

# Tales told of the old times of gold

By Judith Doner Berne  
staff writer

Louie Lawton's moving appeal to the West Bloomfield school board to save Scotch Elementary School last month added a chapter to the Lawton family's chronic struggle for quality education.

"If you close it, you divide our community more than anything that has happened in 60 years," she said to the applause and cheers of her neighbors.

She and her sister, Bessie Weatherston, are longtime residents of the Scotch area, still living in the house on Green Lake to which their family moved in 1922.

"The story of our lives is trying to get people educated," Bessie said.

Their mother — a former teacher — fought against children drinking well water from a single cup at the old frame school on the Scotch grounds back in the '20s. She also was concerned about fencing the school to protect students from test drivers speeding up and down unimproved Commerce Road from the General Motors proving ground in Milford.

Until these changes were made, she withdrew her children to Walled Lake schools.

LATER, SHE persuaded her husband to run for the Scotch school board to combat a move to oust the old-fashioned teacher who taught the basics and kept order in the two-room school for grades 1-8.

Some people wanted it to be an open school, and to allow the children more expression, Louie recalled. "A lot of people now would opt for those methods."

George M. Lawton won the election, serving on the school board for many years.

The sisters recall a type of latchkey program. The custodian had the children help him clean blackboards and clip the grass until their parents got home.

As for co-curricular activities, there was 4-H, and a boys' club started by their mother.

And it didn't take a federal law to

get equal sports for girls, according to the sisters.

"You didn't have a girl's thing and a boy's thing," Louie said. "I was captain of the baseball team. The worst ones played the outfield."

AFTER EIGHTH grade, students had the option of attending high school in Walled Lake, Keego Harbor or Pontiac, with the local school district paying tuition, but not transportation.

To the Lawtons, Pontiac High School — although farthest away — was the only choice. It was the only one which was accredited.

There, teachers, impressed with the skills of the five Lawton children, would say, "I bet you come from Scotch school," according to Bessie.

Bessie went on to get a mathematics degree from the University of Michigan and a teacher's certificate from Wayne State University. Louie got her undergraduate degree at Wayne and a law degree from Detroit College of Law.

The two ran their father's insurance agency until they sold it in 1979.

THE SISTERS worked for the consolidation of the West Bloomfield School District in 1949. It was composed of Scotch Grade School (315 students), Roosevelt Grade School (610 students), Roosevelt High School (200 students), Green Grade School (93 students) and Homer School (not used).

The district also included a Keego Harbor Community Center and the Keego Athletic Field.

"The schools deteriorated before and after consolidation," Louie said. At the time, the school system was offering such poor education that Bessie sent her son to school in Detroit.

Even after consolidation, "Scotch wasn't doing the job," they recalled. So they spearheaded a Scotch School Citizens Group study which led to the school district's hiring non-accredited teachers who could be paid less and were at the virtual mercy of the school board — for fear of being fired for lack of credentials.



Sisters Bessie Weatherston (left) and Louie Lawton have watched the Scotch area develop over the years. They still live

in a house on Green Lake. Louie actively fought to keep open Scotch Elementary School last month.

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## Search is launched for energy appointees

Farmington Hills has several openings on its city energy committee.

Any Farmington Hills resident interested in becoming a member of the committee should send a letter, by March 25, with a brief resume to: Mayor, City of Farmington Hills, 31555 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, 48018, Attn: Energy Committee.

Formed in 1980, the committee reviews current energy conservation means and promotes the latest energy conservation tips and techniques. Meetings are scheduled for the first Tuesday of each month.

In addition to films, lectures and

other informational presentations, this year the energy committee will serve as the steering committee in working with the city staff in administering the Department of Commerce Energy Administration grant which the city applied for and got.

The overall project involves the energy consumption analysis of small businesses with recommendations on how to conserve. Also, residents will have an opportunity to view thermograms (infrared pictures) of their homes which will reflect where heating and cooling are escaping. Both these programs will be free.

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