

## Gordon and Betty Youngman Interview By Bob Mogray

Gordon Youngman, or "Gordy" as many call him, is a life-long Walworthian as well as a local businessman and friend to many! Because of his historic local ties he has contributed to many stories in our past newsletters. He and his family have been excellent sources of historic dates and events. Gordy has also contributed many photographs of local families and buildings that have been stored at the museum; these have also been scanned and backed up on our computer. He has granted this interview which is a personal look into his life story.

Gordon Youngman was born on June 18, 1928 in the second house down the hill east of the Walworth Post office; the house is the current Heinonen family home. Gordy's family consisted of his father Ezra, his mother Ida, brother Bill, and sisters Ester, Leona, Bessie, and Edith. He and his family lived in this house for approximately five years, until he started school at the Walworth High School. Gordy started directly in the first grade and did not go to kindergarten. He and his family then had moved into the next house west of Jay Taber's cobblestone house on the Walworth-Penfield Road. They stayed there for about two years. They moved again, this time into the second house north on the west side of Main Street past Center Street. This occurred when he was seven years old in 1935. We jump ahead until 1945 when Gordy graduated from Walworth High School.

Let's skip ahead a few years until 1949. In October of that year he married Katie Luke who lived on Plank Road. They moved to a house that was between the Baptist Church and the old Masonic Hall. At this time Gordy and Katie rented from DeWitt Tuttle and operated an ice-cream and candy store. This house was later torn down. As you can see, there was a lot of moving around in Gordy's life and one year later in 1950 he and Katie again moved. This time they moved across the street to the second floor apartment in the left side of the store that would later become his hardware store.

For three years they lived here and in 1953 Gordy was drafted into the U.S. Army. Joe and Lorraine Finley bought his store and operated it for the two years he was in the service. While in the Army he served in Okinawa, Japan in the counter-intelligence corps for two years. When Gordy returned home he bought the store from Joe Finley. So by 1955 he was back in business at the store. In 1958 you guessed it! He moved again! This time he and Katie bought the big house on the north side of the store and moved into it. Three years later Gordy enlarged the store - 12 feet to the north and 30 feet onto the back. During the years that Gordy owned and operated the variety and hardware businesses in the stores on Main Street in Walworth, he was active as a volunteer fireman and in the volunteer ambulance also. As a matter of fact, there was a fire and ambulance emergency button in the store and his phone number was listed as an emergency contact for local fire and ambulance calls. When a call came in, Gordy would push the button and the fire siren would sound. Responders would know to report to the fire hall to answer the call.



Gordy and Katie had two daughters. Marlene was born in 1954 and Kathy was born in 1957. Gordy and Katie bought the north store in 1963 and initially ran it as a variety store and also had an ice-cream counter. In 1978 they closed the ice-cream fountain. They bought the hardware store (the former K.O.T.M. building to the south of the variety store) from the estate of Jack Wick in 1972.

From then on only hardware was sold there and it became the Walworth Hardware business until 1990 when he retired and sold the business to their daughter Marlene and her husband Steve, who ran the business until 2011 when they closed the hardware store.



After Gordon retired, his wife Katie passed away in February of 2001. Over a year passed when Gordy went to a Walworth Alumni banquet where he met Betty Garlock. Betty had lived in the "Huddle" area of Walworth when she was younger. Gordy and Betty had actually dated each other in high school. Betty was a junior when Gordy graduated as a senior.

Betty's husband had passed years earlier in 1992. Soon they were spending a lot of time together and they married in 2008. They now live in Greece, New York. Betty had 5 daughters, 12 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. Gordy had 2 daughters, 4 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

The Walworth Historical Society would like to thank Gordy and Betty for taking time out of their busy lives to travel to Walworth to grant this interview. We all really appreciate all of the things that Gordon has done to help the people of the Walworth area over the years and for providing photos and information about the early history of our town. In 2000 Gordon Youngman received the WHS Community Service Award for volunteering his time and efforts to better the community and its people.