

# Holly Evans interview

with  
Dorothy Grubb

ME: My name is Holly Evans I am doing a autobiographical interview with my aunt Dorothy Grubb. We are at her home in Ishpeming Township, and it is December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989.

ME: Where and when were you born?

Dorothy: I was born at Bell Memorial Hospital in Ishpeming on January 8<sup>th</sup> 1952. I was three months premature and I only weighed 2 lb. + 3 oz. and I was only 14 inches long. They put me in an incubator which killed the optic nerves behind my eyes which are the nerves which send the messages from your eyes to your brain. As a result of that I was totally blind but surprisingly I lived and they didn't expect that at all. (laughingly)

ME: What were your parents names?

Dorothy: My father's name was William Thomas Nicolas and my mother's name was IRMA IRENE.

ME: Did you have any brothers + sisters?

Dorothy: I have 2 brothers and one sister all of whom are older than I am. My oldest brother's name is Richard William

My other brothers name is Kenneth George  
and my sisters name is Beverly Jo.

Me: At what age did you begin school?

Dorothy: I began school the day before my fifth  
birthday. In January 1957 and I went to the  
Michigan school for the blind. So that I could  
learn brail and learn how to use a white cane  
and learn all the skills I needed to become  
independent.

Me: Where did you live when you were going to  
school?

Dorothy: It was a residential school, so you lived  
there ~~it was~~ there were dormitories and  
there were generally 2 girls to a room,  
you had your own bed but you shared  
a dresser, you shared a desk, each of  
you had half a closet and so there  
were dormitories like on a college  
campus and you had houseparents  
when we were little there were  
2 houseparents for about 24 kids.  
Then when you got a little older  
there was 2 houseparents for like  
36 kids then when you were in high school  
there was 1 houseparent for like 16  
girls.

ME! Where did you go to school?

Dorothy! Well there were school buildings on the campus and we walked from the dormitory to the building where we went to school and took our main classes. And then there was a gymnasium building which was a totally different building. In that building there was a gym and there was a swimming pool, and down the basement there was bowling allies so we could bowl and then the Home Ec. department and the music department were in another building. And the gymnasium and the Home Ec. Economics building were like a quarter of a mile apart and you only have ~~the~~ 5 minutes between classes when you get to high school. Sometimes you ran! (laughing)

ME! Would you rather have went to a special school or a regular school or a special school when you were young.

Dorothy! Well, when I was going to school if you had special needs, there wasn't any teachers here to teach me brail. And I would of never learned how to read and write. Now they have mainstreaming laws so that no matter what your problems happen to be you are supposed to be provided education in the county where you live so that you don't have to send your kids faraway to go to school but at that time those (3)

SERVICES WERE JUST NOT AVAILABLE AND THERE WAS TO MANY THINGS I WOULD HAVE NEVER OF LEARNED. I THINK MOST IMPORTANTLY I WOULD HAVE NOT HAVE LEARNED TO BE INDEPENDENT.

ME: WAS IT HARD BEING SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME?

Dorothy: Yea, SOMETIMES IT WAS, AND USUALLY I WAS SO BUSY I DIDN'T THINK TO MUCH ABOUT IT BUT SOMETIMES IT REALLY WAS AND I MISSED MY SISTER AND I MISSED MY BROTHERS A LOT, AND I CAN REMEMBER MISSING MY FAMILY + MISSING BEING WITH THEM, BUT I DIDN'T STAY AT THE SCHOOL ALL THE TIME. SOMETIMES ON WEEKENDS I WOULD GET TO GO HOME WITH GIRLFRIENDS TO THEIR HOUSES AND THAT WAS KIND OF FUN BECAUSE YOU GOT TO SEE ALL KINDS OF DIFFERENT FAMILIES, FROM ALL OVER THE STATE.

ME: HOW OFTEN DID YOU GET TO GO HOME?

Dorothy: CHRISTMAS, EASTER + SUMMER. CHRISTMAS + EASTER I'D FLY BACK + FORTH FROM THE TIME I WAS 6. BUT I REMEMBER THAT FIRST PLANE I WAS SCORED. (LOUGHS) I DIDN'T WANT TO GO ON THAT PLANE, BUT IN THE SUMMER I HAD ALL MY CLOTHES AND EVERYTHING I'VE HAD FOR THE WHOLE YEAR. AND SO THAT WAS TO MUCH TO TAKE ON THE AIRPLANE SO MY PARENTS WOULD COME AND GET ME AND BRING ME BACK IN THE FALL. PAGE 4

ME! What subjects did you have in school?

Dorothy! Well, in ELEMENTARY school I had basically what EVERYONE ELSE HAS in ELEMENTARY school now. Reading and writing and SOCIAL STUDIES, art, and GYM + Music. Then in JUNIOR HIGH we started having HOME EC. and it was also REQUIRED that in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade you take piano lessons. when you got into the 4<sup>th</sup> grade you could switch and take another instrument if you wanted to. There was a really good band in the school and the Band Director was totally blind and he taught EVERY instrument in the whole band. And there was in ORCHESTRA and you could take another instrument in highschool if you wanted and it was considered a subject. Instead of going after school for piano lessons and paying a lot of money you got to do that as a subject in school. In highschool you basically took courses EITHER to go to college or not to go to college. If you wanted to go to college then you had to take 2 years of a foreign language, ~~math~~ 2 years of algebra a year of geometry and it ~~wasn't~~ wasn't as specialized as it is now. page 5

ME: How did you get to school?

Dorothy: We walked from one building to another. It was kind of gradual you had to learn your way around the campus when you were really little when you first got there. I was really fortunate because I grew up with the campus. There were some buildings there when I was little and when I was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade they built a new Health Center which was a building where you went when you got sick. There were nurses there on duty all the time and ~~was~~ you stayed there when you were sick. When I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade they built the gym and when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade they built a new library building. So it was kind of like I grew up there as it enlarged it wasn't like learning the whole thing at once.

ME: What were the teachers like?

Dorothy: Most of them were really nice, the classes were a lot smaller especially in elementary school I think there were only like 8 or 9 kids to a classroom, there might be 3 first grades but each of them had only 8 or 9 students in it. I think it was like that so the students would get more individual attention in reading and writing. But for the most part we had nice teachers. page 6

Me! How were the kids expected to behave?

Dorothy! Well they had a lot of rules because there were 350 students in that school, and with a school that size and with kids from all over the state and these people were responsible for us you had to have a lot of rules. Even when we were really small we had to learn to make our beds. We had to make them before we went to school and I can remember one morning when I was in kindergarden I was on my way out the door to go to school and the houseparent called me back and said no, you have to many wrinkles in that ~~bed~~ blanket go back and fix it. So I went back and fixed it but then I got in trouble at school for being to school late. So it was strict, but thats the way it had to be. Even for snacks. It wasn't like we had a refrigerator to go to for a snack. When we were little the houseparent would give us one piece of candy and thats all you'd get cause it was in a locked closet so you couldn't get any even if you wanted it. When we were in highschool you still weren't supposed to have candy, chips or anything in your rooms, we did, but we weren't supposed to.

Me! Was there a certain way the kids were supposed to dress?

Dorothy! Yes, in highschool during school the girls couldn't wear socks or jeans. You ~~either~~ had to wear skirts or dresses and they had to be just below your knees. After school you could wear jeans or socks but you couldn't wear them to school.

Me! About how many kids finished highschool?

Dorothy! There were 33 students in my class and that was pretty big when you think that there were 350 students in the whole school but that was kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade so that was considered pretty big. I graduated when I was 17 and that was in 1969.

Me! Can you remember anything interesting or humorous about school?

Dorothy! We always made big jokes about the food in school I guess that hasn't changed from the food you guys eat in school but we ate 3 meals a day at school and I remember you could always tell when there was pancakes. I mean, one breath on you'd know oh, it's pancakes. Except we all ways called them burnt dish eggs because they were always, always burnt. I couldn't eat pancakes for many years after I got out of highschool. But some things they ~~used~~ cooked for us were really good.

Durothy! We had ~~the~~ this baker that was really good.

He made really good pie & chocolate chip cookies. And if they made bread in the morning when you went to lunch ch. ... you could eat like 4 to 5 pieces. So it wasn't all bad. And some kids like different things than others of course. And when you consider the school was a state fund at school and it didn't cost our parents anything to send us to school there. It was really miraculous, we could have all the milk we wanted. We didn't go hungry, I mean, we had 3 big meals a day our lunches were like supper. So we shouldn't of complained as much as we did actually. One time when I was in 6th grade, I can remember I heard it was the meat but who knows maybe it really wasn't. One time in the night about half the school got sick and there wasn't enough room in the health center for us all to even go over there so half of us spent the next day in our dormitories when it was really a school day we weren't sick for very long. I don't know somebody said it was the meat but I don't know if it really was. One thing that was really humorous on the campus was that if anybody got in trouble with the dean or anybody needed to go to the health center they had a intercom system throughout the whole campus.

inside every building and outside every building so  
if they paged you for something the whole  
world knew. (laughs) When I was a senior  
in high school in fact it was only a few  
days before graduation. Over the whole campus  
they asked for me to come to the super-  
intendents office immediately. And nobody got  
sent to the super ~~intendents~~ office, never.  
If you got in trouble in the classroom your  
teacher would send you down to the principals  
office. And if you got in trouble after school  
the ~~student~~ house parent would write out this  
little memorandum and you might have to go see the  
dean of students but nobody ever saw the  
superintendent. And I thought oh no what did  
I do now, Graduation is in a days what  
could I have done. So I walked into his  
office and said "you wanted to see me." He  
said yes that he had something for me. I could  
not imagine what was in his mind and I  
said before when I had Christmas & Easter  
vacation I would fly home on a plane and  
when I was 4 years old flying home for  
Thanksgiving because I had to get my tonsils  
out. I had to transfer planes in Green Bay &  
the ~~st~~ stupidest just happen to ask the  
gentlemen on the plane that was  
transferring, if he could help me. page 10

Dorothy: And in so doing, The stewardess and this passenger  
started talking and as a result of their  
getting acquainted they started dating eventually  
they got married and had seen the name  
of all the graduates in the newspaper  
in Lansing, and somehow they had remembered  
my name, for all these years and they sent  
this letter to the super intendent thanking  
my because they said because of me they  
met and had 3 sons. They also ~~sent~~ sent  
me a 25 dollar savings bond for graduation.

Me: What sort of things did you do in school for  
fun?

Dorothy: Well, 4 nights a week they had what they  
called social hour and it was run by the  
juniors half the year and seniors the other  
half of the year. You couldn't do this  
till you got in to the 4th grade but  
then you could go, it was like 45 minutes  
long, and they played records so you could  
dance, and they even had a snack bar  
which sold pop + chips + candy etc. Then  
we had recreation too, we could go  
roller skating, swimming, bowling and  
sometimes there were dances. Dances were  
like one a month.

Dorothy! Each class ~~was~~ had a certain dance like I think the 8<sup>th</sup> grade had the Valentine's dance and ~~that~~ that meant that you did all the decorations and you planned the refreshments and that kind of thing. That started in 4<sup>th</sup> grade ~~to~~ too, when we were really little I know that we had house-parents that used to tell us stories at night and make us popcorn. I remember ~~one~~ one lady that used to tell us stories about Bessy the cow, she must of had them from a book. But we used to like those.

Me: What were your special hobbies?

Dorothy: Well, I liked to read a lot. I remember getting in trouble one time because I had been reading too many library books and they were going to take my library privileges away, when I was about in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, because I neglected to do some homework and read a library book instead. (laughs) When you didn't live with your parents there wasn't anybody there to say "Did you do your homework." You had to learn early that either you did it on your own or you got an E.

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Dorothy: The houseparents did not have to come around and ask every kid if they did their homework. It was really up to you to learn responsibility early. But I liked to read. (laughs) and I played house like other little girls when I was little. We used to play games.

Me: What sort of games did you play?

Dorothy: When we were really little there wasn't much available, we'd play hide and seek, Mother May I and stuff that kids play today. When I got older and learned how many braille games were available, there is all kinds of games with braille um, I have braille cards, Monopoly + Scrabble, where everything is braille.

Me: After or during highschool what was your first job?

Dorothy: When I was a sophomore in highschool they started giving jobs to kids at school, like after school, I worked in the office for the dean of students. I used to type for him just like addresses on envelopes and things. The fun stuff was when he let me type MEMORANDUMS I CAN REMEMBER HE HAD ME TYPE ONE TO SOME SENIOR.

boys one day because he thought their room was a MESS. I thought that was funny. (laughs) The days I really liked working for him though were Fridays because ~~he~~ him and his secretary would both take groups of kids to the bus station. There were a lot of kids who would go home every weekend or ~~every~~ every other weekend, they lived like in Detroit or close to the school and then I kind of got to run the office. Not that I did a whole lot but I took phone messages and stuff. I thought that was kind of neat to be the only one in the office. That he would trust me with that responsibility when I was like 15. And we got payed \$1.25 an hour which at that time was minimum wage and boy, we thought we were rich.

Me! Did you enjoy your first job?

Darshy! Yea, I liked it. It was a good experience it was frustrating at times but I liked it. It was a good experience for me.

Me; how long did you have that job?

Darshy! About half a year because it started in about the middle of the year until the end and then the next school year they interviewed kids from all over for the different positions. So they would have a chance.

ME: What sort of job did you have after highschool?

Dorothy: Well, I worked as a Medical Transcriptionist after

I went to school to do so. I worked as a Medical Transcriptionist for 5 ~~so~~ years full time and 2 more years part time at a Large Hospital in Lansing, Michigan. It was called St. Lawrence Hospital. As a Medical Transcriptionist I typed reports from the doctors they were not dictaphone machine but kind of like one. They would record their different operations that they would do. Dr. if somebody was admitted into the hospital they always had to do a history + Physical on that person. I would also type discharge summaries when someone got sent home. It was a good job but a lot of stress you had to know lots of names of drugs and medical terminology and I had to type for over 100 doctors and some of them were really easy to type for and some of them weren't. Some doctors were from different countries so their accents were really hard to understand sometimes. It was hard to type for them. But I enjoyed it.

ME: Did you get married?

Dorothy: Yup, I got married when I was 23 on June 1<sup>st</sup> of 1974 and I was married for almost 12 years.

ME: Did you have any kids?

Dorothy: I have a daughter and her name is Nicole Marie. ~~over~~ she is 10 years old and in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and she goes to North Lake Elementary school.

ME: Was it hard to take care of her when she was baby.

Dorothy: Not really, the only thing that scared me was cutting her fingernails I was really scared to do that. ~~It was~~ ~~scary~~ ~~to~~ ~~do~~ ~~that~~ But other than that it wasn't hard. When she was little I put bells on her shoes, so I could hear. When we went outside I had a rule that she always had to hold my hand so that she wouldn't run out into the street.

ME: When you walk do you use a dog or a white cane?

Dorothy: I use a white cane now. I used a leader dog for 3 years when I got out of school, I went to Northern Michigan University for a year when I got out of highschool and then I got a leader dog. He worked really well especially in Lansing when I lived in Lansing. I could go out at night and go anywhere and people were afraid of him so they would leave me alone. I would be afraid to that with just a white cane in a big city. But now I use a white cane. My dog just got tired of working, he ~~was~~ wanted to be a dog I think. (laughs)

Me: Since you have moved to Ishpeming do you think you like it living in a small town or in a large city?

Dorothy: I really like a small town. We moved back here 4 years ago and I think its a lot safer in a small town and I like the idea that you get to know your neighbors, and you get to know the people a lot better. There's also not as much crime as there is in a large city. The school systems are smaller even the Junior High when we lived in Lansing, Nikki was in kindergarten when we lived in Lansing and I was already thinking that I didn't want her to go to Junior High there. Because there was to much racial trouble and things you don't have in a small town like this.

Me: Are you employed now?

Dorothy: Yes, I work part time for the Library for the Blind which is part of Superior Cooperative in Marquette and I call all the patrons of Library. We have books on cassette tape and books on records which are called talking books and books in large print for some people that have some vision but not enough vision to read regular print. So I call the patrons of the Library to see if they need any assistance and to see if their machines are working properly, or if they have any specific requests for books. I also go to classes and speak to students and I talk to them about braille and talk to them about blindness and mostly about the fact that you can do any thing you want to do if you put your mind to it.

Me: What are your other interests now?

Dorothy: I love to bake and cook and I like to do latchhooks even though I haven't done anything like that for a while. I enjoy swimming in the summer. I like to go for walks. I correspond with over 50 people by tape and some of these people have just gone blind and they need help learning to do things without their sight. Some of them, like me, are now single parents dealing with raising their kids on their own and so we share ideas about children and some people just are lonely and they don't have a lot of friends and so I enjoy corresponding with people. I still enjoy reading a lot. I'm very involved in my church and I teach the women's group in my church and that also keeps me very active right now I am in the process of trying to become a foster parent. That's been a goal for me for a while now. I think that that would add a great deal to my life and also my daughter's life.

Me: Do you have any other particular goals?

Dorothy: In my life I hope to help others through my own experiences and ~~base~~ basically that's my ambition and help my daughter to become an independent and productive citizen.

Me: Thank you for your time and helping with Red Dust interviews.

~~Thank you~~  
Dorothy: Your welcome. Thank you for asking me.