



Gerry Keymel Whitmire was born on March 11, 1931. She just celebrated her 86th birthday. Her parents were John and Edith Keymel. Gerry, along with her siblings, was born in the house they lived in located on Walworth-Ontario Road in Walworth. A midwife named Jessie Billings was the baby catcher for Gerry and all of her siblings. Gerry has five siblings: Eleanor, Martha, Jeannette, John and Roger. Eleanor, being the oldest, acted like the mom at times.

Her dad worked as a crop farmer harvesting many vegetables and fruits. Potatoes, onions, carrots and lettuce were planted in the muck land; the tomatoes were planted in the upland. He also harvested fruit such as apples, sour cherries and berries. Gerry's parents owned property on both the west and east sides of Walworth-Ontario Road. On the west side was the family house and farm and on the east side was their tenant house and farm. Her mom was a great helper to her dad; whenever he needed a part for the farm equipment she would go and get it. Gerry's mom also helped on the farm and canned the products of their harvest each year. Along with raising their six children, she would also babysit other children.

Gerry remembers going to school at the Walworth Academy and doing chores each day after school. The first mower she used was the roller type which was hard to push. She loved it when they got a powered push mower. When helping in the tomato garden, she used to carry a salt shaker in her pocket, so when she would spy a ripe tomato out came the shaker and Gerry would eat the tomato. She says they were so good tasting that way.

Gerry remembers a play house they had that she and her sisters used to play in with their dolls and also make mud pies. Gerry loves dolls to this day. There were many animals on the farm such as horses, cows, pigs, goats and chickens. Gerry's dad would go into town and purchase little baby chicks, bringing them home in a big box. After the chickens were big enough, they would become a Sunday dinner. Gerry's mom was the one who would chop off the chicken's head and hang it upside down on the clothesline to get ready for the feast.

She remembers her mom being very kind hearted and hospitable. On Sundays the family would go to church and then have their dinner; there always was room for another person at their table. Christmas was different when growing up than it is today, Gerry recalls. She remembers always receiving a box of hard candy from church and an orange on Christmas Day. In the wintertime she would sled downhill at Bernie Porray's farm. She remembers there being lots and lots of snow when she was younger. The roads could be shut down for days until they would hear the Linn coming down the road to open it again.

Gerry attended Walworth High School, graduating in 1948. While in school, she played the flute in the marching band and performed in plays. Her good friends while growing up were Ruth VanHanehem, Phyllis Dayton and Thelma Hoffman. They would attend dances in Walworth. After graduation, Gerry worked at Kodak operating the printers. Later she went on to work at the Country Patch and Ames Department Store.



In 1950 a new family moved into Gerry's parents' tenant house. Their son, Grant Whitmire, had just finished four years of service and one year of college. He and Gerry became friends and eventually married in 1953 at the Walworth Methodist Church. Gerry and Grant lived in the tenant house while Grant was building their family home a little farther up on Walworth-Ontario Road. They moved into the newly-built house in 1961. They have five children: Andrea, Marsha, Terri, Mark and Patty. They have 13 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren with 3 on the way. Grant worked at Xerox for many years and retired at the age of 62. Sadly Grant passed away in 2006. They were members of the Walworth Methodist Church for many years and parented several foster children.

She believes that the gift of being motherly came from her mom. Gerry moved to Ontario after Grant's passing. She attends North Ontario United Methodist Church. Gerry knits and crochets prayer shawls. She says it's her ministry and loves giving to others in need. Her best memory of living in Walworth is the neighborhood feeling, knowing others and feeling like a sense of family.