

INTERVIEW WITH DR. JUNE SCHAEFER
AUGUST 25, 2010
GIFT OF SHIRAS PHOTOS TO NMU DEVOS ART MUSEUM

KORDICH, DIANE (DK): June, would you like to tell us about how your family got involved with the Shiras photos?

SCHAEFER, JUNE (JS): Sure, these photographs were included in the Squaw Beach cottage that is on Lake Superior in Big Bay, and when that cottage was purchased by Dr. Walter and Mrs. Margaret Schaefer, Walter and Margaret. They purchased the cottage from Gurn Webb and I don't know the year that that occurred but those (photos) were in the cottage and that was a part of the process. The pictures were to stay with the cottage. These pictures were, of course, all very special because of the early research, you know during the early days of having a flash and I don't know the history. I know that you can seek that history and that information. I'll share some-- another person that would probably have a lot of information (Jack Deo).

DK: And that would be flash at night, capturing animals in the dark (on photographic film).

JS: Absolutely, and of course as you'll notice they're of all different sizes. It's pretty phenomenal to see that. On the backs of the pictures, you'll have some dates that you'll notice when Gurn Webb would've loaned them to the Marquette Club for example.

DK: What was the Marquette Club?

JS: The Marquette Club was originally a club for men. I actually don't know the origins in the Marquette area. While we were-- while Fred was living, Fred became a member of the Marquette Club. At that point, women could come to the club, in the early stages of his membership. Women could come to the club like for fish fries on a Friday night and when they had certain kinds of dinners, but otherwise it was a Men's club. Later, I don't know what year this was, but it would've been before Fred died (July 28,

2001), that women were actually allowed to become members because I can remember them telling me about the first woman who became a member. So...

DK: So, did they have a clubhouse like the Federated Women did?

JS: No, well I don't know what they started with, but this one was at the top of what used to be the Depot downtown. I'm trying to think is that building still there? Maybe not. I'd have to think. I think that building was where... no it is still there, yes. If you think about behind, there's a one-way street you can come on and it's not the street where Getz's is but it's before that. It's before that, I mean this way. And there's a building, it looks like, I think there's a doctor's office is in there now. I think. Sandstone building?

DK: Is it between the law firm and the sewing place?

JS: The bank. You know where the bank is?

DK: Yes.

JS: And there you have a parking area in the back of it.

DK: Right...

JS: Okay, if you look behind there, there is a building back there. And I think now, that, I think there are doctor's offices. I haven't been in the building for years. But that was originally...

DK: Okay...

JS: That is where the Marquette Club was when we were here. But I don't know where it originated. There has to be some history in Marquette about that. Anyway, my husband Fred Schaefer was the son of Walter and Margret Schaefer. Dr. Schaefer, Dr. Walter Schaefer was a Professor here at Northern. I can't tell you the years because I wouldn't have known him. But there were three (professors), I think at the time, from what Fred's mother told me. There were three males who were in the science department and that would've been Dr. West, Dr. Hunt, and Dr. Schaefer. The Schaefer's moved here to

Marquette from the state of Washington because Fred's father had taught in colleges and universities but because of the war, he ended up having to go to a base in Texas. If I understand correctly from the history that I gleaned. During that era, they would've been down there. But, then they went to the state of Washington and he had been expecting to teach science (he's in the science area). Well, when they got there, or just prior to when their school year would've been starting, they had a fire. The building burned. So, in that process, I don't know in that era, how they would've been doing their communication (but I know Fred was very little, so he had nothing he could share with me) but Mom Schaefer used to tell me anyway that somehow or another because Dr. Schaefer was born in Madison, Wisconsin (lots of family there) -- somehow or another he must've known about Northern Michigan, which would've been Northern Michigan College, and found there was an opening. So, they got here as a family; I remember her telling me that they ended up in housing (was not easy to find) so they ended up living in a cottage down on Lake Superior where the Power Plant is on that area of the lake. There was a little cottage and they had to live there until they could find a house. Fred's two older sisters would've gone to school and I don't know that Fred was old enough yet or not. J.D. Pierce was the high school that all of them would've attended here in Marquette, Fred's sisters and himself as well. Eventually, they then found a home on the corner of Second and the street that comes down from the lake, straight up to the university. What is that, that street? And the Berry Events Center is on one side, you know what I mean.

DK: I will fill this in at a later date. Fair? It's Fair. I didn't realize you were going to ask me questions!

JS: No, that's okay. I was thinking I could remember but I didn't, the corner of Second and Fair; it's a grey house. It's still is the same color as what it was when Fred's mother died but they lived there. One of the things Fred always told me which I thought was so interesting, was that as a young child, (of course Fred's father died when he must've been in like later elementary school or elementary school). But he always told me...

DK: Which you think was about 1952?

JS: Somewhere thereabouts, because Fred would've been born, in I think it was 1942 (actually 1943... obituary), because I was born in '45 and I think he was born in '42. His birthday was April 20th anyway. I can look at his...

DK: That's okay.

JS: Death certificate and I can tell you that for sure. But his father had been a military man and so when he walked to school, even as a young child with his father, he said you always walked military style. I always thought that was interesting... and Fred was in the military later, so I guess he had been, prepared for that. Anyway, going back to the cottage and the pictures (photos), Fred and I were married in 1968. We had lived in Illinois for a little over a year when he was working. He was working down there with Montgomery Wards. Then, when we moved back here, he was transferred back to Marquette with Montgomery Wards in finance and so that's how we came back here. We lived in another house, then we are now. The cottage, for him, on Squaw Beach was always very, very special. His mother wanted him to have it and to take care of it (she was still living of course); she did not want to have to worry about it. It was just a really, very, very, very nice, very good sized place and had bird's eye maple floors. So, all these pictures were on the walls, just like they had been when it had been purchased by the Schaefer's from Gurn Webb. So, these Shiras prints were in a big open room and so they had those all throughout that room. That's how we ended up inheriting those photographs. Eventually, once we had moved back here and we lived in our other house for a while. We, eventually moved up there (Big Bay) and lived there year round. We were the second people on Squaw Beach to be living there year round; the road is a private road. The other couple that had lived there, they were right at the beginning of the road, so they didn't have to worry about snow plowing. But when we moved up to Squaw Beach, we bought an Ellis Chalmers tractor, because I grew up in dairy farms, so I knew enough that we needed a tractor with a big front end loader. My dad and brother, told Fred just what to get and we bought this

Ellis Chalmers tractor with a big huge snow-blower. We had a snow-blower and Fred absolutely loved doing that. What happened in fact was that we could open up the road to where we were, because we were about in the middle of Squaw Beach, on a private road, and there were cottages beyond us as well. But no one had been able to go up there during those winter months years before that. We moved up there during the high peak of snowmobiling. So, all of these fella's who had cottages down beyond us were just dying to be able to get up there with their snowmobiles. What Fred did with his tractor -- like I said, we had a huge snow blower-- he would, keep the road open for us. He created a section beyond (because we had three lots on the lake and three lots behind us) he created a big area where they could park with their pick-up trucks and their trailers with those snowmobiles. That was a high point of all those, you know, years...

DK: So, he's doing them a community service?

JS: Oh, and it was the high peak of what all of those folks wanted to do at that time. The other thing that was just really special about our place was because of this wide open-room and we had, Fred added an addition to it which was a two story addition. It was a perfect place for people to gather, so everyone who was up there on the weekends, they'd always... our house was just filled with people all the time. Those pictures were really, really special because no one else had ever seen them and so, it really became a focal point of the place, you know and having....

DK: Kind of a clubhouse!

JS: It was! It was the Squaw Beach Clubhouse! The Schaefer's, we'll do everything at the Schaefer's! Then in the summer's, Fred built a fire, or an outdoor kind of a fireplace/cook place, where he could cook. He loved to cook. So, as a result we had people in the summers as well. We had a lot of friends that, we were all kind of in that same age range and we called it F.T.E, and that was Friendship Takes Effort. We all enjoyed doing a lot of the same things. We were skiers (downhill skiers) and so forth. The place was frequented with a lot of extra folks all the time. A lot of times people staying over night and

whatever because of the distance. But those pictures were, like renowned because everybody, no matter how many times they had seen them, they always were like “Wow, these are just really precious.” I guess, we didn’t even probably appreciate how precious they were until everybody else would be so excited about them, you know. It really was special. When, we moved into Marquette, you know, we had originally had some of these on our walls here at 131 Prospect, where I’m living now. But, then we re-modeled this first floor and we took them down. Unfortunately, really during the last phases of the work that Fred was doing here (in fact he had one on the porch). He had one more spindle to put on and this is when his cancer was just getting, you know, he ended up with cancer really rather quickly. He had had surgery and thought everything was gonna go right but within six months, it just didn’t. So, he died on July 28th, 2001. But he put that last spindle on there and I discovered a little later that it’s one way at the end and it’s just a little turned from the others. I always felt that that was his mark that he left in his memory. But in honor, in memory of Dr. Walter Schaefer and Mom Schaefer, who was Margaret Schaefer, and my husband Fred I want to donate the Shiras photographs to the NMU Art Museum because of Fred’s father teaching there, of what they mean to the world and with Fred graduating from Northern, and myself as well.

Fred and I met in our senior year in the winter semester. We were both speech minors, he was in business (a major in business). He was working down at Penny’s. He was running the shoe department at Penny’s all through college; he worked there and ran that. He would come to class dressed in a suit because back then you wore suits when you worked. He was dressed in a suit everyday. There were three of us that were, no four of us that were upperclassmen, otherwise, that class was pretty much for speech majors. Many of the Speech Pathology majors had to take that right away; they would all sit in the back, you know. It’s that room below the old library. We were the only upperclassmen, the four of us, so we all sat in the front row all the time. So, that’s how I met him because we were sitting almost next to each other. That’s how we met each other and discussed what

was happening everyday. During that period of time is when he would've asked me out. Our first date was to go to the Mather Inn and have dinner in Ishpeming. I was a senior; I had put myself through school pretty much and was on scholarships. I didn't even know what I would wear to the Mather Inn, because in those days, the Mather Inn was the place to go. Of course, thank goodness, Fred gave me a little bit of a cue, but he, as a male, would wear a suit to the Mather Inn. So, I figured out I had one or two dress that I wore to church. You know, that wouldn't have been like the college skirts and sweaters we wore. So, I wore one of those dresses, I guess, that evening. I was so glad I did because I had never been there, so that was really exciting. It was really special. I have to tell you, later on when we became engaged we also went to dinner at the Mather Inn to celebrate. So, that was pretty special.

But, I think if you can look up in some of the Northern archives relative to Dr. Schaefer's death; I am assuming it might've been like the early 50s; it could've been about 1952. Mom Schaefer lived until her death on May 23rd in 2002. She actually died after Fred, I really don't know, I don't think she really ever realized that Fred was gone. It was okay because she was in the... I looked after her, I arranged all of the care for her and I really... she was such a special person. I really, really, really was very, very close to her. I arranged for care in her home and she was able to stay in her own home, right up with nursing services and someone living right with her. I was able to arrange for young people who were just really good caregivers, who understood to be there and stay 24 hours a day, you know. I mean they could go to work during the day but then we had nursing staff come in. It was so special that she could be in her home. So, it was only maybe 2 weeks, when we transferred her to Norlite Nursing Home. She wasn't there very long at all at Norlite and I was with her when she died. She was the epitome of a person who was just the most gracious woman and very active here in Marquette in the organizations that she had been very involved in. She was the ultimate of a mother-in-law and Fred was her special. She had three children and the two daughters that she had were both adopted, they were sisters. They were adopted as young children maybe 4 and 6 or something but Fred was adopted as an infant. So, she was very, very

caring and she herself had been adopted. When you think about that era, she grew up in Lake Mills, Wisconsin which is not too far outside of Milwaukee... outside of Madison. She really, really, really understood what it meant to have family. So, that was why it was so precious for me to have the relationship I did have with her for so long. She and I were just very close. So, this gift that I'm passing on is really a gift from the Schaefer's because I ended up with them. I thought that it would be most important that Northern should have this gift from them that was so special. They didn't have the opportunity to do it, given all of their deaths. So, I had the opportunity. So, I have that will be helpful.

DK: It is, and we thank you very much from the Devos Art Museum and Northern Michigan University.