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Pollock, Herb Oral History Interview: General Holland History

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Oral History Interview
Local History
Interviewee: Herb Pollock
Interviewer: Geoffrey Reynolds
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HP: …the Ottawa Beach area. I have a kind of a personal version. There's, you know, the official version, but my feeling is that Ottawa Beach had its golden era just before and just into the beginning of the 20th century—really golden era, when the hotel was all developed. I think it was very large. Somewhere I read there were hundreds and hundreds of rooms.

GR: It was huge, right.

HP: Maybe as many as 600 rooms. Fully developed. And these cottages were all built about that time, and it was a slightly excellent summer resort area. People came from Chicago by ship, and people came here by train, and enjoyed the hotel, and prominent families owned these homes. There were any number of prominent families, names that we know—the Idema family, which really started and owned Steelcase all of those years. They had one of the cottages down here which burned and then later they had another one. I mentioned earlier, the Padnos family owned this place two doors away. An interesting family was the Pantlind family—the famous Pantlind, the well-known Pantlind Hotel in Grand Rapids—which is now, of course, the Amway Grand, was operated by the Pantlind family, and Fred Pantlind was a hotel person. He knew how to manage hotels. He was the person who ran the Ottawa Beach Hotel, and so he had the first house up here on this stretch.

GR: Which is still there.

HP: Which is still there, belongs to Kronemeyers now. Then he had another one built this side of the big empty lot that's between the two, and that place has stayed in the family, because it's owned by George Whinery and his wife. George Whinery is a Pantlind. His sister, Franny, three years ago, bought the place next door to George's, this side of it, and she and her husband, Joe, had that one remodeled. Now that one had been built in 1891 and had stayed in the Holmes family all the time until Fran bought it, just three years ago.

GR: So there's still quite a connection between the old families, isn't there?

HP: Yes, yes. A part of the tradition of the area is that many of these places stay in the same family for generation after generation after generation.

GR: Is that mandated by the association rules, or does that just happen?

HP: No, it just happened. The association doesn't really have any true power, and they have no real regulations about anything. It's just an association of the homeowners out here to deal with subjects of mutual concern and interest. Despite the fact that this is now a National Historic Site and a State Historic Site, there are no restrictions on what one can do. Fortunately, there are some of us who have felt it's important to keep the traditional character, and so when we restored this place, we tried to keep it looking as much as possible like a turn of the 20th century cottage. Some of the others have done the same. The new one that's being built, that you probably saw on your tour with Jim, that's Karen Holt. Karen's family—the Olson family—bought the cottage that burned about forty some years ago, because Karen, who is my sister's age, they camped out here and rented out here. My sister and Karen became acquainted, and my sister and Karen would stay at our cottage sometimes. She got to know the Olson family, and one day my sister encountered Karen's father down here in the general store and said, "Mr. Olson, I just

heard the cottage down on the lower boardwalk is for sale. You might be interested." And that's how they happened to buy that place. And that's the one that burned last November.

GR: And she, I think, mentioned from the balcony when we talked to her, that she had camped across the boardwalk.

HP: Yes, at the State Park. Fortunately, instead of taking her insurance money and selling the property for a big price and clearing out and maybe somebody from Chicago or who knows coming in and building something modern, she kept the property and she's rebuilding and building something that has a fairly traditional style about it—a lot of nice gabled shapes to the roofs and interesting decks. So it's going to stay in character somewhat.

GR: So the connection has obviously stayed with her.

HP: Fortunately, she used a local woman architect who is really passionate about the character of this neighborhood, and that's Fran Swift. Fran did the redesign of a place up here on Auburn which the Garlinghouse family bought, which had no character whatsoever. In fact, when they bought it, they said, "Gosh, it looks like it a Hot 'n Now." Fran completely redesigned that, and they finished their work this last early summer. It just blends right in now. That one was on the big Holland home tour.

GR: I've been told by Jim Piers that there are some restrictions about how you get to your cottages, these narrow boardwalks and paths. How do people work on their homes and get their luggage and… How does someone get groceries and the simple amenities up to your house?

HP: For those of us along here, it's, of course, no problem. But my family cottage, for example, and all of those cottages along the upper boardwalk, everything comes up there by cart and everything goes back by cart.

GR: With no exceptions.

HP: With no exceptions, except at the very far end of the upper boardwalk. Some years ago, a couple who owned one of the places had an illness. She had some illness, disability, that prevented her from walking up there, and so he arranged to have a very rough roadway put in connecting to a paved roadway that goes to the Lake Michigan cottages. That is now used by the first two or three cottages.

GR: So it kind of became necessary to admit that there was some need for…

HP: But other than that, along the lower boardwalk, everything has to be carried in by carts. And there's, of course, big concern about that right now because of the fire last year demonstrated the fact that they can't get fire equipment along there.

GR: How was the fire fought without being able to get in front of the home? Are there hydrants?

HP: There are hydrants, but they were of no use. The lines supplying them were too small to get the volume they needed. So they brought pumper trucks. That whole parking lot up at the head of Auburn was full of pumper trucks that night. Fortunately, her cottage, the one that burned, is fairly close to that lower end of that parking lot, so they were able to get pumper trucks within about, oh, let's say, six or seven hundred feet, eight hundred feet of her cottage. And then they ran lines from there.

GR: Which is still a long distance.

HP: Sure, a long distance, and there was no saving her cottage. That was an extremely hot fire.

GR: Were you able to witness that?

HP: I was there. They wouldn't let me down in front. I stood on the upper boardwalk and looked down. They couldn't save it, but they could keep it from spreading. We were very fortunate that night, Geoffrey, because it was in late November. It was a perfectly calm night. There was just a light dusting of snow on the ground, and that really kept the fire from going either way. If there had been any wind at all, I think there would have been a number of the places lost along there.

GR: Right, trees and houses.

HP: As it was, the vinyl siding on the cottages on both sides was destroyed. My family cottage is directly behind it on the upper boardwalk, the vinyl siding on the front of it had to be replaced.

GR: So the heat was pretty intense. Now is that the only fire you remember as an inhabitant?

HP: Yes, it's the only time a place has burned in all of the years we've been out here. I think somebody said that there hadn't been one, maybe the Bissell fire was the last one back in the '30s.

GR: Because these cottages are closed up in the winter.

HP: They're all just firetraps. The wiring in these places is just awful, and that always worries me. When I gutted this place, when I was cleaning it out getting ready for the contractor, I found three generations of wiring in here, all the way from the old two-wire—they call knob and tube—and then most of it was regular two-wire, and then occasionally I'd find three-wire.

GR: So did you leave it all in the building?

HP: I said, "I can't sleep comfortably at night knowing all of that stuff is in here."

GR: I was curious whether you left the original wiring in, non-connected.

HP: Pulled it out and replaced all the wiring in the house.

GR: So you feel a little safer knowing that.

HP: Yes. So this whole neighborhood had its golden era around the beginning of the 20th century. And then the hotel burned in '23, I believe, the fall of '23. Shortly after that was the beginning of the Depression. Sometime after that, of course, was World War II. And because of all of those influences, the place began to go downhill. It wasn't used. For example, when my father bought our family cottage in 1943 on the upper boardwalk, he paid $1500 for that place. We started to live there all summer long that summer. It was a ghost town out here. I think probably half these places were used at all.

GR: They were just simply vacant?

HP: They were just vacant. People still owned them but they were busy—either in the service, or working seven days a week, or couldn't get fuel to drive out here, or simply didn't have the money to…

GR: How did your family come to know about it, and how were they able to afford it?

HP: We lived in Holland, not originally a Holland family, but we lived there. I was born here in Holland. My father's work was with a…he represented a company that manufactured boiler treatment compounds. He traveled the whole state of Michigan, and sometimes Indiana as well, testing the feed water in industrial boiler installations and prescribing the chemical treatment for that water so that it wouldn't create scale in the boiler tubes. That

was his work. He didn't have anything to do with Holland. They settled here because I was going to be born, and they had spent lots of weekends here and they liked the area.

GR: Were they originally from Grand Rapids or Chicago?

HP: No. My mother was a East St. Louis, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri person, and my father was originally a Minnesotan. His parents had emigrated from Scotland into Canada and then down. I always say, they were probably the northern border equivalent of the wetback people coming across the river into Texas. So my father was from St. Paul, Minnesota. He had a variety of early careers. He was an old man when I was born. I'm the oldest in the family. My father was in his late '40s when I was born. At some point, he decided that he wanted a career as a flyer, and so he moved to St. Louis and studied at Parks Air College, which was a famous pilot's school. His goal was to become an air mail pilot—he said that's the future of flying, flying mail. And so that's how he met my mother, because he was living in the St. Louis area and they became acquainted. When he finished his pilot training, he was too old. This was back, probably, in the late '20s, early '30s. They wouldn't accept him. So he and a friend bought an old jenny and they barnstormed for a while. We have photos of my father with his old airplane and his barnstorming gear on. So he did that for some years and then eventually got into this…

GR: So how did your mother appreciate a barnstormer husband? That could be a little edgy.

HP: Well, of course, it didn't last long. He realized he had to settle down and not just be having fun with airplanes. They didn't settle down; they traveled all around. During harvest season up north in Michigan, up in the Traverse City area when the fruit harvest was coming in, he was busy up there because then they would activate the boilers in those fruit processing businesses. They always had problems, and so he had to come in

and help them resolve those problems. So they would just live up wherever he was doing much of his work. They would just stay there.

GR: So kind of a transient lifestyle. A itinerant professional.

HP: Yes, it really was. He was an itinerant representative. But then, as I said, they often would weekend here in the Holland area and they liked it. So when I was going to be born, they just decided to settle here.

GR: Now what home was that again, downtown?

HP: Well, originally, when I was born, we lived over on 11th Street, over near Hope Church. But then later, my parents bought the home on River Avenue where the Schwinn Bicycle shop is now.

GR: Right over the bridge.

HP: No, no. No, the Schwinn Bicycle Shop is between 13th and 14th. Just a street down from the Herrick Library.

GR: I'm thinking of North River. You're on South River.

HP: Yes, you're thinking of the other one. We lived there and then later they bought the house on Graves Place, and that's where I really grew up.

GR: Then in '43, you said they bought the cottage.

HP: Yes, they bought during the war, and so we just moved out here. To get back to it, the cottage next door sold for $500. They were valueless. As a result, because people had so little invested in them, after the war when people began to use them again, they just camped out here. They didn't bother to do any maintenance. They didn't bother to maintain them. They just came, enjoyed, with sort of an upscale camping. At least you had a roof over your head. So the cottage neighborhood really had gone downhill in its

quality—it was no longer an upscale resort area—whereas Macatawa had gone the other way. I think when Ottawa Beach was in its prime, Macatawa was nothing.

GR: Was still climbing, maybe?

HP: Macatawa then climbed and it has remained a very nice, upscale, I think, summer home neighborhood.

GR: They're very resort-oriented still. It's almost gated now and they have probably rules. They have a lot of people with a lot of money living there. How is this park…a lot of local inhabitants have purchased the cottages…

HP: Yes, Grand Rapids people here. A few out of state; a few Illinois people. But, I think for the most part when I was a kid, it was Grand Rapids area people who came out here and bought these places at a very low price, and just enjoyed having a place where they could walk to the beach and so forth. Some of them stayed here all summer. Others would just come on weekends. The investment was so low.

GR: You've had parties here at your home where most of the association showed up.

HP: And this was true. The description of the area that I'm giving you was true all through my growing up years, and I can remember when I grew up and was off at college, it was still the same way. In more recent times, it's begun to change. People began to build a sense of community and a sense of neighborhood, a friendliness about it. For example, when I was a kid, I don't remember a big Fourth of July picnic down on the beach where everybody congregated and had big potluck picnic. And there's another one on the Labor Day weekend. That didn't exist when I was a kid. But bit by bit by bit, it became more of a community neighborhood. And that's one aspect. My sister has felt that that's an

important part of the character of the place. And friends…you begin to look forward to seeing your summer neighbors.

GR: What is it like on Labor or Memorial Day weekend?

HP: Oh, my, the parking lot is full. And people are seeing each other for the first time since the previous Labor Day. Now what's happened more recently than that, Geoff, is for me even more interesting and significant. Suddenly, people have begun to realize these properties have value. And now they are selling at prices—for those of us who are old timers—prices that are just unbelievable. Just unbelievable. And that was the case with the Jappingas. A place, no view, with some serious structural problems. I think they paid, probably, two hundred and fifty to two hundred and eighty thousand for that one. And that's a typical price for those places with no view. And that's leads me up essentially to this one. We kept our cabin sailboat over on a mooring at Eldean's and used it as a summer cottage, but we're over here so often for dinner and staying on fall weekends at the family cottage, that we kept pretty good contact with this neighborhood. We knew what was going on. We began to notice no activity here at this place and made some inquiry and found that Marian Dunton Zumbro—was her most recent married name—who lived here had died here. Died here in the spring of '92. This place was vacant.

GR: Was she living here full time?

HP: Yes, used it year round. She may have, when she had inherited it from her parents, had it converted to a year round home. Had central heating put in and had the insulation put in. She lived here year round, she and her last husband, Fred Zumbro. But she had died here in the spring of '92. Her daughter, Beverly, had inherited the place. Didn't care for

Ottawa Beach. Had no use for the place, and so it sat vacant. So I got in contact with Beverly and said, "We want it." That negotiation went on for five or six years. We could not come to terms.

GR: But she left it vacant during this time?

HP: Yes. Could not come to terms. So finally I said to them it has to go on the market to determine the market value. So it went on the market, and we had our fingers crossed that nobody would spring for it. Eventually, our realtor came back to us and said, "I think now if you went back with your best offer…"

GR: So she was made aware that it wasn't worth as much as she thought?

HP: Yes, I think she finally began to realize that. It was on the market for two years and it didn't go.

GR: Really, two years? So there was a realization.

HP: So finally we got it at the end of '98. We bought it at a price that was, from my background understanding of having grown up out here, was an extraordinarily high price.

GR: Did you have an appraiser come through?

HP: Yes, we did. We had it appraised. One of my offers was, "We'll have it appraised. We'll pay for the appraisal. You may choose the appraiser, and we'll pay you the appraised value." So, we did that. And that was essentially the offer we had stuck with.

GR: Now, it's a corner that has a lot of different views, probably three views if you really counted it. Was that an attractive thing? Were there other cottages that might have been on the market at that time? Or was this the only one?

HP: In my humble, unbiased judgment, there's nobody on all of Lake Macatawa that has a view quite like this.

GR: It is just amazing, the views. You're almost like a sentinel for the association.

HP: So many people came to us when we had done the restoration and said, "We looked at that house. We had a builder come with us and look at it. We couldn't figure out what to do with it."

GR: Meaning, structurally it was a basket case?

HP: It was in very bad shape. We couldn't figure out what to do with it. The one I enjoyed the most—Ted Bosgraaf is a local developer, does all these big residential developments up here on the north side, and he had the home over on Lake Michigan. Now he has the one right around the corner down here that he built.

GR: On the lake?

HP: Yes, on the lake, a year ago. I hadn't met him before, but he came here one time and said, "I want to shake the hand of the man who took this one on." He said, "We looked at it and looked at it and tried to decide what to do with it."

GR: So the Bosgraafs had looked at too?

HP: Oh, yes. We heard that story so many times from people. We had a young couple who came here during the latter part of the restoration and said, "You're restoring our house, but we think you're doing what we would have liked to have done." They said, "We came here. Our realtor showed us through several times. We would come here when it was vacant. We'd come here and sit have coffee on the porch and talk about how we were going to do it, but we couldn't afford to do it."

GR: So the infrastructure necessities that you made, that's what was making a lot of people iffy about the price.

HP: Sure. Not talking money, but we invested again the equivalent to the purchase price.

GR: I was wondering if you found yourselves putting a lot of infrastructure into it.

HP: Yes. But Geoff, my wife and I did not raise a family. We both always had professional careers. And so we had the funds available to do this.

GR: And you found your dream house.

HP: And it was done out of sentiment not out of rational behavior. What I'm leading up to, is the funny thing now is, we laugh and we say we'll never do it, but we could sell it now and easily get our money out of it.

GR: Oh, yes, for sure.

HP: Because the real estate values have gone up so dramatically. And now what is happening, people are paying very high prices for the places through the neighborhood whenever they're available. And because they've paid so much for it, they feel compelled to invest enough money in it to make it look like what they paid for it. And so what we're seeing now is what you saw this morning, somebody down here bringing roofing up for a remodeling. There have been three major remodelings since ours, and we think we kind of triggered those.

GR: Well, I think that happens in all neighborhoods.

HP: You know people have said, yes, you can do that. The people up—not the house that I said was the Sligh house, but behind that—a doctor in Grand Rapids and his wife, also a doctor, owned a place that was just nothing. Seymour Padnos built it because the Padnoses all stayed at the family cottage right here. I remember his father, Louie. He

was a nice, little man. He was a little squat, chubby guy with a very high-pitched voice, and he loved to sit down there and fish. Anyway, when Seymour and his brother, Stuart, grew up and got married and had families, there were just too many kids there. Seymour wanted to have a place where he could have his family and not be in the midst of all the other family activity. So he bought a lot right up here and built just a nondescript place on it. The Senagors bought that, maybe 10, 15 years ago, and just used it as a summer cottage. They had their contractor come in recent times and look at winterizing it, so they could enjoy it late in the season and early in the season. He said you know the best thing we can do is take down and start all over. They built a very large, but rather nice place up there. It's brand new, completely new.

GR: So, what is the magic of Ottawa Beach? Other than you having a incredible view, a lot of people don't. What is the magic?

HP: I'm slightly at a loss to explain that. I think there is a sense of tradition about the neighborhood, that it kind of represents the old 20th century resort season. And people like being a part of it because, as you know, from walking with Jim, many of the places still have that old Victorian kind of an appearance about them and people like that feeling, even if they don't have a view. They're a part of it. And the neighborhood has become rather close in friendship and in enjoying the beach down there. The neighborhood uses the beach just a shoreline north of the State Park which, in fact, does belong to the county. That's been decided by the court. But that's where the cottage people all sit and enjoy each other's company. Some of them just sit there and read all day. My sister has an incredible tan every summer because she spends her afternoons down there.

GR: Tell me about the recent changes in the way that Ottawa County has gained ownership of much of the land that was assumed to be West Michigan Park Association.

HP: What's happened is that there are several forces at work here. Number one, these park parcels, this parcel along the water front here that runs probably twelve hundred feet of Lake Macatawa frontage, all the way from the property line of Bosgraaf's new house all the way to the other end of the channel, with the exception of the property that the Coast Guard station is on. That's county property. It's always been known to be. There are park parcels tucked all through this neighborhood. The beach is a park parcel. There's a big one behind the upper boardwalk that runs a long way back. It's a wonderful natural area. The county naturalist, Chip Frankie, just loves to take people on hikes back there. They've always been known to be county, publicly owned, but they have always been, in some sense, managed by or controlled by West Michigan Park Association, simply because nobody ever disagreed with that, no interest in that. In recent years, the West Michigan Park Association wanted to build a new dock out here, extending out, behind the pump house. You have to get permits to do that. The DEQ came back and said, "No, we're not going to issue you a permit because we're not convinced you own that property." The West Michigan Park Association thought they owned the property right where the pump house is. I think the West Michigan Park Association opened Pandora's Box. They filed suit against the county to claim ownership and that opened the whole issue. And the county has won. So now the county is trying to work to some extent with WMPA to develop what they want to develop, need to develop, but yet not affect the character of the neighborhood, not do anything with these parcels that are between the

cottages and so forth. This area, for example, right in front of our…we don't own down to the road. That's a park parcel.

GR: But the park essentially wouldn't do anything with it anyway.

HP: Of course not. Now the biggest problem is the following, Geoff. There are people like my sister who have grown up out here, lived their summers out here all their lives, and they don't want any change at all. They want everything to stay just as it is. So they are very much antagonized by the County Parks Department, and it's really been a terrible confrontation between WMPA officially and the County Parks Department over this issue. At one of the big open meetings where the preliminary master plan was presented—a good master plan, I thought—it was open for public comment. The comment that I heard that best described…

(End of side A of tape 1)

GR: Now Mike Milanowski, who is this gentleman?

HP: Oh, Mike Milanowski is the fellow we mentioned earlier who has the cottage on the lower boardwalk, and he has a somewhat bohemian style about his life, a bearded fellow. For many years he was often an actor in the Summer Repertory Theater at Hope College, had done that sort of thing. He works for an upscale bread bakery in Grand Rapids now, baking scones, I think, are his new specialty. Mike Milanowski is one of these people who grew up out here. Mike Milanowski got up to the microphone and made the following comment, which I thought was just absolutely classy. He said, "Just go away and leave us alone. Just go away and leave us alone." I thought that just exactly represented how people felt out here. They don't want anybody to come in and do anything to change the way it is now. And my sister is one of those people, so we have a

problem within our family because I am not opposed to some of the things the county wants to do. I would like to see this section of the waterfront—this is waterfront—you can't buy Lake Macatawa frontage any more. The county owns over a thousand feet of it and it's just run down and an eyesore now. It's of no use to the public.

GR: Even though WMPA has docks there.

HP: Nevertheless, there are a handful of people, this past summer just six or seven, keep boats down there. Well, darn, I can understand people have a self interest. It's convenient for Jim to have his runabout down there and just walk down to it. But, gee, are you going to deny the public the use of publicly-owned waterfront along here—that you can't acquire, you couldn't buy that anymore—simply to indulge a half a dozen people who want to keep their boats. Those boats can be kept at the marina. That's my feeling and there are not a lot of people out here that share my feeling, I have to warn you.

GR: Will you miss the kind of—it's almost like a seaside village appearance in a way. It's somewhat, you know, not rundown but it's convenient and it's…

HP: It's kind of dilapidated in truth. Now, I'm one of those who will lose out. You can't see them from here, but I keep my little sailing dinghy down on the beach down there. I probably won't be able to do that, but I'll find someplace.

GR: What does the county envision in the master plan that you talked about?

HP: They'll take all these docks out, all along, all the way up to the boat yard, up to the marina. And they'll put in a public access boardwalk along there.

GR: So no docking?

HP: No docking. But the marina will stay and it may be slightly enlarged, add some slips, which would be good. If you've been along the other towns in the shoreline, most of the

communities along the shoreline have very nice municipal marinas. South Haven has a couple of them, St. Joe has one, Grand Haven right down at the foot of Washington Street, and right on up the shoreline. We don't have one here.

GR: Well, we do have one, but it's ramshackle over by the bridge. That's our municipal marina.

HP: Oh, dear. Well, anyway, we don't have one. It would be nice to have one with most slips used by seasonal rentals. Some kept as transients for people who come in here cruising. It would be very nice. But you know, this property, Lake Macatawa frontage now, Geoff, the market value is about between five and six thousand dollars per front foot, that is, a hundred foot lot is a half million dollars, and then more if there's anything on it of any value. Well, my gosh, you know here is millions and millions of dollars worth of waterfront property not being used at all effectively.

GR: So someone that will have to look at this master plan and all of its effects, lots of public use, you have no problem with that?

HP: No.

GR: You find yourself enjoying the fact that others will be able to use it?

HP: Ottawa County has done an outstanding job with their parks system. I don't know any other county in the state that's done any better. That's a well-run organization. They just opened another one a week ago called Hemlock Crossing, which is up near West Olive. It's just this side of US-31 up near West Olive. I went to the dedication and I was so overwhelmed and impressed with it. It's 240 acres, about a mile of property or a mile and a half of property along the Pigeon River. When my wife came and I was telling her about it, she said, "Gee, that sounds interesting." We went back on Sunday and went on

a nature hike with Chip Frankie, the county naturalist, through there. We were so impressed with how well they've laid it out—year round use park, nice restroom facility, convenient parking area, miles and miles of trails, all marked. There's a home, the old Lever home, that's at the west end over where there had been a summer resort and had been a dance hall at one time. That home is still there. They've done a wonderful job with interpretive panels explaining the history. It's just outstanding. So I'm impressed with the kind of work they can do.

GR: So you're ready for WMPA to have another change in its history?

HP: Yes, I'm not opposed to change, if it's constructive. I think that's going to be the next big step in the chronology of Ottawa Beach as it were.

GR: Because it seems like you've been here long enough to know what proceeded you and what's followed, and for someone whose been very used to the norm and you see the changes coming, you have a refreshing outlook. It could be, for a lot of people, very disruptive.

HP: Yes, it is. And I understand it. I'm sympathetic to that. My sister, especially. It's disruptive. Sometimes when she comes here—they were here Sunday, she and her husband were here for dinner—and at some point she will say, "Let's not talk about that anymore."

GR: Well, like you said, families are having different opinions.

HP: Yes. My sister is an RN. We all went to the University of Michigan. She took her Bachelor of Science at the U of M. Let's see, right now, this week she's in Nicaragua. She does volunteer kinds of work with different organizations, and she's in Nicaragua

this week with medical supplies and treating people. I say, "Watch out. You get down there, you're working with Che Guevara's people." (laughs)

GR: Well, plus, maybe this is her rock. I mean, when has Ottawa Beach not been like what she remembered it?

HP: I think it is. Yes, that's right. The place up there will stay in the family. Her kids love it. In our will, this one goes to the family. I understand the feeling. So, I'm sympathetic to it, but at the same time I like to see the public use, in a nice way, in a comfortable way, I'd like to see the public use what they own.

GR: Well, some of the arguments might be, "Well, they've got the State Park."

HP: That is true.

GR: Has that been an argument?

HP: Well, yes. But, I say, the State Park is Lake Michigan frontage and that's the most popular state park in the system. It beats out Warren Dunes down south of St. Joe, even despite all the Illinois traffic down there. And part of the reason is, it's local people. This is the nearest access to see the waves on Lake Michigan. To see the waves beating against the piers.

GR: And I think, what you've pointed out, Lake Mac access is so limited.

HP: Yes, Lake Mac does not have a lot of public access, and it's a different environment than the Lake Michigan shoreline, but it's very interesting. I was hoping it would happen today. It doesn't seem as if… We have a lot of major ship traffic through here in the fall because they're trying to build the stock pile of coal for the power plant before the navigation season ends. So we have ships in and out of here. It is just fascinating. Whatever I'm doing, I just can't resist standing there and watching them.

GR: Maybe that's a good segue into—unless you have other things at Ottawa Beach—about your love of Holland's…

HP: Okay, we'll get to that. Quickly, I still have—I knew this was going to happen. This place was built in 1896 by the Howard family. Now, in our journal from last spring, there was a nice history of the Grace Episcopal Church, and Manley Douglas Howard's name is mentioned all through it. He's the one who had this one built. That was Manley Howard. Here he is. (shows photo) That's Manley.

GR: Yes, that's him. Now is this his wife?

HP: No, that's his daughter. You see on the back, his daughter was widowed and she married John C. Dunton. And that's how it became the Dunton cottage. The two families were very close together, and so we always say, well, it was all the same family, just a small change. So, at any rate, she married John C. Dunton. She's a nice looking young lady. I think he was a lawyer. I believe that's right.

GR: I'm not sure.

HP: I'm not sure either. But his wife was English born and…

GR: But he also had shipping concerns. He had Howard's dock on the north side.

HP: He apparently was a very entrepreneurial fellow. At any rate, you know, when I was gutting things out, this would be his daughter, Mrs. John C. Dunton, a letter I found underneath the basement floor, dated August 1900.

GR: Mrs. John C. Dunton, though. She was a Howard and she married a Dunton.

HP: She married a Dunton, and it was John Chauncey Dunton that she married. What I also found underneath was this—a little English grammar book. And you look at the dates in there.

GR: 1876-1888?

HP: Yes.

GR: Al Kantors was one of the first printers in Holland.

HP: You've come across that before?

GR: Yes, definitely.

HP: Now that would not have been…it wasn't her name, but it was another Howard, maybe a sister or somebody. In the Episcopal Church history, they mention that they had tried to found a school here, a private school, over where the Temple Building now stands on 10th Street, and it wasn't successful. I'll bet you that book may have been a part of that school.

GR: Might have been. I know the Episcopal Church had used that area for the church itself. Maybe there was some thoughts…

HP: Yes, that's what the article said. Because Beverly, from whom we bought the cottage, had said that a number of…"You know, my family was instrumental in founding the Episcopal Church in Holland."

GR: So she would have been a granddaughter of Manley Howard?

HP: Beverly, from whom we bought the cottage, was the great-granddaughter of Manley Howard's son-in-law. It was Beverly's great-grandfather who married that Howard daughter, and Beverly's great-grandfather was this man here. That's John Chauncey. I don't have a date on that, but I'm guessing it was back in the '20s because it mentions that he retired from his downtown office on 1907. But it mentions in here what an enterprising young fellow he was and how at a very early age he got into the real estate business. And that leads me to this. The Duntons owned a lot of real estate on the near

north side up here. You can see for example here's J. C. and then his son, Howard B. Dunton, who had this Howard estate property. Howard Avenue, that's the Howard family. They owned a lot of property on that near north side. Up until very recent years, Beverly inherited a lot of that property. Where originally there was a Meijer store and then later it became the D & W food store, they owned that big piece of property and it was just sold recently, the little piece of property this side of the new D & W. I think it had been a Levi's or jeans store. Now it's a lawn mower repair shop. That property Beverly just recently sold. Because of owning all of that property, that's why that very nice park that's just this side of the Parke Davis plant…

GR: The Dunton Park.

HP: Howard B. Dunton. That was given by the Dunton family to the Holland Township for that park.

GR: That was a piece of land that hadn't had anything on it before?

HP: Not right there. The section further along, that's the new addition to the park, had a brick plant on it that had, I think, been built by Heinz. It's had been vacant for many years. It may be the Parke Davis plant is in what had been a tannery. I can't remember—even when I was a little kid, I can't remember it being used as a tannery. I think it was closed for many years. But some of the tannery may have been to the west of…

GR: To the west of Dunton Park.

HP: Yes, I don't know. At any rate, it was their property, and it's called Howard B. Dunton Park because they said, "We made a mistake the other time. We gave the property on the other side of the River Avenue bridge over the river where the, what we always called the Windmill Park, was located. We gave that property to the city and they didn't want to

use a non-Dutch name so that's called Van Bragt Park. We learned our lesson, so this one is called the Howard B. Dunton Park." Now, the Duntons were principals in an interesting company in Grand Rapids. They were originally Chicago family and then later moved to the Grand Rapids area and had a variety of entrepreneurial efforts in the West Michigan area. But they became principals in a company in Grand Rapids called Haskalite. Haskalite, which no longer exists, was a pioneer in wood laminations for the aircraft and marine industry. For example, during World War II, they built those troop carrying gliders. In fact, that's how most people still remembering Haskalite. They say, "Oh, yeah, that's where those gliders were built during World War II", wood gliders that they towed into assaults, invasions. They also built parts for PT boats. We talked about Howard B. Dunton Park—here's Howard B.—and he was the guy who was an officer at Haskalite during the war.

GR: Do you find it strange that Holland Township has not somehow placed this man's image?

HP: I haven't interposed myself between the Duntons and Holland Township because I didn't really want to. But time and time again, I've said, "Beverly"…I call her. I keep a good rapport with her for a reason I'll explain. "Beverly, they're about to open a wonderful new addition to the Howard B. Dunton Park. Why haven't they contacted you, or you should contact them and have a special invitation to the dedication because you're the only Dunton left." She says, "Well…"

GR: It would be nice to have an image of the man that…

HP: She's not a classy person, Beverly. She's a nice lady, but she just doesn't seem to deal with things like that.

GR: It's sad that the family isn't better represented.

HP: Yes, because nobody knows who Howard B. was around here.

GR: I know people have asked me more about him, and we have information at the archives, but it's sad that…

HP: And I have other pictures of him as well. But, at any rate, they laminated some parts for this PT boat, which was an early PT boat that the Higgins people built down in Louisiana. And here is Howard B.'s handwritten description of going on those trials. This is a picture of the first PT boat ever put into service, tested out in Lake Ponchatrain in 1941. Higgins Industries, etc. etc. And he lists everybody who was aboard. Higgins was aboard, and he said three Secret Service and intelligence people from Washington. "We tested at speeds from zero to seventy miles per hour. We had a wake over eight feet high when we put the ship in a circle of a radius of a hundred yards at sixty miles an hour." Somebody told me that there's a Higgins Museum down in New Orleans.

GR: There is.

HP: I should sometime try to make a contact with them and see if they wouldn't like to have this.

GR: They might, but they might not either.

HP: I doubt whether they would have this.

GR: They have the pleasure craft…

HP: Yes, I remember the Higgins speedboat.

GR: The people that have those Higgins Craft meet every year.

HP: They have a club.

GR: They met in Red Wing, Minnesota, I believe.

HP: I remember those boats.

GR: They were beautiful.

HP: They were a nicely styled boat. They were quite different from the Chris-Craft runabouts because they were not built of mahogany. They were plywood.

GR: Whites and blues and reds.

HP: They always had very good performance and a nice style, and you had a nice line. They had a seventeen-footer and several different styles.

GR: Several different varieties. They were very good with boats.

HP: I was going to mention one of the reasons I keep a good rapport with Beverly, or try to—she lives up in the Grand Rapids area. She has got all of the family files; all of the family history. She said, "I've got cartons and cartons and cartons of stuff in my basement." I always say, "Beverly, I'm trying desperately to build a historical scrapbook of the Dunton [I always refer to it as the Dunton cottage]. Can't we find some things that are pertinent to the cottage that I could copy and put in that scrapbook?" She said, "Oh, I just don't know where I can find the time." She's that way. But, someday I may be able to…

GR: That's great, that she has kept it that long.

HP: At least she's got that stuff. But she doesn't have good feelings about this place.

GR: The cottage, or the…

HP: About her life during the time that her mother owned it. My understanding is that Beverly's mother, Marian, was married numerous times—maybe three different times—and maybe Beverly didn't have a good growing up life and that affected her feeling about the place. Her mother's last husband was a man named, Fred Zumbro, and when people come out here, if I have some work done—heating system or whatever—people will say, "Oh, I remember Fred Zumbro." Oh, I guess he was just a character. (laughs) Now,

what we do have are a series of…here's an old photo of this place. Here is one before the garage was built. Here is one that I was able to copy from a postcard layout of the house. And here's another one of the front.

GR: So it doesn't look exactly like it would have… What you've done to it is not the same.

HP: Not the same. That is true. But, in fact, some of this is not original either.

GR: No, I can see some additions myself.

HP: You know, the brick stuff is certainly—the brick work. There's more of the original, I think.

GR: It looks like it was having issues even then.

HP: It does, indeed.

GR: Do you get a lot of weather on this point? Is there a lot of abuse to the house from the weather?

HP: I have to restain the shingles every two years.

GR: I wondered. It looks like it takes quite a beating.

HP: Oh, it does. It's so exposed here. Now here's one that is dated. I copied from somebody's scrapbook, another source, 1925. And here the house is way over here, you see. What you see here is the house next door with the turrets. And you can see the beginnings of that dormer that we took off. Later, after 1925, that was raised to make a full-height room up there. There was a half-bath up there. Here is one, a fairly recent one, showing the view from the front. This would have been in the 1940s. You can see in that time, this area down here was full of moorings. In fact, I always liked the picture because probably I was out sailing. That probably was a boat I rented from Bill Murphy to get out to my sailboat. I think that's where my mooring was. And way over there,

dimly, you can see in the picture, you can see a big schooner on a mooring. That was the schooner, YahWim, that belonged to a family that I knew very well, the Brown family, who owned, at that time, a cottage up here.

GR: Hasn't changed much.

HP: Not much. Now, some of these old postcards, you can easily pick out where— oh, yes, it's the second one from there. You can still pick out the house. You can always see the porch columns were painted white, the five porch columns across the front. You can always pick it out from that. This is that well-known 1913 photograph. The best one I've ever seen of that, and I always mention it to people, is in the back of Meijer's store on 16th Street, way in the back, there's a big long counter that's, I don't know if it's special orders or something, a big open area, and on the wall behind it, they had one of these made that must be 15-feet long. Oh, it's a magnificent print of it. You know, on this famous photo, there's the house right there with the columns in front.

GR: You can really get an impression of how big that hotel was.

HP: What a magnificent area this was. With the ship coming in, the passenger ship.

GR: Probably taken from Angel's Flight.

HP: Yes, sure, that's the overlook at Angel's Flight. Exactly. Yes, it was a magnificent place. Now, this is probably the best…

GR: Don's book, yes.

HP: Don van Reken. And my sister, I think working with Ann Kiewel and maybe some others, was able to get that reprinted this past year. That was another of my sister's projects.

GR: Yes, you drove the rare book collectors crazy but it was a necessity for the people that…

HP: So many people wanted this thing. Out here everybody wants a copy. I've loaned mine a number of times, and I always keep my name in it. But if you look through this, you'll see that, by and large through here, the photos will say Murphy collection. The Murphys had a home right where Elaine Blouw's big gray place is now and operated a boat livery and a bait shop there. Bill Murphy—and he's certainly in some of these pictures somewhere—was sort of the--, they always referred to him as the mayor of Ottawa Beach. He did a lot of work at the hotel, managing things in the off season, and he had a soda shop alongside the house. And I remember Bill Murphy. He was a very elderly man when I was a kid, and he was sitting there all the time. His son, Archie, had just come back from service, World War II. He had an unmarried daughter, Margaret Murphy. Margaret Murphy never married and she is now 92 years old, living in Zeeland, and she's the source of all these photos. She's got them. I keep saying to people, like my sister, and I say to you, "Somebody has got to get on the good side of Margaret Murphy and take down whatever recollections she still hasn't passed on and see whatever is going to happen with her wonderful collection of Ottawa Beach photographs and memorabilia." Margaret is the oldest person still living who knows the Ottawa Beach area. She's the last. My sister always says, "Well, yes, but I've never really gotten on that well with Margaret."

GR: She sounds like she's an historian.

HP: Yes, she is. She can, I think, be useful. For example, if you have lunch or dinner at the Ottawa Beach Inn, down the road here, in the entrance way and various places around you see a lot of historic photos.

GR: Oh, those are hers?

HP: Those are copies that she gave them. That's Margaret. She was for years and years the bookkeeper at some prominent Holland plant. I don't remember if it was Holland Hitch or…some company in Holland. That was always her work. It may be me, who has to at some point go see her as well, because she called me last winter because she saw my name in one of the articles about the fire out here. I was quoted. And she called me.

GR: You're probably starting to be recognized as kind of the go-to person at Ottawa Beach.

HP: She said, "Come visit me sometime."

GR: Oh, that's great.

HP: I haven't done it, and I should do that.

GR: That sounds like a good visit.

HP: So anyway, there's that and, you know, there's still… I've got the old 1886 plat map. Here are our two lots here. See, these are all forty, forty-five foot lots along here, and the Duntons kept for themselves a hundred feet.

GR: Forty-five foot, what an odd…

HP: Isn't that something?

GR: Now, Black Lake Avenue, that's down…

HP: Well that's what we call Black Lake Avenue, down there, that goes over along the waterfront beyond the Coast Guard station.

GR: Oh, okay, that's Black Lake Avenue.

HP: Yes. Up here, they call this up here Black Lake Walk, and everybody except us, has Black Lake Walk as their address. For some reason, we use Ottawa Beach Road.

GR: Oh, okay. They know how to get to you, right?

HP: Seem too. So that's our nice story of Ottawa Beach. Here, very briefly, this is the way this house looked when we bought it.

GR: Aluminum siding and…

HP: Yes, it was aluminum siding. And then we went to work on it. Here we are tearing down the old front porch and tearing off old siding down to the original, and going to work with the excavator to take out the old basement. At some point, this place looked like a wreck. People would come by. We entertained all of west Michigan that summer of '99. People would come by and say, "I see now you've been able to get up in the air, but how are you going to get it off the hill?"

GR: Did they think you were going to move it?

HP: See, here we are up on steel beams.

GR: That was quite a project, I bet.

HP: Then pouring with the big pumper truck, pouring the new footings, the new foundation. And, here, that's a good one, showing it sitting up on the beams.

GR: So were some of your neighbors a little indifferent to what you were trying to do? Did they think it was going to work?

HP: Well, Jim Piers was very kindly. He was very cooperative, you know, because all this is happening right next to his rental property. But he was very cooperative. I think one of the things that helped us is that, as I said before, we are the very southeast corner of the neighborhood. Everybody knew that there was something going on here, but we weren't in the neighborhood, and far enough in, that it affected anybody. We are at the far end, and, of course, having our own driveway and own big parking apron, we had no problem with equipment being right there and not annoying anybody else. But then, of course, it

all had to go back together again. Here was this fireplace when it was still painted. I found the guy…

[End of side B, tape 1]

HP: We just got on the Wolverine. It docked right here, at a dock that was located about where the marina is now, and took it in to Kollen Park.

GR: That's what this young lady said, she's older now, but she said that they would take it from Kollen Park out to Ottawa Beach and get ice cream or…

HP: Yes, or go to the beach. People did that. It was a convenient bus service, and it was very nominal.

GR: Do you know who owned it or ran it?

HP: Yes. I can't remember the name of the captain when I was a little kid. But later, the Wingard family bought it. Captain Wingard is the name I remember because he had kids who were about my age or a little older. I remember the Wingard kids in school.

GR: I think there's even a Wingard daughter still in Macatawa.

HP: That wouldn't surprise me. He had an unmarried sister, Captain Wingard, who did upholstery work. I can remember her coming to our house to reupholster or do slipcovers for a couch for my mom. She was a very interesting lady because she could do that trick where you put your hands together behind your back and then she could take one arm over her head. I always had to have her do that when she came. So it was the Wingard family that owned it, and I think he may have been the last one that operated it. I can't remember the name of the man who had it before that. Maybe my sister would.

GR: So you're whole term from '43 until whenever, you remember it?

HP: Oh, sure. Yes, I can specifically remember the day that we went to Holland—my mother, my sister, and my brother and I—we all went to Holland for the ceremony and activities around the Holland centennial year celebration in '47. So I can remember going into town specifically that day.

GR: Do you remember them playing a recording or an historical account in the park at all?

HP: I'm sorry, but I don't remember any of the activities except that I can remember going there that day because that's what my mother was explaining to us. That it was important for us to go because it was the 100th anniversary of the city.

GR: What sort of things did you see? You went into town that day to absorb that. What did you see?

HP: I don't remember at all. That I don't remember.

GR: But it was important for your mother to have you do it.

HP: Yes, I'm sure there were ceremonies and flags and…

GR: Not even being Dutch, you still were…

HP: Yes, we're not Dutch. We're Scot. My mother's family is Irish. My mother was raised Catholic, but she left the church when she married my dad, who didn't have a religion. So, in some sense, we never did quite match up with the Holland society because we were not really churched. As kids, we went to Hope Church. We were not really a church-focused family. And my parents did things on Sunday that people didn't normally do.

GR: Tell me a little bit about…you're away from the city of Holland, which for a lot of people meant you don't have to…these unwritten laws—you know, we'll just do it because we want to get along. Was the association life a little bit freer on this end of the lake?

HP: Oh, sure, much different living out here in the summer than living in Holland, because those were Grand Rapids and other area people and the place was a beehive of activity on Sundays, whereas Holland was very quiet. One had to go to some lengths to find a Sunday paper in Holland or buy gasoline for your car. So it was very strict and, of course, it was a very Dutch town in those days. Most of my friends had grandparents who spoke Dutch and some of them their parents spoke Dutch.

GR: Did you feel a little separated being in this part of the…?

HP: Sure, I always sat in the front of all my classes because if you're seated alphabetically, there was Pollock up in front and all of the Vans behind you. (laughs)

GR: Right, and there was no West Ottawa school system.

HP: Oh, no, and that was true all the way through my high school years. Holland High School was a big high school because everybody from the surrounding area went to Holland High School—you know, the kids from Hamilton and so forth. We had 240 some in my high school graduating class. So it was a much bigger school system then because that predated West Ottawa and predated the Hamilton…

GR: Were you kids labeled, north siders, west enders?

HP: No, I don't remember that. I do remember that there were a lot of buses that came every morning bringing in these kids from the outlying district. It does seem they were somewhat apart from the rest of us, because the rest of us all walked to school or rode our bikes.

GR: Was it kind of a rural feeling with those children?

HP: I think so. I think maybe we looked down on them a little bit. "Oh, those are the farm kids." (laughs) The high school, of course, was the building on the corner of Pine,

between 15th and 16th in those days. My take on Holland is, it remained a very conservative town all those growing up years. And, of course, I ran away to the University of Michigan and my focus was there. Things began to change in, must have been about 1954 or so, '55, when General Electric built that hermetic motor plant out of 16th Street.

GR: A lot of people have said that.

HP: I think that was the beginning of the change, because they brought management people in who had worked in their facilities all over the country. And these were, you know, upper middle class folks who had management positions, who were accustomed to having a lifestyle, and they delighted in coming to this community along the Lake Michigan shoreline. But they certainly did not put up with the conservative restriction on not doing anything on Sunday, not being able to have dinner in a nice restaurant. I think because of the major economic impact General Electric had on the community, that forced the community to begin to adapt and accept…

GR: What were some of the first things you saw that you could tell that GE had made an impact? Restaurants? Were there papers? Were there stores open?

HP: Yes, I think, as a young guy I remember being able to buy gasoline on Sunday at almost any gas station, before it was maybe two or…

GR: Because one opened up then the other ones thought they should do it?

HP: Yes, of course. And then more and more other convenience businesses being open on Sunday, which had been totally shut down before on Sunday. Then, of course, much later, nicer restaurants coming in—especially after the sale by the glass liquor law was changed. Before that, it was just the private club—it was called the Warm Friend Club—

where you had to have a membership and you go in, I forget it was maybe the third floor up, which was a private club where they served liquor by the glass. Skiles Tavern on East 8th Street where you could buy a glass of beer. But then later it changed, the liquor by the glass laws were liberalized, which made it economically feasible for restaurants to move in here and offer an upscale menu.

GR: Isn't that funny, how one industry can make all the difference?

HP: Yes, but that was the beginning anyway. And then, of course, when the office furniture industry got so big, that they began to hire management people, not family operate them anymore. That added an additional force to the whole thing. Haworth is a good example. When I was in junior high school, Gerry Haworth was my junior high school shop teacher. I remember him just as clear as can be.

GR: Tell me a little bit about this entrepreneurial spirit that seems to run so strongly through the community.

HP: The Dutch are that way. There are several Dutch characteristics. One is, at least the ones here, a strong religious element in the family. Very clean, everything needs to be neat and clean—yard, house, everything has to be neat and clean. And I think also a work ethic. There is a work ethic that's very strong. I think that's what attracted Chris-Craft to build a plant here and maybe other boat building companies to come here.

GR: Oh they've just as much as said so.

HP: Because they could get people who were really wanting to work and people who were craftsmen. The other thing I also said is Holland is a house building town. Every Dutchman wants to build houses. They just love working with houses, working with a hammer and saw. The Dutch are very much that way. Those are characteristics, I think,

that really were key to the character of the town. After World War II, of course, there were a lot of Dutch immigrants that came. The churches were sponsoring people to come here from the Netherlands where the conditions were so serious—a lot of hunger and poverty. So there were lots of Dutch immigrants that came here then. Those people, boy, they wanted to work. They were really into building a new life for themselves.

GR: So do you see—not only that influx of immigrants, but the traditional Dutch tradition that was here—that keeping those wages down, work ethic up, a lot of production in wood and then this rise of entrepreneurs, who maybe saw a better way or knew they could make more money on their own?

HP: I think there is still a strong entrepreneurial spirit, but I think it's changed a lot here now because people management people from these companies that developed decided this is a great place to be, and so they retired here. They tell their friends in other places, "Gosh, when you retire, Holland is a nice place." I think there's a large financially somewhat upscale retirement community through this area. I think there are a lot of people who came here in the real boom time of the office equipment manufacturing—lower level, lower middle management people—and I think Holland has changed completely as a result of that. This is a town that's got some nice features.

GR: It does.

HP: You drive through downtown Holland, of course, that's much the result of the Prince philanthropy. Downtown Holland is a delightful place. It just amazes me that here on the northeast corner of 6th and Central, is this beautiful new condominium development, right in downtown Holland. Those are, I'm sure, rather upscale condominiums.

GR: Near the old dump. (laughs)

HP: Yes, the old dump. So Holland has really experienced a real financial upwelling in recent times. Of course, it's suppressed a little bit now with the office equipment industry down a bit. But it really has gone up from the time I was a kid to being a really, as we say, important part of this golden triangle of Holland, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, or Grand Haven area. And I like it. There are people who are critical of it, and I get frustrated sometimes with the traffic over the River Avenue bridge at rush hour. But, gee, I think Holland is a great place, and I'm just delighted to be back here.

GR: I know that when they do surveys they say what are some of the attractions, many of which you've mentioned, and then there's the fact that it's near water of any sort. I think that happens to be a draw.

HP: Certainly a big draw.

GR: You were born and you lived in Holland most of your life, does the lake really have that much effect on people coming here, or people that have lived here? What makes it attractive?

HP: You know, that's one of those mysterious things that there is some kind of a visceral attraction of water, lake, and it's evident along this whole lakeshore. Now, our home in Benton Harbor is on Lake Michigan. We see the loom of Chicago from our living room windows. The value of those properties along there…it's unbelievable what's happened. I say, "Sal, why don't you retire?" We own ten lots down there. The Chicago area people are paying extraordinary prices for anything on the lake or even near the lake down that way. It's very slowly moving up this far, but it's certainly in place down as far as St. Joe and up as far as South Haven, I would say. And Kalamazoo people, they pay big prices to have a place over near South Haven, near the lake. There's some kind of an

attraction right in here that draws people to that, and I'm sure that was true for my family, because my father—you're a good straight man, you're leading me into my next subject. My father was very interested in boats. He had lived for a good number of years in the Seattle, Washington, area, which is really a maritime community, and he had a great passion for boats. When I was a little kid, that's what I was somewhat being exposed to. Soon after we got the cottage, my father bought some little nondescript sailboat from....his barnstorming partner was a test pilot during World War II at the big bomber plant in Ann Arbor—Willow Run. He was a test pilot there, and he was living on a little inland lake and he had a sailboat there and said, "I don't have time for this sailboat, why don't you take it?" And so, my father got that sailboat and brought it here, and that's where I started sailing. Then, a little bit of that for a few years, and then I began to crew for people at the yacht club and the races. Then we got interested in getting a boat that we could race. We joined the Lightning class. The Lightnings were a 19-footer that were one of the two or three popular, racing classes at the Yacht Club. These are Lightnings, here, 19-footers. One of the reasons it was popular here, Campbell Boat Company built them. Campbell Boat Company built dozens of Lightnings. They built almost all of them that were used here. I used to talk with people who would say, "Oh, I remember that's where we got our Lightning, it was in Holland." They built a lot of Lightnings. We wound up with the first one they ever built, their demonstrator boat, number 307. That was a very popular class here, and lots of prominent local people were involved in sailing Lightnings. Of course, those were all wooden boats in those days. The Linn family, Bob Linn who started Roamer Boat Company, his son, Rick, was about my age, and then he had another younger son, Dave. They had a Lightning built right in their

shop, in their boat building business. At that time their boat building business was on South Washington Avenue between 40th and 32nd Street. The building is still there. It's got one real tall section so that they could have a high door. They built those Army tugs there. That was one of his big contracts, those 45-foot Army tugs they built in the early '50s. Then, of course, they built the Roamer cruisers. Eventually, that company was sold to Chris-Craft. Then they even built a separate plant for it over here, which is now part of Prince, I guess, or somebody.

GR: The big one off Lakewood, yes. JCI or Prince? Well, same thing.

HP: Johnson Controls. At any rate, they were in that class. Gee, those people are all gone now. Rick was killed in some kind of a shooting accident. I think his brother Dave is no longer living.

GR: I think they all passed away.

HP: Rick started the University of Michigan a year behind me. He lived in the same dormitory, East Hall, used to see him every day. He was going to study naval architecture.

GR: Was he going to follow in his dad's footsteps?

HP: Yes, he was going to study naval architecture, and that's, of course, what I was, but I think a lot of guys who were interested in boats just couldn't face up to all of the general engineering courses you had to take before you could get involved in design. It was true of my freshman roommate, very tragic story. My freshman roommate, Dean Kesterson, from Grand Rapids—his father was managing editor of the Grand Rapids Press, Dean Kesterson—that kid was really into boats. I had met him a few times, so we agreed to be roommates. Boy, he was into boat design. He was getting better grades than I was

because—he went to East Grand Rapids High School—had better preparation than I had from Holland High School. But he couldn't put up with all of that general engineering course material that he had to take and he dropped out. Eventually, that was the Korean War, he went in the service. He got back from the service. The tragedy of it, I talked with him several times… He shot himself to death on the dock at the Grand Rapids Yacht Club down on Reed's Lake. Just a terrible story, just terrible. But at any rate, that happened to a lot of people. And Rick dropped out of the University of Michigan. I think he went to work—I forget now—oh, he worked for Chris-Craft.

GR: Oh, did he?

HP: Yes, he had a career with Chris-Craft. I think his brother Dave then worked, and Rick later, worked…it was his father who started that marina which is now the Yacht Basin. It was called Bay Haven when they had it. I think the boys both worked there at some point. But they're all gone now. The people who always won the season championships were the Curtis family. Their home was a little brick house on the corner of College and 7th, the southwest corner of College and 7th. That's why that office building on the corner now is called the Curtis Building.

GR: Bob Curtis's parents?

HP: Bob Curtis and his dad, Stanley, and Bob's sister, Carol—the three of them—were a Lightning crew. They owned a summer home down here just over a little way east of where Tiara built that company lodge.

GR: By Easter's old place?

HP: Yes, just over from Stan Easter's. At every one of the historical meetings I go to at Graves Hall, I see Bob there.

GR: Well, he's a great resource for the Szekely Aircraft.

HP: Yes. Bob's an aeronautical engineer graduate of the University of Michigan. He had his whole career with MacDonald Douglas out in L.A. I think he was a landing gear specialist. But he flew light planes himself and knew generally how to design. So I think he works oftentimes with the experimental people around here doing things.

GR: Oh, good. They seem to all know who he is.

HP: Yes, he's a nice guy. But his father, Stanley, lived to be 104 years old. I went to visit him when he was 102 years old. He and Bob were living together in a house on 29th Street. Stanley could no longer see, but his mind was just as sharp as ever. He just was so interested to talk about things with me. A very interesting man. He had been a student of naval architecture at the University of Michigan before World War I. Before the U.S. got in the war, they knew they had to get ship building activity going. So he and several other of the students went to work one summer at Newport News out in Virginia, down at the south end of Chesapeake Bay. At the end of the summer, they said, "Won't you please stay here?" So he did. He didn't go back to school. He stayed there and worked through much of the war. Then he left Newport News and went with Electric Boat, up in Groton, Connecticut, and finished the war there. By then he's married, and pretty soon he's got family on the way. Bob has an older sister. But he wanted to come back to Holland, that's where he was born and raised. Moved right back to the house where he was born and took a job doing insurance work. Then later, he took a position with Holland Furnace Company, and that's where he retired. He was retired when I was a little kid, and they were sailing Lightnings. A very nice man. I really liked Stanley. But

Bob is a pretty good source of a lot of old maritime information around here because he grew up sailing Lightnings along with the rest of it.

GR: I will have to talk to him about that. So were you aware of the Linn, and the Campbell, and the Beacon boat?

HP: Sure, because I was interested in boats and any of that thing. Oh, the other Lightning people I want to mention were the Van Lare brothers—Dale and Don Van Lare. Now, in your nice article, which I've got here somewhere, on the Mac Bay Boat Company—good article. It was super that you got in touch, I think, with Phyllis White to get some of that information. I think we had talked about that. Maybe I mentioned that one time, you ought to call her down in Florida. That was super. I forgot, maybe it was their father—who I never knew because their father was dead or gone or something—who had been involved with Mac Bay because there was a Van Lare mentioned there. Then later, when Melton had the shop over on 7th Street, over about in that area where Marsilje's had a building later for travel and insurance business. It was over there between River and Central on 7th. The Van Lare brothers built a Lightning in there.

GR: Oh, really?

HP: Yes. They're still around. I see them occasionally. But it must have been a father or a relative or something that had been with Mac Bay that gave them the connection to…

GR: It sounds like a lot of people either worked for him for a long time or a short time, anyways.

HP: Well, I knew him because somehow I wandered in there, because there was somebody building boats.

GR: That's what a lot of people…

HP: And I got to know him. I used to borrow clamps from him. He was a funny little guy. He didn't build very many boats because he was working by himself. This was really a hand-to-mouth business.

GR: This was Van Lare?

HP: No, this was Melton, A. B. Melton. He was working by himself in there. He wasn't even really a boat builder, but he was a good electrician, and he was so focused on putting a good radio on every one of those boats. Anyway, I used to borrow clamps from him and he was funny. He'd say, "You're going to borrow those clamps. I want them back. You've got to leave something of value here." So I'd say, "I haven't got anything." So he'd say, "Well, give me your wallet." And I'd leave my wallet there. (laughs) I just walked down there because I lived over…

GR: So there wasn't a lot of activity going on in there when he owned it?

HP: No, there would be one boat at a time.

GR: It sounded like he was really the bridge between the Pelgrim White era and the Cliff Dobbin era.

HP: Yes.

GR: He kept it going.

HP: The Whites were also Lightning sailors. That's how I first knew Jim White, Phyllis's husband.

GR: I know he was quite a Macatawa Bay Yacht Club person.

HP: Oh, yes, he was commodore at one time. That's how I first knew him. Their home was a little further east, set way…it was almost next door to what we used to call the "little store" that was on South Shore Drive. That's where they lived. But they were Lightning

people also. That's how I first knew them. This is a coincidence. Phyllis's younger brother, George, was my age. We were only six weeks apart in age.

GR: Probably named after his father?

HP: Oh, of course. George Pelgrim, Jr. George and I grew up together. We were very close friends all the way through school. He came to my college graduation and said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I've got a job in San Francisco." He said, "That sounds great, guess I'll go out there too." So we went out to San Francisco together. He didn't have any job. But his parents gave him money to…

GR: Can you tell me a little bit about that relationship, Herb? Jim comes back from the war and he's married to Phyllis, which is George Pelgrim's daughter, and he owns a furniture company. Do you think that, like I wrote in the article, the reason why that whole company got going was "We had money and we had vision." Was that how it happened?

HP: Well, Jim White was a businessman kind of person. He had those kinds of things, but I don't remember that he was the motivator. My recollection was that it was that man…

GR: Victor Watkins?

HP: Yes, Vic Watkins. That he was the one that really pushed it. I don't know if it was Jim White who had met him or George Pelgrim, Sr. who had met him, that set up the arrangement to use the lower level at Bay View Furniture as their...

GR: It doesn't seem like anyone remembers Jim White really being around. They do remember Victor Watkins being around a lot.

HP: Yes. I don't remember Jim White being that integral a part of that business. He did a number of things later. At one time, he owned the Nash automobile dealership, which was on Central Avenue between 9th and 10th Street in a building.

GR: I knew he was a car salesman. Phyllis said that.

HP: He owned the Nash dealership for some years.

GR: Do you remember this Victor Watkins at all?

HP: I only remember him very vaguely because my dad, my brother, and I went to the Chicago boat show, this would have been in 1948. Mac Bay Boat Company had a big display there of their new boats, and George Pelgrim, Jr., who was my age, was there doing some work at the display. So we spent quite a bit of time at their display because I knew George. I remember Mr. Watkins from that time. But then he was later killed.

GR: In Petoskey.

HP: Yes, I think they were delivering a boat.

GR: They were.

HP: Or trailering a boat somewhere and he was killed. He had a home down here on South Shore Drive located where Jim Brooks Jr.'s big stone home is located now. He built a home there. He was killed, the Post family got that home. The Post family had North Star Truck Lines, I think, headquartered in Grand Rapids. Their son, Bud, was about our age, and so sometime he was in school with us.

GR: It sounded like Mrs. Watkins remarried, I think, a Landwehr?

HP: Oh, really?

GR: Yes, some sort of Landwehr, because Victor Watkins had originally come to Holland to work for Holland Furnace. He worked with something to do with the damper systems on the furnaces. He married a Landwehr girl because of the simple connections with the Landwehr family. That's where that comes from. That's why he worked for Muncie Gear.

HP: Muncie Gear Works.

GR: And was an outboard guy.

HP: Yes, Neptune Outboard Motors. I've got a friend who collects Neptunes.

GR: He was part of the Gear Works that was working on furnace type. So even though he might have had a connection to Muncie in a little way, but he was more of a Gear Works for furnaces. It's funny how he comes to Holland and accidentally starts a company that…

HP: Gets into building boats. It was originally called Playboy, and then had some kind of infringement on somebody else who had copyrighted that name. I think it was a company that was going to build light aircraft. Everybody was going to build light planes after the war. Everybody was going to fly. A company was trying to build and market a plane called Playboy—didn't last long.

GR: Playboy was a popular phrase then?

HP: Sure, well, not as popular as it became later. But it was some kind of copyright infringement that caused him to change the name to Grayboy, because he used Gray Marine engines in the boats.

GR: Which didn't seem like it had as much effect.

HP: Of course, but they were using Gray Marine engines, and so that's how they happened to use... To get back to….George stayed out in…In fact, my wife, I met the evening that she had a date with George Pelgrim.

GR: Oh, my. Now is George still with us?

HP: George died about three years ago. He stayed out there. I, of course, lived all over after that, but he stayed out there and eventually he was married, had twin daughters, divorced. But he made his home in Hawaii then the rest of his life.

GR: Yes, that's what I was told.

HP: He had an Islander 36 sailboat in Ali Wai Yacht Harbor and made his home on that boat. We always communicated, always wrote back and forth, kept in touch. He was getting very interested in Mexico, and he was on vacation in Mexico, one of those places down the coast of Mexico, and he took ill. He said, "I better get back home." Big mistake. He flew back home and died in his doctor's office of a heart attack. He had gotten very overweight. I always used to say that guy is going to…doesn't take care of himself. A very big guy…

(End of side A, tape 2)

HP: I lived in Sausalito after we were married and George, by then, was working as a purser on President Line Ships. He'd leave all his stuff at our house in the garage, and he'd be gone for months at a time. Then he'd be back.

GR: So he really didn't follow in the family business?

HP: Not at all. Of course, Bay View Furniture went out of business in… this would have been in the '50s.

GR: Yes, early '50s, I think.

HP: But our wedding gift from George Pelgrim was a whole set of this Heathware china, which we still use. It was china that was made in Sausalito, and we still use that. I think of George every time I have something on one of those plates.

GR: Did you see people buying these locally made boats, like Mac Bay?

HP: No, not locally so much. Because despite the fact that we're right on the water here, the importance of Holland as a boating center, as a place where you use boats, is really quite recent. I don't think there was enough money here when I was a kid for people…a few people did…Pelgrims had a nice Chris-Craft runabout because their home was here on South Shore Drive, just this side of the narrows.

GR: Which surprises me, because when I interviewed Phyllis Pelgrim White, she said they never owned a Mac Bay nor did the Watkins family. They owned Chris-Crafts. I thought that to be really odd.

HP: That's right. Yes, they had a 19-foot barrel back when I was a kid. And then later, they had a big 22-foot utility in much later years. But I don't remember Mac Bays being around here, other than maybe seeing one out and saying, "Oh, yes, there's one of those. They must be testing one of those that's built right here in Holland."

GR: I find it strange that in a community with 36 power boat plants, very few ever…

HP: I think the reason was economic. When I was a kid, there were some speedboats around, but just a handful, because these were the more upscale, the small number of families, who had a lot of money locally.

GR: It's easier to find a Mac Bay runabout in the state of California than it is in the state of Michigan.

HP: Isn't that funny? Well, at any rate, because my interest in boats then—I had decided what I was going to do when I graduated from Holland High School—I decided that I was going to become a naval architect. So I headed off to the University of Michigan and put in my 4½ years there and took my degree in naval architecture. Then I took a job in San Francisco working for a company that had a contract to do working drawings for a

nuclear submarine, right at the beginning of the time when they were trying to develop a submarine-based system for launching missiles. That was our first one. Poseidon was the next one. We were the backup system. If they couldn't make that system work for launching missiles from submarines submerged, they were going to use a submarine that had a hangar in it. That would surface and they'd pull the missile out of the hangar, put it on a launcher and fly it to the target, a guided missile. So we did all the working drawings for SGN-587, submarine guided nuclear, the 587 Halibut. That's how I happened to be out in San Francisco, and then went East to work for the same company in New York City for a while when their yacht designer quit. My big interest was yachts, and so I was their yacht designer for a while.

GR: What company?

HP: Well, it was a New York City firm called M. Rosenblatt and Son, Incorporated. They really didn't do much yacht work. They were a real New York firm—of course, a Jewish firm—that was focused on making money. And you don't make much money as a yacht designer oftentimes unless you're very prominent. But Mr. Mandel Rosenblatt, Sr., had worked in some of the yacht design offices, and he was in yachts. So I worked for them. In fact, I did a lot of the design work on a boat they had built for themselves—the Rosa Two that often is seen still in magazine illustrations. But I didn't like New York, so I left and I came back here, and I was working independently. I came back to Holland. Sally and I came here. I said, "I said, I'd like to go back to western Michigan." So we lived over here on the south side for a couple of years, and I was doing things then like this… I sold plans for that thing all over the world.

GR: A Seagull outboard.

HP: Yes, Seagull Outboard. You know Seagull Outboards?

GR: Yes.

HP: I'm a collector.

GR: Oh, are you?

HP: I've got about half a dozen of them.

GR: I didn't see any of them down there.

HP: And this one. This is another one of mine. But it was that kind of stuff I was doing, selling drawings. But it's pretty hard to make a living at it. Sally had a teaching degree, and at that time she was teaching school at one of the elementary schools over here on the west side of town. But then, I got involved with a very interesting man. You may or may not have heard this name—George Glen Eddy.

GR: Oh, yes.

HP: You've heard that name?

GR: You know George Eddy? Oh, my.

HP: You've heard that name?

GR: Yes, because of his dealings with Century.

HP: He always used to say, "I'm the one that brought the Century Boat Company to Manistee from Wisconsin."

GR: He does. Well, they still do.

HP: That's true.

GR: The aqua flow hull.

HP: Yes. He was a very interesting man. Unfortunately, he suffered, eventually terminally, from emphysema.

GR: Yes, he died in Lansing.

HP: Yes, I went to his funeral.

GR: Oh, you did?

HP: Oh, sure.

GR: Most of Glen Eddy's contemporaries are either gone or you can't find them.

HP: Well, what happened—he had patents on a bottom configuration he called edgoconic (?). He had the patents on that. Edgoconic looks like a conventional hard chine powerboat bottom with shingles all over it. It's a takeoff on the stepped hydroplane idea but, with little shingles all over it, and he had patents on that. He was interested in getting government contracts. At that time, we were just beginning to enter the Vietnam conflict, and the Navy had issued an invitation to bid on a river patrol boat. I'd had some experience working in military work, small boats, because at one time Sally and I lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and I was a staff naval architect for a Borg Warner division that did military amphibious vehicles. I had a specialty in that for a while. I was designing that and going to Washington and working with people there. So George Glen Eddy was very interested in me because I knew some of the people in Washington. So I became George Glen Eddy's naval architect. I think he kept a mobile home here.

GR: I know he had an office here.

HP: Yes, he had an office on Central Avenue, and he also owned a little building down on Blue Star Highway south of town where he had one boat built to test out some ideas here.

GR: Jason Petroelje said in about 1960 they were working on an experimental cruiser with foam flotation, and it never really worked out and all went bankrupt. Was this the same thing?

HP: It may have been George Glen Eddy involved in that one too.

GR: I was thinking Lakewood or something.

HP: You see I didn't get involved with him until 1964.

GR: He died in '66, didn't he?

HP: Yes. So, I was doing the design work, designing these boats—I've still got the original tracings on all of this—designing this thing to be a river patrol boat with his edgoconic system. And then also there was an invitation to bid on a replacement for the 36-foot LCVP landing craft. So I did one of those, and it was a very interesting inverted V-hull, very interesting stuff. But he was an antagonistic guy and people in Washington didn't like him. But, at the same time, he had some investors. He had some people who were giving him money to get going. And, with that money, he had control of the old closed-down Richardson Boat Company in Tonawanda, New York. So all that winter of '64, going into '65—you know how bad the winter can be there—George Glen Eddy and Herb Pollock were flying back and forth because we started building a boat in the old Richardson plant, on spec. I'm a young naval architect and here are these investor people coming in and they'd say, "Okay, Eddy. We want to sit down in another room with your designer here, Herb Pollock. We want to talk to him about why he's working with you and what he sees as the future for this." These people were pumping me before they put more money in because Glen Eddy was kind of a shifty character, I think.

GR: Oh, I think that's his reputation.

HP: Yes. So I'd tell them, "Well, all I can say is it's interesting work, and right now I'm getting paid. I need the money, I'm interested in the work, and I think maybe there's some good ideas here."

GR: Was Glen Eddy professionally trained in this? Or did he hire you, knowing he was lacking?

HP: No. He was no naval architect. I don't know what kind of academic background he had, but he was no engineer. But he knew boats. A lot of people can do things pretty well, just from practical experience. But he needed a little more than that. He needed somebody who knew structural design, knew hydrostatics, and who knew all the details of how you design one of these things to do what you claim it's going to do. Then he took ill and he died.

GR: So he was living in Lansing but had in office in Holland?

HP: He had a home in Lansing. He was married.

GR: Was this his first wife?

HP: No. He was married, but then he also had a woman who was working as a secretary, just handling phone calls and stuff in that office in Holland. It was in that building that had been the Nash dealership. It became a building where they rented out little office spaces on Central between 9th and 10th.

GR: Is it gone now?

HP: That building? It may be the same building that's still there. I'm not sure what they have in there now.

GR: Right, the Nash dealership. That's where they have a phone answering system.

HP: That's what it is. That's what's in there now. That was part of what was in there at that time. Yes. At any rate, he had a woman who was working as a secretary for him in there.

GR: You said he had a trailer in the area that he lived in?

HP: Yes, just down the road here, just past the General Store a little way, there's a trailer park. It's called Holiday Haven now. It was nothing back in those days; it was almost empty. But he had a trailer in there

GR: Why, Holland?

HP: Well, it was on the water. Lansing's not on the water. He had a principal backer, who was in Lansing who was a funny guy. I've forgotten his name. He was an ex-football player, but that had been his big thing in life. He'd been a star on the Michigan State team.

GR: Not a professional player, though?

HP: No. But after Glen Eddy died, then, they still wanted me to continue. I said, "No, I can only work if I'm being paid." I'd lost some of what I had billed for when he died, you know, and I didn't get paid. I said "I can't do that. I've got to earn a living." They said, "Oh, don't worry, you'll get your money." I said, "I'm not a speculative investor here. I've got to have money." So I left and then because I knew all these people in Washington, D.C., they called me and said, "Why don't you come here and work?" So I took a job with the Navy department in '66.

GR: What happened to the project?

HP: It died.

GR: The boat stayed there. Were you working on a boat?

HP: Oh, yes. And those people would call me and say, "What are we going to do now?" I'd say, "If I were you, I'd go find a job."

GR: There were other people involved besides you?

HP: Oh, there were people building the boat in Richardson's shop.

GR: How many people do you think were actively putting this boat together?

HP: Three.

GR: Local people from Tonawanda?

HP: Yes, they were people who had worked for Richardson. They wanted to see that company come back again. They loved what they did.

GR: Are there any names that stick?

HP: I don't have all my files here. I have files in Benton Harbor. I still probably have some of that stuff.

GR: What an interesting story.

HP: I still remember that. It was a big, old frame structure. It was right on the Erie Canal in New York's…

GR: So you were part of Glen Eddy's last…?

HP: I was his last business associate.

GR: What a great story. We should talk about doing something, written-wise. So many people wondered what happened to Glen Eddy. I just read an article last night about his aqua flow system and the boat that was created in Bay City. It's rare, but if you can find them, you're a lucky man.

HP: He was such a funny guy.

GR: And his personality, especially…

HP: He had a very unusual personality.

GR: The people in Manistee especially…

HP: People didn't like him generally.

GR: Describe George Glen Eddy as a person. I think people wonder why he was so hard to get along with.

HP: I think part of the problem was, in his later years especially, which was the only time I knew him, he was very ill. He couldn't walk ten steps.

GR: From smoking?

HP: Yes. Most people who have emphysema…

GR: Or was it mahogany dust?

HP: I hope it was smoke, not mahogany dust.

GR: Was he a person that was actively working on the boat?

HP: No, not really. He was more the promoter type. But he knew details of boats. It was amazing. I'd work out hydrostatics on something and, darned if he hadn't guessed pretty close to what I…

GR: So he had the mind of a marine architect without the degree.

HP: Yes. But he himself wasn't a boat builder. He knew that part of it, but he was more the promoter, trying to get investing monies in. I think he had been a failure at a lot of financial, and a lot of situations.

GR: Was he living on patents?

HP: No, because nobody paid him anything for those. He hadn't been able to promote that to…

GR: Because they're two patents in 1936 that he filed, on the aqua flow and the ride that it created. I wondered, was that something that people adapted to and then started the royalties would come in?

HP: No, nobody ever used it, to my knowledge.

GR: So, he was just constantly gathering money, spending it, and moving on?

HP: Yes, that's really about it. He had two sons who were—I don't remember their ages—they were a good bit older than I. They were trying to press me to hand over stuff after his death. And I said, "No, I can't do that. I haven't been paid for it."

GR: Because technically you owned it.

HP: I hadn't been paid for it.

GR: So you still own that material?

HP: Still got it.

GR: Well, it's probably for the best that you do still own it.

HP: I've still got it. Whatever files I have on the Eddy—I think I kept all that stuff in a separate file—is still in my files down in Benton Harbor. I'll have to bring that up. You know, he was using an oxygen tank and, boy, you can imagine all that flying we did between Detroit and Buffalo, New York, that winter. I still remember that as being a horrible time in my life because I was having to get this guy, in terrible weather sometimes, I've had to get him through the airport and onto a plane.

GR: Did you recognize him as a visionary that you wanted to work with?

HP: No.

GR: What was the connection?

HP: The connection was I was being paid and it was interesting work.

GR: Now how did he find you in Holland? Or did he? How did you guys meet?

HP: I think the first time we met, I was still in Kalamazoo. Our Ingersoll (?) Kalamazoo division was still in operation. I left Kalamazoo when Borg-Warner closed it out. But

we met there, because he came there one time knowing that we were involved in high-speed military amphibious vehicle work, trying to sell the edgoconic idea.

GR: And he couldn't sell it?

HP: No. This went on long after his death. I one time got called into a congressman's office in Washington, D.C., the congressman from the Lansing area who had been put up to it by a group of Eddy investors in the Lansing area. We're spending too much time on this.

GR: Oh, no, you're not. (laughs)

HP: This congressman had been put to this to push the Navy department to buy, or at least pay for, construction of a test facility, test boat, to prove that the edgoconic system would be a major improvement to Navy small craft. I got called in. An admiral went with me and he said, "Now here, Pollock, you can talk some technical stuff, but I don't want you to get into any policy." He had primed for exactly what I could and could not say. Then at the meeting where these people—who I had known because they were people who had been talking to me at the time that the Richardson plant was under Eddy's control—it was very embarrassing and awkward for me.

GR: What happened to the money? It's gone and they have nothing to show, which sounds like it was an Eddy legacy.

HP: Yes, but these were people who were substantial venture capitalists anyway.

GR: There's always a chance.

HP: Yes, it's a chance. So, I stayed in Washington for four years through the Vietnam War designing sometimes interesting boats—some we did for covert action and some really interesting stuff. That was an interesting time for me. But then it began to wind down. When I saw a newspaper article, where some of our boats had been stolen by some rebel

group in Thailand and were using them as pirate boats. They had gotten an American cargo ship in the Gulf of Thailand. I forget the name of that ship now; it was the name of the incident. I said, "That's it. It's time for us to get out of here, Sally." She said, "Here we go again, back and forth across the country, whatever is interesting." I said, "No, let's bag it." So I went back to the University of Michigan and took my MBA. I said, "Now I'm going to give up the career, and we'll start all over again in the hopes that we can find something along the West Michigan shoreline."

GR: How old were you when you decided to change your life into an MBA…?

HP: My late 30s.

GR: Civil engineer? What did you end up doing after giving up a career, obviously, that you loved? That had to have been tough.

HP: Naval architecture? No, I took my graduate degree in business.

GR: So you took your marine architecture degree and really adapted it to…? What sort of profession did you follow after that? You stayed in marine?

HP: No, that was the end of it. No longer involved with boats at all in any way shape or form.

GR: That must have been hard.

HP: It was very hard for me, because it was work I loved. But I said I really want to go back to western Michigan. Sally did. So I took my MBA, and I took a position with Whirlpool Corp. in Benton Harbor. We have our world headquarters there—I was with them for 17 years—I designed management information systems. Then, everything was the big mainframe computer. I would work with senior management to identify what their needs were and how they wanted that to appear in what format. I would write a specification, as a business systems analyst. Our detail systems and programming people

would build the system, then I would test it and teach the senior management people, or their secretary, whoever, how to use it.

GR: But you were there only 13 years, you said.

HP: Seventeen years.

GR: Seventeen. So at 47, you're done?

HP: No. Fifty-five, I was done. I walked out the day I qualified, fifty-five.

GR: Were you just kind of…you were doing your job…

HP: I tried very hard. Some interesting things I tried to do and tried to bring to Whirlpool. It was an unusual graduate program I was in at Michigan business school. It was a field called Operations Research, that specializes in mathematical modeling of business situations and deals with decision analysis, using sometimes probabilistic…

GR: So was any of this based on Jack Stevenson's work?

HP: Well, see this was so long ago now, I've been retired for so long, I don't even know his name. I talked meaningfully with a local businessman, has his consulting business—Dean Whitaker—up over Butch's Dry Dock downtown East 8th Street. A lot of the business, some marketing, some of the business systems work they're doing is close to what I liked to do when I was involved academically at Michigan. I tried to bring some of that to Whirlpool, especially in the area of inventory management. Finished goods inventory is a horrendous thing at an appliance company, because these things are big and they're a big investment. It's not like an inventory of toilet paper. These things are costly to inventory, and so you're always trying to have enough, but not too much. So I did a lot of mathematical modeling for that kind of thing. But, it wasn't work I loved, so the day I qualified, boy, I was out of there.

GR: You've built boats since, in retirement?

HP: Oh, before and since. Yes. Let's see, is there anything else I wanted to mention about that?

GR: Do you want to talk about Bob Dawson a little bit? And your relationship?

HP: Yes, we'll get to that in a minute. Oh, I know what I wanted to mention again was the—and this will lead me into building boats—was the Haskalite thing. When I was gutting out the kitchen here, it was kind of spooky because it was very quiet here in the middle of the winter, and I'm gutting this house out. What am I going to do if somebody taps me on the shoulder and I turn around and it's the ghost of one of the Dunton's saying, "What are you doing to my house?" Here I was gutting out the kitchen and tearing out. The kitchen was just terrible. It didn't blend in at all. So I'm, you know, crowbar, tearing out kitchen cabinets, and I looked down at a broken edge of plywood and I say, "Wait a minute. That's not your normal kitchen cabinet plywood." So I scraped off and said, "My God, look at that." It's ¾ inch Honduras mahogany, seven-ply plywood. That stuff was laminated to the best specifications that you can ever imagined.

GR: Yes, that boat and airplane…

HP: Yes, that's what it was. I said, "My God, they must have had a lot of this stuff left over after World War II, and at some point, Howard B. said 'We've got to have some new kitchen cabinets, let's use that stuff.'" But, man, I've saved all of that stuff. Saved it all. My most recent boat building project when I got into…

GR: So you have 1940s-era Haskalite?

HP: Yes. A year ago in the fall, I started building this little sailing dinghy. This is lamination here. I'm laminating something up out of Douglas fir that I'd salvaged from old Douglas fir floor joists in the old basement.

GR: Which is a good framing material for a boats.

HP: And beginning to put a boat together. Then you have to scarf plywood, because the boat's longer than the sheets of plywood. Then you have to lay out on the plywood. Since I'm a naval architect, I've still got my spline weights, and so we use those. Then you start to set the boat up. Now here, this is 21st century boat building. There's one of those pieces of plywood being used. There are no fastenings holding these planks together. It's all epoxy. And boy, do you have to use a lot of special little clamps. That's that. And then, that boat finished—here we are, these are pictures sailing the little dude last summer. That's a cute little boat. I was going to design one, and I came across this thing—it was a Joel White design—and I said, "I can't do any better than that." So I built this boat to Joel White's design. Joel White was a naval architect and boat yard guy up in Maine. When we bought the sailboat that we just sold this spring—I found in Nova Scotia, 22 years ago and surveyed it, found some problems, had it moved down to Joel White's yard, and they repaired the problem. So we went out there and cruised the Maine coast that summer in that boat, Sally and I. So that's how I knew Joel White. Interesting man. You'd think he'd come on planet Earth, crawling out from underneath a boat, but he had a degree from Cornell and a naval architecture degree from MIT. His academic background was due partly to the fact that he was the son of E. B. White. Ever hear of E. B. White?

GR: Other than the author?

HP: That's him.

GR: Oh, wow!

HP: The Stuart Little story.

GR: How interesting that his son became an architect.

HP: And Charlotte's Web. Well, E. B. loved that Maine coast, and they spent their time up there and his son got interested in boats. We met E. B. He was still living then, that summer that we were at Joel's yard. Tall man, didn't say very much. We used his dinghy to get out to our boat. At any rate, Joel White, a very interesting guy. He died of cancer, guy about my age, died of cancer about 4 years ago. He designed some very interesting boats. But the man who took his position at that yard doing the design work wrote this article. This little paragraph is what I'd like you to read. But it built the plant here just before World War II.

GR: '39?

HP: '39, yes. At that time, one of the Smith's sons, George, came here to work, and then I think it was quite a bit later that his younger brother, Chris, came here to work. But the two brothers then, of course, made their homes here. Until recent years, George lived over where the…he built the home in 1950, nice brick home, just east of where the little store was. That house has been taken out by the Jurries. She's a…

GR: Huizenga.

HP: Huizenga, from Waste Management. They've put up a much bigger, very elegant home.

GR: And Chris has left the lake too, now.

HP: Yes, Chris has left. At any rate, George's home was there. That's when I first met George and Chris, because they were interested in iceboats. I bought one of the boats

that was built—they built a handful of them, iceboats—in the Chris-Craft plant. One was for Chris and the others were for people who worked there, one of which was Bill Jacobs. You've met Bill Jacobs.

GR: I've met Bill, yes.

HP: Bill Jacobs flipped his over, and he said "That's enough of that." We bought his boat and that's how I got to know George and Chris so well. So we raced iceboats out here in the winter, years and years. For some reason, we had winters with good conditions.

GR: Bob Dawson had an iceboat. Did he race?

HP: No, that's a Chris-Craft Algonac iceboat. See now, George's older brother, Chuck Smith, who may not be living any more, stayed at the plant at Algonac. My father kind of knew him because they were customers of my father. They had boilers in their plant and my father…

GR: He was everywhere.

HP: Yes, right. So my father kind of knew Chuck. Chuck and some of the other Smiths were kind of involved in iceboats in the Detroit area. And that's where that one came from.

GR: So that's an Algonac-built iceboat?

HP: Yes, a very old, 1930s era boat in pieces. Bob Dawson told me one time, "Yes, at one time I got it all together. I went flying across the lake." He said, "On the way back, I even clipped a fish shanty. That's the last time I sail that thing."

GR: So do you think it's there because Chris Smith is related to Bob Dawson?

HP: You may know this better than I. There is some family connection.

GR: Bob Dawson is Chris Smith's nephew.

HP: Was it Bob Dawson's mother who was a part of the Smith's family?

GR: She's Chris Smith's sister. She's a Smith, yes.

HP: I knew that there was a connection there because Chris…

GR: Well, they all grew up in Algonac and the Smiths and the Dawsons met. And that's why there's a Smith in the Dawson family. That's why I wonder if that iceboat is there…

HP: That's why that iceboat is there, because of Bob's connection with the Chris-Craft.

GR: It's kind of part of his family.

HP: Yes, but he always said it's just a bunch of junk now. There's nothing there. It's there, but there's nothing…

GR: I've seen it. It's on a Teenee trailer and it's ready to go.

HP: Oh, is it really on a trailer? Anyway, so we raced iceboats there and then, of course, I grew up and moved away and got away from it. Then when we came back

[End of tape, end of interview]