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Buys, Ekdal and Hermina Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Ekdal and Hermina Buys

Conducted November 18, 1997
by John Maassen

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Ekdal J. Buys and Hermina Buys
November 18, 1997
Interviewer: John Maassen

JM: Ek, we've just gone over some of the details of what this is all about, and we have your lovely wife, Mina, here to see to it that we don't go off track too far. We're here in order to find out some of your reflections about the many years that God has given you in this area, and your interests in Holland, Hope College and Western Seminary. First, we'll just review some of the details that I asked you to give me for the initial contact form, and that way we'll have it for the record. Then we'll go on and just have a discussion together. Your name is Ekdal J. Buys. I think you told me where your first name came from.

EB: My mother Jeanette Ekdal.

JM: And she came from where?

EB: Sweden.

JM: She was born in Sweden?

EB: Yes.

JM: How did she happen to meet your father?

EB: My grandfather had a grocery store on Holland Street in Grand Rapids and her parents migrated to Grand Rapids. He was a shoe cobbler and rented a space in my grandfather's store. That's how my dad, who worked for my grandfather, and she met there and eventually were married.

JM: That's interesting. Did your grandfather continue to have a store all through his life?

EB: He had the store until he passed away and then eventually it became a commercial area. They made a lot of bricks and things there. They had a lot of clay, good clay. He would sell boots and rubber equipment. He was the first one that gave them some credit because he had a lot to do with the mining of the clay--so if they didn't pay, he knew where to get it (chuckles). He made a lot of friends that way.

JM: Did your father continue with that kind of business?

EB: No, my father, when he finished working for his dad, started in the real estate business and stayed in it until he passed away.

JM: Your wife's name is Hermina, although my guess is you don't get called Hermina a lot. It's Mina, right? How did you meet?

HB: Dr. Nykerk's English class at Hope College.

JM: So you go back to the pre-Nykerk Cup days, don't you?

HB: Right. I went to prep school. Ma Durfee and Nykerk.

JM: I can remember my father talking about Banty Nykerk. That's what they called him.

HB: That's right. They moved into Voorhees Hall.

JM: Very interesting. So you met at college then?

EB: Yes.

JM: And you went to Central High School, I believe you told me, in Grand Rapids.

EB: Correct.

JM: And then you came to Hope College. What brought you to Hope?

EB: My brother graduated from Hope in 1926, and I had been down a couple times with him. To go to college at that time the Depression was pretty tough. But Hinga and

Doc Maclean came to see me. I had a job firing boilers at Nash Kelvinator. That way they figured they could get me some work here. And they did get me a job. I chauffeured for a couple years for some of the wealthy families. Then I managed the Frater House for two years. So I pretty well made out on that basis. I had come off of a state championship football team. They were just starting to build football.

JM: In other words, Central was a state champion.

EB: Yes, we won state.

JM: Were you a part of the Reformed Church also in your growing-up years?

EB: Yes. Reverend TerKeurst was my pastor for a long time. I guess when I was about fifteen, on Monday nights a lot of the ball players would go to a movie, the show. For some reason or another, I had heard somebody or talked to somebody that instead of going there I went to the consistory meeting. And when I was fifteen I joined Bethany Church.

JM: Then of course, Dr. TerKeurst followed you to Holland.

EB: No, it was the other way around.

JM: Oh, it was the other way around. When you came to Hope, of course, you had an athletic interest, so immediately I assume you tried out for football.

EB: Yes, there was a freshman team at that time.

JM: And you continued to play all through your four years?

EB: Yes.

JM: Any other sports?

EB: Basketball and track. I just played freshman basketball and sophomore. At the end of

my sophomore year, the basketball people across the country changed the rules so that you didn't jump after every basket, jump center. So they started to run then. Coach Hinga came to see me one night and was very nice about it, but he said, "Ek, I think there must something you could to help you out a lot more than basketball under the new rules." He said, "Why don't you be a debater?" I didn't know what debating was or anything about it. "You go see Dr. Shackson." I walked in his office. Football players scared him a little. I walked in and he said, "What can I do for you?" And I said, "I want to be a debater." You should have seen his face. "Oh no!" he said. I said, "Yes, I'm serious--I want to be." So starting there, Wendell Miles was one of my partners and we had...Dean Dykstra.

HB: Dean.

EB: Dean Dykstra was my partner.

JM: Wendell Miles, of course, became a judge.

EB: He became a judge, that's right. We debated a lot of...even in Chicago a couple times on WGR. The question at that time was "should the President have the power of appointment in the Supreme Court." That was a pretty good one.

JM: What was your major?

EB: History.

JM: Tell us a little bit about life at Hope College. First of all, do you remember the enrollment?

EB: The enrollment was 400--250 women and 150 men. That's one of the reasons I think that sounded pretty good (laughs).

JM: You lived in the dormitory?

EB: At the Frater House.

JM: You said something about having jobs while you were in college.

EB: Yes. I chauffeured for one of the Holland families. They were very gracious to me. When I would drive her to Grand Rapids, she'd always pay me and then say don't tell so-and-so. Then on Saturday I washed the car. Dregman was the name, the Dregmans. I'd wash the car and he would give me 5 dollars and say don't tell my wife. Room and board was \$7.50 at the Frater House. I was making 7 clear. So it worked out real well. The Dregmans were very nice. She had a daughter who had graduated and she taught in Allegan. I had to go get her on Fridays and then come back and drive her down on Sundays. But they all sat in the back seat. He had one of those big Nash chauffeur's cars. So I had an earpiece right next to my ear. She talked to me on the way to Grand Rapids. She had one child and she told me every time I drove her for two years what a terrible time she had. She was a nice gal. They were very nice to me.

JM: Then you had another job later which was at the Frater House?

EB: Yes, Dr. Mclean asked me if I would want to manage the Frater House. So I came early my junior year and got things started, and then my junior and senior year I ran it.

JM: Was that E. Paul Mclean?

EB: Yes.

JM: What was his position at the college?

EB: He taught psychology. He also was on the MIAA Athletic Committee. In those days, the coach of the sport and Dr. Maclean and they'd pick one person to represent the teams. For two years I represented Hope College on the MIAA Board as a student-- got to know a lot of them.

JM: What about summertimes? Did you have time off in the summer?

EB: No. I had a job before they called. In fact, when they came to see me in Grand Rapids about coming to Hope, I was shovelling coal for one of the Kelvinator companies. It was a good conditioning thing, you know. My boss' name was Van Dyke, but I told them I'd never known a Van Dyke that was Polish in my life. We got along real well. They came in to see me and he said, "We think you ought to come to Hope College." Of course, my brother had been there, and that meant a lot to me. They didn't have to talk very long and I said I would do that.

JM: Now, your brother was considerably older than you. He must have had quite an impact on your life.

EB: He was eleven years older. My mother died when I was ten. He was a junior at Hope at that time. I can remember one weekend he brought me down to Hope to see a basketball game at old Carnegie. Mina's brother was playing. It was kind of a thrill for me. Then one time I came down, they took me to Jack Schoutens' house for dinner on Sunday. Jack Schouten said don't eat any fat. So my mother looked for him for a long time to find him. My dad remarried. Fortunately, she loved athletics and we made them all. She was a real nice lady.

JM: Your brother's name was Adrian. What was his career? What did he do?

EB: He was in the real estate business with my dad for many years. He came here and worked in the block business.

HB: Dunn Brick.

EB: Dunn Brick. He did a lot of their foreign travel. He sold overseas, and even I think sometimes in the islands, brick work.

JM: You graduated from Hope College in 1937?

EB: Correct.

JM: Did you have any career plans specifically?

EB: Well, when the banks closed in Grand Rapids, the federal government sent what they called the whiz kids in those days, some of the top business school people in the middle west, like from the Chicago schools and places like that to try to help them out so they could open their doors again. One of those was a fellow by the name of John Schermer. My sister was not married, and they met. Then they could come down with their sons and see the football games and all that. He asked me if I'd like to go in business with him. But I had promised Mr. DenHerder at Bethany Church, he had a son but he wasn't interested, and he told me (he went to Michigan) if I would go to law school he would pay my way. But I had a summer before law school to work. I got my license July the fifth, 1937, and I really enjoyed it a lot. I didn't really want to go to law school, but in fairness to him, I went for a year and then eventually paid him back.

JM: With your debating background it might have been a good choice.

EB: It was good. I had a lot of legal contracts, mortgages, this type of thing, property

law. It was a good thing. Plus it was a good thing to learn that type of operation. It didn't hurt me any.

JM: Stepping back for a moment to the life at college. I assume it was really quite restricted. You went to chapel; that was required.

EB: Yes. Sometimes I knew the lady (chuckles) who took the monitoring and sometimes if they were real nice I didn't have to go once in a while.

JM: I didn't tell him this had to be a confessional.

EB: (laughs).

HB: We liked chapel and wanted to go.

EB: I led chapel a couple of times. I was on the YMCA board.

JM: Of course, the girls were very definitely kept separate from the boys except on certain occasions.

EB: We got into a little trouble on that one once or twice too. Two lates and out. I'd come in from a track meet or something...

JM: Are there certain individuals that you remember from your college days that have continued to be close to you or that are significant people in terms of what they have accomplished?

EB: Yes. I think Nella Meyer; I took French from her. She was a great lady. She was always very just so. You never did anything any different. One day she said to me, "Ekdal, one thing you've got to learn: you should be a little bit more of a gentleman, because," she said, "you're always the first one out of French class." Then after that we got to know each other fairly well and then she said to me one day, "How would

you like to have dinner at my house some night?" So I said, "Fine." So we invited another friend of mine, and her sister came. And the first thing I did, she put a pie a la mode and I spilled it on the rug (chuckles). She turned out to be a wonderful friend. She taught me a lot of social graces. She was just a real fine lady. In fact, I executed all her four sisters wills after that. Marguerite Prins was the last one.

JM: Any classmates that are particularly meaningful to you?

EB: Yes. Bill Poppink was my roommate for a couple of years. Russ Palman was my roommate. Russ was very close. I usually rode in with him and we did a lot of hunting together. We had a couple...Milt Slagh...they kind of took me over. They were seniors when I was a freshman. Both of them were longterm friends. Of course, they're both gone now.

JM: Had you already met Mina by the time you graduated?

EB: Yes.

HB: You were a junior.

EB: I was a junior. In fact, we were just kidding the other day. Our first date was here in the lobby of the Warm Friend Tavern, a Frater party.

HB: 62 years ago.

JM: I was just thinking as I walked down the street. You probably never dreamed you'd live here.

EB: No, no. In fact, when we lived out there, we'd come here on Sunday nights after church and walk the street. And she would always say to me, "There's our house." I'd say, "Come on, come on." Here we are. It was a nice move for us.

JM: I wasn't clear exactly how you got into the securities brokerage. It was through this...

EB: ...John Schermer.

JM: John Schermer. And he employed you?

EB: He was married to my sister and said, "Ek, why don't you try the brokerage business?" He was smart. He was a real good research person. We decided that the western half of Michigan was really soil that hadn't been turned, like the Gerber and that situation, Kellogg's south. "So why don't you go on the road and I'll run the office." So that summer I spent on the road. And I made a pretty good income. I liked it a lot.

JM: Was this cold selling?

EB: Yes, we did a lot of underwriting. At that time we underwrote Consumers Preferred. That was my first sale. And eventually got into the common stock of consumers. We did Kellogg, Gerber. We did a lot of them, El Paso Gas.

JM: Now this was 1937?

EB: Correct.

JM: There must have been a lot of shell-shocked investors still around.

EB: Well, the Dow Jones when I started was 147. Now it's 8000 (chuckles). But the thing was that the banks closed, and because some of the banks didn't open up, people were skeptical and Consumers had a good ring with them. I had a real nice opportunity to get started on that basis. And I came home every weekend from law school and worked on Saturdays.

JM: Oh, you did go to law school then?

EB: For a year.

JM: You were married in 1939?

EB: Right.

JM: Were you waiting for her to graduate or waiting for you to get some money?

EB: No. I'd been working you see. She was teaching in Zeeland. I had been working and in '39 we got married.

JM: Were you from Zeeland, Mina?

HB: I was born in Holland--1914.

JM: What church were you raised in?

HB: Third, baptized in Third Church. We moved to Grand Rapids when I was in elementary school.

JM: So actually, when you were in college you were from Grand Rapids. Where did you marry?

HB: Married in Kleis Chapel by John Dykstra and C.P. Dame.

EB: We got married good (laughs).

HB: We did.

EB: Old C.P.

HB: Both lived in Grand Rapids and we had never met each other until we were at Hope.

JM: That story's been duplicated again and again and again, hasn't it? That's great. By that time, 1939, you pretty well knew what your field was. You were going to be staying in the securities business.

EB: Yes. I had been doing very well with it. And about 1940, 41, of course...We had a

one son and he was just a little over a year old wasn't he, at that time.

HB: When you left for the war?

EB: Yes.

HB: He was two and a half. I was pregnant.

EB: Well anyway, a friend of mine from Hope, he was a senior lieutenant in the Navy.

He had gotten out about four or five years before he was a Frater. And he called me and said, "We have a system now called procurement for Naval Officers." I didn't know what that was. And he said, "What happens is if you pass the physical and the written you will become an ensign in the Navy immediately. You'll draw your ensign's pay immediately and your wife will have subsistence, enough to live on. And eventually you will make other grades." He said, "We'd like to suggest maybe that you try it." Well then when they bombed Pearl Harbor, I figured it was going to be a lot quicker than they talked about. So I called him and took the exams, and that worked out real well. I left in '43 in December, like good old Navy, two days before Christmas I had orders to leave Grand Rapids. I met my crew in New Orleans. Part of my crew was there. It was kind of interesting because a Marine officer and I came to together and he didn't know any more about it than I did. Jefferson barracks, we all kind of went and it was a mess. But we had to wait for our troops. We were going over on a Hawaiian shipper or one of the commercial lines that they hired, which was a pig pen. I hope somebody hears that. When we got our troops in, the Marine sergeant was from down south. About two o'clock in the morning he shook me out of my sack. He said, "Your troops are here." And it was

raining. Oh! Like mad! They had their sea bags and they were sitting on the sea bags in that mud. That was just terrible. I won't tell you what he said on the plate, but he really read them out. He said, "This is your officer!" Boy they all stood up and stood at attention (laughing). I almost cried, felt so bad. We took them overseas. They were stretcher handlers. They worked in the hospitals. They didn't do any actual fighting but had a very difficult duty.

JM: It was a medical corp type.

EB: Well, yes, sort of.

JM: Now, you were commissioned before you actually had any training or any experience?

EB: Right. They sent me to Princeton Naval Officers School.

JM: Then you came home again to wait your call?

EB: For about a week.

JM: Oh, that's all.

HB: You went directly overseas.

EB: No, I came to you.

HB: Just for a day.

EB: Yes, a day or a day and a half.

JM: So you were almost as green as the troops were.

EB: Yes, and we had orders to proceed to Noumea, New Caledonia. This was sort of an up-base from New Guinea. They had been at Guadalcanal. It took us about thirty-two days. Interesting thing, it wasn't a Navy ship and no officers quarters. If you wanted your eggs fried, you had to give them a dollar, all this kind of stuff. But we got

there. I waited there for about three days for my ship. I was assigned to U.S.S. Tryon. What happened was at Princeton, about halfway through Princeton, the Admiral addressed us one night and said that as of yesterday the Japanese would no longer allow white ships to come within a hundred yards of the beach as they had before. They would be sunk. He said now we have six ships that are going to be ready. In fact, two of them are ready. And if anybody would like to volunteer these are real fine ships. They're fast. They can hold about 1300 troops, about 800 wounded on the way out. And you'll have the same fire power as maybe a second class destroyer, enough to keep it away. So I volunteered. I talked to Mina about it and I volunteered for that. And I met my ship there.

JM: What kind of ship was this?

EB: It was a U.S.S. Tryon. It was an APH 1. It was, I'll show you a picture of it, it had a flared bow.

HB: Semi-Hospital. It was a hospital ship and had adequate fire power.

EB: That's not a hospital ship.

JM: You probably picked up the wounded.

EB: Attack-transport. We were only running in place of the hospital ships...

HB: ...because it was armed it wasn't white.

EB: We had no protection--ran alone to New Zealand frequently.

JM: But no Red Cross on it either?

EB: Nope. We had usually twelve to fourteen doctors.

JM: Now in that particular situation, what was your role?

EB: I asked to be a deck officer because I had a lived on the lake a lot and had done a lot of water work. So I was assigned to the deck office, to the deck section. We had sixteen landing boats, eight on each side. They'd hold 44 troops each of them. They weighed about three and a half tons a piece, not loaded. And they had these two great big 200 gray Marines so you could pull off. I worked in that division. I had a couple of good breaks because I was a little older. The captain asked me if I'd be interested in working as assistant first lieutenant. The first lieutenant in the Navy is in charge of the deck, like the gunny officer would be in charge of the deck in the boats. And I liked that. And I said, sure I'd like to do that. In maybe two months I moved in to my own quarters. I had a real nice situation. I had a little colored boy for my room boy. Lived good in between. I made fourteen landings with them in three years.

JM: You transported the wounded back to the...

EB: We brought them to New Zealand. The first two years I was in, we could hit New Zealand four and a half days. The only trouble is the Tasman Sea is between there and New Zealand. That's the roughest part of the Pacific. The kids would get so sick. My chaplain was a Franciscan monk by the name of Padre Nolan, wonderful guy, played center for Boston College. He really stayed with it. After I got to know him a little bit, in fact, how I got to know him, my dad sent me letters. And he thought I was with a Catholic chaplain. He'd write around the outside of the letter, "be careful of the Catholics; don't get too close to the Catholics." So I go down to Padre's quarters and I'd say hey, my dad says you're dangerous. He laughed. Finally, we got to be really good friends. In the in between time when I had time off

if we were running wounded, I would carry a bucket of water and go down below with him. At that time we didn't have air. It was terribly hot for those kids. We'd have a bucket of water and wash them off. He'd help them, talk to them.

JM: You learned a lot about compassion in those years.

EB: Yes. In fact, the interesting thing, we went into the invasion of the Philippines. We were in the whole invasion, seven beaches. We got into this one place. Kamikazes came over the first night and nobody had ever seen one. They got a tug right behind us. Then we started pulling kids off the next day. In those days they put them in those straight jackets. That's a horrible thing. It looks like you're ready for burial. All of a sudden I heard someone say, "Mr. Buys." I looked around (laughing), how would anybody in Leyte Gulf in this mess want Mr. Buys. I looked down and he looked up at me. "I was in your Sunday School class in Grand Rapids," he says, "in Bethany Church." And he said, "I don't want to be here. I'm scared. I'm not really wounded. I'm scared." But we had a little stick like iodine we could use and then you would have three numbers we could use. If they were supposed to go back by air, you put a big A on their chest. So I put a big A on his chest. (laughing) After the war was over I got a call from him. He was home in five days. But, I got to know Padre real well. We'd take all the dungarees and all the stuff we could haul down in New Zealand and then I'd give him a driver and a jeep and I'd go with him. There was a leprosy camp down there about a hundred and fifty miles south of Auckland. We'd bring our stuff down there and he'd get his communion linen washed and he got a little extra wine coming home (chuckles). He was just a wonderful guy.

JM: There are certain times that are so important that you remember them always. Where were you when Pearl Harbor was announced?

EB: I was sitting in the living room with Ek Jr. on my lap listening to the Lions game, and they closed it off. That's when we started talking serious, that maybe I'd have to go. That's where I was, right in my living room.

JM: I happened to be taking off my choir gown at the first Christmas Vespers concert at Hope College.

EB: No kidding. That's when that happened.

JM: Sure, Sunday afternoon. I suppose you stayed in until peace was a reality.

EB: Yes. I went back out again. We came back for a complete overhaul. In fact, she had a chance to come out and see the ship at that time. Her sister stayed with the youngsters.

HB: We had a son born. Chris was born.

EB: Coming to this, we're going to get that now. I was coming back through, just coming out of a light in New Caledonia, a light from Senator Vandenberg for Ensign Buys. But we turned the corner and we couldn't catch it which meant that I knew that maybe we had a youngster born because she was waiting. Well I got down to New Zealand with that load. I got a letter from her and she said the baby's just fine and everything is just wonderful. I didn't know whether it was a boy or a girl (laughs). And we had a lot of fun with that.

JM: So both of your sons were born while you were in the service?

EB: No, first one was before. We passed out cigars and my buddies would say, "What

have you got?" And I would say, "I don't know, just smoke the cigar. (laughs) I'll tell you later."

JM: So obviously as a school teacher, you couldn't continue teaching and be married at the same time, could you?

HB: That's right. I'm happy for that. I taught three years, then we were married.

JM: Then of course you were in a position to buy a home or rent a home.

EB: Before I went overseas, we rented an apartment. It was kind of a nice one, kind of handy to downtown. Then Mina became pregnant and the lady that owned the house didn't want that. So then her dad and my dad and I looked at the fields out there by where Hope Church finally went up...there was a hayfield all around it. The guy, a Ford dealer from Rockford owned it. He wanted \$3000 for it--it had a nice yard--\$300 down, which I didn't have, but I worked it out and we finally made it. Then we lived there until 1950 about?

HB: Well during the war, Hope Church was started in the store front building on Kalamazoo. When we moved across to the pre-fab then you left for the service.

EB: Then I left. Then you taught all that time. She had the two boys.

JM: You were able to teach after that time?

EB: Sunday School. She had the high school gals for forty years and I had the high school guys for forty years.

HB: We always taught at different places.

EB: Well, different churches.

JM: You never did live together away from Grand Rapids while you were in the service?

HB: No, stayed right there.

JM: How long was your separation?

HB: It was four years.

EB: Just short of four years.

JM: How long was the period when you did not see each other?

HB: 13 months. Our son was 13 months old when he first saw him. He left the country six weeks before he was born. We had no money.

EB: Very little.

HB: You sold...

EB: Oh yes. I got a ration, you know. I got beer, booze, and coke. I'd keep the coke and sell the beer and the booze and send her the money.

HB: Send it home.

JM: So finally the war was over and you're settled down and you have a home.

EB: Actually, we were in Guam after this, when I came back the second time. And we were staging to invade Japan. We had over a thousand ships there. We were all practically ready to go, and they showed us pictures of the planes that would fly over and the Japanese had guns all along right in the waterway. They said that maybe half of you will get back. That was the story. Then all of a sudden they dropped the bombs. We were in Guam, and we got word of the bombs and two days later they capitulated and they gave up.

JM: So you would always say that was a good thing?

EB: Yes. I was really happy. Then we got orders to go down to Manilla and pick up

General Eichelberger's staff and the General and pick him up for the parade in Tokyo. They came in behind the Missouri and stand by to have our hospital clear. They had found 600 prisoners of war up north of Tokyo, and half of them were almost dead. We went up and cleaned that out, well I didn't, but our crew. They brought them back and we had them on board. The chaplain called me and said take a look down there. And here on our galley, our lower galley, are all these guys on their knees before steaming food. They hadn't had any food, but they were all on their knees. There wasn't one fellow eating a thing. Then they did of course. But Lieutenant Meyer, who was one of about the highest in the whole bunch, I had a little extra room in my room and he stayed with me until Pearl Harbor. They had a lot of psychologists and psychiatrists went over with these prisoners. We lost quite a few on the way over; they died. We buried them at sea. They called from Pearl Harbor into San Francisco for clearance and they got a hold of Lieutenant Meyer's wife and the message from her was: It's been five years since I've heard from you. I've cashed your insurance and I've remarried and I don't care to see you. That poor guy cried next to me in my room. Two days out of Pearl Harbor about five in the morning, turned around; he was missing. He went over the side. I sent his gear back, never heard a thing from her, not a thing.

HB: But how wonderful Hope Church of Grand Rapids was to wives of servicemen at that time. That was when everything was rationed, gasoline, sugar, rubber, all of that. I remember one of the boys' Sunday School teachers, a farmer, came over and gave me some of his meat certificates so I could buy things.

EB: Gas too, right?

HB: Gasoline, because my folks lived way on the other side of town. They knew that was my only outlet to get over there to see them. The church was wonderful.

JM: I was overseas during all that time. I was overseas three years. I don't much about the civilian side of it, but it must have been quite a war also. How old were you when you got out of the service? What was your ranking then?

EB: I was a Lieutenant JG. They offered me an opportunity if I would take one more trip back to Japan, they'd make me a full Lieutenant, but I said I'd rather go home (laughs). The skipper didn't like that. We had to change skippers and he was a nasty old...he didn't like me. But he said, "Buys, I'll get you back on this ship."

HB: How old were you?

EB: Twenty-seven. I walked into the western sea frontier to try to get a change of orders, and here down the steps come a fellow I played football with at Central High Grand Rapids. He had braids about to here. He was a weather forecaster. He went to the University of Michigan, big braids and all that. I said, "You look like the guy I got to know. I got to go home." He said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go to Great Lakes as fast as I can and get out of there as fast as I can." I got back to the ship and headed off to quarterdeck. In about 15 minutes, "Lieutenant Buys report to the Captain." So, (laughs) the Captain was about 4 foot 6, something like that, a little bitty guy. He was an Academy man, which he told me about twice a day. But anyway, I walked into his cabin. In fact, the first time I ever walked into his cabin was about two years before that and I sat down and he said, "Who told you to

sit down? Stand at attention." So he told me, "I've just gotten orders to release you. Will you tell me how you got orders to be released before we go back to Japan again?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I'm glad I got the orders. I want to go home." "Well," he said, "I'll give you another half a stripe." I said, "You may have my half a stripe, I want to go home (laughs)."

JM: I see, that was the alternative.

EB: I said, "I'll see you later." So I took off that afternoon.

JM: I think that was the general feeling of most people at that time.

EB: They sent me to Great Lakes.

JM: It seems to me that the Ekdal Buys we know now would never have been that Ekdal Buys if he hadn't had those years in the service. Those most of been very formative years for you.

EB: There was a lot of that. I saw a lot. I had a chance to...

HB: You buried a lot of fellows at sea. You started a Protestant service on the ship.

EB: Slide them off under a flag. Then I had to pack their box and write their folks.

JM: So you were a hands-on chaplain, you might say?

EB: Well, yes. I was with Padre all the time, no matter what he was doing. In fact, he had a softball team; I had a softball team. He had all the Catholic kids. One good first baseman, he was an Italian boy, he slid in and Padre called him out. He said (speaking in an Italian accent) "Padre! I'm going with Buys now. (laughs) No more you!"

JM: Coming back to Grand Rapids which I assume at that time was still quite provincial,

at least the Dutch community was. That must have been somewhat of a change.

EB: Yes. I went right to work. And things really got rolling along in good shape. We were still living on Philadelphia Avenue.

HB: He worked five and a half days a week and we had one car.

EB: Yes. And I was covering that territory all the way up--I got as far as Traverse City. That worked out real well. I had a little extra money then and things were going better and I had a decent car after a while. We had a short-haired pointer and we'd go behind John Schermer, my brother-in-law's house. He had a nice home, and we'd hunt those dogs on Sunday afternoon with the kids. They loved that. We came back from there it was what 5 o' clock, 6 o' clock, we got a phone call, my brother-in-law dropped dead. He was fifty. There was my job--gone. Lo and behold, I got a call from one of my customers and he said, "What are you going to do, Ek?" I said, "That's a good question. I'd like to stay with it. And I think I could buy the business, but I don't have any kind of money." "Well," he said, "you come and see me and maybe I can help you." And he did. He financed it for me. I bought my sister out.

JM: He had an office out of which he operated I assume.

EB: McKay Tower. It was a nice office. Then right after that, Doug McGregor, who was married to her sister, Mac was a good friend of mine. He had gone right after the war to Ann Arbor, business school, and he came out of there with flying colors. He was the number two analyst for Northern Trust.

HB: In Chicago.

EB: How many kids did they have?

HB: At that time?

EB: Yes.

HB: They had a total of eight. But at that time they had a couple.

EB: I called him up. I said, "You want to be my analyst?" He kind of laughed. I said, "I can't pay you more than \$200 bucks a month." "Oh," he said, "I'll talk to my wife." So then the next morning...[tape turned off to avoid chimes]...Then he came back up. He got enough so he could take care of his kids. He was the in-house man, the analyst. And I went on the road. We had a couple others hired, and we hired a couple more eventually. Finally, we ended up with twelve offices in Michigan and we had about 125 personnel. At that point he became a partner.

JM: What year would that be at that particular point?

EB: I came in '37. Then I went overseas; I came home in '46 so that would be about five years after he came up.

JM: So there was a very fast decade of growth over about ten years then?

EB: Yes. We had a remarkable growth, and we were really going along great. And he was very conservative, he was a Scotsman, good thing. He would kind of tell me what was going on and how to do it, then our sales group would do it. And lo and behold, the market broke in '74. Boy, she really broke. However, we were mostly in good utilities and we didn't get hurt much. All of sudden we heard that one of the big ones, McNaughton Greenwalt in Grand Rapids, was shaky. Then we heard about another one that was a little shaky. So I called my friend and said, "Now that we paid you off, do you want to get in on another deal?" He said, "Fine." So we

borrowed enough money to buy those two companies. We picked up about 40 salesman. We rented this Trade Center, and we left that as it was. It was the old Masonic Hall.

JM: In Grand Rapids?

EB: Yes. It turned out to be real nice. We worked there for the rest of the time. From there they have now moved into the Tower Building. I retired. My wife says I'm not retired. In 1990, I retired.

JM: Prior to that you had sold your business I think you said.

EB: Yes. Just before that, I merger with Robert W. Baird. Prior to this time, throughout the country, the major city in the state and the major outside person represented the National Association of Security Dealers--Eighth District, that was seven states. You remember Bob Hack from Hope College? Bob was on there from Wisconsin, and two years later I got on it from Michigan. So we had two Hope guys on there. Then eventually Bob kept right on going and he became Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange. We were close friends. He had sold his company to Baird, and when I found that out, I talked to him about it. He wasn't well at all then; his kidney's were gone. He said, "I've been treated well." So then we got together.

JM: What was the name of your company when you were in business?

EB: Before, Buys, McGregor and Company. It turned out to be Robert W. Baird and Company. [end of side one]...ten year agreement with them after I left, and I have one more year to go and then that's over.

JM: Somebody told me yesterday when I mentioned that I was going to be here that you

were a part of the beginning of Hope Church in Grand Rapids.

EB: We were both...

JM: You were charter members?

HB: Charter members. We started in the storefront church.

JM: Was that just before the war or during the war?

HB: Before the war. Van Harn was our pastor. Those were wonderful days.

EB: Tuxedo, full dress.

JM: Was that John Van Harn?

HB: Yes. Then we moved across the street, bought that pre-fab building from up north.

EB: ...American Seating.

HB: Haul that in.

EB: Haul that in.

HB: Oh, yes.

EB: That's where she went to church while I was in the Navy.

JM: I assume, being a new church, there were many, many young wives like yourself.

HB: Well, not too many. But you were an elder immediately. You were never a deacon.

You were an elder and vice-president right away.

JM: Even before you went to the service?

EB: Before I went to the service.

JM: There are some people who are recognized as leaders from day one, aren't there?

HB: The Lord just providentially...

JM: I don't know how you define that, but it's true. So when you got back from the

service, we heard about how much the Lord blessed you in your business, but you had a family life too. How did you cope with a husband on the road?

HB: I was happy to be a mother at home because he was busy, charter churches you are busy every night of the week. It was something every night of the week.

EB: Of course, she started getting real busy too. She became president of the Women's City Club in Grand Rapids.

HB: Well, that's after the boys were grown.

EB: Well alright. But I say you had how many members, 1200 members?

HB: That's much later.

JM: Did you call it the Women's City Club?

HB: Women's City Club, but that's much later after our boys graduated from high school.

JM: What was it that 1200 members?

HB: The Women's City Club had 2400 members. That was much much later.

EB: Then, but ok right after...

HB: Were talking about Hope Church Grand Rapids, that storefront church.

EB: It met in out basement the first couple times.

JM: Is that right?

HB: That was Peace Church, then we were charter members of Peace Church.

EB: Oh! I'm sorry. Excuse me; that's later. I'm sorry.

HB: Yes. You were involved in Pine Rest, the Synod, national level in New York...

JM: Why don't we just get into that one by one. The first time I think I got to know you was when you were involved in the starting of Peace Church, and part of that was the

fact that Wayne Kiel was a former parishoner of mine. Wayne was a deacon when I was at Zion Grandville.

EB: No kidding!

JM: I told the church recently when I preached there, he sat there and heard me for fifty sermons, a hundred sermons, a hundred fifty sermons. He finally said if he can do it I can do it--and off to seminary. (laughter)

EB: We see Wayne.

JM: Yes, I do too.

EB: We have a lot of fun. In July, they have horse races over at the Horse Club. A bunch of guys come up and we have a lot of fun.

JM: That's when I first got to know you, through that whole process. I may have been on the extension committee.

HB: Sure. We remember those things.

JM: Hope Church then was your church for a number of years while your children were growing up, wasn't it?

EB: Well, our boys were in college then.

JM: By the time that you left Hope Church?

HB: At Hope Church, Ekdal graduated from Ottawa in '58. And Chris in '62; '58 and '62. So we were at Grand Rapids Hope Church, and when Chris graduated from Ottawa in '66, we moved to Duncan in '66 and then he started Hope.

EB: That's right.

HB: And then it was a year before we started Peace Church in the cafeteria. Pastor

Wayne was a student at the seminary, a senior.

EB: I got bought out. (chuckles)

HB: And we wanted him as our preacher. They all did.

EB: I gave him a little early call (laughs).

JM: As you developed your business, you also developed your community contacts and so on. It appears to me that you both became quite involved in the civic life of Grand Rapids and so forth.

HB: Of course you did more, through Pine Rest and the Civil Rights...

EB: We had a really bad political situation. The city was being run and the state was being run by people who shouldn't have run it.

JM: So you got into the political scene as well.

EB: I got into that real heavy.

JM: You never held an elected office however.

EB: No I didn't run as a precinct delegate, but we got Jerry Ford to run for Congress.

Boy, we really whipped them. Frank McKay, who was a... Our oldest son, Ek Jr., wrote a paper on our political situation--he was a political science major at Hope--and McKay's granddaughter got a hold of it at Ottawa Hills. It said McKay was a drunken bum (laughing), which is true. McKay called me up and said, "Buys, I want you to know something, I'm going to put that kid in jail. I want every one of those books back on my desk." I said, "I'm sorry but that isn't going to happen. We are right where we want to be." Boy, he really got hot under the collar. Then we established Homefront and really organized. By the time that Yonkman was the

congressman from this district, and he had a cottage on Silver Lake, and when they put new 44th through (laughing) they went down and paved his driveways. So when they had a big political meeting at the Rowe Hotel, the guy said, "You have to ask him who paved his driveways," which I did. And that ended it right there.

JM: This is of course involved in Republican Party politics. Were you a committeeman or something like that?

EB: I was a precinct delegate.

HB: You were in Homefront politics.

EB: Homefront was the name of our organization. I was on the radio forum a couple of times.

JM: I see. It was a reform organization?

EB: Yes.

JM: Now, you became very active in the local church, almost immediately. That led to other involvement as far as the denomination was concerned. Would you like to tell us a little about that?

EB: Well, let's see. I went to General Synod, of course, a few times after that. But in 1955...

HB: The Program Council.

EB: The Program Council. Then in 1955, Lubbers came to see me.

JM: Dr. Lubbers, the President of Hope College.

EB: He said, "Ek, we need a layman on the Board. We were wondering if maybe you would want to try that." I said, "Well, I don't know anything about it all." Dr.

Dykstra was chairman of the board at the time. So, in '55 I joined the Board, and five years later I became the first chairman of the board that hadn't been a preacher.

JM: There was an entire change of constitution in regard to the Board, instead of the Board being appointed by the local districts, or classes, the Board was appointed in a different fashion--as it is today.

EB: Right, classes still had some appointment, but not control.

JM: Much better arrangement.

EB: I think it worked out well.

JM: Yes, we were on the board together.

EB: I just finished my fortieth year on the board. I'd been on already for ten years, but they kind of kid me along a little bit. Some of them are almost at the end of it now, but they're still very nice. We have some good laughs. In fact, the guy that takes the pictures, somebody said to him the other day when they took the pictures, "When are you going to quit?" He said, "I'm not quitting before Buys does." (everyone laughs).

JM: You were also involved in Pine Rest. You didn't elaborate on that. Were you on the board? Or did you have a special...

EB: I was chairman of the foundation.

JM: Chairman of the foundation. The Pine Rest Foundation is the parent corporation for the Pine Rest Christian Hospital?

EB: It was the operating area and the money raising... It was kind of an odd thing how that happened. Right around the corner, McKay Tower, where our office was, was a young fellow, very odd, but had a lot of money because his folks were in the Utility

Commonwealth Southern. They had made a lot of money. He came into my office one day after I had gotten back to him at Pine Rest and said, "I'd like to make a little gift for my mother. My mother always said the nurses at Pine Rest were angels. So I'll bring you a gift." So a couple of days later he comes in and he lays some securities on the desk, and I had never seen them. I looked at them and I said, "Where are these from?" "My dad started this company in Cleveland years ago." To make a long story short, they were worth \$400,000. That's still the largest gift Pine Rest has ever had. He gave them to me! I said, "I want to give you a receipt." "No," he said, "Just write a letter of acceptance." So that's where we got started. Who was our friend out there?

HB: Bill Hiemstra.

EB: Yes, Bill Hiemstra. Did you know Bill?

JM: He was a chaplain at Pine Rest.

EB: He helped a lot.

JM: It occurs to me as I look back, because we were in the same classis together, that you must of had some strong classis responsibilities. Weren't you on the Extension Committee or the Church Planning and Development Committee?

EB: Yes. I was on the Extension Committee. Lou Benes and I were in charge of Camp Geneva, the Camp Geneva committee, started that, went out to raise some money together.

HB: You were going to New York when I started going in 1957.

EB: Well, that was business. No, I was on the General Synod Executive Committee for

three years trial, three years Michigan, and another time, oh, they were going to run it for three years remember.

JM: So you might almost be called a pioneer as far as lay leadership in the denomination is concerned. There were others, but you were one of them.

HB: That's true. Ministers always did that; laymen didn't. They probably couldn't take time from their work, but you did.

EB: MacGregor and I had a deal that I could take ten percent of my time for that. And we worked out a little deal.

HB: And you did it at least every month.

EB: I was in New York almost every month. Of course, I had to be in New York in business too. But I started the Extension Foundation.

JM: Oh, you started that.

EB: Yes. There weren't (laughs) too red hot about that. They said we don't know what you're doing. I said, "What we got to do is find some people, churches, that want to put some money in there and when they do, we in turn will loan it to some other churches."

JM: This is for the development of new churches?

EB: Yes. The first one I went to was, well, he died.

HB: Where was this?

EB: In his church up in northern New York. He stayed at our house.

HB: Howard Hagman.

EB: Howard Hagman was with First Church and they had a pretty good endowment you

know. He called me up after only three or four days after I got back in Grand Rapids and said, "We're going to put in \$25,000." That was a real start for it. Then I got quite a few of my clients, some of them not Reformed either, to buy a \$5000 or something like that. That's the way we put Peace Church and Hope Church together.

HB: Then what about for the pastor's salary?

EB: Oh, I was chairman of the committee after the war for pastors' salary. I had know idea. It was \$3000 or something; it was almost nothing.

JM: My first salary was less than that!

EB: But anyway I went to this church, I won't tell you the name of the church.

HB: Yes, that was exciting.

EB: I said, "I think from this point on the situation you have you should be paying X number of dollars to your pastor." And the consistory guy said, "If you want to pay him that much take him along."

JM: Oh, boy.

EB: And he was sitting right there. You know, it just broke my heart.

HB: And then the Presbyterian and Reformed...

EB: Oh. Southern Presbyterians.

JM: Yes I remember those days.

EB: I was on that committee (laughs). Oh boy.

JM: ...the Committee for Reconciliation, the Committee of Eighteen.

EB: That's going to be a good one.

JM: That was part of your experience too?

HB: You went to Schuller's church. Was that the 25th Anniversary of California Churches?

EB: Well, I was President of the Board of Domestic Missions.

HB: Still in the drive-in church.

EB: We took the first \$500 to Schuller in the drive-in church.

JM: Is that right? That's the \$500 he's always talking about.

EB: He's always talking about it.

JM: I worked there for eight years as you know.

EB: Yes I know you did.

HB: That's right.

EB: He was up on top of that movie deal. We drove out there.

JM: You've had a lot of experiences in terms of the Church, and then you decided to relocate to Holland, Michigan. What was that all about?

HB: Providentially it all happened. We lived at Duncan Lake in a large home.

JM: Where's Duncan Lake?

EB: Right by Peace Church.

HB: Between Middletown and Caledonia.

EB: We had a beautiful spot there.

HB: What, a 4300 foot home. A huge one. And your brother who lived in Holland had a home about half that size that he wanted to sell. Off the top of my head I said, "Let's go there!"

EB: So we sold our lovely home. We had lived at Duncan about 12 or 15 years.

HB: Never dreamed that.

JM: And what year was that you moved to Holland?

EB: 1970.

HB: 70-72.

JM: Did you commute to office then in Grand Rapids?

EB: Yes, I drove back and forth. We had an office here too. We had nine offices by that time.

HB: But yet you were in Grand Rapids.

EB: Yes, I drove back and forth every time. I still remained in the office.

JM: Now, you bought your brother's home here in Holland.

EB: On Brecado Court.

JM: Coming to Holland involved changing churches did it not?

HB: Yes. Our good friend John Piet was the first person to invite us to a church. John and I were in the same class at Hope. We were very good friends. They invited us to Hope Church. Because we had been in charter churches we had never gone out looking for a church. Your brother was there and my two brothers were there. So that's where we went.

JM: And the pastor at that time was?

HB: VanderWilt.

JM: Marlin VanderWilt. Have you taken leadership roles in that congregation?

HB: You did. Right away they pounced on you.

EB: I was Chairman of the Consistory three years. Vice-President.

JM: I assume you have relinquished that in recent years.

EB: Oh yes, it was time. I have a grandson that's over there, Art, and he's been doing a great job. We're proud of him.

HB: That's a different discussion. It was all very different for us. We were accustomed to a night service, teaching catechism, Sunday School, prayer meetings.

JM: You couldn't find that here in Holland today.

EB: It's different.

JM: It is. How did Holland appear to you? You of course knew Holland, but what was your impression of Holland as you started to live here in 1970?

HB: We were pleased.

EB: We liked it.

HB: Having been born here and have a lot of history here.

EB: Your brother was here.

HB: Dad's business was here and your brothers were here.

EB: Both brothers were here.

HB: Yes. Holland had changed a great deal. We felt it would be very narrow and very cliquish. We found that's not true.

EB: Another thing: my brother had Parkinson's bad. He loved athletics.

HB: Had a good time.

EB: But her brother and his son George, we would go all over together.

JM: And you had more time for yourself and for Mina, for each other.

HB: No, he continues being busy.

EB: She says I'm not home now.

HB: He had a secretary up until two months ago. He handles many estates and trusts and involved with the college, here and there and is called for consultation and financial help, families and so forth.

EB: A lot of my former clients need some direction.

JM: Many of them are elderly no doubt.

EB: That's right. I decided not to do it and then I did part-time. I have two or three left, something like that.

JM: As you look back across the 17 years you've lived in Holland, give us some reactions. What has happened to Holland? What has been good? What has been bad?

HB: I think very good. Many wonderful opportunities here.

EB: We think a great deal of Holland.

HB: Wonderful residents. We have a mayor who is...

EB: Working hard at it.

HB: We heard his speech on Armistice Day.

EB: Wonderful.

[participants take a break]

JM: Just before we took our break, we were talking about changes that you had seen in Holland since you came here in 1970. I think you made some positive comments about the things that you have seen. Would you like to reflect on that a little bit more?

EB: Actually, in the college situation here in Holland, and the seminary, I've had some

opportunities to work with the Cook building at the seminary. I was chairman of that drive. John Hesselink had just come as president. And of course Peter Cook, everybody knows Peter. Peter was a great help. We raised the money for that.

JM: Peter Cook is an industrialist from Grand Rapids.

EB: Right, he's from Mazda Corporation. Then not too long after that we needed a new recreation center. Dr. Van Wylen had just come then and we decided that we try to build a Dow Center if Dow would help us. I had the opportunity to work on that with him.

JM: You mean Dow Chemical?

EB: Dow Chemical, that's why it's Dow Center of course. We had a wonderful time with that. We dedicated it to the four coaches. The day of the dedication I had an opportunity to speak about the four coaches.

JM: The three coaches being?

EB: Schouten, Hinga, and Vanden Bosch.

JM: What you are trying to say, though, is these were significant coaches in the history of Hope College.

EB: That's right. They put the base on the athletics.

JM: The interesting thing about it was that Schouten never had a college degree, did he?

EB: No.

JM: He was really a trainer.

EB: He was a trainer, right. Jack was (laughs) our coach, our freshman coach in football. I did quite a bit of work in track, I held the record at Central High in Grand Rapids.

When I was a freshman, the first day in track, he stuck a stake in the grass by where the old sandburn patch was. And he said you throw it there and you're the new champion. Well in three days I had thrown it over there, but I had to have a track meet to get until they could get it done. So I held the record in shot put for a long time, about 15 years.

JM: While we talk about Schouten, reflect on Carnegie Gym.

EB: The balcony was all the way around, and of course, the corners you couldn't shoot under. But the interesting thing about Carnegie Gym was that the basketball floor went right up to the folding doors. So when I played freshman basketball, and Schouten was our coach, I was following the dribbler going to make a bucket, and instead of that, I carried him through the doors and rolled him down the steps! Boy, I really got it for that! The training in those days was ropes. You swing from one rope to another and before you go down, you swing four times down the lane without getting off. The result was that your upper body was really strong.

JM: You didn't have to have a great big building.

EB: No.

JM: That is one of the few gymnasiums that Carnegie ever underwrote, I understand. He built libraries.

EB: That was a great place. It kind of fell apart--but it was a great place. We have a good freshman team.

JM: Did athletics move to the Armory then at that point?

EB: All the time I was there it was in Carnegie. Basketball games were played in

Carnegie. They backed a big lumber truck up and we'd all get on the lumber truck and go to Riverview. Nowadays they have nice plush cars. Jack Schouten was a fine trainer and a fine coach. We used to have a lot of fun because Hinga had just come from Holland High, and he'd had a wonderful record there. He put the ball in the middle of the field. In fact, Nettinga was quarterback for them. He was a senior at Hope. He'd say, "Okay, fellas," to the varsity, "when you go across the goal line and you go in." Schouten would say to us, "Freshman, if they go across the goal line, you stay here 'til dark." In fact, one afternoon we laid Nettinga up twice. We had a good freshman team.

JM: Hope has a lot of community support as far as its athletics is concerned. Was that true in those days as well?

EB: Oh, yes. Pastor Henry Van Dyke was my coach--self-appointed. He'd come down there on Monday, "Buys! Come over here!" He'd get me right down there and say, "Now that guy knocked you flat on your...You got to get forward a little more." Then something else would happen in scrimmage or something and then he'd say, "Buys! Come over here!" and everybody would laugh because he was my coach. I'd just come off a state championship team in high school, and this preacher was telling me what to do! (laughs)

JM: He was at Fourth Reformed Church, wasn't he? He was a friend of my father's.

EB: Oh, he was a nice guy. I was his boy.

JM: Going back again to the city of Holland. Have you had leadership roles in the city itself, as far as the government is concerned?

EB: I haven't done much in the city that I can remember.

HB: You started a trust where you gave them a pattern for beginning...

EB: For the foundation here.

HB: Yes.

EB: That was year's ago.

JM: What foundation are we talking about?

EB: The Holland Foundation which now has...

HB: The Community Foundation.

EB: ...almost 20 million.

JM: Is that the organization that Bill Vanderbilt works for?

EB: Yes. I really didn't have anything to do with that.

HB: No, because you were not retired when we came. You kept commuting and I did too.

JM: Have you been a member of Rotary or any of those organizations?

EB: No, I never joined. I was on the road all my life; John Schermer was very active in Rotary. He used to speak a lot at noon throughout their system. Time and time again, way back when I had to be a debater--about the best thing that's ever happened to me...Like for instance, the president of Gerber came back from Florida. Two days after he came back he realized that he had to have a speaker for Rotary, and I guess you're really supposed to be there. The vice-president called me and said, "Can you give a speech?" I said, "Sure." So I gave a speech. That's a long story, but I got paid about a hundred thousand times more than the speech was worth, I know that.

(laughs)

HB: In college you teach a seminar every year.

EB: By the way, next Monday I teach my 27th Senior Seminar in the Business School.

JM: Is that right? At the college? That's wonderful.

EB: Once a year.

JM: Let's get back to the athletic program. There's a field named after you at Hope College. Can you tell us something about that?

EB: It was kind of a surprise. Dr. Van Wylen called me one day and said they wanted to get together and talk to you with a couple other fellows on the Board. I'd had pretty good luck in raising funds for Dow, and built Dow, and the Van Zoeren Library, I built most of that. Then Kresge gave us the Vander Werf building. Kresge was a real good friend. His wife was a dear friend of ours. He loved Hope College. Then the new Peale Science building was Kresge. I can remember Gordon and I went down there. We had finished Dow too long, and he got a little huffy about that. We walked in there one day, and in fact a friend of mine had said he's just given \$500,000 to Hillsdale--they liked it because of their politics. We walked in and the first thing he looked at Gordon (he knew Gordon from the University of Michigan). He says, "How's it happen that you went to Hope College?" Boy, he went after him. He's just a little guy. He said "I can't give you any more." I said, "Mr. Kresge, you just gave \$500,000 to Hillsdale." "How did you find that out!" "I found it out. A friend of mine told me." So we went home. We wanted to get a new swimming pool, it was \$350,000. In the Sunday paper, Kellogg gave all the equipment for exercising and all this stuff, got a big play in the Detroit paper, for the Dow.

Monday I get a phone call from Gordon at the office in Grand Rapids, "What do think? Listen to this!" Kresge calls him up and says, "Is that true of Kellogg?" "Yes." "Okay, build a pool!" We had some wonderful times.

JM: You have to know the right buttons to push, don't you?

EB: An interesting sidelight to that was he had never seen the Tulip Time parade. I asked her kind of casually, "Have you ever seen the Tulip Time parade?" She said, "No. Stanley, would you like to see the Tulip parade?" "Oh yeah." It was about two months away and I got hold of the committee and they hadn't picked anybody for the front piece. I said, "Can you put him in the car?" "Oh yeah, we'd love to." So I called Kresge a couple days later and said we're all set--that he would be part of the parade. Oh, he liked that. We had asked him to stay at Duncan with us, but they had some problems and he stayed at the old Holiday Inn. They had to take him over to the parade. He was standing there--Mrs. Kresge was such a nice gal. She said to me, "Ek, I'm worried." I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "You see that nice powder blue coat he's got on, and those pants and that tie and those shoes?" I said, "Yes, I've never seen him dressed up quite like that." She said, "The only problem is that if it rains today, by the time the parade's over, it'll be up to here, and up to here. He bought those at K-Mart!" (laughs)

JM: In other words, they would have shrunk!

HB: At Kresge's.

EB: Kresge's, K-Mart. In fact, the first K-Mart they decided to open on Sunday, and she got up at the annual meeting and said, "I can't take care of you, but the Lord will."

And when I see K-Mart folding up here last year, I said, "Boy lady, you are correct."

JM: I brought up the matter of the field...

EB: Oh yeah, they got together and asked me to sit down and talk to them, which I did.

They went on to say because of all of this and I'd taken my time and all that kind of thing, it sounded pretty good. They said, "What we'd like to do, we have this property and we're going to turn it into fields, and we'd like to name it after you."

At first it hit me--I didn't know what to say. That's how it happened. Months after that, during the football season, they had a big green and white tent. I could ask 100 guests for steak before the game. Then afterwards they had a platform outside and my family was there--all the boys--and they dedicated it then. I get a lot of cheap talk about it, of course, in this place. A lot of people kid me.

HB: They don't know, and we don't want them to know.

EB: It's nice, but by the same token, it kind of wears a little bit.

JM: My guess is that there is a lot of philanthropy behind the surface that we aren't going to hear about, that you've been involved in. One of the interesting things about Holland is that there has been so much of that local philanthropy. My brother-in-law, Paul Muyskens, is on the city council of Orange City, Iowa. He was here last year. It just blows his mind. He says if we only had people like that in Orange City who give to the community like these people do--and I'm thinking of the Haworths and the Princes. My concern is, are the second generation people going to be doing what their parents did? Of course, the parents were the original entrepreneurs. How do you feel about that?

EB: People coming up--young Haworth, some of the young fellows that came out of Prince Corporation in this new deal--there's going to be a lot of big money. And they're all church involved. I think the future of Holland is strong, I really do. Especially the good things. The city center right now is being kicked around a lot, but I think that will come out alright. I'm sure it will.

JM: Do you have any concerns about Holland itself? Many people bring up the issue of gangs, graffiti, lack of security in certain areas and so on. Is there anything you'd like to comment on about that?

EB: I guess I know it's there, but I've never been intimidated by something like that. If you're going to have a gang, have it in Holland. After awhile it will disappear. That's the way I feel.

JM: The good outweighs the bad.

EB: Yes, the good will beat it. You watch these kids who just killed at Pereddies. They all apologized--they didn't know what they were doing. It's sad.

JM: From my perspective, there have been drastic changes in the churches here in Holland. Would you like to comment on that?

EB: I think the churches in Holland are taking some good leadership, and they're headed by some people with good leadership. I see some of the younger fellows at Christ Memorial that I know well, and your church, and First; our church has some good young leaders. I think Holland is going to be okay.

JM: I think I see a shift in power--in other words, I sense that the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches may be in a struggle for supremacy, if that's appropriate to use

that phrase, that they never had to face before because of the onslaught of fine mega-churches like Central Wesleyan and so on. How is that all going to play out as you see it?

EB: I think the mega-church, fortunately Christ Memorial is almost a mega-church and I think there are others capable. When we lived over here in the condo, one Sunday morning I had to go get something for my wife. I went to turn up there on 41st, and the traffic was all the way down on Washington--I couldn't even get out of there.

JM: Their new building is larger than the Crystal Cathedral. That's a phenomenon that you're finding other places too. I guess I can only say that's good, and we had better be able to adjust. Some people decry the fact that Sixth Church and Bethel Church had to close. From my perspective, yes, it's sad; but those churches were designed for an entirely different era. You don't build churches that close to each other anymore. You don't build churches for a walking congregation. It's inevitable that it's going to happen. But it shakes up a lot of people, of course.

EB: Mina worked for a long time in the guilds, the national guilds, and she got to know the church.

HB: Women's work is all shaken up.

JM: That's because women are all shaken up! The home has changed.

HB: And women are doing men's work. They don't want to do the women's work.

JM: Somebody would ask, what is women's work?

HB: Women's work, Dr. Marcus can tell you, and Irene Dykstra and all these early workers when we started in '57 in New York. We had women's guilds and women's

work done. Missionary work, everything.

JM: Everything is congregational today, is it not? To use an old phrase, foreign missions is an entirely different concept today. By the same token, when you think of all the "foreigners" we have in our own societies, it obviously is a mix. Plus the fact that the American church doesn't have all the answers if they ever did. There are other churches in the world that are much more affected. Is there anything you'd like to share that we haven't explored?

HB: You asked some questions in the beginning about the rules at Hope College when we were there. They were strict, but we had a wonderful time. I lived in Voorhees Hall six years having gone to prep two and college four. When I think back to those rules, we had no telephones in our rooms, you signed in and out and the door was locked, but we had a wonderful time.

JM: We were a privileged generation to be able to go to college. That makes all the difference.

EB: Very much so--my parents never went.

HB: But even before that, and after that.

EB: That's true though, my dad never went to college.

JM: I've also reflected that my wife has been in education, I've been in the ministry, you've been in business. At least for education and the ministry, the years that we ministered since WWII, were probably the best years in the entire century for ministry or education. With the growth of the schools, the growth of the church, the broadening of vision--it's incomparable. I would guess that might be true in the

securities business as well.

EB: We used to do all our work on the mimeograph machine.

JM: Not only that, but the vision you have, what could be...

EB: They've got 51 offices in the United States now. I watch these "kids"--their customer is going to come in in an hour--print it all out all nice and ready to give to them.

Used to take me a week.

JM: We made some reference to the government here in Holland, and we commented on the mayor. I think we feel we have a dynamic leadership at this point. What might be some of the danger points that city leadership might be encountering today? What might be some of the concerns they ought to be aware of? Are we building too fast and too quickly? We're doing an awful lot of groundbreaking and wall building and so on. How do you feel about that whole situation?

EB: I think that the town's growth demands a lot of it. By the same token, if it isn't done properly, it's going to be a disaster because we won't have the equipment--sewage and all those types of things--to go with it.

JM: The delay of the civic center is probably a good thing.

EB: For now.

HB: I think they have some long range planning, and there are certainly some with a great deal of wisdom that are working on that and seeing things for the future that we don't see. But they know, and I hope their plans materialize.

EB: This city center thing they really got down to a science now. I think it will break loose in a couple of months.

JM: Is it your feeling that it probably will be downtown?

EB: I think behind us. That's where that can go, with the other side on the river.

JM: A major issue will be transportation, won't it?

EB: The only thing about transportation is it takes you about--at a full house on 16th it would take you about an hour and half to an hour and forty-five minutes to empty. Over here, about forty-five minutes.

JM: The River Avenue bridge would be a bottleneck.

EB: Well, if you're going north. You won't be coming this way.

JM: And they will find ways to deal with that too.

EB: And they are going to open up those highways, you know that.

JM: The bypass has to happen.

EB: Look at 7th behind us, if they go under 50 miles an hour there I'd be surprised (laughs). Oh man!

HB: Often those who are doing this planning are criticized, but actually it's for the best of the community. It's not their own wishes or their own welfare I don't think.

JM: So you are very strong supporters then of what is going on by and large.

EB: Oh, very much so.

JM: Would you like to take a long term view of Hope College and talk about how it has developed. Without getting into personalities, what were some of the low points in the history of Hope as you saw it? And what have been some of the specifically high points?

EB: I feel that Hope is, number one, getting into a position where Hope can be of more

help to the student. Our financial situation is much better than it was. I won't quote any dollars, but by the same token we do have an opportunity to put a lot of scholarship money so are people can come here. Not only that, but we're limiting to 3000 students, based on the fact that we want them to have the college atmosphere and be able to take care of them and handle them and pay the bill.

JM: What about the Christian atmosphere?

EB: That is phenomenal!

JM: In other words, it is beyond what the general trend has been through the years.

EB: The Board goes over each time, and it's a thirty minute date in the morning. Actually they say 10 to 10:38 or something like that.

JM: 22 minutes.

EB: You've been there I suspect, or maybe not. But they fill the place, standing room only.

HB: But the ground work was laid too.

EB: Well, there was a lot of groundwork laid, but by the same token this is another look at.

JM: Well it's a miraculous thing in a sense. It's not just money, not just a sudden foundation.

EB: Kids! Kids get up and give their testimony, swaying back and forth and singing the good songs. The balcony is full.

JM: I'll just say this briefly, but I as I reflect on Hope and my relationship with it through the years, I think it is more overtly Christian than it has ever been.

EB: Oh, yes.

JM: And I mean, even in the good old days. It is unabashedly...there is a religion editor at the Anchor now and things of that sort. [end of tape one] In the early days, how different it was, especially for those who were registering, and how you would not have to face all the battery of tests and all the secretaries and so on. You were talking about some of the financial times when you needed a little assistance even though the tuition was only thirty dollars. Do you want to say more about that?

EB: We'd talk to the registrar and tell him the true story and he'd say, "When you get it, you bring it back." And the Frater House...When I first came in, I wasn't working and if I five dollars instead of \$7.50, they'd go along with you. They were always really nice about that. I learned an awful lot at Hope for not very much money really. In fact, it was \$30 a semester when I came. Boy you had a heck of a time trying to get it together.

HB: Almost everybody was in similar circumstances. I didn't know that the trousers you wore were the only pair of trousers you had or shirt.

EB: I'd just press them every morning.

HB: You had to keep them up yourself.

EB: Well, my dad gave me \$5 when he dropped me off at Hope.

JM: Where was the dress code they have today when we needed it with the jeans (laughs)?

EB: We could have really enjoyed that. But my dad gave me \$5. That's the only money I got from him in four years.

JM: Is that right. That is remarkable.

HB: See I was very fortunate. But I was very careful.

EB: He taught you kids how to do it. He was tough on you.

JM: Would you like to make some comments about young people today as you have come to encounter them? How do you feel about those you've met at the college?

EB: At the college? Oh, I'm just 100% for the kids that are there now. We have a couple small scholarships that we have. I had lunch with two of the scholarship girls the other day. The one comes from Wisconsin and the other one comes from Louisville. They tell you how they got here, friend after friend after friend. Another thing I think is that the college tries so hard to make it work.

HB: They were very appreciative. They write letters and keep you posted on them.

EB: Oh, we get beautiful letters from these kids and what a wonderful time. Take the seminar now coming up Monday, last year there was about 10 girls in that seminar and the business school is moving over to that. I always ask them what kind of goals have you got. This one gal, a very pretty gal, a nice looking gal just a couple seats away from me, she says, "I want to get a job as fast as I can for as much money as I can, and get out of here as fast as I can." So then I gave them a talk. A couple of days later I got a letter. "Dear Mr. Buys, I couldn't go to sleep that night. I just want you to know, I am going to do what you told us to do. I knew you'd feel better when you found that out."

JM: Isn't that wonderful?

EB: Beautiful gal.

HB: We have two young fellows working here as waiters.

EB: Oh, yes. We have a lot of fun with them.

HB: They are so good to the elderly people.

EB: They are wonderful to the folks there. They just love them.

JM: Now that brings us to another stage in your life because you had this condo in Brook Village, which we once looked at as well, a lovely place. And now here you are at the Warm Friend Tavern, where there used to be dances was the hotel in town. How did you come here?

HB: Providential. How did it happen? You had been ill and you'd had a couple surgeries.

EB: I had a new hip put in.

HB: Rotator cuff, and caring for you was difficult, not only the therapy and the work at home, but the amount of visitors and the general things were we looking ahead.

Because our boys are far away, we have no one to turn to. Those who come here and are happiest are those who made the decisions themselves to come, not put here by a son or daughter.

EB: If you come on your own, it's a lot different.

HB: Step by step I had called my brother everyday at Freedom Village and we know what a wonderful place that is, but for somehow we were led here. And step by step it was right. We waited a year and when they called us and said no, it's premature, it can't be. This was available and there's a waiting list if we didn't move. And then the beauty shop from the basement was moved upstairs so he can rent that room and he has a nice hideaway.

EB: On your way out I'll show it to you.

HB: You meet more people and more friends and so forth. There are many opportunities to do things here.

EB: A nice bunch of people here. I got a lot of buddies. In fact, on Sundays we sort of put the thing together on Sunday night. On Friday night we put all the chairs up and get everything ready. And we're up to pretty steady at 45 to 50 out of 80 people.

HB: There are many wonderful residents.

EB: Wonderful people.

JM: Now this is part of the Rest Haven program is it not? Could you describe that a little bit?

EB: Well the Rest Haven Coporation owns it.

HB: This is independent living. And they have two nursing homes.

EB: And they have full time nurses here.

JM: Do you have priority for the nursing homes if you have to use them?

EB: Yes, the Rest Haven system, they have their own nurses situation now. If you get sick in your room and you've had some problems and you need some care they will give you home care until you're ready. And the fifth floor, they move you up there if it takes more than that.

HB: You look at the calendars on the elevator, there's so many, many opportunities to do things.

JM: I noticed that as I was coming up.

HB: Our lifestyle hasn't changed that much where we can avail ourselves to that.

JM: And you're in touch with the pulse because you're downtown.

HB: We can walk to the college, walk to church.

EB: Everybody has fun. We have a lot of fun. There's one big kid here, Vern Boeve, went down the steps of his basement not too long ago, about five years ago, fell, hit cement and dented his brain. And he's not an imbecile or anything, but he can't drive a car, but he drives a truck. People like that, you get to know them. He's a big strong guy. The first time we shook hands he put the squeeze on me. Of course, I've thrown weights all my life, and I still work out down there, you know I'll show you where it is. I put it back on him. I almost had him on his knees (laughs). He says, "Boy you're tough." So now when I introduce him I say he's the toughest guy here except me. He likes that.

JM: Now obviously Holland is growing in every way, but especially in terms of senior citizens I think, because it is an attractive place. Are there enough plans afoot to take care the older seniors here in terms of housing?

EB: They're going to have to hurry.

JM: I think so too.

EB: My dream would be that they would start right behind here and go right straight back to Seventh Street.

JM: Use the facade of this building.

EB: Go right straight back. Then put a garage underneath it. I think that may happen.

JM: Because the waiting list for a place like Freedom Village is incredible. Here too I suppose.

EB: Yes. We've got several wonderful friends of ours, just in fact one of them stopped

me at church the other day and said, "When are you going to get me a room?"

JM: You got to make sure you don't drink something he's prepared for you. (laughs)

Well, is there anything else that we ought to discuss?

EB: I guess we got it all covered (laughs) I would say.

HB: When we talk Hope College, both our boys graduated from Hope and our daughters in-law and our two grandsons.

EB: Both of them are doctors.

JM: Medical doctors, you're talking about your sons?

EB: Ph.D.s. Chris has had two Fulbrights. He's been in Alexandria, Egypt; Calcutta, India.

HB: Malaysia. But they loved Hope and they're in education and they appreciate Hope and know how Hope stands.

EB: Both the boys think the world of Hope College.

JM: Now you have been a denominationally oriented person as well. I am rather struck by the fact that not only has Hope been successful, but so have Central and Northwestern.

EB: Oh yes.

JM: And that is unique in terms of the fact that many smaller liberal arts schools are not making it. There's one folding right now in Lemars, Iowa. Westmar College is having its last semester there now.

EB: In fact, I understand the Brigadier General is the new President of Central.

JM: Yes, that's right.

EB: Wow, I'm not too sure I like that. (laughs)

JM: But I have been amazed that despite all the demographics, those three schools have all prospered.

EB: The President here is such a nice soft going guy. He runs the Board. I don't say anything anymore I just sit there. But I love to watch him. A couple of months ago he just said, "I want to just say this nicely and sincerely. I want Christian oriented and dedicated professorships here." Period.

JM: My understanding is that about 1970 that became quite an emphasis with the Board, and I suppose that would be about the time that Van Wylen is coming in.

EB: This fellow is entirely different.

HB: They each have their strengths.

EB: Gordon was a real pro. Gordon was a hard dealer, a hard worker.

JM: Well, I want to thank you for your time. I'm glad you decided you wanted to do this. Your boys are going to be thrilled with it and so is the city. I appreciate having this chance to talk about it.

EB: We hesitate to do all of that too, because the good Lord has provided for us all these years, and if we can share it with somebody else.

HB: He is always in control.

EB: He's running the show.

JM: That's right.

HB: For sure.