glenn, had grown up in an orphanage until he ran away and was embraced by an older couple who owned a farm in Rome where he worked in return for food and a place to live. When the couple passed away, the farm became his. Ruth's mother's Yankee roots stretched back in history. Ruth had been born in Pennsylvania in 1918. There was only one doctor in town who visited homes on a horse and buggy to birth the children.

They had a daughter who played the flute. Ruth played the piano. Her father belonged to the Odd Fellows Service Organization. When he first died her mother had received various offers from folks in the area to take different ones among the children into their homes. Her mother rejected that idea. She wanted them all to remain together. There happened to be an Odd Fellows Home in Sunbury, PA where the eight youngest were placed. You had to be at least three but not more than twelve years to be considered for placement. Ruth remembers clearly the day they all arrived there.

She remembers the dress she wore. She remembers when she got out of the car there were some swings. She sat on the swing and swung on it. She remembered from that day on being separated from her mother. One thing that was very good about it though, was that her mother was not going to have to worry about how she was going to feed and clothe all those children. They enjoyed the good education they got there and having their own high school. They had their own band and orchestra and a lot of the children had had piano lessons. The boys got instruments, the girls got violin lessons. There weren't many children in the home at that time, only about two hundred all together. Her mother would come to visit them a couple of times a year. It was difficult for her because in those days there wasn't a car available and someone else would have to drive her for a visit and she never learned to drive. Her sisters and brothers all shared the same goal of getting a college education but the lack of money didn't allow it for all of them. Ruth remembered some of the people that served her well while she lived in the Home. She even kept in touch with them after she left. Her Home Economics teacher was one such person she stayed in touch with as she did with her Music teacher with whom she would later correspond. She established lasting relationships with many of the boys and girls of her age group who lived with her while in the Home. She remembered adults who were there at the time saying "*We're all one big happy family*". She said they used to sneer at that comment but it was true nevertheless and they still have a reunion every year over Labor Day.

Ruth knew from the time she was seven or eight years old that she had wanted to become a Nurse. They would have a doctor from the nearby town come and check all the kids; looking down their throats to see if they needed tonsils taken out. She also remembered a year earlier having her own tonsils removed and while in that hospital looking around wondering why all those people were there.

Later in her life when she had two children of her own the opportunity had presented itself to become a School Nurse Teacher while she was taking care of both of them at home. To qualify the Nursing Education she had had was a three year training program called *The Diploma School*, and the State Department required certain courses. You had to have a certain number of credits in a certain number of years. Within five years you had to have thirty credits to earn Provisional Certification and then go on for your Permanent Certification. “*And that, she said, “is how I got to college, and I really enjoyed it.”* She was living in Brentwood, about 1962, and skipped around taking credits in different places but she never matriculated. She attended Adelphi East which became Dowling in Oakdale, and took courses at L.I. University in CW Post, always taking courses that interested her. Like so many other people were doing at the time she did this while employed full time as a Nurse Teacher. At the same time she was managing a home and family. It was a very busy time for her. She hadn’t been driving until the opportunity to go to school opened up for her. She suddenly was motivated to become a licensed driver. It encouraged her to qualify for a New York State Drivers License and to gain the additional freedom and independence that being licensed would afford her.

From her days in the Home she still corresponds with a High School mate whose name is Pauline, is retired and lives in Florida. They used to play piano duets together. There are quite a few other friends including Alameda, formerly from Florida who has just moved to live in a retirement home in Philadelphia, and another one who lives near her brother in Towanda, whose name is Arlene. Everyone there at the Home had a knick name. Arlene had red hair so her knick name was *Fritz*. She and Fritz still correspond. Ruth used to visit every autumn because the foliage was so beautiful up there. It also provided her with the opportunity to visit her brothers and sisters who still lived in that area.

She remembers sleeping on a folding bed while they were still living on the farm and having a nightmare waking up crying about bears running around the outside of the house. Her bed in the Odd Fellows Home was in a large dormitory. She smiled as she recalled what a wonderful time the kids all had in that room, running and jumping from one bed to the other like on a trampoline. While living there chores were assigned to the kids. Each had specific chores to perform so that everyone had responsibilities. The work schedule was changed every so often as one got older. You either had to wait on tables in the children's dining room or you waited on tables in the adult's dining room. You had dishes to do, beds to make, and sundry other housekeeping chores.

Ruth was eighteen before she got her first paying job. It was during the Great Depression in 1936. She worked for two years before going into Nurses Training. Given her college prep training the only work she could get at that time was house work. That's what she did for two years to save money before going into Nurses Training. Housework meant you lived in with families that could afford to pay you which meant you saved on room and board. They also had children and you had some responsibilities for those children as well. The first place she did that was in Pennsylvania. She did it for six months and then she went to East Orange, New Jersey where she got a job doing the same kind of housework near where her brothers and sisters were staying.

She remembered celebrating Christmas at the Home. She loved taking walks and enjoyed the outdoors. It was in the country so they had a lot of freedom. They would walk up over the hills and they knew the trails. They knew where all the apple trees were and the pear trees. She remembered all the books about the outdoors by Gene Stratton Porter she read. She loved them all.

The Campfire Girls were among other favorites. In her teens she remembered listening to a radio via speaker in what they called the “*living room*”. Then on Sunday morning they listened to the Children’s Hour from New York City on which their school band was invited to perform. She said, “*that was a really big deal*”.

She loves the Fall. We spoke of the aroma of burning leaves, the crispness of the air and the colors of foliage. Remembering favorite toys and building blocks in particular she remembered playing with them in the Home. Lilly’s of the Valley and wild roses are among favorite aromas. Her favorite subject in school was English. She liked to parse sentences. She enjoyed learning.

She was in Nurses Training in 1941 and had a date with a young man who asked Ruth if she might be able to “*fix up*” someone he knew with a date to go out together with him and her. She said yes, and arranged to have a girl she knew join them for his friend Fred, while she went out with him. Sparks must have flown that night for only about seven months later she and Fred were married. The U.S. was attacked that Dec 7th when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Ruth immediately contemplated joining the WACS and going into service, but she thought of her brothers and sisters already in the military and feared joining might put her mother over the top with worry so she decided to get married instead.

They had been living in Phelps NY, near Rochester, originally in Waverley, where he had been teaching and then moved to Newton, New Jersey. It was from there in 1955 she and Fred first came to Brentwood to look for a home once Fred was to be interviewed for the position of High School Principal by Dr. Gene Hoyt and the Board of Education. Tom Hastings and Dr Hoyt spoke with Ruth and asked her if she would be interested in the position of Nurse Teacher. She said yes, the deal done and she was hired.

Joe Carson was the Principal of Village School when she started and Lou Lotito had been there before him. Reggie Poquette was there but hadn't yet moved his wife from where they'd been living to join him in Brentwood. Some single teachers had rented a house and were living together. Many met future wives in Brentwood.

Ruth Weaver retired in 1973. During her final year working for the District she worked at Oak Park Elementary School. Jack Hoffman was the Principal. Phyllis George was there as Art Teacher. She was married to Dave George the Shop Teacher from the High School. Why had she retired? She and her husband Fred Weaver had accomplished their biggest objective by getting both of their children through High School and College. At 55 years of age she decided she was ready to make the change. Fred didn't want to travel. He loved fishing as we all knew, so she and her daughter Louise traveled to Israel twice and also to Hawaii where they had a wonderful time. Ruth teamed up with two sisters and they did likewise going to California and straight up through Canada. She and Fred currently enjoy reading mysteries of the "*Who done it?*" variety. *When he visits the library, she says, that's what he comes home with.* As we concluded the interview Ruth, as a brief aside, mentioned that because her health was not as good as it had been, she had curtailed travel plans for the immediate future.

We finished by thanking her for her willingness to share her life story with us and for the time given on behalf of all retirees of the District, to contribute to our History Project in recalling her life's memories and her career as a Nurse Teacher in the Brentwood School District and as the wife of the District's first High School Principal.