1-1-1984

De Pree, J Bernard Oral History Interview: Former Mayors of Holland

Hope College

INTRODUCTION

When this project was first initiated, there were several mayors who had but their names on the list of potential interviewees -- whereabouts unknown. With the help of Mr. Bill Wichers, to whom I am greatly indebted, these gentlemen were found, contacted, and, if possible, interviewed.

Mr. Bernard DePree, one of the "missing" mayors, happened to be visiting his daughter in near-by Grand Rapids and agreed to be interviewed. His was the first interview, and he did it off the cuff. I had not had time to give him an idea of what questions I was going to ask him.

Mr. DePree was the only mayor interviewed who had operated solely under the old charter of Holland. He had also lived through World War II in Holland. The interview paints a vivid picture of what Holland was like during this time and what the local government had to endure during the war. It was a Holland totally different from the Holland of today.

Mr. DePree, through his outstanding service and activism not only on city council but amongst the entire community of Holland, was able to give a special insight into the Holland that was and the Holland that laid the foundations for future growth.

The other "missing" mayor found by Bill Wichers was Mr. Elmer Schepers who I contacted by letter, an interview being impossible due to the distance between here and Norwalk, Ohio. He graciously answered the questions which I sent to him. The original response from him is attached to the end of Mr. DePree's interview, Mr. Schepers also holding office during approximately the same period.

Name: John Bernard DePree

Birthplace: Sioux Center, Iowa

Birthdate: January 18, 1907

Education

Elementary and Junior High School: Sioux Center Elementary
High School: Sioux Center High School
College: Hope College

Professional Experiences: Peoples' State Bank, office manager of Holland Aniline Dye Company, Holland Color Chemical Company, secretary and treasurer of Milwaukee Hospital Association

Father's Name and Occupation: S.B. DePree, medical doctor

Mother's Name: Elena Hyink DePree

Spouse's Name: Gladys M. Huizinga DePree

Date of Marriage: October 27, 1934

Childrens' Names and Present Occupations: Judith Lynn Bradshaw, Eugene, Oregon Post Office employee; Jean Elena Brace, housewife in Charlotte, North Carolina; Joan Lou, elementary teacher in Kentwood District, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Committees and Assignments: Ottawa County Board of Supervisors, Hospital Board, Board of Review, Ways and Means Committee, Claims and Accounts Committee, Ottawa Savings and Loan Trustee, Deacon at Third Reformed Church, Hope College National Committee on Solicitations, Western Semiary Finance and Administration Committee Treasurer, City Council, Mayor

Affiliations: United Presbyterian Church, American Chemical Assocation

Present Activities: retired

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Dear Phil

I am sorry that the return of this material will be somewhat late, but it arrived while we were on a vacation trip to Oregon, Nevada and California.

I have made some additional corrections.

Seems to me that some of the sentences are not too smooth and could stand some editing. Please feel free to do so.

We are having a great and delightful summer out here, as usual. The summers are super.

Best wishes.

Bernard DeVoe

Interviewer: You were a councilman first elected in 1942.

Mr. DePree: That's correct. I was from the Third Ward.

Interviewer: Did they have the same ward system they do now?

Mr. DePree: No. There were six wards and there were two representatives from each ward. The city charter was changed after I left. In fact I think that I had something to do with instigating that. When I became mayor the outline of the city was the same as it had been in 1880. It went west to where the old interurban tracks crossed at the H.J. Heinz Company on Sixteenth Street and then went south across West Seventeenth to Thirty-Second. That was the city limits west. But just outside the limits it was all filled in and the city serviced it and there was much complaint about that. They didn't participate in the costs of the hospital and so forth and yet they had the same service as the people of Holland who were contributing the major share of the support, building, and upkeep of those institutions. So there was much undercover complaint.

There was no city manager then either. The mayor performed the same duties as the present city manager. It was a part time position and a real chore. In fact, my employer there at the Holland Color Chemical Company which was outside the city always had some complaints about me doing that. I always got telephone calls there, and he didn't think that was quite right; although I don't think he wanted to complain too much because if they were in the county and not in the city it didn't hurt the plant too much because I also served on the Ottawa County Board of Supervisors.

I don't remember just when that vote was taken that changed the city charter and also provided for a city manager. The fact of the matter was it was after I left, but it got its start then. I remember Vernon TenCate was the city attorney at the time and he did considerable work on it. He was the first person in Holland that I told that I was leaving. I was still serving as mayor, but I had made a trip west to look over the situation, and I was pretty sure that I was going to do it because it provided for considerable more income. Even though, I hated to leave Holland, having lived there for 25 years and always liked it. But, after all, you have to think of your family, too. I just had to do it. He was the first one who I told because I had put in a lot of work with that charter. I was quite insistent that it ought to be done because of the demands upon the mayor's time. I felt that the city had reached a size that it ought to be served by a city manager. And so he said that he'd work on it if I provided my unqualified support. And I said, "Yes, I 'll promise that." In view of that promise when I decided to leave, and he was half way through with it, I thought that it only fair that I tell him first. But it didn't make any difference because he was so far along that he could just go ahead with it. I don't know whether it passed on the first shot or not. If it did it was very close. I can remember that.

Interviewer: So besides changing the charter it also annexed some land?

Mr. DePree: Yes it did. That was also helped more by the schools as those things grew too. Holland was always in a rather unfortunate location in that the limits of the south side were Thirty-Second Street, across that being Allegan County. This led to a conflict. That is why that had never been annexed into the city before. But the school district also had to expand. So those two things, the change in the

charter and the expansion of the school district were mainly responsible for the expansion of the city limits beyond the borders that had exisited since 1880.

Interviewer: What was the population of the city?

Mr. DePree: My recollection was that the population of the city-proper was about 18,000.

Interviewer: You said you were putting in a lot of time as mayor. How many hours a week; can you estimate that?

Mr. DePree: I can best explain that this way: my kids used to say to me, "Dad, are you going to be home tonight?"

And I said, "No."

"Tomorrow?"

"No."

"Night after that?"

"No."

About the only night that I could count on being home was Sunday. But otherwise almost every night I was tied up in meetings; and at other times too. Hourwise, I just don't know. It was too much for a person who was also trying to make a living because as alderman they paid $50 a year; the mayor got $100.

Interviewer: What were some of the industries of Holland at the time?

Mr. DePree: Well, most of the industry at that time were home owned; local people. Like Holland Furnace Company; excellent company. They had a wonderful product. They did well. They were far and away the biggest operation at the time. Then

there were the furniture factories; some went out of business during the depression. When I first was here the Bush & Lane Piano Company was a big operation. They made a very wonderful piano that's still a primium piano if you can get ahold of one second hand. That's now Baker Furniture. That went out during the depression. The radio became so popular that people forgot about the piano for awhile there. They weren't buying them anymore. And so an operation as big as that and they couldn't go. That was local interest. Walter Lane lived in a rather expansive home on State Street. As you approach south to the city limits to your left there's a brown brick house which may still be there somewhere in the vicinity of Twenty-Sixth or Twenty-Seventh. Well, anyway, that's the Lane of the Bush & Lane.

Let's see, what else was there at that time; Heinz Company and it's still here; the (St. Louis) Sugar Factory. That over the years became less and less active. That was out on West Fourteenth, and I think the buildings are still there (but are scheduled to be torn down). That was quite an operation. I visited there on occasion and it took two weeks to get the smell out of your clothes. That process was just like burnt sugar. That was in the drying part of it. It would look almost like brown sugar when it first came out.

Also, what is now Parke Davis, that was a big leather making concern. That's been out of business for many years. Primarily though those were the primary things. There were other small outfits that would come and go. Plus a machine works that became part of Ex-Cello Corporation; that was a pretty growing concern too. That was out there in the vicinity of the Harrington Docks.

That's where that steamer the "City of Holland" used to come in which made nightly trips across the lake. Graham-Morton Docks I guess they called them. The "City of Holland" was both a passenger and a freight carrying boat. It was serviced also by the inter-urban. The inter-urban ran, when I got here, in the fall of 1925, as a carrier of passengers until 1927 which ended when the auto came. I went on it many many times to Grand Rapids. The fare was 80 cents. When I was playing on the Hope basketball team, when the roads were bad and we were playing in Kalamazoo (we used to play Western at that time and Kalamazoo College), as a team we'd go to Grand Rapids and then transfer to a line that ran through Plainwell, Otsego, and those towns. The inter-urban had a track running down Eighth Street. It came in about at the Pere Marquette depot. It would go down into the swamp and down under the tracks and then toward Zeeland. It ran down Eighth and it made a turn at River and then it ran to Thirteenth and made a turn and ran all the way to approximately the St. Louis Sugar Factory. But they had that spur going to the Graham-Morton Docks because they brought in freight from Grand Rapids and shipped it by boat to Chicago. It was an overnight trip and would come back here the next day. The "City of Holland" was a sidewheeler, a roatating machine that propelled the boat on each side. Mississippi boats were in the back.

The son of the President of the Furnace Company, Paul Landwehr, and three other people, his cousin, something like 14 years old, Earl Van Lente and John Arends, who was employed by the Furnace Company were riding in Paul's speedboat who was kind of a daredevil. In order to be playful he would run that speedboat toward the "City of Holland" and swerve off. But one time he got too close and went right into the side of the big boat and killed all of them. I was writing as a part time duty at that time for the Grand Rapids Press, and I know I spent a

miserable night. I didn't know about this incident at the time, and the Grand Rapids Press was trying to get ahold of me and go to work on that thing because as you can image it created a lot of excitement. It happened in that bay there where Con DePree, my father's cousin, had built a house. He was with the company that was one of the big industries at the time. That's where his house was and that's the house that the fellow with the Amway Corporation, Richard DeVos, had moved. It was right in that bay where the accident happened. That was in 1927, I think. So, that's the history of that boat accident.

Interviewer: What was the downtown like during this period of time?

Mr. DePree: There was when I first came in 1925. Of course it's much improved now. That whole west side of River, from Eighth to Ninth, except for the building on the corner that's still there; The rest of the buildings up to the Brower Furniture Company which was torn down (I believe there's a financial institution there now) were all wood, and I believe they're all brick now. And the west side as well weren't the finest looking buildings. On the corner across the street there was a two story building known as the Wolverine Garage, and up above it there was a relative of mine, Ed DePree, and John Van Zoeren, the donator of the Van Zoeren Library. They had started what they called Chemical Specialties Concern. Later on, they built a plant in Zeeland which they later sold to Miles Laboratories. I think that was the basis for John Van Zoeren (I'm guessing) being able to make that large donation for the library at Hope College. From that little acorn a big tree grew. He was in on it. I cashed his check many times and it was small, but he made out well after the company went well. That same thing was pretty much true on investments made by others in small, local industries. Mr. Walter Walsh owned

numerous properties on Eighth Street, but other local people owned property or structures which changed ownership as time went on, and new buildings were erected.

Peoples' State Bank was across the street where there now is a smoke shop. As you go east from that approximate location from the north side of the street that's pretty well filled in now; all the way to the corner of College anyway. Before there were open spaces in there. There was also an open space and a theatre just west of First of America. There was a Strand Theatre there which we would go to Saturday afternoon to see the cowboy shows and whatnot. There was also a vacant lot there and there's now what appears to be a vacant lot, but it's got a brick installation (it's a a parking lot). What is the Model Drug has changed a lot. Well, Holland just generally has changed quite a bit. The Hitching Post was just like an inter-urban car.

There have been changes in the churches of course. I think some of it through fires. The Methodist Church is a brand new building. And Hope Church has renovated a lot. Third Church hasn't done renovation all that much since I left; although some was done, I know. But when I was still active there they were already doing some of that work. I haven't gotten around enough in the outlying districts to notice all that much change, but there has definately been a change.

And when I was in the council one of the last things we were very active in; we saw this trend toward malls and in order to protect downtown business our group was the one that led to this buying of all these lots back of the stores on Eighth so we could provide parking. Our idea first of all was that we could finance it with parking meters because parking became a real premium. We had angle

parking and then we had parallel parking because that was the easiest for traffic flow, but it cut down on the parking spaces. And that was a trend which would lead to malls.

We had a little inkling of that because already there was a mini-type mall built on Eighteenth and Washington. You people accept that because it's there, but it wasn't there when I was first in Holland. I think the Fabianos, Charley and Patsy, who had restuarants; Charley on River just south of that corner between Eighth and Ninth on the west side and Patsy on the south side of Eighth. I was walking along there the other day and there's been changes in those fronts but the "iano" still shows on the tile. That's from Fabiano. Patsy had a place there. They had a big family because that was their secret in those days; those Italian families they'd have big families and their kids would all work on the establishment for next to nothing, and that all went into the family fortune. So it was easier for them to build up a great business with that kind of deal. They had a fine place. They had some money. They were the ones that bought up that property and started up Washington Square. That was built about late 1920s, early 1930s. There weren't the malls yet but we could see the tendency and wanted to protect the downtown area. So the only way we thought to do it was to buy those properties. And we installed parking meters. Parking meters would help the city get its money back from its investment and help with the upkeep of the property. Other than Dykstra's Funeral Home and a few others we bought up the places.

Bill Meengs was on the public safety commission. He used to run a gas sation on Sixteenth and River, that Standard Station. Bill was a good councilman; as were John Beltman, Harry Harrington, he succeeded me as mayor, Bertil Slagh, Peter

Krohman, Ray Holwerda, and others served well.

Interviewer: How many councilmembers were there?

Mr. DePree: Two from each ward; 12 plus the mayor. The mayor had no vote except in case of tie; something like the vice-president in the Senate. I was called upon once or twice to cast a vote.

Interviewer: You attended and ran the council meetings? How often were they?

Mr. DePree: Yes I ran them. I don't think we had study sessions but we had special sessions when matters of importance would come up. I know that when I first was on Council they didn't always bother about seeing that everybody knew about the meetings. And the Sentinel started to raise a fuss about that because they called those secret meetings. And I think that whether there already was a state law about that or they were enacting such a law that you couldn't have secret meetings, they thought that they were entitled to be at the meetings. So after that we were sure that they knew about them. I think we met twice a month always on Wednesday night. Sometimes those sessions would last a long time and sometimes they were rather short. The mayor usually called all the special meetings. But we had them in the afternoon. And when such hearings as the Corps of Engineers in connection with the dredging of the lake would come up, the mayor would always have to take charge of those meetings. I remember one of the first things I had to do was go to a series of meetings in connection with those dredging of the lake; all the way from the channel to Holland.

Actually the city dump used to be on the coener of Eighth and Pine and ran to Seventh. That whole low area there was the city dump. You can imagine the rats in

there. I can remember being downtown after the inter-urban tracks were dug up and seeing the rats run across the street. That was a severe problem. That was one reason why they abandoned that as a dumping ground. It was too close to town.

Interviewer: Were the councilmen elected just from their ward?

Mr. DePree: Yes. The mayor was elected by the whole city, at large. And so was the treasurer, the auditor, and the assesor. Those were all elected positions.

Interviewer: Was there more responsibility as a councilmember to do quite a bit of the work because there wasn't a city manager?

Mr. DePree: Oh yes. Primarily the final decisions and quick decisions all depended on the mayor. But you had the mayor being responsible for the appointment of all the members of these various committees: Ways & Means, Claims & Accounts, Public Safety, etc. It seems to me that there were about a half dozen committees. Actually the men would be very anxious to be on those committees because sometimes that's where the major work was done, because the actions of the council depended upon what these committees were able to find out with their individual searchings on it. And they couldn't just arbitrarily put into effect what they deemed best. That had to be council action. There was quite a bit of work depending on which of those committees you were on. The Ways & Means, for instance, were responsible for the adoption of the budget along with the mayor. He always served on all those committees. Then the Claims & Accounts, those worked out of the city clerk office, another office that was elected.

When I was in there there was a fellow by the name of Oscar Peterson who was the city clerk. Those fellows did their duties clear beyond the call of duty. Jake Zuidema the city engineer; if it wouldn't have been for fellows like that; how they got along without a city manager all those years was more than I could figure. And that was one of the reasons why I just felt there had to be a change in the city charter.

Interviewer: These other elected positions besides the council and the mayor, were they full time?

Mr. DePree: All full time. The fact of the matter is, that I don't think that the city engineer, Jake Zuidema, was elected. He held office at the pleasure of council. I'm not sure on that. But you're never going to get rid of a man like that who did so well.

Interviewer: Was there a planning commission?

Mr. DePree: I believe that was started when I was on the council. Because Neal VanderMeulen was one of the orignal members of that planning commission. I know in connection with the 100th anniversary, the centennial commission, 1945-48, maybe in the planning of the centennial celebration that Holland had; 100 years after its founding. Bill Wichers was very active on that too. He was on that planning comiission. That was a pretty good sized one. Bastian Kruthof who was a minister, was at that time minister of First Church and later at the college or seminary, well he was on that commission. Grand Rapids cooperated with us very well. Part of our celebration entailed coming to Grand Rapids where an arrangement was made to have KLM land a big plane with some immigrants,

illustrating the difference in the arrival of the Dutchmen to this part of Western Michigan in 1948 as compared to the way they formerly came by sailing vessel from New York through various rivers and whatnot to get here. So that was quite an event. I believe that was about the time the planning commission came in. Marvin Lindeman was another valuable member.

Also I think at that time they started this idea that you could contribute, leave money in your will for the city. I know that the hospital was built originally with reserve funds; the BPW had 50% of its profits go to the city. And increasingly, over the years, those men who served on that utility didn't like that. They had to expand too. Originally their main generation plant was on Sixth Street where the college used to play football before they went to Sixteenth Street. There was a big plant with a great big chimney. That was their first plant. Well then they had to have this undertaking to increase their output so they moved over to the lakeshore. That was done while I was here. And Joe Geerds was the chairman of the board. And he and the council got into a lot of arguments about that 50% share because he said they needed it for their expansion of their plant and we said we needed it for the taxpayers of Holland. That was the agreement. That's how they had their licence to operate and we didn't tax them. It was only fair to get that. But there were some awful rubarbs about it. There were fellows like that; public spirited men who devoted an awful lot of their time to the welfare of the city and didn't get paid for it.

They developed that whole south end into an industrial park after I left. I used to hunt there with my dog. That was a good hunting space; a good place to run your dog.

Interviewer: Was the hospital city run?

Mr. DePree: Yes it was. It was built, the original hospital was built with funds from the BPW. Then its first expansion, that was one of the side events that really led to the change in the charter because here we had to expand the capacity of the hospital. The first hospital, when I first got to Holland, was located where the Netherlands Museum is. That was the hospital and then they had that annex in the back. I think that served as emergency. Well, I believe that new hospital was built in 1929, and in the 1940's it was necessary to expand because the area around Holland had grown so much and had to be served. They paid the same rate as the citizens of Holland. And that was the extent of their contribution to the hospital but with the taxpayers we would always appropriate a certain sum for the operation of the hospital. That was spread on the taxrolls. So there was a lot of feeling that it just wasn't right. They should be part of it too. If it was necessary to expand, well it had to expand. I think I was on the council at that time. I know Oscar Peterson said to me,"We have some reserve funds to help pay for it." I said let's get it done. That first expansion was out of those funds; indirectly from the funds that were there primarily because of the city's entitlement to 50% of the profits of the BPW. That ultimately led to the changing of the city's limits. It was always city run.

I remember we also had a problem with garbage collection. Is that city run?

Interviewer: No, but we're looking at asking for bids to do it on a city wide basis.

Mr. DePree: That could be bad. Some of those guys make off like bandits on that. When I first lived in Seattle we were in the county at that time. Our garbage cost us a $1.15 a month unlimited. It didn't make any difference how many cans you had. Even then they didn't like anyone to burn their junk, especially their shrubs. Anyway, it got less and less and less and the price kept going up and up and up. Now, for one can and one bag, I'm charged $8.95 a month. If I get two cans and two bags, then it jumps to $12 a month. It's out on bids. They come around only once a week. And they come right down our alley. That's another thing we used to fuss around with in Holland. Most of the alleys were between Nineteenth and Eighteenth. It was always close, close close close. I don't know why. Maybe its because they were junky. People weren't very careful. And that would encourage rats. So maybe that's the reason. I always kind of fought to keep those open. I always hated to close streets too. We had an awful fuss there with that Christian School when they wanted to close that street. But now aren't they going to make a Senior Citizens Center there?

Interviewer: Yes they are. What effect did World War II have on Holland?

Mr. DePree: There were air raid drills. They had those committees; furnished with gasmasks and hardhats, and periodically we would have a drill and everybody would have to be off the streets and all the lights in houses had to be doused. And the members of the patrols would go out to see if there was compliance with that. It was almost mandatory. But the people cooperated very well. I lived on Thirteenth Street at that time right in the vicinity of Central and College, in an old, old house

where John Tysse just built those apartments. Gladys' father had bought that property.

We were talking about the war; now, I can only speak of how it was at our plant. We were right accross from Chris Craft. Chris Craft wasn't there at first, but it was built. They built landing barges. They would drag them across state to Lake St. Clair and put them in the water. I think they built three a day. As far as our plant was concerned, we had had 75 people but when labor became so scarce we finally got down to where there were only 30. They were all going off to fight. That even affected our office. So much so, I had to do much of the manual work that ordinarily a man in my position wouldn't have to do. In fact, when the plant burned I had been there until 2 o'clock that morning working on getting the payroll out. At 6 o'clock I was called at home and my boss, the president of the company said,"You better get over here. Our plant's on fire." So I did. I often thought, why didn't I see that fire? We had a small night crew working and I had to go past that. It was theorized that - we had a man in there to increase our capacity to dry - and what he did was increase the speed of the drying machinery. That involved a lot of pulleys and generators and so forth, and it was theorized that that speed up caused those things to over heat and that's what started the fire. But that's how low it was at our place. And I have to believe that's how it was at other places.

You could apply for a hearing: if someone was extremely valuable at your place, he might be deferred for awhile. And in some cases that was done; if your industry was necessary from a defense angle. Now we had a defense because we made a zinc preparation as well as a molybdate orange preparation which was painted on anything made of steel as a rust fighter. So those of our people who

were engaged in that particular operation had better luck getting deferred than others.

It changed things, immesurably. You couldn't buy an automobile; although GM had some cars in reserve from the last year of production, which I believe was 1939. I made one trip to Pontiac, Michigan when I was a memeber of the Public Safety Commission because we had to get two or three more police automobiles because our others were just falling apart. And the only thing we could get were Pontiacs. They had enough stock of those that we could get them. To save on expense, we went there to get them and drove them back. They weren't the fastest cars to give chase but at least we got them,. They just simply weren't making automobiles. For six, seven years just all defense production; tanks, airplanse, parts of airplanes. So that's the way that was.

There were a lot of people from Holland that went to the eastern part of the state to work in defense plants. So from that angle of it Holland temporarily lost some people. I can recall a fellow coming in to the Peoples' State Bank when I was there, and I was there until 1943, and he had a check for $90 and he was working in Pontiac. Well at that time an average check was maybe around $25, $30, maybe as high as $35 for a person working in Holland. So I said to this fellow, "Man you've got the bull by the tail, $90!"

And he says,"That's true, it's quite a difference between Holland and Pontiac." But he said,"I have found that as far of the cost of living is concerned I'm really no farther ahead because my cost of living there is just that much higher too." I always remembered that the answer really isn't in how much you're making but in how much you can buy with what you get!

Interviewer: You had mentioned the Sentinel before. What kind of effect did they or any of the radio stations have on council dealings?

Mr. DePree: Whether it influenced us? Well, I don't think really, well the radio station wasn't here very many years while I was still here. That came in during that time. And really the only real influence editorial-wise and so forth was the Sentinel. They controlled that and the City News, which was the once a week paper. When I got here the Sentinel building was half way down the block between Eighth and Seventh street on River Avenue. It was a small two story building. That later on became the News Publishing Comapany. A fellow by the name of Mulder whose daughter, Jennette, lived with Meta Ross who just died, was the daughter of the fellow who published the Holland City News. His brother Arnold was an author. Ben Mulder was the City News and when he died the Sentinel took it over. By the time I was on the council, Ben was no longer on. So the only one we had to worry about, and I can't say we worried much about it, was the Sentinel. Course at that time, that was before Bill Butler got there. Bill was kind of a bulldog alright. He was the son-in-law of the fellow that owned the paper, Mr. French. And French was more of a retisant kind of person and he got to be pretty old. In fact, I can tell this story now because it's so funny. He was always not making fun of, but making much of A.H. Meyer and James A. Brower who were still active in business. Meyer had the music store and Brower had the furniture store. And they used to be partners up until the turn of the century. Well, he would write about them, and whenever he did he would mention their ages; "those aged men 93, 94, 95 years old"; gosh, French dies in Florida and he was 98, older than those two! But nobody ever knew it. But that was the way he was; very quiet. So I don't think any council really worried much about the Sentinel until Butler became, more-or-less, took

over the active management of it. And he did express his opinions, and around town would create little disturbances about what does council mean by this; anything to arouse the people. I know as far as I personally was concerned, I never worried about that and did what I thought was the thing to do. I'm sure that wasn't true with all of us. I had a fellow sitting next to me from the third ward who was always conscious about that sort of thing. I know when we'd be appointing different people to playground commission and other lesser jobs he'd say to me,"We've got to appoint some people representing labor."

"On the playgound commission? I want the fellow in there who would do the good job regardless of what he is!" But he probably might have been influenced by the paper. Maybe some of them were influenced by it, but I never knew it.

Interviewer: What were just a few of the major issues you had to tackle?

Mr. DePree: One of them was, I would consider it major because we even had a strike which lasted less than 24 hours; when labor relations weren't too good. Changing the city charter was a major confrontation. This business about buying property by the city in order to forestall the building of malls outside the city thereby detracting from the people on Eighth Street. Trying to protect our own people.

There was a water problem that came up in my early years. We used to get all of our water from wells until that proved to be inadequate and that led then finally to the getting it from Lake Michigan. That was quite an undertaking. I was only indirectly involved in that because it was a BPW operation.

We ran into increasing costs, we tried to adopt a conservative budget. When we were talking about the budget for the next year, it seems to me that I attended meetings almost every night for about a month. I suppose that was because I was a member of the Ways & Means Committee. It meant what it said: ways and means of raising money to pay the bills. So that was a problem. I know that finally led to where the Holland Furnace Company, which was the major industry, they felt that they were being abused and paid too much and so they said,"Will you accept if we pay for the cost for an outside firm to come in and make a survey of the whole city to ascertain if the taxes are being properly levied?"

And we said,"As long as you pay the bill, we'll take it." And you know what? The joke of it was, at that time it was found that we weren't assessing them enough, but they were perfectly satisfied after that. I remember I was on the Board of Review, and that year I don't believe we had a half dozen complaints, where otherwise we'd meet all day with one person after another would be coming in. But they were satisfied then after that outside person came in and reviewed. We always had things to keep us busy.

Obituaries

J. Bernard DePree, 81

J. Bernard DePree, 81, of Seattle, Wash., died Tuesday, May 10, in Providence Hospital in Seattle following an extended illness.

DePree served as a city councilman and mayor of Holland prior to his move to Seattle in 1949. He preceded Harry Harrington as mayor.

Born in Sioux Center, Iowa, DePree came to Holland to attend Hope College, graduating in 1929. Following his graduation he was employed by the People's State Bank where he became head of the loan department. He was later employed at the Holland Color and Chemical Co.

While a Holland resident, DePree was a member of Third Reformed Church where he served as deacon and treasurer. He also served as treasurer of Western Theological Seminary.

In Seattle, DePree became secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee Railroad Hospital Association. He was also a member and former elder of the University Presbyterian Church in Seattle.

Surviving are his wife, Gladys Huizenga DePree; three daughters, Judith of Springfield, Ore., Jean of Charlotte, N.C. and Joan of Seattle; six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Monday, May 16, at the Notier-Ver-Lee-Langeland Chapel, 315 E. 16th St., with the Revs. Paul and Harold A. Colenbrander officiating. Burial will be in Pilgrim Home Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be given to Hope College.