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In depth interview with newsmakers

by Patti Holdraker

Debbie Williamson

Seamstress/Interior Designer
Window Treatment Specialist



Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I grew up in South Buffalo. I attended Catholic schools and graduated from Mt. Mercy Academy (an all girl school) in 1972. I played Title 9 girls sports in high school: basketball, volleyball, and softball.

Tell me about your parents and siblings.

My mom and dad were Lois and Wally Duke. They raised 9 of us - Paul, Thomas, Bobby, Jane, Kate, Lois, myself, Mary Beth, and Jack. My oldest brother is now 78 and my youngest is 51.

Dad worked for Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna, until he retired. My mother worked as a waitress to help send her kids to Catholic schools. There were sometimes layoffs at Dad's work and mom worked even harder. I guess we were lower middle class, but I don't remember it being bad. Each of us, in our way, helped to raise the younger ones.

What did you think you wanted to be when you grew up?

I remember wanting to be a teacher. My father was of the opinion that girls should be secretaries, nurses or teachers. I had no plans for college.

After high school, I got a job at an insurance company, which lasted about 3 months. Then I took the Civil Service test and got a job with Erie County Public Health Department. I worked there 7 years, as a clerk/typist, then typist, and then principal typist. I stayed in that job until I married and moved to Wayne County.

How did you meet your husband?

In 1976, when I was playing in an adult softball league, I met Phil Wil-

lamson. He was coaching and I was the left-handed left fielder. We hit it off. Phil and I married in 1977 and moved into a townhouse in Hamburg, New York. While I continued to work at the Health Department, Phil had a job with Marine Midland Bank in Rochester (later it was HSBC). He commuted for two years. We had our first child, daughter Andrea in 1979, and when she was about 6 months old, Phil heard about a great place to live, outside of Rochester, called Gananda. It was a new housing development in Wayne County in the Town of Walworth. I loved it right away. It was one of the best places to raise kids. All the moms knew each other, we had kids together, and we were there for each other. When our son Philip was born in 1984, I remember that my neighbors brought meals for my family for weeks.

Did you work when the children were young?

Not outside the home. But I made up little sheets of paper that said Sewing and Alterations. I have been sewing since I was about 14, so I thought that was something I could do and make a little money around the development.

How did you get interested in sewing?

A girlfriend from grammar school, who is still my friend, had a mother who sewed. I remember asking Mrs. Craven if she could show me how. She showed me a little, and then I would borrow my sister Kate's sewing ma-

chine, and I taught myself. I remember telling my friends Moms that I would sew dresses for them for \$5.00. Whenever there was a party, I got orders.

When we were dating, Phil bought me a really nice Bernina Sewing Machine, which I still own. It is Swiss-made and even thought it is though it is 38 years old, it's great. I now own two of them; they hold their value.

After a while, I wanted to do a little more with my sewing, and I realized that Gananda homes needed lots of window treatments, so I added that skill to my sewing expertise.

I unofficially began doing window treatments in 1980, but in 1989, I started my business Treatments for Your Panes. In 1991, I added shades and blinds, hooking up with Hunter Douglas and becoming a Priority Dealer. I have their complete line available to sell and the training to install. My husband Phil with the Drill is my installer. He also helps with my bookkeeping, while keeping his full time job as Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Walworth. I use him as my subcontract helper. I could not do any of this without him.

What if you get overwhelmed with work?

I have a friend who also does window treatments, and we barter work with each other. I hired a high schooler, Delaney Roach (She is no longer a high schooler) to help with...well, the stuff I didn't want to do or can't find time to do. She sort and labels my fabric samples and organizes things, and helps me with computer work. With Phil's help we have done Gerber Home window treatments for 9 Homearamas. I have done work for Penfield Country Club, Blue Heron Hills Golf Club, and Home Properties. We did 500-700 mini blinds at The Gardens Senior Living Home in Walworth, and blinds for 1500 Home Leasing properties in Auburn.

Do you have time for anything things besides work?

I always wanted to go to college. So, when Philip started kindergarten, I enrolled at MCC part time, and got my Associates Degree in Interior Design in 1992. In 1994, I received by Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Management from Roberts Wesleyan College.

I learned to golf 29 years ago, when

Blue Heron Hills opened in Gananda. I even had the status of Club Champion for 3 years running in the '90s. The Club was semi-private then and we belonged for many years. Then I had a three year bout with severe tendonitis and we did not join. We are now members again. I love to golf. I have belonged to Gananda PTA, BNI - a networking group, the Macedon Chamber of Commerce, and I am a member of the WCAA (Window Covering Association of America). I have taught nationally in 2011 and 2012 in Louisville. We have belonged to the Church of the Assumption in Fairport for the last 10 years. I am a communion minister, and both Phil and I have been Stephen Ministers.

Who would you say was the greatest influence in your life?

My mother was. She was always very strong and determined. Raising 9 kids, she worked like crazy. She lost her mother at a very young age and helped to raise her siblings. Mom always found a way for us to vacation in the Summer at Sunset Bay in Silver Creek, NY on Lake Erie. I don't know how we did it...all of us kids in a little cottage, AND we were allowed to bring a friend. We thought it was the best place on earth...with an amusement park and pavilion and so much to do.

What do your children do now?

Philip, who is 32 is married. He and his wife Nicole live in Rochester and he works for Quest Diagnostics, as a Strategic Account Executive, consulting on Health Care. Andrea, now 37, is a veterinarian, working for Mendon Village Animal Hospital and has her own business, Mendon Integrative Veterinary Medicine, which is an alternative therapy and rehabilitation business for animals.

What, to you, is the meaning of life?

Stuff doesn't mean anything to me. I don't care about big houses and cars. Things are not important. Doing for others is what I care about. I have read, and was moved by this: When you find yourself in the position to help someone, be happy and feel blessed because God is answering that person's prayer through you. Our purpose on earth is not to get lost in the dark, but to be a light to others so they may find their way through us.

People News

The following local students were named to the Dean's List at Paul Smith's College during the fall 2015 semester. Each earned a semester average of 3.3 or higher to receive this distinction: **Shane Garlock** of Pultneyville, N.Y.; **Averie Riel** of Walworth, N.Y.; and **Nicholas Verden** of Macedon, N.Y.

Kailee Spusta of Macedon graduated from DeSales University in Fall of 2015. She was to be part of the January graduation ceremony that never happened. For the third time in its history, DeSales University's mid-year commencement was cancelled on Saturday, January 23, because of snow. Graduates will receive their diplomas and a program from the ceremony in the mail, and all graduates are invited to walk in the May 2016 commencement. Kailee received her MPA, Physician Assistant degree from DeSales.

The pursuit of academic excellence during the fall 2015 semester at the University of Akron (UA), Ohio's Polytechnic University was truly inspiring. **Caroline Hasse** of Werder, Germany, is one of those outstanding individuals. Hasse, a full-time undergraduate student majoring in Psychology, earned a perfect 4.0 semester grade point average for fall 2015.

SUNY New Paltz student **Krista Vermeersch** of Newark, NY is part of The State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz Women's Swim Team. SUNY New Paltz was one of 130 women's swimming teams across NCAA Division III to be named a College Swimming Coaches Association of America (CSCAA) Scholar All-America Team for the fall of 2015, as announced by the CSCAA.

Sarah Blejwas of Macedon has been named to the Dean's List at John Carroll University for the fall 2015 semester. Students eligible for the Dean's List must have completed a minimum of 12 semester hours within one semester and have a quality grade point average of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Local Students Named to the Dean's List for Fall 2015 at The College of Saint Rose include: **Aleksandra Dewa** of Newark, and **Lauren Modzelewski** of Marion. Full-time students who complete a minimum of 12 credit hours and achieve a semester grade-point average of at least 3.5 with no grades of D, F, Incomplete or Pass/Fail are eligible for the Dean's List.

Zachary Weber of Williamson, N.Y., graduated from Paul Smith's College in December 2015. Weber earned a bachelor of science degree in natural resources management and policy from Paul Smith's, which is located in the Adirondack Park in upstate New York.

Maggie Selner of Palmyra has achieved placement on the Dean's List at the SUNY College of Brockport for the Fall 2015 semester. Maggie is a 2009 graduate of Palmyra-Macedon High School, and is the daughter of David and Donna Selner. She is pursuing a second Bachelor's Degree in Nursing at this time. She currently has a Bachelor's Degree from SUNY Geneseo. Maggie hopes to be a labor and delivery nurse.

Doran Brandt of Sodus Point, a 2011 graduate of Sodus Central, and a student at Niagara University has been selected as one of 11 from NU's prestigious College of Hospitality and Tourism Management to partake of the NFL Experience at Super Bowl 50 in Levi Stadium on February 7th in the San Francisco, California.

During the students' six days on the West Coast, they will get a first hand look at what goes into organizing one of the world's largest sporting events. This is the 7th year in a row that Niagara University has sent students to the Super Bowl. On Super Bowl Sunday, the sport and recreation management majors will work with NFL -On Location- at a sold-out pre-game VIP party adjacent to Levi's Stadium. On Super Bowl Sunday, the students will serve in numerous hospitality positions inside Levi's Stadium where more than 70,000 fans are expected to see the NFL crown a champion. An additional 120 million viewers are projected to watch the game on television. The NU group will return home February 9, about 36 hours after the Panthers or Broncos hoist the Vince Lombardi Trophy.



Marion Historic Association Highlights of 2015

The year 2015 came and went as all years do. I filed requests for information, from all directions of the country, took time to research and answer with questions about cemetery records and early school remembrances topping the list.

The following is a list of programs and showings I presented at our Marion Museum and Jennie's House during 2015:

- February 14 Early Games
- April 12 1926 Marion Enterprise Newspaper
- May 25 Memorial Day
- July 11 Mary Ann Tearoom
- September 12 Scrapbooks
- October 10 My Homemade Jellies
- December 5 Holiday Open House

Just as a note: The specialty at the Mary Ann Tea Room (in the 30's) was their custard pie - people came from a distance for this treat.

My jellies included: Green Pepper Jelly, Corn Cob Jelly, Queen Anne's Lace Jelly, and Currant Jelly from my own currant bushes!

On October 10, I entertained my Red Hat group at Jennie's House serving samples of my homemade Jellies. (since we have no electricity there I schedule my showings during summer months).

Our Town's mural was uncovered in August of 2015. It is very colorful and represents all of the fruits and vegetables grown here and the Newark-Marion train that allowed our crops to be shipped out of Marion.

Our Holiday open house was on December 5. I showed a collection of

Monopoly games loaned by my grandson, Justin Devlin. Guests enjoyed plates of warmed Chocolate Bread Pudding with a sweet topping.

The two planned projects for 2015 did not happen:

1. Cleaning out the garage at Jennie's House
2. Replacement of the side porch Perhaps this year!

Carolyn Adriaansen, Town Historian

Marion Historic Association Calendar

- 2016 MARION MUSEUM PRESENTATIONS
- February 15 10:00 to 11:00 AM Marion's Birthday
 - April 9 10:00 to 11:00 AM Tulip Tree
 - May 30 10:00 AM Memorial Day
 - July 2 10:00 to 11:00 AM Picnic @ Jennie's House
 - September 10 11:00 to 12:00 PM Marion Schools
 - October 15 10:00 to 11:00 AM Pumpkin Recipes @ Jennie's House
 - December 3 10:00 to 2:00 PM Holiday Open House
- OR BY APPOINTMENT, CALL 926-4436
- Annual Membership Dues:
Individual: \$7.00, Family \$10.00
Treasurer: Carol Kearns,
3635 Palmyra Road, Marion
926-4445

The Lyons Public Library is holding a drawing for its "Keep Calm & Color Basket" on Fri., Mar. 4. There are many reasons to color: for fun, childhood memories, relaxation, creativity and improving mental alertness. The basket contains everything needed for a relaxing time: Zen Doodle Coloring Book, Globe Pencil Sharpener, 8 Colored Pens, 12 Colored Pencils, 20 Colored Markers, Box of 64 Crayola Crayons, 1 Folder of Coloring Pages, 1 Folder for Completed Pages, 2 Cinnamon Bun Candles, 1 Box of Chamomile Tea, 4 Packets Hot Chocolate, 1 Large Mug. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5. For more information, contact the Library at 315-946-9262 or email lyonslibrary@owl.org.

