Appledorn, Barbara J Oral History Interview: Tulip Time

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The Hope College Oral History Project for 1995
The Joint Archives of Holland

Interview #10
Mrs. Barbara Appledorn
The Oral History of Tulip Time

Conducted by:
Jason Valere Upchurch
26, June 1995
The Oral History of Tulip Time
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- Interview with Barb Appledorn @ Hope Van Wylen Library
- 229 West 20th Street / Holland, MI
- June 26, 1995
- Interviewer: Jason Valere Upchurch

Begin Tape 7: Side A

BA: Barbara Appledorn. I was born in Muskegon, Michigan, and my birth is [date removed], thirty-six.

JVU: What is the nature of your association with Tulip Time?

BA: I am Dutch dance coordinator right now for Tulip Time, and I just finished my sixth year doing that. What that is, it coordinates the High Schools and alumni. It's sort of like I sit between the board and [them].

JVU: This question sort of deals with the same thing, but in a little more detail. What areas of the festival have you attended or been involved with?

BA: Well, I was Dutch dance director for Holland High School for eleven years if that's what you mean, and after I left there I was an official tour guide. I've also danced with the teachers group out of Holland High School for many years, and then when Betty Dick retired—who was the coordinator for all the schools and alumni—they asked me if I would take her job over. I'm also associated with the Christmas things, like Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates and all that. So, I've just completed my twenty-third year with all sorts of things with Tulip Time.

JVU: What else can you tell me about Betty Dick?

BA: Betty Dick was a very good friend of mine. She had been associated with Tulip Time for I don't know how many years, and when I came in as Dutch dance director, Betty Dick... in other words it was Gary Feenstra who was principal at our school at the time—at Jefferson School—and he is now superintendent over at Zeeland, and he came to me and said, "Barb, there's just the job
opening for you."

I'd always had a big dance background, and things like this, and he said the Dutch dance director job was opening up over at Holland High School. So, I went over and applied for it, and I got it because really no one else wanted it. [laughs] Because at that time, you had like twenty-five groups coming out of Holland High School; twelve in a group. Betty Dick then called me, because I had always had Betty Dick's daughter in dancing--I used to teach at [name] dance studio here in Holland--so she called, and she said, "Barb, you know, we really need someone with your big dance background." So I've worked with Betty for many, many years, and she had done so many things. She had also--and like I do to--you work with the costume directors, Dutch dance directors and things like this type. She passed away just last year.

But I also got her husband involved, Len, this year. He's still doing the same things like taking my wooden shoes that the girls carry through the parade. He went to all the parade marshals, and took them down there, and stuff like that. I don't know exactly what you'd like to know about Betty. She was a dear, and she always oversaw all of the Dutch dance directors and of course when she came in as Dutch dance director, or Dutch dance coordinator, when she came in, there was really only West Ottawa and Holland, and that was like twenty-some years ago. Then, after that, came Holland Christian, and then Zeeland and then Hamilton. Originally, when she was in it, it really entailed probably . . . well probably just Holland High, then West Ottawa came in.

JVU: Was she still active when all the schools began having Dutch dance groups.

BA: Yes. Yes she was. In fact she was in through the whole thing, through all of the schools coming in. I remember even going with her when Hamilton came in, and we went to talk to them. So, she was here from the very beginning. When I say very beginning, I mean . . . well, she used to dance also, for Holland
High School, because that was the only school that was in. That was the only school that was in, and then she danced for them, and then later on she sat on the board too. Then, when West Ottawa came in, and Holland Christian came, and that was right about the time that I came in—twenty-three years ago or something like that—that’s when she became Dutch dance coordinator. It was somewhere’s between twenty years ago and twenty-three years ago.

JVD: Do you know what might be some of the things she started, and that maybe you continued to do after you began, that changed the Dutch dance groups at all; brought them to where they are now?

BA: Well, first of all, like I answered before, there was only one school in (Holland High), and then West Ottawa came in, and then in more recent years, Holland Christian came in. I do know one thing that she started: She and my sister-in-law, Anne Appledorn-Mulder, started the alumni dancers. It started out like with one or two groups, and now, this year, there are sixty-one High School groups, and there are fifty-five alumni groups. She and my sister-in-law had started that, and in fact when I was married in 1960, I had really wanted to be able to be part of it, but I couldn’t because I was not a High School dancer. Even though Anne, who was my sister-in-law, I still couldn’t become a dancer. That was fine, but certainly the person who can’t stay in the Hotel, so they go out and buy it. [laughs] I was sort of like the person who couldn’t [because of age, not ability] dance, so I went out and taught it. [laughs]

I sort of earned my right to dance, but now what they have, and what I teach right now: when I came in, and this is the change, when I came in as Dutch dance coordinator, the Tulip Time board came to me and said there were many, many people who want to dance and become a part of this. So, in 1991 or 1992—I can’t remember the exact date—what we started was The Community Dancers. What that was: it was sort of the people that fell through the cracks. Maybe they were in High School, but they
were in band, maybe they broke their leg, maybe whatever, they were never able to do it. Maybe they’ve lived in Holland for twenty-some years, and still not been able to do it. So then, what I did, I started the community dancers and we’ve had two groups that have gone through so far. This coming year will be another group that will be coming through, then I said, "Stop it for a while." So, we’ve had . . . we will have three groups this coming year. We started in 1992, then we waited two years, then we had another group come through, and then we didn’t do it this year, and next year we’ll do it. We have about enough for four groups that come through each time. Then, they become alumni dancers, and they’re trained just like your brand new dancers in High School. They’re taught the dance. We have a costume director for alumni, Wendy Branderhorst, and she comes in and talks to them about costuming. We set them up with their dress makers if they don’t want to do it, and things of this type.

JU: Can you describe for me any changes you’ve noticed in the Tulip Time festival over the years?

BA: Oh, yes. When I originally was involved and even watched Tulip Time; the parades have changed. I remember I used to go with my son who was then very, very little--now he’s like thirty-two or thirty-three years old--in that time, the parade routes were much shorter. It was only a four day festival, and now it’s ten days. Shows that used to be like Lawrence Welk and a few community shows. Now, this year, there was Smothers Brothers, or we’ve had Tammy Wynette. That’s extended a lot. The ten days is a wonderful thing. We start out at Kollen Park, which never did that before with wonderful fireworks display and this. It also gives the people a chance to come in and see Tulip Time without all the parades, but to see the tulips and it’s a more relaxed atmosphere. You spread out your groups that way.

Tulip Time: they used to have their office down the Civic Center, and now they’re down [at] the Train Station, which is a wonderful place. It started out . . . I remember even with Dutch Dancers . . . well first of all, it started out with one
school, now we have five schools involved. I do about forty contracts a year where the Dutch dancers go out all over the country. I’ve been in Washington, D.C., New York City; we’ve been in the Carolinas, we’ve been all over. That’s extended too, where we used to have a couple groups go out to a couple different parades, and now we have them going out all over. State, locally, nation-wide.

Also, we used to do it sort of by the seat of our pants—I did anyway, and I think most people did. Like, I can remember getting the Dutch dancers started at one end of the parade route, and hopping on my bicycle and riding like mad down to the other end, running in a house or maybe a convenient store, and watching to see when the Dutch dancers were coming, then calling on the telephone up to where the music . . . where that was all being lead, saying, "Turn the tapes on now." Now we have things like walkie talkies, this year I had a cellular phone. [laughs] You know, we’ve really gone up into the nineties, but when I think back how we used to do that.

I used to work a lot through Nels Bosman, a wonderful, fine gentleman—and I hope his name and Betty Dick’s come up a lot because they did so much for Tulip Time. Nels Bosman was the very kindly, dear gentleman that used to . . . that I worked with all the time with sound. In fact, I always start to get choked up when I talk about him, because he was always there for me. We have a wonderful gentleman now too, that has sort of taken over for him. Ralph Schierbeek: very much like Nels. But, Nels was always there for sound, and he lived right across from the park. I always would have to go down and test the sound. He’d always get the sound for me when I practiced with the Holland High dancers, and then after I left there was Tammy Paauwe-Kooyers and there was Sandy Bodenbender who did that job, and he would always work with them. A couple of years ago then, he passed away. The sound too, they went into new sound systems; that was brand new.

I think that we’re more nationally advertised. Our brochures are very—if you look at the brochures that when I
first came in to what they are now, I mean there’s been such a change. They’re very professionally done. We now have corporate sponsors, which we never did before. Tulip Time is refining a little bit, but it still keeps the home town atmosphere, it still does.

JVU: Do you think, for the most part, the changes you’ve noticed have been good?

BA: Yeah. Yeah, I do. I loved it the way it once was, but things always have to change. When you do something like this you always try to . . . just like with the Dutch dancers, it was refined so much. I think when I used to ride my bike all over—I still do, I still ride my bike all over. If you ever want to see me, I’m always on my bike. I took my car down today, but I’m always on my bike. I think that with it, they’ve tried to keep this hometown touch with it. Even though they have refined it a lot. I don’t know, I’m still always thrilled when Tulip Time comes around.

JVU: Do you think that Dutch pride has affected Tulip Time, or do you think that Tulip Time is what has brought on a rise in Dutch pride in Holland?

BA: Well, this is sort of hard for me to answer, because I’ve only lived in Holland since 1960, when I got married. Before then I used to teach dancing at Oosterhouse Dance Studio, here. I feel there was always a lot of Dutch pride. In my own opinion I think that they’re still sort of fighting for that here. I think that their city is escaping them right now. [laughs] I think that the people who have lived here, are still wanting their city to be that wonderful town, that clean city, the beautiful tulips, the beautiful land, and it’s escaping them here. Tulip Time once a year attempts to bring all that back. I could be considered totally wrong on all this. [laughs] But let’s put it this way: this is a viewpoint in terms of somebody who was not born and raised in Holland. I came to Holland, I loved Holland, and I sort of sense this where it’s escaping them. I don’t know if that’s the word I want. One time a year, for
Tulip Time, it does bring this back. I don’t know.

JYU: I noticed there are non-Dutch, Dutch dancers. How do you think [ethnic diversity] has effected the festival?

BA: Oh, I think it’s fine. The only thing that I think they possibly lack, and that we’re trying to bring to them is they don’t really realize all of the Dutch pride and what has gone before it. But that’s the same with the kids who have grown up here. So, what we’ve started to do--and this is why we’ve started to assemble some of the directors and myself are getting together and trying to assemble a lot of facts. Also, last year there was a video that was brought out on Tulip Time in Holland, to sort of give your history of it.

I’m so glad at what you’re doing because we think that if we can bring it down into a smaller version for the kids--and I’m talking about any group--they would know the history behind this. I think it’s fine that all of the ethnic groups are part of it. It’s great fun, and I just feel that when they want to join in with us like that, I think that’s just fantastic. Because there is no place else, anywhere, that anyone can participate in something of this nature. I just feel: bring them all on.

The only thing that I think that it is, is that originally when I came in, you had like grandmothers, mothers, daughters, and we were down into our third generation of dancing, and all don’t know that history. We’re trying to bring that to them, and show them the pride. Like in any town, you have your Danish festival, you have your Scottish festival, and I think that in any town, this escapes the newer generation; the history that has gone behind it. So I think that’s the same here. If they want to do it, and they take great pride in what they’re doing, and their costuming, and their dance, it’s just great fun, and I love to see those young people out there, just having all this great fun. And alumni dancers. We have males that also dance, and I just say, "Bring them on too." [laughs]

JYU: What specific memories do you have of past Tulip Times that
stand out as particularly special, or especially memorable?

BA: A lot of different things. One thing I remember: when my son was small, and we went to watch a parade--then it used to end at Centennial Park--it rained, and rained, and rained, so all of our streets were just covered with all the different colors of the crepe paper. I can remember that. I thought that was sort of cool. [laughs]

As a Dutch dance director, I can remember a funny situation. My son is a tennis player, and tennis players and athletes and all that always used to drink Gatorade. I think they probably still do, but there’s a lot of other power drinks out there, and I can remember when we were starting the kids out at the Saturday pre-parade; it was so terribly, terribly hot. With a microphone, without ever thinking what I was reaching here, I said, "After we dance here, I want you all to go out and get a can of Gatorade, this will replenish all of what you need, all the electrolytes back in your system." And I’m out there announcing all this, never thinking. Well, after the parade, and that Saturday evening, there was a whole sell-out on Gatorade. There was not one Gatorade can or bottle in the city of Holland. [laughs] When you’re talking to hundreds and hundreds of dancers, and of course other people along the parade route were hearing this too, so we had a sell-out on Gatorade. They just couldn’t believe it. The stores said, "We cannot believe . . . we do not have any Gatorade left." So that was sort of cool I thought.

I can remember . . . there’s just so many fond, fond memories. I just wish I could think of all of them, because there’s just . . . [laughs]. I can remember when we first got the boy Dutch dancers in. That was fun, because they came in under me.

[Also, in 1988, I was Honorary Parade Marshal for the Children’s Parade; I was so thrilled.]
BA: We used to have to, from the Saturday night performance--like I said you'd have to go by the seat of your pants--we used to gather up the tape player and run to the Civic Center. I did, because I always had a Dutch dance group dancing there before the big show on Saturday night. It was easier for me to run from Centennial Park to the Civic Center than it was to try and find a car to get me down there. I can remember Betty Dick coming running up to me and saying, "Barb, you've got to get your dancers out of the fountain in the center of the park!" Now that was before they had the lights that went up onto this in the fish pond, and I said, "Well how do you know they're my dancers?" And she said, "Because they're the boy dancers!" It was a really hot night that night, and they had jumped in the fish pond, and the tourists were having a field day with taking pictures. So I can remember that.

I can also remember, Betty Dick used to run up to me a lot [laughs], and she came running across the park this one night, and she said, "Barb there's an ambulance taking one of your dancers away."

And I said, "Well how do you know it's my dancer?" and she said, "Because, you're always telling your dancers to kick high, and this girl knocked herself out with own wooden shoe." What had happened was, the shoe had come off, and it went like this, and hit her in the head. I always told the dancers [to] keep going no matter what, so they... her partner--she was dazed--so they pulled her off to the edge of the road and they kept dancing. There's just a lot of things like that. I know they're not fond memories, some of it sounds kind of dangerous, but you think of all of these things. I used to remember running the Dutch dance practices out at the lower parking lot at Holland High School. Now they don't have that anymore. I don't even think they have a lower parking lot there, because the school has been built up so
much. I can remember running those out there and all twenty-five groups of them. Times twelve, I don’t know what that is, three hundred and something, and feeling a great sense of pride. Even as far as the costume directors, I work a lot with them now too, and they’re always . . . this year we just brought a brand new costume, the Groningen, and watching them work, it was just amazing.

[List names of Costume Directors.]

JVK: Are there any specific people that you haven’t mentioned yet that you associate with Tulip Time, and why?
BA: What I’ve always been associated with are the dance directors, and the costume directors, and as I say, Nels Bosman who was always the head of many sound for me, and Betty Dick. I’m just trying to think of this one lady that used to be the secretary of Tulip Time when it was down in the Civic Center and all of a sudden her name is escaping me, and I worked a lot through her, and she was just marvelous. She worked there for years and years. [Pauline Vanderkooy]

Of course then you have Andy, Andy Van Slot. All of these that have been the Tulip Time, on the board for years and years, and these people that are on the board--that have been on the board for years; like Andy or like Rog Stroh, or someone like that--it is just amazing how they do their job. People don’t even realize it. How they do it with flowers. How they’re put in the trucks. Where they store them. Where they store the floats. That’s just amazing. But what you find; Tulip Time is really what it is. Right now we have a wonderful gal that’s administrative head, Mary Duistermars. Kristi Van Howe did a very good job too. What you have right now, are your newer members that are coming in. So, with a little of the new, and a lot of the old, is what I really feel has kept this. Jim DeGraaf, he’s off the Board now. He just went off this year, but these people know Tulip Time so much. Tom Westerlund. People
don’t realize what he does. Tom Westerlund was always the head of like the bleacher patrol. But he just did marvelous things for me. He’s gotten all my schedules. I hand out like twelve pages of schedules to the head couples of each group, I mean it’s amazing. Every Dutch dance group has a number, and they have to know where to go, and people don’t know this. You just think you just plop them on the street and there’s where they are. Every Dutch dance group is scheduled in whether it’s high school or alumni, and I do all the master scheduling. I do all those things like that; the exhibition training session, I do the style show at the beginning of the year--that’s sort of a kick-off where they come see their costumes--I do the contracts, I have meetings with Dutch dance directors, costume directors, I help them all with inspections. My job goes all year long that I do. I have a full time job, but this is sort of my other full time job.

[Brief discussion of current Dutch dance exhibition group.]

JVU: What are some of the things that the exhibition group has done in the past? Maybe before you were involved? When were they started?

BA: They started out probably on a very small scale. My guess, because I often remember Betty Dick talking about when they took a group to Wyoming. I’d taken groups to Canada and maybe we used to go out three or four times a year. I can’t remember when they [started]. I think they started almost when your main Dutch dance thing started. I mean like years and years ago, they had Dutch dancers. I want to just say this here: I’m getting this off of this sheet of paper that we’ve tried to assemble here. In 1933 a group of girls called Dutch Villagers performed Dutch Folk dances as part of the High School music program. They have "High School Music Program" but I’m not sure if it was that or not. I know if it was the music program, then a few years after that, Dutch dance would have to have been taught in the Phys. Ed.
classes at Holland High School. I do know this, and this is how that began. It did start out very small, but then when they did it in the High School phys. ed. classes, it became larger and larger. I almost think that your exhibition group started then. I heard a story, and I know that it’s true: They used to dance at the old football field. It’s not the one that we have now, but it’s the one that’s down by Freedom Village. They had groups that danced right there on the football field, but they had a group that danced on a wooden stage. They would get the sound off of that, and there’s still people that are around right now that remember doing that. One of them was Viv Hoogland, who’s the Dutch dance director over in Zeeland. She said they used to dance there. She graduated from High School probably about in ‘49 or something, and that’s my guess--‘48, ‘49--and so that had to be in the late forties when they did that. The dance that we do now, started--I don’t think I can give you the exact date, but I might hit it pretty close--in 1953, and why I know that it’s right around that time, is because at our fiftieth anniversary for Tulip Time, a group that had danced at that time, came back and danced at the fiftieth anniversary. They were able to do this, because this dance had been choreographed at that time, and I think that they were from--I think they were in the class of 1953. I think.

JVU: How do you feel about the guests that come into Holland?
BA: I love them. First of all, that’s why we’re here, to bring the people in, and this year we had many, many bus tours that came in. It was unreal. I don’t know whether it was two hundred and fifty-six busses or something, I mean it was . . . we just had loads of bus tours that came in. If you didn’t have the tourists come in, you wouldn’t have the celebration. I know that it ties up traffic a lot, and of course you hear a lot of times from people, for ten days it’s a bit weary . . .

-End Side A-
JVU: Discussing the tourists . . .

BA: I mean, that's why we have the celebration. Of course, throughout the years, many, many times you've had maybe your elderly that come in, because they come in on bus tours and things of that type. Of course then you have your families that will come in in cars and all this kind of thing. This year, they had a real innovative or however you want to say it, kind of thing. They really pushed for local people to come out and enjoy the shows, and they also had what they called the [kinderplaatz], which was for the children. So they wanted to really not only have all of your other tourists come in, but they wanted to have the children to be able to enjoy extra things other than . . . you know, of course they always had their parades, which they probably walked through with, and like that. This year, they really pushed for the local people to come out to the shows. A lot of local people have really stayed away from the shows, thinking they were always sell-outs because of all the other people coming in. This year they really pushed for that, and you had a lot of people coming out for your shows.

But the tourists are what make Tulip Time, and I think you just have to leave a little earlier. You have to take up walking or riding your bike, and I dearly love to be able to answer questions for the tourists. To be able to make them feel welcome. [We tell the dancers to] go up and talk to the tourists. This is one time you go up and you talk to strangers. This one time we say go up and talk to them; answer their questions, make them feel welcome.

JVU: Maybe you can describe for me some of the sentiments that tourists have expressed to you?

BA: First of all, they love our beautiful tulips, and our flowering trees. Throughout the years, I've gotten calls that have come right into my house from people all over the country,
saying they cannot believe how wonderful that the young people are here. How they make them feel welcome. One time there was a couple teachers that called from Georgia and said, "How do you get them to go out and dance in the rain?" And I said because they'd worked very hard for it, and I said I'm out there with them. See, I still dance, and I dance with the High School kids. So, I not only do what I have to do, but then I run out and dance. So, they really can't say, "Well, Barb is hiding under cover." I'm right out there with them, and dancing with them, going through parades with them, doing everything they do, and I'm probably, maybe, forty years older than they are. A lot of sentiments. They love Tulip Time, and they love the, even in the paper, you'll read letters about the graciousness of the people here in Holland. One of the things that really does this is when the people open their homes to tourists, which is a big part of that. Many people have done this for years and years and years.

[Brief discussion of tourists homes.]

JU: Anything else that the tourists have specifically mentioned to you about Holland?
BA: Oh, clean . . . very clean town. Friendliness, the beautiful flowers, the beautiful flowering trees, our beautiful parks, the Dutch dancers. Nowhere else can you ever find anything like this. I know you have other Tulip Festivals, but I can almost guarantee you that you would not have this. When you stand at one end of the parade route, and look up and watch hundreds of Dutch dancers down the middle of the road dancing, connecting, and all in time, you just can't find anything more spectacular. JU: Why do you think the tourists love the festival as much as they do? What do you think it is about Holland that is so unique that allows a festival like this to grow to the size it has?
BA: I'm not sure, and actually what I might say might be misconstrued, but I think I'll just say this: I think that for a
lot of people that come in, they always used to be able to take a step back in time. Holland is changing a lot now. I don’t know how this is going to affect the Tulip Time. Did Andy Van Slot say anything about this, because I have no idea?

JVVU: I can’t remember exactly what he said.

BA: He’s been involved for a long, long time. It was almost where one of the things, even up to like ten years ago, people used to say the "wholesomeness" of our teenagers. It was like they loved to come back, and take that step back in time. It was like watching [The Andy Griffith Show]. [laughs] I don’t know whether that’s it or not, but I’ve had a lot of people tell me this, that they could come back and still know that this was here. But I’m not sure anymore. I don’t know, because even though we still have wonderful, wonderful youth--I mean we still do--sometimes I think that newspapers and things center more on the other. I think they should center more on all the wonderful youth that we do have.

I don’t know how this is going to affect Tulip Time. I have no idea. I think I use those words "step back in time" because I think tourists have said this to me. It’s like they like the wholesomeness, but I don’t know if Holland is losing that now. Maybe you would know more about that? I don’t want [this] to be misconstrued in any way. They call it progress, but to me it’s not progress. I know that you have to have progress, but I miss a lot of what Holland used to be. I’m not saying that you can’t have diverse things coming in and progress, but I think it’s coming in too fast. I don’t know how that’s going to affect Tulip Time. I don’t know how that’s going to affect the visitors coming back. Maybe it won’t be a step back in time.

JVVU: I think the important point that you made, is that a lot of attention is drawn to negative things, and the positives far outweigh the negatives.

BA: Definitely. And maybe at Tulip Time, that’s what happens. People again see the positive, and they can come in and still see our youth; they can still come in and see like the alumni
dancers. They can still come in and see our wonderful shows that our youths put on. I mean, we have shows here that our youths--our very talented youths--put on, and our choral directors...Kerry Daab out at Holland High School, and his group, they were the opening for the Smothers Brothers, and they were opening last year for the [group that came in last year]. So maybe, at Tulip Time, this does bring us back in again. This wonderful positive, and I'm glad it does.

JVU: What do you think it is about the Dutch dance program that keeps [dancers] coming back?

BA: Great fun, tradition, exercise, friendship, maybe they haven't seen these people all year and they come back, great camaraderie. They come back and they practice together, they dance together. Yeah, and the tradition. We have people of all ages, and they dance together in the same group. Love of community.

JVU: How do you see the Dutch dance program being a reflection of the sense of community like you said, in Tulip Time?

BA: First of all, it's something they don't have to come out for. They're there because they want to be there. I think that's important. In other words, no one is saying, "You have to come out for Dutch dance." The young people that we have, and also for the alumni, or whatever else you want to include into Tulip Time, they're there because they want to be there. I think that's a very good reflection on our schools, and on our community. Even those young people that are moving in--I mean families that are moving in--they come out for that. They have to come out because it's fun. They have to come out because they're with their friends, and because they want to be a part of this great festival.

They also make new friends, because they're out there dancing with people that maybe they didn't know in High School, and that's a great place to make friendships. We had a group--it was one of my last years that I was in as Dutch dance director--and we had six senior boys and six senior girls. They were
outstanding. They used to bring their own press photographer with them, because no matter where I picked up the paper, there they were. Sharp, sharp. In fact, one went on to be the mayor here, the youngest mayor in Holland [and probably the country]. But he always said, "What better place to meet girls." [laughs]

Whatever reason that they come out, they do come out. It’s hard work. It is not easy. That dance is fifteen minutes long. There’s like three dances with a little break between each one; it’s fifteen minutes long. For instance, for the new dancers, they start right after Christmas. Then the ones that know the dance, they usually start a little bit later, when they get closer to Spring break or something like that. It’s hard work, and a lot of those kids are not only Dutch dancers, they’re in the band, they’re going to school because school is still going on, they’re in all the different shows—like Tulip Time salute and all those—they act as tour guides not only on the busses but in recent years, we’ve had it on the boats. Last year it was Winkin’, Blinkin’ and Nod, and this year it was another boat. Your forensics groups and your speech groups and all things like that, they were the tour guides. So they’re not only Dutch dancing, they can be in the flag corps. They’re in the bands. I’m out there cheering and rahing for these kids because they just do magnificent jobs!

JVU: I think that’s a good tribute to your group. When Tulip Time comes around every year, do you plant tulips in your yard? BA: [laughs] We only have a few tulips in our yard. We have Appledorn tulips though. There is an Appledorn tulip, and we plant Appledorn tulips. You know what? My sister and brother come into Holland, and they’re always amazed that there’s just not that many tulips in private yards, private homes. Then again, maybe that’s just on main roads. We have eight miles of tulips [Tulip Lanes] in Holland. We have some out by our garage, and our neighbors do, but when you look around there’s not a lot of [private] tulips. Maybe we should promote that more.

JVU: What is your favorite part of Tulip Time?
BA: Well, my favorite part of Tulip Time is the Dutch dancers. I’ve been associated with that for a long, long time. And I have to say this too because I have a great pride in that, and my whole family does, that I do this. I think that’s another thing. The last few years, I’ve been thinking about getting out of it, because it’s just overwhelmingly big, and it’s getting bigger all the time; particularly now that it’s gone to ten days. I take off school three days during the parade routes and things like that. I’m a teacher at the Jefferson School. I work with the physically impaired. I’ve been in the school system for like twenty years too. I keep doing it—and I have grandchildren now, and of course they ride the floats with me and everything—and it really is sort of fun, because they take great pride in what I do too. Tulip Time is such a big part of my life—and I will end it up with this—the only way I can do Tulip Time, and what I’ve done all these years, and believe me, it’s been highly, highly involved, is first of all, all the wonderful people that work around me. They are always there to give a helping hand. They are always there to really help me. I could not do this on my own, and also because of my family. My husband: I could not do what I do if I had a husband who always wanted his meals and wondering why the house is messy. [laughs] But he has totally supported me. The directors and the people that work in Tulip Time have got that spouse support because it would not be fun if you didn’t. Also, my children and grandchildren. My granddaughter has her picture with me in a brochure for Tulip Time for a couple of years. The pride that they have. I could never do this job if it wasn’t for family and spouse, and support and all the people around me that are always there for me. So I guess I just have to end it up that way because it’s an important job I do, but if it wasn’t for them, I couldn’t do it.

JVU: Over the years, what has Tulip Time meant to you?

BA: I could say "everything" but that wouldn’t be quite . . . [laughs]. I think I just said that a while ago in something I said: When the time comes for me to get out of it, or at least
what I’m doing right now, it would be like getting a divorce. It is such a big part of my life. Everything I do revolves around it. As I say, right before I came here, I was typing out contracts. I also have another little off-shoot of this job. I get people for the Holland City floats. How I got that, I’m not sure, but I guess because I have access to a lot of people that have Dutch costumes . . .

Tulip Time has been a big part of my life. When I first got married, I always wanted to be a part of it. Even when I get out of what I’m doing now, and I know this, I will do something else in Tulip Time. Not as big. I think I will do something in Tulip Time where people tell me what I have to do and where I have to be. [laughs]

But, I can’t think of a day almost where I’m not thinking somewhat whether I’m getting a call from someone on the telephone, to say what are the names of the songs used in Dutch dance, how do I get a costume, I’m going to this convention, how do I get a costume . . . Even before I go on vacation for two weeks, even before I go, I have to make sure that floats are covered, that my contracts are all in. I would say that it’s an enormous part of my life. Does that answer it?

-End of Interview-