

## Treasured Films She Never Saw – Until Now

A benefit of being town historian is the opportunity to meet people I would otherwise never know, and to hear stories of our residents that deserve to be told. When the puzzle pieces of our local history present enough clues, I often knock on a door for the rest of the story. That's how I met Leona.

Born in the fall of 1918 on a small Jefferson Avenue farm, Leona Sharp was one of several children of Elmer and Margaret Sharp. Leona attended Fairport schools, and graduated with the class of 1937. Along the way she became friends with classmate Bob Kramer of Baird Road. After graduation, each found work, he with Eastman Kodak and she at Bausch and Lomb.



*Leona Sharp Kramer and Robert Kramer, May of 1943*

Recently a descendent of Bob Kramer contacted me, having heard my pleas that we not allow precious old photographs and documents to disappear into dumpsters and landfills. It seems the Kramer family had a small box of 16mm movie films that belonged to Bob Kramer from the late 1930s. Each film was stored in a can, each can in an Eastman Kodak box, stamped "Research Laboratory Test Film". I had the films, dated 1938 and 1939, digitized for viewing on a computer. Surprisingly, all were photographed in color, probably because Kramer had access to the research labs as a Kodak chemist.

Many of the subjects of Bob Kramer's films were local scenes, including Main Street, the railroad, canal shots, and the high school from which he and Leona recently graduated. While his immediate family was often the subject of the films, it was girlfriend Leona Sharp who was most frequently photographed. The films show Bob and Leona visiting local places, such as Fairport High School, Cobbs Hill, the Center Cemetery on Ayrault Road, and having fun with friends along the canal.

Bob Kramer enlisted in the Army Air Force on March 11, 1942, and received training as a pilot. Soon the couple planned a wedding, even with the sobering reality of war in Europe. Leona M. Sharp and Robert P. Kramer were married on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1943. A few months later, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Kramer was dispatched to Europe, the pilot of a Flying Fortress. As he flew over his hometown one last time, he spotted his wife and family and wagged his wings.

Lieutenant Kramer's plane was shot down over Germany almost 72 years ago, leaving a widow, just 25 years old. After viewing Bob Kramer's films, I wondered what happened to the girl so prominently featured in them. I found her in her hometown, and learned that Leona persevered, and has lived a full and rewarding life. We watched the films together, along with Bob Kramer's youngest brother and his daughter. Although the movies are over 75 years old, Leona smiled as she watched them for the first time.

*Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian*

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