DePree, Max Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Max De Pree

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by Larry Wagenaar

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
LW: Mr. De Pree, could you just state your full name and place of birth please?

MDP: It's Max De Pree. The middle initial is "O," for Owen. I was born on [date removed], 1924, in Zeeland, Michigan.

LW: And you resided in Zeeland most of your life?

MDP: Yes, although I was away. When I was 16 or 17, I left Zeeland to go to college. I was there for a semester, and then I went into the Army for three years. So I was away from Zeeland then. In the late '60s, my family moved to Europe where I worked for a year and a half. Then in the early '70s, we actually moved out to the north side of Holland on the lake. So we have been mostly in this area, but we have lived other places.

LW: Tell me about growing up in Zeeland. Give me some of those memories as a child and then as an adolescent.

MDP: I grew up in a family of seven children, three boys and four girls. The chronological spread was 20 years. My older brother was 20 years older than my youngest brother, and they were at the extreme ends of the family. My brother Hugh was born first and then I had three sisters. Then I came along, then I had another sister and then another brother. So I was almost in the middle. We were a depression family. We lived pretty much the same kind of life that everybody lived in those days. The family had, for instance, one car, but my mother never learned to drive.
It wasn't really until after World War II, as my recollection, that the kids ever had a chance to drive the car. Of course in those days the doctor would come to the house when you were sick. He would go into the kitchen and mix the medicine in a sauce dish and you would take the medicine that way. I was the first in our family to be born in Zeeland Hospital. The other children were all born at home. It's interesting, last spring I spent some time with a fifth grade at Van Raalte School and one of the things that we did, which was quite interesting to the children, was talked about the things that they take for granted, but which didn't exist when I was in the fifth grade. The thing that got the children's attention the most was when I said that there was no such thing as a computer. You could hear the class gasp about that.

LW: They weren't even around when I was in school.

MDP: No, so when I was a kid we didn't have a refrigerator. We had an ice box on the back porch. We did all the things that families did in those days. We fired up a coal furnace early in the morning before we went to school. My mother had to hang all the wash out on the line year-round. Those kinds of things. There were no dryers. There was a washing machine with a wringer on it. I went to Zeeland Public Schools. I must say, I think I had a really first class preparation for college in the Zeeland Public Schools. One of my favorite teachers may even be a person you have interviewed, Mrs. Buys. She was Mina Buys, Ek's wife. I had Mina Bekker, that was her maiden name, in seventh grade. She and I have stayed in touch all these years. She dutifully reads my books and sends me notes about them. You know in those days the teachers all came to school dressed, the men were all dressed in suits
and ties and the women teachers all wore dresses. There was a great deal of discipline. In those days we had to take a foreign language and we had to take Latin if we wanted to be admitted to college. So I have always had a warm spot in my heart for the Zeeland School system.

LW: So you feel it was very good preparation for you to head off to college. One of the unique characteristics of our area, at least historically, has been the sabbatarian practices—for Sunday. What kinds of things could and couldn't you do when you were growing up?

MDP: My dad never liked us to listen to boxing matches on the radio, of course there was no television. So if we wanted to listen to Jack Dempsey or Joe Louis fighting, we could sit on the porch and hear the neighbor's radio about it. I was a Detroit Tigers fan, but in our case, my dad would not let me listen to the Tigers on Sunday afternoon until after I had listened to Charles Fuller on the radio. Charles Fuller was the great evangelist. It is interesting, I have, for reasons beyond my ken, ended up on the board of trustees at Fuller Theological Seminary, and I knew Charles Fuller very well before he died. That was one of the rules. My recollection is that my dad preferred us not to ride our bikes on Sunday, but we could play catch or roller skate. I can remember one of the nice little stories that I can tell you, is that my grandfather had a cottage on Lake Michigan. So for three or four weeks every summer my family could stay in that cottage. And my dad and mother taught an afternoon Sunday school class in what was known as Ventura, out on Quincy Street. In fact, that Sunday school class ended up, my dad formed a Baptist Church there and was
their pastor for many years. One of the rules was that we couldn't go swimming on Sunday. Well, with seven children you knew that somebody was going to break the rule. So what we would do every Sunday was make all the bathing suits wet whether anybody went in the lake or not. So that when our parents came home from Sunday school there would be all the wet suits on the line. (laughter) They took that with good humor. My recollection is that it was the boys that were in the water and the girls that were not. But you know, your memories on some of those things fade. Our family all grew up Baptist and we didn't really have the restrictions that our Christian Reformed friends had on the Sabbath.

LW: Which church were you a member of in Zeeland?

MDP: First Baptist Church. My dad and a number of other people came out of the Second Reformed Church and formed the Baptist church there. That is the church that I grew up in.

LW: Tell me a little bit about the nature of interaction between the churches in Zeeland. Do you remember at all? You mentioned the Christian Reformed Church and some of the additional restrictions.

MDP: I don't have a great sense of that. As a kid we were very much aware of our friends who went to the Christian school. Sometimes we fought with those kids. But my best friends who lived across the street, two brothers, we went all through high school together, were both Christian Reformed, but I don't remember that being a matter of any kind of discussion among us.

LW: You came out of adolescence and decided to go to college. Tell me about that
experience and then going into the military.

MDP: My older brother and my three older sisters all started out at Hope College. I was the first one in our family to go away to school. I went to Wheaton College, west of Chicago. I was a pre-med student there, taking the usual science courses for that. I entered Wheaton in the fall of 1942, and after the first semester, it was very clear that I was going to be in the Army shortly. So I think in January or February I dropped out and I was in the Army in early April. I spent three years in the Army. I got quite a bit of my education in the Army, because the armed services, at that time all three of them--the Air Force, Navy and Army--all had what the Army called the Army Specialized Training Program. This was the pre-cursor to the G.I. Bill of Rights. It was designed for two reasons actually. One was to keep the schools and faculties alive. And the other was to continue a core group of people who had a college education, because all the men especially were disappearing from the colleges. So the armed services were sending a lot of their young men to college. After I finished basic training, the Army sent me to the City College of New York for a math refresher course for six weeks, which to an 18 year-old was really something. In those days New York was safe and pleasant. We roamed all over New York. From there I went to the University of Pittsburgh to continue my pre-med training. Then I was transferred to Haverford College outside of Philadelphia where I completed that pre-med training. This was a very enhanced program. We went to school 12 hours a day. That was all we did. Then the whole pre-med group I was in at Haverford College were all told we had been accepted at Temple
University Medical School, it was only 20 miles away in Philadelphia and that we would be moving over there in a few weeks and starting med school. Then after a couple of weeks we were all gathered together in an auditorium and told no, the Army changed their mind, you're going overseas. So we were sent to Texas for a few weeks training and then shipped out to overseas. I landed in the European Theater in late '44.

LW: What was your role there?

MDP: I was a scrub nurse. Because I had been pre-med, I was assigned to a general hospital which had their...the headquarters of the general hospital was in Nancy, France. But actually I was sub-assigned then to what was called a shock team. A shock team was a small group of people, two surgeons and two or three scrub nurses. (telephone interruption) My general hospital was a part of the Third Army, which was commanded by Patton, and the shock team operated between the front lines and the field hospital. You're familiar with the M*A*S*H program? Well, that was a field hospital. So we were between the field hospital and the front lines. We had our own vehicle, and we moved about spelling surgeons in treating wounded immediately after they were wounded. Wherever the casualties were the highest, that's where we were sent—to replace the surgeons assigned when they got worn out. They would operate hours on end and they needed to be relieved. So we would be assigned by radio up and down. In effect, some of my early assignments were in support of Patton's army when it relieved Bastonne in the Battle of the Bulge. In fact, our team operated in Bastonne itself for several weeks after we recaptured it.
So I learned a lot about surgery.

LW: It must have been an emotionally trying experience because you were constantly dealing with tragedy.

MDP: Yes, it was. I think I was only 19 at the time, and when you are 19, you can deal with a lot of that through humor. And that was a great release for us. It's something that still is very meaningful in my life, it carries forward. I never miss a Memorial Day Parade because of strong feelings, that you can never let those sacrifices be forgotten.

LW: Tell me how that changed you, especially as you returned back to western Michigan.

MDP: When I left for overseas I was already committed from a marriage point of view; we weren't married, but my future wife and I were committed to each other. When I got back, I was no longer interested in the thought of another 4 years of medical school and a year's internship and all that stuff. We wanted to get married. So we did. We got married maybe seven or eight months after I got out of the Army. I enrolled at Hope College and did a year and a summer there, and then I went to work in what was then a very small family business of Herman Miller.

LW: Tell me about meeting your wife.

MDP: I first met my wife when we were kids living in the same neighborhood. Our family lived on Pine Street in Zeeland and her family lived on Main Street right at the corner of Pine. Pine almost dead-ended into her property. There was a vacant lot across the street from her house where we all played sandlot football. My first recollection of her is watching her leave the house and go to the nearby corner store
to do some shopping. We both were in Zeeland High together. When I was a senior and she was a sophomore, we started to date. She wasn't the first girl I dated, but almost. So then what happened really was that I was in the Army for three years and we carried on our courtship pretty much by mail. I saw her only a few times during that three years. Of course, once I left for Europe, I didn't see her again until I was discharged.

LW: Relationships worked a little differently at that time. Tell me what the family business was like when you first encountered it.

MDP: I first was involved in the family business when I was in high school because I would work in the factory summers as a student. I did a variety of jobs. I worked in several departments. I worked in the maintenance department, cleaned the boiler, helped move wood in and out of the dry kilns, pulled weeds, painted window frames, tailed machinery. You know what that is? A machine operator in those days would feed the wood into the rip saw. Somebody had to catch it at the other end and stack it. I was a catcher. Then I learned to do some cabinet fitting. I became an upholsterer. So I knew a lot about the factory actually before I worked there full-time. But then when I started there full-time, I think the company had about 100 employees in all and there were maybe five women in the whole group: a bookkeeper, a couple of secretaries, and a couple of seamstresses in the upholstery department; but otherwise it was an all-male thing. Everybody went home for lunch at noon. In fact, the workday began a 7:00, or 8:00 if you were in the office, and go until 4:00 or 5:00. Almost everybody walked to work. We didn't even need
parking lots in those days. The company was really recovering from the very
difficult...they had a double whammy--you had the problem of the Great Depression
which put them in a very interesting position, and then World War II was also very
difficult because materials were rationed. My dad had to work with the government
to get materials in order to keep people employed. During the war, they made a lot
of stuff that was needed for the war effort. They didn't really make furniture; they
made foreman's desks for war plants and so on. They made some plywood parts for
experimental helicopters and so on. Helicopters were not really operational in those
days, but there was a lot of experimenting going on. For instance, during the
Depression, my dad and his chief of sales, a man named Jim Eppinger, would get
orders for furniture and then they would come back to Zeeland and they would figure
out how much they could pay for the labor to execute those orders. Then they would
invite the work people in and say, "Now we got this order, and this much of it can
be allocated for labor. So if you are willing to do the work for that amount, then we
will take the order." Of course, they almost always would because those men needed
work too. Just like my dad needed work. It seems odd now and my surviving
siblings and I once in a while talk about it. We all remember that in those days, the
early '30s, my dad was making $75 a week and supporting a family of seven children
on that. It is an astonishing feat. Of course, the dollar was worth more then.

LW: So jobs were negotiated every time?

MDP: That's right. Every time they got an order, the job was renegotiated. So when you
realize that, what an awful lot of parents went through during the Depression, it is
really an astonishing thing that they achieved what they did.

LW: You started with the firm, was it growing at the time you were...?

MDP: Yes it was growing. In the mid '40s, my dad had made a very important decision to give up the manufacturing and sale of traditional furniture which was all copied out of European museum books, and decided to go only into contemporary designs which were designed for homes and apartments in this country. After World War II especially, but starting in the '40s, there was a great building boom of apartments in major cities. These apartments didn't have room for all the large furniture, the traditional designs. So they went full scale into only modern furniture. Herman Miller was really the first company to do that in this country. Then in the late '40s, early '50s, the designers that my dad was working with began to design executive office furniture. Then the sales department, as we got into the late '50s and early '60s, began to see that they could make more money selling for offices than for homes. So there was a slow transition away from residential furniture.

LW: A natural progression, it sounds like.

MDP: Yes. In the mid '60s we established a research company in Ann Arbor with a very creative guy named Bob Probst, he was an inventor and sculptor and artist. We said to him, "We want you to get us into businesses other than furniture; don't design any furniture." He did a number of other things, but the thing that he did was he designed what we call "action office," the movable wall systems which absolutely revolutionized the industry. That is what triggered the growth of Herman Miller when we brought that out in 1968.
LW: So there was that sort of slow but steady growth pattern, then all of a sudden...

MDP: Yes. Then it just took off because everybody...industry really needed that kind of office, they couldn't afford to continue to give everybody at one level private offices and have everybody else out in a bull pen. That wasn't working either. They needed the flexibility that these movable wall systems would provide. That triggered real growth, and in the early '70s the company went public. And with a couple of dips, it has been on a growth pattern ever since.

LW: How has the competition changed? Obviously the number of local firms that are in competition weren't even in existence at one point in time.

MDP: The residential furniture business has mostly left Grand Rapids, as I am sure you know. It has gathered in the south, although we are at the point now where if you want well designed modern furniture, you are likely to be buying something made in Scandinavia. The office furniture business has gone through a process which in many ways is really quite sad. As it became more competitive, there are 5 or 6 companies that have grown tremendously. That meant that an awful lot of small sized, very creative makers of good quality furniture have simply disappeared. That is a great loss to the nation, because some of those people were very creative, and they were much more orientated toward quality than price. But everything has gotten more competitive. Now the office furniture industry in this country is really dominated by about six companies. I think that more than 40 companies have gone out of business--which were good companies. The move toward the movable wall systems, which Herman Miller originated and everybody else copied, eliminated the
market for a lot of those smaller companies. Then as these 5 or 6 companies grew, they came to dominate the dealer relationship program so that the smaller companies could not find dealerships to represent them, and that was really too bad.

LW: Was it deliberate on the part of the big manufacturers to try to...?

MDP: I don't really think anybody planned it. I think it is just evolved that way, preserving their own market shares is what did it. I don't think anyone set out to get rid of those other companies. For a while, the bigger companies were buying the smaller companies. But that didn't really work well because after a bit the people realized that the smaller companies actually had nothing to sell. Anybody could duplicate what they were doing without buying them.

LW: What were a couple of the local ones that you remember fell by the wayside, that you thought were good, that you thought had good products...?

MDP: You had people like Widdicomb in Grand Rapids, made very nice office furniture. There was a company in Bern, Indiana...Dunbar. Ed Wormley was the designer for them. They made very fine office furniture. There were a number of companies in California that really did some outstanding stuff. In Grand Rapids you had companies like Kendall who were primarily in residential business, but did some office stuff. These were family companies, Widdicomb and Kendall and people like that, who did such fine quality work. But they never moved technologically or from a professional management point of view into the next level. They stayed family companies. Then they couldn't survive. It was tragic.

LW: Tell me a little bit about involvement of Herman Miller with its surrounding
community, and how maybe that has changed over the years especially while you were in leadership and then as you’ve seen it...

MDP: For a good part of Herman Miller’s history, we saw ourselves on the one hand as a company that had a high social obligation. We saw ourselves as not being separated from society. We saw ourselves as being a legitimate member of the community, wherever we were. While on the one hand we understood who we wanted to be and what our competitive advantages had to be, for years for instance, we knew that we were going to compete on the basis of good design. Doing good research and good design we knew gave us a competitive edge. We knew we could develop human relationship programs, which we knew would give us a competitive edge. The Scanlon plan and participative management and all that stuff—we were some of the pioneers of that in this country. That gave us a competitive edge. We also always worked on the assumption that you had to make a profit to survive. We saw profit as the normal consequence of doing the right thing and doing it well. We did not see profit as our goal in life. While we grew a lot over the years, we never said, until maybe recently, that growth and profit were our raison d’etre. So over the years, we always developed strong programs of continuing education within the operation and strong programs of cooperation in all of the communities in which we served. The company has always supported the communities, the board of directors has always set aside a percentage of the profit for distribution to health care and education and to Christian organizations. So the company has had a high social agenda in the way in which it operated. We always made efforts to include the family and community in
what we did. Over the years, at all of our operations where we employed a lot of people, we would have community open houses and stuff like that. Business has changed a lot in the last 10 years, and it is much more difficult to compete successfully.

LW: What do you think the reasons for that are?

MDP: I think some of the reasons for it are the globalization of industry. We began to see in the early '70s the way in which the Japanese really attacked two major areas that the United States and Western Europe considered to be their strengths. One was in the automobile business, the other was in the computer business. I can remember in the late '60s, early '70s, when I was living in Europe, observing the way the Japanese attacked the calculator and computer business in Switzerland and Germany. They really came in and sold below their cost in order to gain market share. We know what they did in the early '70s in the United States to the automotive industry. They really came in with a better product at a lower price, and also a product that consumed less fuel. You know that it was in '73-'74 that the oil shortage was developed by the mid-east countries.

(Take break)

MDP: The globalization really took off quite quietly at first. For many years at Herman Miller we were buying steel parts from Korea, and it wasn't widely known. Then some of that stuff started to get into the newspapers about American companies buying overseas, buying parts from Mexico made with cheaper labor and so on. Actually from the early '70s on, this was going on broadly in industry even though it
wasn't published much. Globalization is not that new, but in the last 10 years, it has become much more prevalent in industry. I think that that does have a lot to do with the nature of competitiveness which has changed. I think another thing that has influenced the way business is done, and life in general, is the move in the direction of litigation. We live in such a litigious society. That has been an interesting move. There is another major influence on what is happening in business these days. That is the existence of alliances among major corporations. It is very interesting—if you take Apple and IBM, they're competitors, have been for a long time. From time to time they sue each other, but they also have very vital alliances which they work together. They'll share technology, they'll share the way that they approach a market. Businesses all over do that. Herman Miller does that today too. We have some working alliances with a couple of competitors. It is very interesting.

LW: So one part of the company might be suing and the other part might be sitting at the coffee table talking about x, y, or z.

MDP: Sure. Those alliances are also global which is very interesting.

LW: You were talking earlier about your role in the community, and I know one of the major—and I know you have many and I would like you to talk about others—but one of them has been your membership on the Hope Board of Trustees and your leadership in those areas. Could you tell me a little bit about that involvement over the years and some of the high points and low points that you have encountered playing that role with the college?

MDP: As background to that, I would have to say that I have had a lot of involvement over
the years in the Reformed Church. Early on, when I was in my late twenties, I was chairman of the executive committee that formed the Faith Reformed Church in Zeeland. Then later I served on some of the Reformed Church agencies. For a number of years, I was on the Board of World Missions for the Reformed Church. I served several years as president of that board. Then I served as chairman of a committee on the reorganization of the Reformed Church. We did quite a bit of work on that. Then the Reformed Church established a General Synod executive committee to oversee the operations of the denomination, and I served on that for a number of years. I have been on the board at Fuller Theological Seminary for 33 years. When Gordon Van Wylen was president at Hope, goes back I guess to the early '80s, he asked if I would consider coming on the Hope board, and so I did. When it came time for Gordon to retire, he asked me to serve as chairman of the search committee for a new president, which I did. Then after the search was completed, the board elected me chairman of the board. So I was chairman of the board six or seven years. I think the key element in that experience was serving as chair of the search committee. I think we went through two major fund drives while I was on the board. Hope College has a very loyal group of supporters and alumni, and they are able to raise a lot of money.

LW: I can remember you as a speaker at a number of events where I helped out, so I know of your leadership in that area. You mentioned a number of RCA committees, but my first question would be, when did you move from the Baptist to the RCA, given that you were a member of the Baptist Church?
MDP: When I got married. Esther was a member of the First Reformed Church of Zeeland. So I moved over there.

LW: Was there any concern on the part of your parents or was that just sort of...?

MDP: My dad got caught in an interesting thing on that. He would tell my sisters that when they got married, their husbands should join their church. So when I got married and I joined Esther's church he was kind of caught on his own petard there. (laughter) No, it was never a serious problem. As a matter of fact, theologically I am still a Baptist. That is not a problem.

LW: You have served on many RCA committees, tell me a little about how the RCA has changed in the course of that time, and maybe some of those changes you have seen or have been a part of.

MDP: I think probably the greatest change that has happened to the RCA is similar to the changes that have been going on in the main line denominations for a couple of decades. Slow change in which there...if you look at the Presbyterian Church for instance, they have had an enormous fall-off in membership partly because of divisions within the denomination. Some of the liveliest Presbyterian Churches carry the name but are not seriously involved in the denomination. They are more congregational. I think in the Reformed Church we have seen a move toward congregationalism, but not necessarily because of a split like the Presbyterians have had, but more because denominationalism is a declining existence in the mainline churches. You can belong to a Reformed Church in Grand Rapids and Holland or wherever around here, and you might never hear anything about the denomination.
You might not know anything about it. Years ago, the denomination ran the Board of World Missions and the Board of Domestic Missions and the Board of Pensions. They had all of these rather active things going on. But the Christian church has changed a lot. We see the growth of Pentecostalism and charismatic church in this country. We have seen the growth of churches like Willow Creek, which are market oriented but they are gathering in people by the thousands. The Reformed Church has had a drop-off in membership, quite significant. It is more a quiet malaise, I would say, than what is happening in the Christian Reformed Church where you have people divided over the role of women in the church. The Reformed Church hasn't had whole congregations separating that way. They just quietly become less interested in the denomination and they become more congregational. Instead of strongly supporting a foreign mission program, you have individuals in the church who will pick out where they are going to give their money. So the local congregation has donors who support the local congregation, but when it comes to a para-church organization, they decide themselves where the money is going. It is a big picture and a little picture, the way it seems to me.

LW: Where do you think the RCA is headed?

MDP: I am an admirer of Wes Granberg-Michaelson. I think his leadership has been good. He is a very good leader; he has a lot of experience. But that doesn't seem to be the necessary ingredient. One has to look at the role of the local church in relation to all of the para-church organizations that have sprung up. If you think about youth ministries, for instance, years ago it was the Sunday School and the Christian
Endeavor in these local denominations. Now you have Youth for Christ and Young Life and Campus Crusade and Intervarsity. These things have left the church pretty much. There are Christian mission organizations that operate on their own. They’re transdenominational, but they’re also not denominational. You have Latin American Missions and Mission Aviation Fellowship and Wycliffe Translators. These are the people who are sending out most of the missionaries. It isn’t the denominations that are doing that. The churches don’t have to worry about prisoners, because you have Prison Fellowship to do it. In terms of taking care of the poor in the community, at every local basis in every locality, you have people like Salvation Army and Community Action House, Heartside Ministries, and it kind of goes on and on. One of the things that I wonder about when you think about the future, how can the formal organized church survive when its obligations have been taken up by parachurch organizations? For instance, one good move that is going on is that Young Life has developed a program of partnering with churches, where Young Life will train the youth minister. The youth minister works part-time in the church and part-time for Young Life. I think that that is really good. I think it would be great if Prison Fellowship could do the same thing, so that the churches in Ionia ought to be partnering with Prison Fellowship to be serving the Ionia Prison. That might make the church survive. If the church has nothing to do but take care of itself, you wonder, does it matter? That is not exactly oral history, Larry. (laughter)

LW: I understand that. Since you played that role, I couldn’t help but ask you that question. But let’s get back to the past...Tell me how Holland and Zeeland and the
MDP: One of the interesting things that has happened in the Holland/Zeeland area is what also happens in a very successful private endeavor. You have a certain quality of environment that attracts people to the environment. It can be a city, it can be a corporation, it can be a college. The very qualities that attract the people are the ones that come into question when new people arrive. I have seen it happen in a corporate setting many times, not just Herman Miller, but many times. I've done some consulting and so on, I know my way around these places. You have a really wonderful company and then you hire somebody...suppose you are Prince Manufacturing here in Holland, and you hire a key person from Xerox. This key person really wants to live here, they like the schools, they like the lake setting, they feel it is safer for their children than Buffalo was or Schenectady. And so they come. Subconsciously they start to try to change Prince to become a Xerox. This is what has happened to this area; this has happened to the communities of Holland and Zeeland. Another thing that has happened to communities is that for whatever reasons, the people in leadership positions in the townships and cities have never been able to gain the initiative in planning. They have never been able to plan ahead so that zoning laws have never caught up with the growth, traffic arrangements have never caught up with the growth. Residential development was planned by the developers, not by the communities. A good example is what has happened on the north side of Holland and Zeeland, primarily Holland Township. You look at the West Ottawa School system and the Zeeland School system and the developers can
take agricultural land and build. And in many cases they build very high density places--trailer parks, apartment houses and so forth. But you get high density so you get more families per acre, you reduce the tax contribution per family to the school system, you raise the number of students at the same time that you reduce the tax contribution per family, and you put West Ottawa and Zeeland in a defensive position full-time. They are simply not able to keep up with the growth in students as compared to the income they ought to be getting. Developers feel no obligation about that and the township is on the defensive too because they realize too late that they have let it happen. So what we have now is a classic case in the West Michigan area of the community as a whole being put on the defensive by the growth. I think an interesting example happened across the street here where there is a little grocery store. A couple of years ago a family bought it. They did two things immediately. They announced that they would no longer be open on Sunday, and that they were going to stop selling alcoholic beverages. This is their right. They own the store, they can decide how to operate. Some guy writes a letter to the Holland Sentinel asking, "What right do they have to do this? I always do my shopping on Sunday. I have always done it here. Why do they have the right to do that?" You see, that is an example of what I am talking about. People come here because they like the place and the place was a special place, partly because of the social mores by which we live. And now you get the pluralistic setting, and the new people do have rights too. The guy, in a way, has a right to ask that the store stay open on Sunday. But the owner also has the right to say, "That's not the way I am going to do business. I'll
run the risk of losing you as a customer. You can go to Meijer or D&W." I see the West Michigan area struggling greatly with these two areas. They are on the defensive from a planning position and on the defensive in the terms of dealing with the advance of pluralism in our area. Those are very difficult things to deal with.

LW: Where do you think we are headed? What do you think the resolution of this...

MDP: I think a number of groups in the area are starting the catch-up process. I think the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council is a strong force for the positive side of this. I think the city of Holland has made enormous progress in the last few years in this. If you look just at traffic in the city of Holland, we have seen a kind of revolution—the widening and extension of Waverly Road, what they did with Sixteenth Street as an entry to the city, what they have done right out here with 17th and 16th Streets has been very good, the renovation of the downtown which was triggered by Ed Prince. These are enormous steps forward for a community. I think if you look around the city of Holland in the last five years, they have made enormous progress on our parks. The parks are in great shape. The whole renovation of the City Hall was a good move. The fact that the voters have voted to expand the hospital and the swimming pool and the library, these are good signs. I think that there is reason for some optimism, but it is not going to be easy. One of the significant problems is what happens with the 31 corridor, whether the city and the townships and the state can get together and find a fifty-year solution to highway 31. As it is now, it divides the whole community as far north as Grand Haven. It is not going to be easy to find the right solution.
LW: What about the Area Center? What are your thoughts on that issue?

MDP: Let's take it piece by piece. If you think about a performing arts center, Hope College has the Dimnent Chapel and the Knickerbocker Theater, and West Ottawa has a very fine smaller performing arts center, but is very fine--the acoustics are good, all the arrangements, the parking, everything is there. Now Zeeland has a major performing arts center. I think it seats just three seats shy of a thousand. Great acoustics, technologically right at the forefront. I don't understand why when you've got a thousand seat auditorium seven miles away, why you have to build one. I don't understand why the combination of the Knickerbocker and Dimnent Chapel and West Ottawa and Zeeland isn't enough for West Michigan. So my feeling is that I don't think Holland needs to build a performing arts center. The second part of that is the skating rink area. I think a skating rink would be very fine. I don't know how many people use it. I suspect since ice skating is not uniformly practiced, that maybe it ought to be a private fundraising project. I would much rather see it down on 6th Street than out on 16th. I think it's better for the city. The third element, a sports arena. The two major users of the Civic Center are Holland Christian Schools and Hope College. My feeling is that that is their problem, not the city's problem. Now, if you are going to build one having it down there on 6th Street, it would probably be a very good idea. What does that leave us with...a conference center. Here again, I think for an area like the Holland/Zeeland community, a conference center ought to be private industry, not a city business.

LW: Hope just opened...
That is the problem to me is Hope College is getting into the business of being in business quite a bit. I think it is fine for Hope and Calvin to own a food service company together. I really don't think they ought to be soliciting business outside. I think the College ought to have a bookstore, but not one that competes with local bookstores. But I don't really think Hope College should be in the hotel business. I don't think they should be selling memberships at the Dow. I don't think they ought to be selling memberships at the tennis club. I have a different perspective on that than John Jacobson does, which is one of the reasons I am not on the board anymore. I think higher education is very different from competing in the business world.

Those are some of the ways that I think about it. If we are going to raise big sums of money as a community, I really think there are some other things that we ought to do rather than provide Hope College with a basketball arena. Hope College itself is a better fund raiser than this city will ever be. I think things like the library and enlarging the city pool are much more important to the city and are broadly available to the city. If we have a new basketball arena, you are not going to get very many junior high kids playing in there, they are going to be playing in their school gyms. We already have all that. I think education needs more money, I think health care needs more money in our community, we have to continue to grow our health care on a regional basis rather than just a local basis. The city has serious problems with people who live below the poverty level, even with almost no unemployment we have that problem. We have a lot of children, who from a health care point of view, are in families below the poverty level. If you talk to the people who are running that
new community health center, they will tell you that about half the children in Holland are below the poverty level when it comes to health care.

LW: There are some major issues there.

MDP: Yes, and I think a community like this has to be very careful not to get on the bandwagon for some of these exotic projects.

LW: Sort of a segue into the ethnicity issue in Holland...tell a little bit on your thoughts on how ethnicity has changed in Holland during your lifetime, and some of the issues you see there.

MDP: I think Holland is probably doing a better job of integrating the various ethnic groups than a lot of places in this country are. I think a lot of the Hispanic families who originated here with summer employment in the fields, a lot of those families felt at home here and decided to stay. I have always felt that that was a real compliment to Holland, that they made those people feel at home enough that they would stay here year round. One of the areas that I think we need some improvement is that people who have more seniority in the West Michigan area need to understand more about the ethnic groups and be more open to their ways of living and not insist that they have to live our way. I think that your school programs, your zoning programs, the ways in which we communicate, have to take some of these things into account. To just give you a small example, years ago I used to teach at the night school at Aquinas College. This was a masters program in business and it was for people in mid-career. I had a very mixed class, men and women, and quite a few blacks. In those days the only men who kept their caps on indoors were blacks. They were
usually baseball caps, but it was sort of their culture. One day I had a white guy show up who kept his cap on in class. So I asked him on the side later, "I would appreciate you not wearing your cap in class." He said, "Why not? All those black guys do it." "Yes", I said, "but it is a part of their culture. It is not a part of your culture. Your mother brought you up differently. She brought you up to take your cap off when you walked inside a building, she brought you up to stand up when a lady enters the room, and she taught you certain kinds of manners. The black guys were taught different manners. You don't have the right to encroach on them. You can't come in my class and wear your cap if you are white." This guy said, "I never thought about that. I never understood that this was a part of their culture. You're going to let them wear their caps?" I said, "Yes, I am going to let them wear their caps, because that is their culture." Well for him, he was man enough to admit that this was a good educational experience for him. He said he would carry that over with him to his job. He was a middle manager in one of the Grand Rapids companies. He said for the first time he began to understand that they had rights to certain behavior patterns because it comes out of their culture. You see, we get disturbed here when a black family moves in and they don't mow the lawn right away the way we do. They don't mow it every week. We get a little disturbed about that. It would be nice if he would mow the lawn. Sometime he has to understand that the way that he keeps up his property has to do with its value. But also, initially, we have to understand that he is legitimate for who he is. We shouldn't feel that he is obliged to become white in order to live in Holland. Does
that all make sense?

LW: It makes a lot of sense. It's the kind of remarks I've heard from other people.

Holland was recognized as one of ten All-American cities recently. We talked about a lot of qualities in the last hour. From your point of view, what qualities do you think qualified Holland for that honor? If you were to evaluate as an outsider, what do you think are the strengths of Holland that brought that type of award here?

MDP: I suppose the quality of the downtown and the comparative quality of the hospital and the school systems. We would like to see improvement in our school systems, but if you look in this area, Zeeland, West Ottawa, Holland, and Holland Christian are all very good school systems compared to what is abroad in this land. I think the presence of Hope College in the downtown area would give us a lot of points. I think the quality of industry in this area would give us a lot of points. If you look at industry in other cities and compare it, you find that in the West Michigan area more industrial firms are concerned about the quality of their buildings, land, parking lots, and their safety records. There is a remarkable corporate ethic in the area which I think would give us points. Now on the other hand, the way I look at things, we are not replenishing our tree stock in the city of Holland. If you ride around the city in the summertime, look upwards and see how many of our trees are dying at the top, and are not being replaced on time. On 16th Street, 7th Street, 9th Street, 17th out here, the city has been planting trees. That is wonderful. But by and large, our tree stock is down. I think the residential builders in this area, the developers, are really out of touch with what ought to be going on in residential buildings. I don't mean
that the architecture is bad, I think it is, but that is not what I am talking about. It would be wonderful if the architecture was better in a lot of the development areas. If you make it a habit, as I like to do, one of the things that I enjoy doing is I go to the new developments when there is building in progress. I go walking through them on the weekend, or I will go to open houses and look at them. Then I compare it to what I see in other parts of the country where I do the same thing. In Arizona I love to go through developments and look at open houses and so on. I think, generally speaking, our builders here are not doing a good enough job with supplying long term, quality buildings for families.

LW: So you think that they are made just cheaply or...?

MDP: I think they are just repeating old patterns. I don’t think they think about what they are doing. I have seen rooms in new houses 10 x 10 where the builder says this is a home office. It’s just a big closet. I’ve asked questions like, "What kind of wiring is built in here for future electronic needs in this home?" "Well, all we have is the outlets." They haven’t done anything about what is happening electronically in our society. Everybody gets a two and a half or three-car garage now, but the house has no particular thought given to the way in which a family ought to live together. I’ve been in other places in other parts of the country, Reston, Virginia, Scotsdale, Arizona, Carmel, California, Portland, Oregon, you can go on and on. It’s a whole different attitude about how residential neighborhoods ought to be formed, maintained and so on.

LW: An interesting remark. I’ve not heard that one before. Being a resident in a new
house in one of those developments, it's interesting to hear you remark along those
lines. What controversies have you witnessed in Holland and how have they affected
the community, Zeeland also? They don't have to be recent.

MDP: One very recent controversy has been that whole business about where the Holland
library ought to be located and so on. I think that if Ed Prince were still alive, I
think we would still be having some controversy about that. He had some interesting
ideas about what ought to happen to a distributed library in a region. Zeeland builds
the Howard Miller Library downtown, and on too small of a lot, and now you are
going to expand the Holland library on too small of a lot. That is not where the
people are. The people are not across the street from Centennial Park. The same
thing is true in Zeeland. They are all going north. The old people go south in
Zeeland, the young people go north. It is very interesting. I think that is one
controversy. I think another controversy that's been boiling just below the surface
for 30 years is the fact that Holland/Zeeland ought to have had one major hospital,
somewhere between Holland and Zeeland, and should have been built thirty years
ago. Now you have two smaller hospitals, both hemmed in by residential areas. No
more room to grow. You get some problems that are partly ego problems where
people don't what to give in, don't want to merge up and form a bigger...Actually, I
think the school systems have done a better job of that. The establishment of West
Ottawa as an alternate to just trying to make Holland High bigger and bigger and
bigger--it was a good move. People did the right thing years ago.

LW: Brought services to the people.
MDP: Sure. I think the controversy over whether or not the downtown could survive the malls. That was a very interesting controversy. Here again, this community owes an awful lot to Ed Prince for having the vision and then putting the money behind his vision to give us a downtown that is really a model. And it is surviving. The people in the Holland downtown have done something that the people in the Zeeland downtown have not been able to do, and that is compete. I think we haven’t had enough controversy about some of the things I was talking about earlier. We should have had a lot more controversy about what has happened on the north side of Holland and Zeeland where the zoning has been totally inadequate. The establishment of that regional mall on the north side of Holland has not been a long term favor to us, the traffic it has produced and all the problems that come with that. That is not a favorable development for an area like this, in my view. It should have been further out. Why couldn’t Grand Haven have had that? The people who shop there are regional people, people come from Muskegon to shop there. It would have been a great favor to this area if the Holland Township had said, "No thanks." There should have been controversy there, but there wasn’t.

LW: Sounds like Holland Township has been the most challenged in this area of zoning and planning and so forth.

MDP: I just disagree strongly with the way the Holland Township Board has behaved in all that.

LW: What do you think the future of Zeeland’s downtown is? I’ve seen a number of shops close even recently.
MDP: I personally don't know enough about retailing, but it difficult for me to see how they have a future. That is too bad because Zeeland is a good community. It is well run as a favorable tax system, has a good crime record, has a very good school system. Gary Feenstra is an outstanding superintendent there. Zeeland just has a lot going for it. But you know, going back many years, those merchants never were able to agree to run themselves like one unit. They couldn't agree on hours, they wouldn't advertise together. Lots of reasons why they haven't competed.

LW: Tell me how the role of women has changed.

(End of tape one)

LW: We were talking about the role of women...

MDP: When I was growing up, it almost seemed as though women were either in their home or they were teaching school or they were nursing. That is kind of the memory that I have about it. I can remember that the first woman manager that we had at Herman Miller was a woman named Martha Bell. She lived in Grand Rapids and drove back and forth to Zeeland everyday. She surely goes back a long ways. I don't remember whether my dad hired her or if my brother Hugh hired her. I would think she started at Herman Miller 30 to 35 years ago when we had our first woman manager. Of course, now we have seen an absolute revolution and it has both its positives and its negatives. In my own family, I have four children and each is married, so I have eight children; each of the four women is a professional. One is a lawyer, one is a doctor, one is a nurse and one is a school teacher. As a matter of fact, all four of them work part-time at their professions. I think they are outstanding
people and make a great contribution to society. This pattern is repeated on and on and on. In each of their cases, they have a family that hangs together and they and their husbands have worked out ways to develop good families. On the negative side of all that, while many women have much more opportunity, which I think is very appropriate in society, this has put a strain on families. At the other end of this scale, you have single mothers trying to work, have a career and raise children. For those of us who have been in two-parent families and have been two-parent families, we realize how difficult that is. I think it is almost impossible to do a good job of being a single mother and have a career. I think it is even easier for odd reasons for single fathers to have a career and do better at it. The statistics tell us that the most difficult family is the single mother family with a career. So we have seen this revolution, but I think in the professions and in industry and in education and in religion and in government we have made strong strides in making it possible for women to reach their potential on a career path. There is such a thing as a glass ceiling, I am aware of that, but it is harder on ethnic minorities than it is on women in these various areas. I personally feel that, in the long run, we are going to be a better society for being able to capitalize on the potential of women than we were a society that I grew up in. But there are growing pains of that. We haven't solved all of problems. The military is a good example of it. They're kind of an irrational example that we have to deal with. I heard one guy say, "I'll believe in women in the military when I see a female defensive guard in the NFL." Well, that isn't quite the problem, but on the other hand, it describes the problem. So whether or not we
figure out what to do with women in combat, that is something that has to be figured out. But I don’t think that is the analogy of the role of women in society. One of the things that is difficult for us men is having to face up to the fact that there are very many things that women do better than we do. We are going to have to learn how to live with that. White men especially are going to have to learn how to work for women. That won’t be easy. I think we have a long ways to go, but we are becoming, in a good sense, in my judgement. I think we are doing better by women than we are by blacks or Hispanics; we are probably doing okay by Asians in this country.

LW: Do you see any hope for change in those areas where there is less opportunity?

MDP: Yes. I think there is hope for change because more and more children are being put into mixed society, and they are not growing up with the biases that we grew up with. When I was a kid, we even had a bias about Catholics. As a nation, we have gone through this time and again, especially along the east coast. We had a period in our history where the Irish hated the Italians and the Italians hated the Jews and the Jews hated the Poles—but we lived through all this. I think the hope for a new age in ethnic relationships lies with the younger children as they grow up without these biases. They will see this mixture, I like to call it God’s Mixture, as being a mixture that is legitimate and that they are going to be comfortable with.

LW: Do you think that there is a perceivable generation gap at all?

MDP: Yes, I think there is. I think that right now in America there are at least two generation gaps. There are generation gaps in the arts, there are generation gaps in
religion, music, films, in taste and manners. There are generation gaps in family practices. When you become a grandparent, these are interesting to observe. Our grandchildren's schedules are run by coaches, not by the parents, not by the church, not by the school—they are run by coaches. My wife recently talked to a couple who are grandparents who said that they have to go to the 8:30 service on Sunday morning because else they can never see their grandchildren because their grandchildren start playing soccer at 11:00. So they have to get to the soccer field by 11:00. You asked earlier, "What about Sabbath differences?" These are important generational gaps. I think another big societal change that has gone on is the growing influence of sports and entertainment over school and church. I don't know what is going to happen there. I suspect that many of us rue the day that television was invented, because children spend more time in front of the television than they do in school.

LW: The statistics bear that out.

MDP: In our whole value system, people love to talk about family values, but they don't really talk about them, they only use the phrase. Our whole system is being poisoned by the sports industry. Recently, Forbes or somebody published the income of the top ten sports figures incomes. Well, when you get Michael Jordan making 70 million dollars and a Evander Holyfield makes 50 million, you don't have to ask about our value system—it is very clearly stated. It's in the paper. That is our value system. You can't imagine how many chemistry teachers equals one shortstop. So if we really cared about our children and our society, we would have a different value
system. So these are serious matters.

LW: Is there someone, it could be your parents, a friend, a number of people, that you look to as being role models who played important roles in your life personally?

MDP: Absolutely. I had several people I would call my mentors. Oddly enough, I rank my Mother ahead of my Dad in that, as a mentor. Dr. Carl Frost, who worked as a consultant at Herman Miller for years on the Scanlon plan and human relations matters, was a very important mentor in my life. David Hubbard, who for thirty years was the president of Fuller Theological Seminary, outside of my family, was my best friend and also a very important mentor in my life. Lewis Smedes who has taught ethics at Fuller Seminary for years, a fine Christian Reformed guy, has been one of my mentors. Peter Drucker has been a mentor of mine. I have been very fortunate in having people who served as models and mentors. No doubt, one of the greatest gifts you could have in life, is to have people who do that for you.

LW: I am beginning to run out of questions. We have covered a lot of ground. I have got just a couple of things. They are more like potpourri. Your thoughts on Tulip Time as you've observed it all these years?

MDP: I can remember as a child it was a really wonderful event. Coming from Zeeland, we never marched in the parade, but we always came to the Tulip Time parades. I see now that it is a big event in the lives of my grandchildren who are here. I think one of the funniest, but also the most profound things about Tulip Time is to see how many of the kids in Dutch costumes are of different ethnic background–especially all of these Hispanic kids. One of my grandsons is Hispanic. One of our daughters and
her husband adopted a little boy who was a Guatemalan Indian. One of my favorite pictures of him is in his Dutch costume. But you see, that is both funny and profound. It is really quite wonderful that these families all come here and join right in that celebration. One of the things I learned early on as a business manager was that if you want to clean up a factory, from a housekeeping point of view, you simply declare a certain afternoon and evening as family visitation open house. You are going to invite all the families to come and see where daddy works. Well, the factory gets cleaned up over night! Having a civic event like that does that same thing for a city like Holland. It gives us all something to shoot for. I think that the fact that we attract so many visitors is positive. As far as I know, Tulip Time leaves Holland’s reputation enlarged every year. I think it is wonderful. The city gets tulips in--both actually and symbolically it is a very positive thing for Holland.

LW: We talked a little bit about the furniture industry and so on in Holland. Tell me how you feel the role of industry, more broadly speaking in Holland and Zeeland, has changed in the course of your experience.

MDP: I think in the Holland/Zeeland area over the last forty years, the industrial sector has become stronger and stronger and better and better. I think we are very fortunate in Holland to have so many good corporations who are actually so civic minded. I think it is kind of astonishing how much money local industry gives to local needs. I think we are very fortunate there. As far as I know, all of the major companies in the Holland/Zeeland area are civic minded companies. If you are ever involved with fund-raising, as I suppose you are--all of us do get there from time to time--but these
businesses are great contributors to what goes on. As I said earlier, driving around the area, you see a much higher quality of business, commercial and industrial establishments than you generally do around this country. I think we are very fortunate in that way.

LW: The arts and other cultural things in Holland...thoughts on that? Arts Council, Museum...

MDP: I think the Holland Museum and the Arts Council are both very good things to be doing. I think for the size community we have, we are fortunate to have such good facilities. The group who moved in on the old post office building and got it reestablished, that was a good move for the community. Considering the size of Holland as a city, not the region now, but as a city, that was a really big move. The only problem there is that it's not on a spot where it can grow. But maybe that is okay. Maybe it is big enough for what we will need for a long time. The Arts Council...again, you have people for who that is a passion and they get behind it; the Prince family's support of that is outstanding. The educational programs that they provide, I am all for that. I think that is very good stuff to have in Holland. There is a sense in which in a small way it is a bit of a balance against all the emphasis on sports. I have another thought about sports, and I proposed this once at a meeting in Lansing where members of the Michigan Education Association were there. That is a powerful union, as you know. We were talking about how to improve education in the state of Michigan. I said, "I think we need to change some priorities. We need to spend some of our monies in different ways. For instance," I said, "I think that
sports in the public schools, the only sports the public schools ought to provide are sports that a person can still play after they are 50 years of age." Boy, did they gang up on me. They said "What about football?" I said, "Fine. If you want to be a minor league for the NFL, let the NFL pay for it. That is what happens in baseball. The major league teams all have minor league teams." The high schools are not obliged to field baseball teams all over the country. They can do it or not do it. There are whole series of excellent sports that you can do all your life: swimming, tennis, golf, bicycling--there are a lot of them. Why should public schools pay for sports that you can't play when you are mature? I still feel that way.

LW: I'm sure that they ganged up on you! I recently heard a remark on NPR about the new athletic director at the University of Michigan. I gather that he is insisting that the three remaining non-profitable sports have to file a business plan and be profitable to continue. (laughter)

MDP: That is a typical attitude. File a business plan. But they are not a business.

LW: That was my reaction to that remark, even though I am not a particularly athletic oriented person.

MDP: I am less and less.

LW: Any other remarks that come to mind or thoughts that you would like to relate that maybe we haven't covered or touched on?

MDP: I think in this area, this West Michigan region, we are fortunate that we can live in a productive area which is human scaled. I think that cities and regional areas that become large enough and busy enough that they lose their human scale, begin to take
on very difficult problems to manage. I think that is a very positive part about who we all are, and I think it ought to be a part of who we intend to be. I also think that the area needs more leadership that speaks up on what the agenda ought to be for an area like this. I think we need to have a regional plan, we need to find a way eventually to get rid of these townships and city boundaries and have a region which provides the services. One fire department, one police department, one hospital system, one library system, one set of zoning laws, one body dealing with transportation. We have moved beyond where these township and city boundaries are legitimate. They are no longer legitimate. Maybe Macatawa Area Coordinating Council is the embryo for what has to come about. If we had, for instance, a newspaper editor who would come back to this over and over and over and set our agenda. Years ago, that's what newspaper publishers did, they set the agenda for a community or a nation—some did it for the nation. It is very hard to do that without a public voice. There are people who have a public voice who are not using it in that way. Your boss, John Jacobson doesn't do that. His idea of leadership is to let Tom Renner in the PR office answer every complaint and make every statement. I think that Mayor McGeehan speaks out often, but he is not focused on what the priorities ought to be. He speaks out on anything. Sometimes on everything. But a spokesman who is going to set the agenda, ought to have an agenda.

LW: Selective items...

MDP: That's right. Very selective strategic agenda for using the bully pulpit. We don't have any local ministers who speak out. Our educators feel more on the defensive
than I think they ought to be. I think Muncatchy and Bishop ought to be setting the agenda. So it would be interesting to see if that kind of leadership develops anywhere along the way. Somebody has to start saying, "You know, you township people, think about it. You had better give up you fiefdom. Let's establish a new concept here."

LW: Have you ever considered, in your many years and after you retired, of going into politics?

MDP: No, because I have always been so busy with other things I chose to do. One of the things I do...I have ten people, each of whom considers me to be one of their mentors. I see them quite frequently or talk to them on the phone. They are a very diverse group, geographically and professionally. And it keeps me very much alive to be working with them. I have given up public speaking because I don't want to deal with the airplanes and the inflexibility of making dates to give speeches and so on. So the mentoring is much better for me at this stage in my life. I am now 73. I want to continue to write. I enjoy writing a lot, and whether it gets published or not, I really don't care. Well, I do care a bit, but I want to write whether it is published or not. Because it is kind of in my bones. I want to write. I would really like to be a better grandfather than I was a father, if I can. So those are my areas of interest now. I want to continue to serve in areas like Fuller Theological Seminary. I am involved a bit with Words of Hope. I am involved with Young Life and things like that. So I have a very active retirement. I have got a great place to do it here. I think when I was in college, I must have made a subconscious resolution that
someday I was going to work in my own library because I always liked libraries so much. So it is a good stage in life for me, but it isn't in my nature to be in politics.

LW: What do you think led to Gordon Van Wylen's loss when he ran for mayor? This was some years ago now, but what do you think the factors were?

MDP: I think in a community like this, it would always be difficult to elect a genuine leader to a job like that. Ed Prince could also not have been elected mayor. People by and large were ready to take his money and listen to his ideas, but I think people are often afraid of a genuine leader. I think that is one of the things we live with in a democracy.

LW: Afraid someone is going to speak out and blaze the way.

MDP: Yes. On a national scale, I'll bet George Marshall could never have been elected president, but as Harry Truman said one time, George Marshall was one of the most capable person he had ever met in his life. But he probably couldn't be elected president. I think that is one of the facts of a democracy that we have to live with.

LW: Thank you for taking time to speak with me today. This was very enjoyable.