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DeVelder, Marion Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Marion De Velder

Conducted March 14, 1997
by Beth Marcus

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Marion and Edith de Velder
Interviewer: Beth Marcus
March 13, 1997

BM: This is Beth Marcus and I am talking with Mert and Edith de Velder. Now, Mert, may I have the date of your birth?

MDV: 1912, January 28. Born in Iowa, educated at Central College, Iowa, Class of '34. You want that?

BM: Yes, sure.

MDV: New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 1937. I did graduate work at the University of Chicago for several summers but never got a degree. But I went for three summers. Hold graduate degrees of Bachelor of Divinity, Master degree from New Brunswick Seminary. Honorary degrees - Doctor of Divinity from Central College in Iowa 1950, and Hope College here in 1977.

BM: Now a little bit about your family.

MDV: Our family came to Pella, Iowa, with Scholte, and my family roots are de Velder and Rietveld, Ver Hoef and Klein. In fact, I'm a shirt-tail relative of Ruth (Klein) Green and that group, and Mary Klein who married Norman Kansfield. That's the Klein branch. Our ancestors came across to New Orleans up the Mississippi to St. Louis and then over to Pella where they found the kind of land they wanted. Scholte, of course, was somewhat different from Van Raalte. He was more of a scholarly type. Van Raalte was a practical businessman type as well as a minister. Scholte had a French wife and she was quite a problem in the village. (laughs)

EDV: She played cards... (laughs)

MDV: She got her dresses from France and she didn't attend church very often. It got to be quite a problem. The de Velder family went from Pella a little later, when they wanted to homestead more land, and they went to Orange City, Iowa. My wife, Edith, is Edith Wandscheer and they lived in Sioux Center, Iowa...

EDV: Also homesteaded.

MDV: We met at Central College in 1932 and that started our love affair. We've been married sixty-one years now.

BM: How wonderful!

MDV: As you can see I am 85 by the date, 1912; Edith is 82. Can't believe it!

BM: And children?

MDV: We have three children. Mark is the oldest boy and then Mary is the next one and then Anne.

BM: You went to Central and then you went to New Brunswick Seminary. Were you married while you were at New Brunswick?

MDV: Yes, the last two years. Unheard of...

BM: In those days.

EDV: Frowned on!

MDV: But I began serving at the Griggstown Church near Princeton, and brother Wally had served there after he came back from China. Wally is a graduate of Hope College as you know, in the Class of '29.

EDV: The first year in seminary you were alone.

MDV: I was alone because she was still out West. We got married in 1935. I was student pastor at Griggstown Reformed Church near Princeton for two years. Followed Wally there, who had been there two years and they liked him so much that they really engaged me without even seeing me. They said if he's the younger brother of Walter de Velder, we'll take him. Now that gave us a tremendous field experience because we handled that church of thirty-three families for two years.

EDV: It educated both of us.

MDV: Because Edith did the choir work and everything. Junior and youth choir. So we had a wonderful time.

BM: Let's go on with... basically your ministerial career and others. Let's get that down.

MDV: Well, all right. After the student pastorate of two years at Griggstown, we went to North and South Hampton Reformed Church in Churchville, Pennsylvania - one of the best rural churches in the East, as you probably remember.

BM: Still is.

MDV: They had two satellites that we served, Feasterville and Johnsville, but we were there only two years from 1937-39 when Hope Church here in Holland got in touch with me. I had no intention of doing anything, but my professor at the seminary, and Ray Drukker were key persons in that. Ray Drukker really leaned on me. I said, "I'm not going there even to preach. I don't want to go any other place. I'm here!" A beautiful setting there you know. Eighteen hundred dollars and a parsonage. Then because of Ray Drukker and Dr. Theodore Bayles' urging they said, "You have to go over and at least preach there." Hope Church had the

ministry of Thomas Davidson for twelve years and he was retired at the age of seventy-two. Well, they really asked him to retire because he was losing his memory. Then the church was vacant two years and they couldn't settle on anybody. "Jock" Riemersma and Leenhouts and all those people were... Mrs. Kollen were all in the church. But I came here to preach and I came here alone which was not a very smart thing. Edith should have come with me, but Mark was there. He was a little kid.

EDV: It was 1939.

BM: You couldn't just pick up and go...

MDV: We came to Holland and this church had a lot of the leaders of the city in here but they were very down... demoralized. Hinkamp was the key there, he was the supervisor. Paul was a very definite person and he really wanted me to come. He said, "If you follow the Reformed Church order properly, then I'll support you all the days of my life." He did! So then we came here.

EDV: He was very good to me, too.

MDV: Then, of course, the church had two groups. Vernon Ten Cate was the leader of the young group and they wanted to close the evening service and the older people said we'd lose face if we did. I made a compromise suggestion that we continue for a whole year with the evening service as is. That pleased the older people and the younger people didn't like that. Then I said we'll appoint a committee - now they call it a "task force" - and we studied it and we came up with the School of Christian Living which was a unique evening program and lasted twenty years with a

great effect. We had a tremendous program in the evenings.

BM: Did you divide up into groups and so forth?

MDV: Yes, it wasn't a duplicate service at all. It was a family oriented, family-based...

We didn't know what we were doing but...

EDV: Junior high, Senior high, college group and adult group.

MDV: We had adult sponsors for all those groups and we had the most unusual people.

We had Paul MacLean and Bruce Raymond and those fellows working like crazy in there. You never would have got them. The college students at that time had nothing at the college so they came. Well, then I made, I don't know, this is a kind of personal thing, but I'd been there about twelve years and then First Church Albany was open and Zimmerman had gone there. He had been the pastoral minister and when Clee died, who was a very colorful man, they upped Zimmerman into the senior pastorate. But they called me and they said in two years when Zimmerman retires, then you'll take over the church. We didn't have it in writing but the trustees told us that verbally. So we went over there and we didn't like it over there. They had two ruling bodies in that church, trustees and consistory. So we came... then I decided that wasn't for me and I resigned.

BM: After how long?

MDV: About a year and a half. And that wasn't our style, but we did. Then when Hope Church found that out they started working... "Jock" Riemersma and those people and got us on the phone. To make a long story short, they called us and I set all kinds of hurdles, and said that's not a good idea! But I said they'd have to have at

least 85% ballot vote or I wouldn't consider it, come back at the same salary and this stuff. They had 94% ballot vote. They had five hundred some people at the congregational meeting and 465 in favor voted by ballot. We came back here! Our children were happy and we lasted eight more years.

BM: Now what year was that when you came back?

MDV: In 1951.

EDV: '52. We left in '51; came back in '52.

MDV: So then we went on until '59, eight more years. Soon we got on the radio, WHTC, and so forth. At the end of that time, I didn't know whether I could stay forever at Hope Church. There were a couple of people... Ray Herrick wanted me to do that! Herrick came to our church in the summers, the man that gave the library. But then Central Reformed Church called me, and I went there in 1959 in September.

Following Dykstra, I intended to retire there. Really! I was 48, and Dykstra had been there thirty-five years. So it was a great church at that time. Happily at work there, building staff and everything. Then the Reformed Church in America needed a stated clerk, Jim Hoffman retired after nineteen years. Just between us, there were two of us in the running, Howard Hageman and myself. Then one day, unbeknown to me, Ek Buys and Max De Pree arrived in my office in Grand Rapids and they said, "We're the western part of the search committee," (these were pretty formidable fellows) "and we want you to consider the position of stated clerk.

We're going to have an office, and a full time assistants. We're going to have a General Synod executive committee of twenty people if we can work it out." You

know that whole problem. They had no head on the Reformed Church at that time. I had no intention of leaving Central Church, but those two fellows were very persuasive. I remember Ek Buys finally said (when I kept protesting) they wanted me to shut up! And, "we'll talk for a while." Then Ek ended up by saying, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?" I said, "That's why I'm here!" He said, "It's my impression that you're not going to listen to the Holy Spirit. There's a door open. You don't want to walk through the door and even look! Is that right?" Well, I said, "I'll think it over," but I don't do anything without Edith, so we did. Then "we stood for election" as they say, at the General Synod. They said it was unanimous. but that was bologna.

EDV: Mert has never believed that unanimous stuff.

MDV: Then in the meantime, I had been called by the Board of North American Missions to join you and...

BM: Russ. That's right!

MDV: I turned that down because they never conferred with me. The Board took that action without ever contacting me. I thought this was crazy. Warnshuis was looking for a house for me. He said, "You can't turn that down!" I said, "I don't feel that I want to do that." Well, that was in '57, and in '59 I was elected President of Synod.

BM: While you were at Central, right?

MDV: I was Vice President and President of General Synod in '58 and '59 in the meantime.

EDV: The last two years we were at Hope Church, he was the Vice President and President of Synod.

BM: Oh. It was while you were at Hope Church that you were President.

MDV: That's right. I also was director of the United Advance for two years, 1946-48.

BM: Yes, I remember that. What did you try to raise?

MDV: Two and one half million. We didn't quite make it. We made about 87%. Time ran out on us and there were other needs, terrific needs after the war. But that was a lot of money in those days. We did pretty well. Then when I got to New York in 1961, I stayed there until 1977, and we had the reorganization of the church and everything happened you know...

BM: Boy, I'll say!

MDV: We don't have to talk about that.

BM: I'll attest to that!

MDV: I was there until 1977 (as General Secretary), and to our utter surprise, this year, we've been retired from New York for twenty years!

BM: All ready?

MDV: All ready!

EDV: It will be twenty.

MDV: Thirteen of those years I worked as a calling pastor for Hope Church and then we decided we would stay forever here. We could have retired other places but we knew so many people.

EDV: May I interject one sentence to add? Because he won't say this, but in that calling

we're not talking about a few calls. We're talking about sixty to ninety calls a month. This is no part time task when he does it.

MDV: We had over three hundred members over the age of sixty, and the way the two ministers were structured then in their positions, they didn't expect to do a lot of calling. So I ran from Douglas to Grand Rapids to the nursing homes, nine of them. We had people in nine of them in all, and then the hospitals, and then the shut-ins here were forty or fifty - and so I enjoyed that. One on one. I enjoyed that more than being an executive. You know, when you go from pastor to executive, then you have to deal with conflicts and everything. I enjoyed this work, one on one. And when I retired here in '94, I lost my support group. I really was miserable for a little while because I had a successor who took over. I loved those old people. I could get on the phone with them but I couldn't call on them.

BM: You know, I think that's a lost art among ministers today! Calling.

MDV: Those older people need continuity. Continuity. If you have a different person all the time, that doesn't work. So that's the ministry I had. I think the volunteer work we've done in the last twenty years, both of us, is pretty important too.

BM: That's one of the questions here. What are some of the organizations you have been involved in? How did you get involved in them? What did the group do? Now, mostly they're talking about Holland. Over the years, what changes have you seen take place?

MDV: Volunteer work - that's been considerable. I started out with the Salvation Army Board. They asked me to serve. I had served in Grand Rapids on that Board. But

I served eight years on that Board and that was very good work and they do a great job. Most of the time we were struggling with - could they have their own building and where. I got very tired of it because they never seemed to make much headway on that. So finally after eight years I retired. I was on two or three other things...eight years, that was enough. They wanted me to stay longer but I said no. The next thing I did was six years on the Region 14 Council on the Aging. That's based in Muskegon. It's a federally supported program. It's Muskegon, Oceana and Ottawa Counties. There are about 25 on the Board. They seek board members who are 55 years or older and I qualified at that, but they'd rather have you serve only two terms, six years, because they want more representative people than have one person. It was in Muskegon and we had to go to a monthly meeting there, but I got to be chairman of the Personnel Committee, they had personnel problems. I was running to Muskegon a lot. After six years I was glad that my time was up.

Then I spent six years on the West Ottawa Schools Educational Foundation. I was the senior member on that. They wanted somebody who represented retired people because of the tax problems. So, I enjoyed that. Everybody on that was younger, lawyers and all these people...

BM: Weren't you also supposed to be the encourager for advanced degrees for teachers? Working on them? Bettering themselves? Improving their faculty?

MDV: The Educational Foundation raised about \$20,000 a year for enrichment programs since the regular educational sources of money weren't there. They had special projects for teachers, they had to make an application, we granted them things to

enrich the teachers and so forth. I liked that. As I say, there were some very unusual people on there...

BM: This was when you came back then?

MDV: Well, I was here... I served on some of them simultaneously.

BM: In the West Ottawa School District.

EDV: In Waukazoo.

MDV: They asked me to serve on the Holland Board of Education here but I was a resident of Park Township so I couldn't do that. The airport committee of Holland, I was on that for two years. Van Wylen headed that up and they extended the airport. The Attending Clergy Association that Engelhard started for the five years he was here. He really brought all the ministers together around pastoral services at the hospital and then in churches. Now we organized that, and he did, mostly. Of course, he went to Dallas later. He got a big job there. But that was a great adventure. Then I was chairman of a committee of ten people to raise \$200,000 for the chapel and the pastoral care center with all of its electronic equipment, like computers, in the hospital. Harvey Buter and Kay Donnelly and all these people were on that. That was a thing I liked to do and we did it. We got money from industries, churches and from individuals. I don't know if you've seen the chapel and the pastoral care center is wonderful. They never had a place where they could coordinate all the information. So that's what I did. In the meantime, I served on a number of things for the denomination, but we'll just talk about Holland here. I was on the Editorial Council of the Church Herald for six years and enjoyed that a lot. But the main

thing that I've done, starting in June of '81, I began writing for the Sentinel once a week. I've done that now - this is my seventeenth year. I haven't missed one week. I've written over 820 columns. A few of them are some good. (laughs)

BM: I enjoy them!

MDV: The next project we're going to have is a book. I've got a couple of people in mind who can select and edit - there's not a lot of editing to do but somebody objectively... Edith is my main editor so she's also prejudiced. But if there are fifty-two columns - we want to know - are there five of those that ought to go into a book? A collection of them. I hope that if my strength endures it we will finish that project because a lot of people are saying, "Why don't you do that?" Now J. Eppinga has done that with two books. He was a Christian Reformed minister who wrote in the Banner. So that has kept me alive really, intellectually. I do a lot of reading. I'm writing about how to enjoy life, how to cope with stress, how to enjoy your work, how to relate to people... all of that stuff in the most unusual way I can. In the old days, fifteen years ago, nobody was talking values much. We struggled along. Now the whole focus is on values. You sort of move into that and people say, "What is the meaning of life." In writing I try not to preach, not to moralize, if the point isn't made it's too bad. I'm not going to get into politics and I don't get into controversial things very much because I can't afford to lose a reader. (laughs) That's no fun. I don't want to preach... I don't want to give testimonials all the time. Just between us, I've never been able to live up to what I write, have you? I've never been able to live up to what I preach! My kids saw that. One time when

I was hard on my daughter for championing some underdogs, she said (she was only about 14), "Dad, you're not practicing what your preach. Why don't you let me do that?" What do you say to that? So that has kept me going. On Fridays I write and that's one of my best days because I start thinking about... Recently they've said to me, "Where do you get your ideas?" Well, as a preacher you've got to illustrate your stuff and a life time of that is stored up. I've got a couple of drawers full of ideas I haven't even worked on. You know, the other day I heard Marian Anderson's 100th anniversary of her birth, the great singer. I want to do a column on her because she was one of the greatest women that ever lived in the field of music. She was such a self-effacing person. She never would step over the line at all. But that will take me a little while. That isn't jelled yet.

BM: The DAR was wondering whether they would let her sing!

MDV: She sang at the Lincoln Memorial. There were 90,000 people who came out to hear her when the DAR wouldn't have her. Mrs. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, was the one that sparked that. Well, I get very excited about writing. I don't know if I'm doing any better than I used to, but putting together 600 words every week is a discipline that I need. The Sentinel has changed hands now but they're quite enthusiastic. I'm going to do that as long as I can read and think straight.

But now, Edith and I believe in volunteering. For example, Evergreen Commons couldn't even exist without volunteers. We've got to have even more now with government programs being withdrawn.

BM: This sort of leads into some of these questions here about what are some of the

qualities that seem to stand out concerning the City of Holland? Then, are there some negative aspects of the city or drawbacks of living in Holland that you've observed or felt along the way?

MDV: When we needed to retire, we thought Florida - but too much wind, too much heat, all older people. I've got to be careful what I say here, but we did not want to go to Florida. Edith said, "I don't like Florida." Arthritis problem. Thought of Arizona, didn't know anybody there, dryer. Thought of Southern California, we have some relatives there, Edith particularly has a lot of relatives there. But we didn't feel that lifestyle was right for us. We didn't want to live in California because they had earthquakes, they had mud slides, they had fires, they had everything like that. So when we came to Holland it was...

EDV: I like four seasons...

MDV: That's the positive thing. The second thing is that we had a host of friends, a friends network in Holland that was unmatched. For example, one little experience. We came here when the Peale Science Building was dedicated and I was involved in it. I had to give the invocation at the luncheon that they had right after the open house and the dedication, the cutting of the ribbon. Well, we're in the chapel and Edith and I are trying to get from the chapel to the Peale Center to at least be present to see that happen. We never got in the building! People were on College Avenue there...

EDV: We were visiting...

MDV: On College Avenue there and talk and talk and talk.

EDV: We turned right around in the middle of the street to go back in.

MDV: ...and all of a sudden I look at my watch and said, "I've got to pray over at Kollen," and we actually started running (we could run in those days) across that Pine Grove to get over there so they would know we were there. In the middle of it we stopped and looked at each other and we said, "You know we have to retire here because this is where our friends are."

EDV: That was our most priceless treasure of all.

MDV: We never thought about it again. We said we're going to retire here when we get ready to retire. Now in Holland, let's talk about the climate. May to November, shall we say, it is one of the most beautiful places you could wish for. The lake, the climate, so forth. In the winter, it's drab and dark and it's not very pleasant. But we grew up in a part of the country where we had very, very heavy winters. We've complained about the winter this year. But when it comes to location, relationships are far more important than climate. We find out that we can endure the climate because we don't want to give up our relationships in Holland. We've had forty years here of excellent, excellent friendship with people and contacts. It's good to be recognized and to be known, and people call you by your first name. Isn't that wonderful?

Holland has a lot to offer, the lake, and that stuff and church life is great. Of course, coming back to a church where we had served twenty years, but then there was an eighteen year interval so we didn't threaten anybody. We weren't like a successor. We have an older group in that church that is very valuable to us. I've

been in the Rotary Club for over fifty years and this Rotary Club is wonderful. I've been chaplain about twelve years now. That means we have a family sharing of all of our problems, we are one of the few Rotary Clubs that does that. Every week I give a report of people who are ill or need help or need prayers. We've got a lot of those.

EDV: Well, you have to add, too, that we've spent two winters in Florida, we've spent two winters in California, we've gone on six cruises since we've been retired, five of them Mert was chaplain on the Rotterdam.

MDV: She was craft director...

EDV: I was craft director so we both earned our way...

MDV: It was the only way you can afford it if you do can that. But then the HASP group at Hope College, and you know that, that's the most exciting thing that we've ever been into.

BM: Its wonderful. It something though that can keep you so terribly busy if you signed up for everything they're offering.

MDV: Right now we can't do that. John Hollenbach sparked HASP. There were five of us who were called as a steering committee and when we had a charter membership of twenty-five we organized. You were in it. But we had a wonderful group, a core group there. Now we've got over 300 members and it's getting pretty big. But it is the most wonderful group and we wouldn't miss that for the world. Also those excursions. Now we can't do them any more. We went to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

BM: They continue to do it. Last week, I went to the opera in Kalamazoo.

MDV: We signed up for both of those and couldn't make it.

BM: I know. I saw your name on the list and I wondered why you couldn't do it.

MDV: Well, the first was a blizzard and the second time our knees hurt. Well, anyway, the church life and the College and the Seminary and the cultural life that we have here is very rich, so we've got just about everything we want here.

EDV: Well, we took advantage of the nearness of Chicago, too, all down the years that we've lived here. That isn't very far. The cultural things that you want to see, you can do that without spending a fortune.

BM: There are some questions here about whether you are a member of a church and that's very obvious. You've been talking about that. How has the church changed in the past fifty years?

MDV: Our church, if you want to localize it at Hope Church, has changed very, very much. I would say that it's almost 80% the younger, baby boomer, rebellious group when they were younger, who have come back to the church now and we're just swamped with those people.

There are some disadvantages to that. Most of them are not very literate in the Bible. Maybe if I were to start over again I'd start some good old-fashioned catechism or core Christian work on the Bible. They are willing, but a lot of them by their own admission are coming to the church now because when they have their families, they don't know how to raise those kids. They need help. They think that the church is a resource and it certainly is. I don't know if the church is doing enough in that area to help the parents be better parents. The older people are sort

of spectators now. They feel a little left out and we have to try to reassure them that they still at least have some wisdom.

EDV: You have to say that during all the years that we were here, we had a weekday Bible School, which was the equivalent of the kind of catechism we had.

BM: There are so few that do it these days.

MDV: And we had a weekly prayer service every Thursday night.

BM: And we did, too, at Third, and that doesn't happen. I am so pleased with the young people in our church that we've been having some Koninia groups at night - that's intergenerational - and I sat next to a young man last Sunday night who just loves to study the Bible. In fact, when questions were asked he was right there with the answers.

MDV: We have to do more...these people need to be helped in understanding what the core of the Christian faith is. I don't know that the church is doing a great job there. They're trying. The church has changed too...we don't have to talk about the Guild, but the younger women do not have the energy or the time or the interest.

EDV: Many of them work. That wasn't true in my younger days.

MDV: But I've often said that the women's work in the church, as the Guild was set up with the circles, they provided more good pastoral service than any movement in the church! If a woman stubbed her finger or something they'd practically join together...

BM: And basically the Bible study.

EDV: Our Bible study is wonderful. Absolutely every chapter in that book is used every

year. Without exception, all the books have been wonderful in my opinion.

MDV: You did your level best to move that along. Edith was very involved in the New Jersey Synod and felt that... For example, the Women's Literary Club and the Guilds are all sort of waning now because they can't get new interest of those younger people. But the younger people have different interests. I'm not discouraged about the church, I'm just saying that there are enough people there now that perhaps the church ought to think about how they could equip these people, or help enlist them, to do a better job.

BM: Has there ever been any controversy in Holland that you know of? Any major controversy?

MDV: In this I'll describe the minor controversies...about the lake and the civic center. Those are big propositions and a lot of older people are against those things. Even getting water from Lake Michigan, if we have time?

BM: Why don't you go into those things because that brings us up to date in terms in terms of...What about the area center? Talk about a controversy!

MDV: It is interesting that when we moved East for our work that all three of our children followed us for education or for career, and they spent quite a bit of time in the East. But all of them have returned to Holland because...

EDV: And with no suggestion from us that they do so....

MDV: They couldn't get out of Holland fast enough. For the excitement and everything. When they have all the experiences of New York and the East, then they want to come back to where life is better than they ever had it before. That is interesting.

EDV: Even Annie who has her degree from Columbia in theater. She came back to Holland. Isn't that something?

BM: She found a way to use that here?

MDV: Well, minimumly because the trouble is that...

EDV: She's costume designer for the Cleveland Ballet right now. She's there right now. John and Catherine have gone to see her for the weekend. She was gone three weeks. She's had one week and there will be two more weeks...

MDV: The field of the dance and everything is starting here. You have to go to New York to...

EDV: He's a dancer.

MDV: So they miss that a lot...

EDV: He's good! Better than anything you've seen on any stage in Holland.

MDV: In Dance 23 they had the ballet where the women all danced on their toes. John, Anne's husband, he also has done it in Western Michigan University on weekends. But he's working in a frame shop on the north side to keep himself alive. But Anne has gone now for the third time to Cleveland where she's costumed the Cleveland Ballet for the Nutcracker. Now she's doing a number of other things there, well, frankly because they pay about three times as much as Hope College does for equivalent work.

EDV: And the weekend that she started working on that...the present connection, twenty minutes after she had the call from Cleveland she had another call...Just to give you some idea - Baryshnikov called her and asked her if she would costume his group.

MDV: However, she said that was probably a one shot deal in Cleveland...they were even somewhat thinking about the fact that they may have to move to Cleveland in order to get the full benefit of their talents. John wants to do more in the field of teaching and so forth. He's working with the Holland Arts too, the Center for the younger people. But he's also a licensed Swedish masseuse but he hasn't gone into that at all. Three years he worked on that in New York and now he gets over here he's involved in all these other things and he hasn't even pursued that. We've said why don't you pursue it? People our age need massage now, don't they? (Laughs)

BM: How has Hope College changed over the years? It got larger, of course.

MDV: It was down to 400 one time during the war, and Hope College has become one of the best recognized colleges, liberal arts colleges, in the whole system.

BM: You going to listen to the basketball game tonight?

MDV: Oh yes. On the radio and hoping that those darn Cornhuskers aren't too good for us. They've got a good big record although not as good as Hope...

BM: And they're on their home turf which will make a difference, that's for sure.

MDV: But maybe the boys will come through, I don't know. We miss a center like we had, but when they had that they couldn't win it either. That was a fluke over there, I guess. They got players from Fairleigh-Dickenson transferred to their college. These guys were in Division II.

If you should ask about major memories that were interesting in Holland in that 40 years, I'd start with the Holland Civic Center. In 1940, the site on which the Holland Civic Center was built was a large city block. It was between Eighth

and Ninth Street bordered by Pine Avenue on the east and Maple Avenue on the west. It was a vacant lot. It was the former location of a tannery. The concrete foundations were still visible above the ground. They were jutting up. It was covered with weeds. But our children loved to play there because they could imagine castles and everything else and it was a dangerous place because they could hurt themselves on that open concrete. Now the background of the purchase. This is an interesting thing because it tells something about Holland. Holland is usually very late in doing things, but when they do it, they do it superbly, finally. And they always worried about the finances. They don't want to borrow money. My memory is that the background of the purchase...the sparkplug for the purchase was one Casey Kalkman. Casey Kalkman was a councilman. How he got elected, I don't know, because he was not an educated person. He was a self-made man. He was short, quite chubby, friendly, talkative, and he loved beer and he drank a lot of it. And when he drank beer he talked a great deal and he was quite a persuasive fellow in a Yankee-Dutch way. He was on the council and for about a year before the purchase of the lot by Holland City, Casey kept urging the purchase of that lot. It is said that at every council meeting under old business and new business he would demand that they buy the lot for future city use. For a needed large auditorium, he said. The largest place in Holland was Hope College Dimnent Memorial Chapel which was dedicated in 1929, seated about a thousand or twelve hundred people at the most, and was not suitable for some functions. It was reported that Casey Kalkman's insistence was so determined that the city council bought the former

tannery lot as it was called for ten thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight dollars in 1941. From 1941, it took the City of Holland, conservative and thorough and generally opposed to borrowing money, until 1954 to build the Holland City Center. The voters finally approved a \$500,000 bond issue for the building. The total cost turned out to be \$616,000. The original plan called for a swimming pool, but this was eliminated to cut down to an acceptable cost. The Civic Center was dedicated on November 16, 1954. The opening hymn was, "Faith of Our Fathers" (that would have to be changed now, of course) with a formal acceptance speech by Mayor Harry Harrington. It took Holland 13 years to plan for and build a public center for "Recreation, wholesome entertainment, cultural rewards and social activity for young and old." That was the charter. According to the introductory brochure, basketball games at last had a real home, seating for over 2,000 fans. For its time, the Civic Center was a grand facility and has served the city well for 43 years. Now it looks quite dated and is too small for Holland's needs. The present proposal for a greater Holland area center, to cost around \$50,000,000, is a challenge the Holland area must decide on in the next year or two. And that's going to be quite an argument, mostly about location, not because of the need or even the cost, I don't think. But we're going to have some very divisive times unless they can resolve this. That shows you that Holland is a conservative outfit. When it does something, it does it right. In the old days that Civic Center looked so big. Now it looks so small.

Now the Holland Public Library - the ground-breaking was in 1959, of the Herrick Public Library... May 7, 1960, was the dedication thirty-seven years ago.

They had a program in the afternoon at the library, site of the dedication, and seven o'clock in the Civic Center. And as I said, those were glorious meetings! The dedication at 2:30 had greetings from Mrs. Henry Steffens, President of the Holland Library Board, I gave remarks about the background of the library as former pastor of Hope Reformed Church (I was in Grand Rapids then), the presentation of the key to the library was by Mr. Ray W. Herrick, the great Tecumseh multi-millionaire, acceptance of the key by the Hon. Robert Visscher, Mayor of the city, and remarks by Mrs. Hazel Hayes, city library director, who really sparked the whole thing because she got next to Herrick to see whether he was willing to give that much money. As I remember it was around \$300,000 or \$350,000. The dedication address was by His Excellency Dr. J. H. Van Rooyen, Netherlands Ambassador to the United States. And the cutting of the ribbon was by Mrs. Ray Herrick, and she was a lovely woman. The evening was a public dinner in the Civic Center at 7 p.m. I don't know how many hundreds or people were there. The Master of Ceremonies was Dr. Irwin J. Lubbers. The invocation and the benediction were given by yours truly, Marion de Velder. The dinner was held and then there was music, and this is interesting, by the Holland Christian High Acappella Choir, Marvin Bass, Director. They sang "As Torrents In Summer" and "The Lord's Prayer." There were greetings by the mayor, response to the introduction by Ray Herrick and an address again by...

[Tape ends]

BM: Yeah, yeah, hasn't that grown!

EDV: When you've got Haworth and Donnelly...

MDV: Maybe we'd better stick with Herrick here...

BM: Yes. Let's finish with Herrick.

MDV: Well, our personal involvement with Ray Herrick happened because he came from Tecumseh over here to a beautiful home he had at Macatawa Park on the Lake. And he came to Hope Church. He and his wife were there for every summer from the beginning to the end.

EDV: They were every Sunday people...

MDV: I conducted vesper services not only at Castle Park on Sunday evenings but also at Macatawa Park. So they came, he and Hazel, and I remember...

EDV: We were entertained in their home on the east side of the state.

MDV: Well, yes, over there and in Tecumseh and we had a lot of dinners with them. When we left he was at Christ Memorial a few times. But in those days he came to Hope Church. In fact, we had people from the Castle and from Macatawa Park. Our audiences in the summer were larger than winter.

EDV: And he spoke of tithing.

MDV: And Herrick was a very religious person but he could also...he was very opinionated and strong-willed and he had...if people appealed to him the right way he was a great philanthropist. On the other hand, if he didn't like a person personally he wouldn't give anything. He was a strange person. And I remember that when he got excited, which he often did, he'd say, "God Almighty!" And some people listening might have said, "That's a profane son of a gun!" But I found out that

Herrick meant, "Praise the Lord!" You know like we say when something wonderful happens, "Praise the Lord!" Say, "God Almighty!" Then at the end of the summer he would come in with a big check. In those days a thousand dollars, fifteen hundred dollars, two thousand dollars, and he'd say, "Now, Marion, you use that wherever you can in the church for mission or for anything you need." Well, of course, they loved the guy, you see. And he was very, very personable that way. He was very appreciative of Holland, Michigan. He and Hazel (her name was Fortney) grew up here and they met here and they married. And when he left here to make his mark in the world - he worked for Henry Ford for a while - he borrowed the money from Henry Ford to start the Tecumseh Products Company. Now, this is really history! And then because he made compressors and he serviced General Electric here, they used all these compressors from him so he made money hand over fist. And he wanted to do things for Holland. When our second child graduated from Holland High School in the Civic Center they gave Herrick an honorary high school diploma! You'd think he had the world by the tail! He cried that they would do that. About that same time, he started to say, "What can I do for Holland?" Well, I wasn't in on that, but Hazel Hayes got next to him, see, and then pretty soon he was willing to do that. Bob Visscher was a very good friend of his, so was Irwin Lubbers, so was Marvin Lindeman, and those people all encouraged him to do something like that. So along the way when I got involved he said, "Now I want some plaques in that library." Let's take a look at them. I personally selected these in correspondence with him and then it says, "The bronze plaques in

the Herrick Library bearing the inscriptions here shown recall the ground breaking ceremonies of March 14, 1959 in which Rev. Marion de Velder stated in part, "It seems entirely appropriate that this ceremony should be in the spirit of prayer and with thanksgiving to God. From the beginning, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Herrick have shown this spirit in their generous gift. In a letter to me, Mr. Herrick spoke of possible inscriptions for the new library for calling attention to the blessings of Almighty God."

BM: He always spoke of Almighty God.

MDV: My answer to Mr. Herrick said in part, "I am aware of the deep religious feeling of humble dependence upon God and have sincere thanksgiving to him for your life and your success out of which you were moved to provide this new library. And he said, "Will you select...I would like three inscriptions to be in different parts of the library. So here we have...the main one was (you can find them if you look) "To these halls come all those who seek light." But then I picked two Scripture verses. One is James 1:5: "If any one of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him." "Oh," he said, "I like that." Then the other one was the more familiar one, "Wisdom is the principal thing. Therefore, get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding," from Proverbs 4:1. Now, those are still in the library, so I have a feeling about that. Leo Jungblut, sculptor, was commissioned to make a marble head of Herrick, and it's a beautiful head of him. The roster of gifts indicated some of the furnishings. So we felt pretty good about that and Herrick was so thrilled that he

could do that. Later on he got a little disenchanted. He was going to put a swimming pool up for Holland and a radio station got wind of that and they broadcast it in an unofficial program that Ray Herrick was going to give a swimming pool to Holland. He withdrew the offer and everybody just about killed that guy. He was on the north side. So Herrick was kind of funny that way. But he gave so much money to Adrian College. That was a place where he put his money.

EDV: That had been her college.

MDV: Yeah. And I talked to her about that diploma he got...

EDV: That occurred on the same night that you were elected President of Synod. And I went along.

MDV: We've covered that pretty well. And the Herrick Library, the name will still...

EDV: The night he got that honor at the Civic Center was the same night that Mary's class graduated there. You know we said, "Look after our Mary," and he did. He really paid attention to Mary there. It was Mary's graduation.

MDV: Well, I think Herrick will loom large as a person who sparked enough stuff here in Holland, although they could have handled him better. That was because Ray reacted to certain people adversely.

But now, water from Lake Michigan. Would you like to hear about that?

BM: Yes.

MDV: Again in the early 1940s and before, the city of Holland had surface wells which provided Holland city water. Now these were shallow, twenty to thirty feet deep, and as I recall, the city's water was hard and filled with chemicals, especially sulfur

and not very tasty. As needs increased, more surface wells were added. As the city grew they just dug another well.

EDV: And there were very dry summers.

MDV: But water supply was not enough. Periods of drought brought on bans for water use. We couldn't sprinkle a lawn. Homes which could afford it had water softeners. Everybody had to have water softeners to have laundry and to have water tasting good. The Culligan man had an assured market in Holland. Then studies were made by the Board of Public Works to secure a larger and better quality water supply. Randall Bosch was the chairman of that for years and so we knew all about it because he bragged about all that the Board of Public Works did. The Board of Public Works developed a plan to secure water from Lake Michigan and a modern treatment plant following the example of Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids had been pulling water from Lake Michigan. Now many discussions and debates followed. That was a heated time...heated and divisive. A personal example: one day I was in a barber shop in the chair for a hair cut on River Avenue just south of Eighth Street. As usual, several older men were waiting and discussing affairs of the day. The topic turned to the proposal to go to Lake Michigan for city water. They were all against the plan! Not because of the increasing need for volume and quality of water. They were strongly opposed to borrowing money! In this case, a proposed three and a half million dollar bond issue to be voted by the people. Negative opposition filled the air. They were really quite emotional about that. "It was unwise to borrow. You must stay out of debt. Get along as best we can. We

always have. Dig more surface wells, they're cheap. Vote down this darn foolish idea." Then they turned on innocent me. I stayed out of that stuff. They demanded, "Dominie, what do you think about this business?" I swallowed and took the plunge. I said, "It's a good idea. The best one since sliced bread. Think of having an unlimited supply of pure, clean, soft water. We'll never have to ration water which will be safe and good for all of us. It's a health consideration for young and old." And I ended up by saying, "And most of all, it's great, because can you imagine Lake Michigan ever running dry?" Well, there was silence except for murmuring and I got out the chair as fast as I could and hurried to the safety and peace of the parsonage. I still recall something about the danger of asking a "dominie," especially a young one, for a solemn opinion on anything (laughs). Later I took some satisfaction when in 1957...now that took again about fifteen years...the Board of Public Works finished a long anticipated and needed Lake Michigan connection with the water treatment plant. And even to this day in 1997, forty years later, we can and do enjoy the best tasting water in the world from good old Lake Michigan. The water is delicious and soft. No water softeners are needed and no rationing is in sight. And I want to tell you when you drink Chicago or New York City water you know that one of the great assets is the Lake Michigan water that we have. That was another one of those things like buying the tannery lot.

I want to say something about Holland and the Second World War. The first Sunday service I conducted as the new pastor of Hope Church was on September 1, 1939. That was the day Britain and France declared war on Germany, beginning

World War II.

EDV: Just before we went to church!

MDV: We listened to the radio at breakfast and there it came and I was so distressed about that I didn't know whether to cry or pray. I was only twenty-seven at that time and I could have been called and so forth. And then after the shock of that, when Germany and Britain got in and they almost got vanquished by Hitler, on December 7, 1941...that's about two years later...the US declared war after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and we got in there...World War II continued until May, 1945. Some of those things we have to remember. With Germany surrendering in Europe and until August 14, 1945, with Japan's the same year...

EDV: That was the day Annie was born.

MDV: She was born on V-J day. The experience of World War II on the local parish level in Holland was a difficult and upsetting time. The most devastating experience was in our own church with the entrance into the military of 109, including five young women. Every effort was made to support these young people in the service by church organizations and leaders and to provide meaningful pastoral support for their parents and family.

EDV: We sent cookies once a month to every one of those in service. We saved our coffee cans and packed those coffee cans on a certain day of the month. Everybody expected to donate three dozen cookies because they had to go to so many, 109, we needed an awful lot of cookies! And we had paper boxes that we bought by the gross because each month they all had to go out. We all went to the church to pack

cookies.

MDV: They packed that stuff with popcorn. That was the best way to send it.

EDV: All the chinks were filled with popcorn which they could eat. But it kept all the cookies from rattling. Nothing was cracked. We would get letters from those servicemen and our men members wrote to each kid five times during that...Six meetings a year they had, and every meeting they got a name of some soldier. They had to fill that envelope; it was already addressed...fill it. Sometime this week get it on its way to these kids. And those kids would write back and we'd get letters in the parsonage which said, "I'm the only guy in my outfit whose church remembers him regularly."

MDV: We also had a folder that we mailed every month with all the addresses in there, the APO. We were challenged toward the end of the war by the security people that we probably could give comfort to the enemy by mailing this thing. That was a lot of baloney, and it didn't make any difference anyway. But the Men's Club was about 150 men then and we had postage stamps on the envelopes with all the addresses and they selected their own person they wanted to write to. We also gave them, as many churches did, a small New Testament Bible with a frontispiece in it, and some of those fellows still show me that Bible signed by me. But anyway, the war brought heart-wrenching experiences and conditions both to service persons in harm's way and to anxious families at home. They had a method then that when a young man was killed in the service, the War Department didn't send a telegram toward the end of the war. In the First World War, they discovered that sending a

cold telegram to a home was not a good way to do it. So they would notify the state police and the police would get in touch with the pastor, if there was a pastor named, and "Jock" Riemersma and I went to all those homes. Now, when they see the minister and an elder coming they know there is something wrong. How do you tell people? The only way that I know is that you just tell them. And then you hug each other. One wonderful young man, Herbert Chaplain, who was like an All-American boy, was Rex Chapman's and Wealthia's son. He was a Michigan State grad and he looked good enough to go to Hollywood. He was killed, not in action but he was an artillery observer and he went down in a plane in this country. But I went there about ten o'clock in the evening with Jock, and Jock had to go home. Do you know that I stayed all night with those people because Wealthia had been given a sedative. She was sleeping. Rex couldn't deal with this. And I knew that if I left him he might do something dumb, so I stayed with him until daybreak until some of his family came to meet him. That was the kind of thing you went through. Eddie De Pree, Jack Lokker and Ted Carter and, my God, all these boys...one of them we never found. They never found him. He was blown to smithereens. But the most touching of all was the loss of nine young men of the 109 in military service. The list included the following young men in our church: Edward De Pree, Clarence Jack Lokker, Nelson Carter, Willard Pelgrim, Herbert Chaplain, Carl Gordon Berry (that was Mrs. Berry's son), W. Edward Buteyn (I never knew whether he was related to John Buteyn or not), William J. Mawhinney was a fellow that married one of our girls and he was a member but not a Holland boy, and Jesse

Guy Cole. On April 4, 1943, we had sixty-two on the roll and by August 12, 1945, we had 109 on the roll. But we had services of thanksgiving and remembrance in our church in 1945 on May 8 when at the conclusion of the war (V-E Day) we had a penitence, remembrance and dedication service. In 1945, August 15, (that was when the whole war was over) we had another service in the Civic Center. But it might be interesting to you at least that in 1945, August 15, we had one in Hope Church and we had Rev. John Vander Meulen, the son of the great John, and we had Dr. Peter Pleune, who was professor at Louisville Seminary, and we had J. Carlton Pelgrim, who was the uncle of the Willard, take part and myself. I also considered whether I should enter the service as a chaplain. The Reformed Church was one of the smaller denominations but it had filled its quota, far beyond its quota. So they said you could volunteer but we don't really want chaplains from only one denomination, we've got to work the other denominations. I talked to some of my people too, like Irwin Lubbers and other people, and said "I have this burden on my heart, but I have a feeling that I am not doing everything that I should." Well, some of those people like "Jock" and so said. "Look, we went through the war and you've got about (at that time we had about 800 people and we had 109 people in the service), you can do a lot here. You've got a wife and three children." So I excused myself from...A Holland pastor, Henry TerKeurst, at the age of 48...(you couldn't volunteer after fifty)...at 48 he insisted he had to go and serve the country in the Navy. In the preliminary training, he had to learn to swim and he could never learn to swim but they took him anyway. It almost killed him. They just

threw him in the water every time. Then they assigned him to the Aleutian Islands where it was absolute fog all the time and Henry came home a broken man, a nervous breakdown and everything. He soon died after that. He died quite young. So that wasn't a very smart thing.

BM: Each to his own, you know. He must have felt that he had to do that but...

MDV: And you know Hope College went down to about 400 students and they...

EDV: They put a curtain in the middle of the chapel!

MDV: The students were practically all women.

BM: Yeah, that's right. You see I graduated in '42 and Ed De Pree was my classmate. Then I was here for ten years with the Red Cross and I know what you mean because once in a while I would get some messages that I had to bring to some of those people too, you know, so I know what that is.

EDV: I remember rolling bandages with the Red Cross women when they were in that building on tenth street, in the Temple Building, that whole basement. I remember going there. We had to do that. I was in a group that had to do it in the evening because that was when Mert could be home with the little kids and our kids were little. Mary was born in '41 and Annie was born in '45, on August 5. VJ Day was August 15.

MDV: We just hope that doesn't happen again but of course if we ever get into nuclear war we won't know what's going to happen.

EDV: It was really kind of a miserable experience...

MDV: Well, I think the last thing I want to share and then Edith can think of something she

wants to share beyond what she's done but...I was called the "burying parson" and that bothered me. You could even call this a little self-serving, but I think that when I ceased preaching, the funeral memorial messages were something I could still contribute. What we tried to do on that is to personalize (as your minister would too), to try as much as possible to personalize the service and not just talk in general terms. That can happen only if you know people over a period of time, a decade or more. And there have been people that I've buried that I've known for fifty years. I have to catch myself a little bit. I can get too emotional about that, but it's still a service that I could render and I have. Not all of these were Hope Church people that I buried, because I had to bury people like Art Peters and a number of people...John Telling...they were not connected with the church. They may not want to even record this but if they want to take it...during my ministry in Holland from 1939 to '59, I had 236 funerals or memorial services and then later from '78 to '97 (that was a twenty year period) 216 so far for a total of 452. I conducted funeral memorial services for a number of prominent leaders in Holland's history. I'll just name some of them that I think you know. James De Young, after whom the Public Works power plant was named, Dr. James Huizenga, he was a doctor from Zeeland. I think some of his descendants went into missionary work but I'm not sure. Dr. William Tappan...

BM: Oh, yes. His son, Bill, was my classmate.

MDV: Wasn't he a nice guy? He went to Reno, by the way.

BM: He's still living there. He's coming for our fifty-fifth graduation from Hope

College.

MDV: And then C. James MacLean, a son of the man who was superintendent. Nicodemus Bosch, I also buried his wife, Emma. Francis E. Browning was quite a famous name. Walter C. Walsh. They had the Walsh House near the college, and one daughter married Ernie Brooks and the other one...I can't think...well, anyway, I buried that whole family. And Walter C. Walsh told me confidentially one time, "I own twenty-eight buildings on Eighth Street." I don't think he ever told anybody that. I got very buddy with him. And then John Bosman, the tailor, who looked like Daddy Warbucks and Louis Van Schelven, he was quite a historian. Ben Mulder who printed...he was a strange fellow. Cornelius Blom, wasn't he the chief of police for many, many years? Charles H. McBride was a lawyer, Mrs. A. L. Cappon who was the wife of J. J. Cappon, I guess. Dr. John E. Kuizenga, theologian. J. Earl Van Eenanaam who was the top man in Holland Furnace. Dr George A. Stegeman, Charles Kirchen who was head of the West Michigan Furniture. Con De Pree, head of the De Pree Chemical Company. Mrs. John J. Cappon, they were related to that Cappon House. Now Ray Hoek was the decorator..

BM: The decorator in town, my neighbor.

MDV: Judge Orien S. Cross, Fred Boone was one of the old men who were the horsemen. Mrs. Julia Riemold was a granddaughter of A. C. Van Raalte. Riemold, that was the old Riemold property over there. And Benjamin Van Raalte who was head of the big Dunn Company on 24th Street. A. C. Van Raalte Gilmore, Thomas Marsilje

(he was a member of Third but they didn't have a minister. I buried Herb's father...

EDV: Because Herb was in our church.

MDV: Jay Den Herder, John E. Telling (that was a trophy of grace if there ever was one), Daniel Ten Cate, Vernon's father, Dr Abraham Leenhouts, a pioneer doctor. Mrs. John A. Otte, 94, one of the first woman graduates of Hope College. Egbert E. Fell, a great man. Dr. Edward D. Dimment, Jack Schouten, R. E. Barber, Dwight Yntema, and I buried three of those Yntemas, Dwight, and his sister Clara and Theodore. Willis Diekema, David E. Boyd was Holland Furniture. Simon Den Uyl was the CEO at Bohn Aluminum. Started that factory on 24th but it wasn't a success. Willis Diekema was the head of De Pree Chemical Company. Jack De Valois, pioneer agricultural missionary. William Vander Water, although he wasn't a member of Hope Church. Carl Andreason was Holland Shoes. And there are a lot of them. Robert Visscher was a former mayor. And to sum it all up, of the forty-four presidents of the Women's Literary Club, I buried 12 of them. I could name them all. You know, the more recent ones are Betty Becker and Sadie Grace Winter...

EDV: And when Third Church was vacant there were a lot of times that we knew them well enough because they were city people that were involved in city affairs. And Mert did their funerals.

MDV: I buried 22 ex-presidents of the Century Club, and of the Rotary Club six charter members of the 17, nine past-presidents of Rotary Club. I'm still am able to do

that, but I don't think that I can do that very much longer.

EDV: He has gotten to the point where he writes everything out. That's why he has those records.

MDV: I used to be extemporaneous. I have to write it out.

BM: That's okay. I understand that.

MDV: I'll tell you why Henry Bast was being installed as professor of preaching in First Reformed Church and I was stated clerk. I had to help install him and we had a meeting beforehand and then a reception afterward. But John Mulder, John R. Mulder...he was quite a leader. He was presiding and he was toward the end of his career after the students had almost made him a nervous wreck. You know the bunch that were after him all the time. Well, he was going to introduce me as the stated clerk and John...with a big flourish said, "Now my dear long-time friend, ...my long time friend." (He couldn't say Marion de Velder). He looked at me and he got kind of red and he started over again and he couldn't...He took the program out of his hand and said, "Oh yes, how could I forget Marion de Velder!" You know that during the reception he apologized to me about ten times and I said, "John, for God's sake, cut it out!" I said to Edith, "If you ever notice (laughs) that I get like that, tell me for goodness sakes." You know Les Kuyper was such a great fellow and he died at 81. But the last time he had to do something at Hope Church, he couldn't do it. And I said to Edith, "Before that time comes..."

EDV: ...don't let me say yes! (laughs).

MDV: Have you got any other questions? Personal questions? (Laughs).

BM: I think you've pretty well covered a lot of these.

MDV: Oh, much too much!

BM: No, I think that's all very, very interesting.

MDV: I tell you, Beth, we're the old warhorses!

BM: Aren't we?

MDV: And I've often said, (I don't if you've heard me say that when you leave your big position that you've held for a long time, the day you leave it's a different story. And the one that I've heard lately is, "You can be a peacock one day, right? And you can be a feather-duster the next!" And boy am I dusting fast! (Laughs) Now, you aren't there yet. You're not dusting feathers yet but the time will come when you can't even be president of the classis anymore. Are you about ten years younger than I am?

BM: I've going to be 77. How old are you?

MDV: 85. Wally's going to be 90 on May 17.

EDV: We are going east for his birthday.

MDV: Well, we're planning to. I hope that we can. He has very bad eyesight now. This has been a terrible thing for him. Do you know Leon Bosch? He's a member of Third Church.

BM: Yeah, yeah!

MDV: Well, he has the same...he was in Wally's class at Hope, but he has the same macro degeneration of the optic nerve or whatever it is.

BM: Isn't that what Marie Walvoord has now too?

EDV: Yes.

MDV: Well, she told Edith. I haven't talked to her.

EDV: I didn't indicate that I knew how serious that was.

BM: Well, she has more recently admitted to that.

MDV: I think we better turn this thing off (three way conversation ensues).

BM: (Interviewer resumes) Let's just talk about this for a minute. One of the questions here is: have the problems facing the general citizen of Holland changed in the past fifty years? And then, how have they changed? Is crime different? How is your daily life different, and you sort of mentioned that as you've been talking, then it was ten, twenty, thirty, forty years ago. Two or three of these questions deal with the changing of Holland. Every once in a while I say to myself, "Boy, this isn't my town anymore."

EDV: It's very different from what it was. It was small town, but you see, now Holland is about the population of Sioux City, Iowa.

BM: Is that right! Sioux City.

MDV: One of the ways it has changed for us is when we came to Holland we lived in the inner city there on Eleventh Street, West Eleventh Street, and we walked all over. We didn't use the car.

EDV: We couldn't park any closer. That's downtown and just in and around for us.

MDV: As I recall, too, we weren't conscious of ever locking our doors in those days. You know on the farm in Iowa we never had any keys so...

EDV: We lived quite a while in New Brunswick before...out East in Ridgewood before we

began locking the doors when I went to the store.

MDV: I recall there were two fellows in Holland, that was old Brouwer and Meyer. They each had an electric car. And the Van Putten people had that store on River Avenue.

EDV: I remember those vehicles. They looked different and they made no noise!

MDV: It was predominantly Dutch then too.

BM: Yeah, they ask about the diversification of the city.

MDV: We left here in '59. When we came back we were astounded to discover the large proportion of Hispanics in this city of Holland which was 16 or 18%.

EDV: They weren't migrants any more. In my day, they were migrants.

MDV: And also that Washington School, where our three children went through, is now about 80% Hispanic I guess, somewhere in there.

BM: Yeah. I would say. And maybe some Asians in there too. Vietnamese and Koreans and so on. There are quite a few of those.

EDV: Its very interesting to us that our children, when they went to school, lived in a lily white community, really. There were some Hispanics, but not many. In those days they were people that did the crops and went on to the next crop. But all three of our children have lived east and all three of them are very conscious of not showing any prejudice about race. And they would really fit in with the new generation now. Very much better than most people that come here and expect it to be a lily white community. Because they have lived in New York City.

MDV: The leadership of the city has changed a lot. Many people who have moved to

Holland have assumed leadership. They're not of the pioneer families any more.

And I think that's good in a way. That's fine. We have a lot of petty crime. Not many murders or anything, but we did have five of them one year.

BM: One year it was pretty bad.

MDV: And largely unsolved. Security, in those days we could be anywhere in Holland and be safe. We can't now. Do you think so?

BM: That you can't be anywhere in Holland?

MDV: I don't know. I mean not everywhere in Holland can you feel safe.

BM: No, I think not either these days. I think everybody's locking their doors and if you don't, you're in trouble.

MDV: That's right.

BM: They seem to find it. They seem to find an open door.

MDV: For example, when we built our house in Marigold we were out east, but the builder called us one day and said they've broken nine of your windows throwing bricks through them in Waukazoo. And that wouldn't have happened before. The attitude too was, "Well, don't worry. The insurance will cover it." They didn't really make a big to-do about catching those kids. And since we built this condo, they broke five windows in here throwing concrete through it. And that model has had windows broken too. So it's this crazy vandalism that...Now look at that nut, \$250,000 vandalism. This fellow was an angry rejected worker apparently. We didn't have that kind of thing.

EDV: Well, that man was angry and he was taking it out on somebody who didn't deserve

it.

MDV: And that's generally throughout the whole country of course. Now violent crime is going down, they keep telling us, but we don't feel any safer I don't think.

BM: No. I sure don't in Holland. I often drive with the doors locked.

MDV: And if someone had an argument with you, you wouldn't get out of your car and defend yourself. That would be the dumbest thing.

BM: How about this one. Concentrating on Holland, how do you think the role of women has changed in the past fifty years in this city?

MDV: Well, it's changed a good deal.

EDV: A great many more women drive. Almost all women my age drive.

MDV: I wonder what the work force...what the percentage of women in the work force would be...It's way up I think.

BM: Yeah, because they keep talking about all the mothers that are working.

MDV: And we still don't have enough women involved in the top governing bodies.

Common Council. Who is that first lady that was on the Common Council? A doctor's wife.

BM: Westrate.

MDV: Westrate. Mrs. Kollen was an unusual thing. She was the first woman on the school board, the first president of the school board. But now, women are...for example, the Sentinel does a feature on small businesses. I think the majority of small businesses now are started by women. It's quite different. And I would think also in your light industries that you've got proportionally more women than men.

BM: I was thinking. The Superintendent of Schools is a woman.

MDV: Yes! Very capable.

BM: Very much so.

MDV: She's a Dutch gal, Brink was her name.

BM: Was that her name? Marcia Brink? They joined our church last Sunday.

MDV: She told me they were going to and I said that was the best idea...

BM: A good place for them. Anyway, I have not met the, what is she called, of the hospital, the president or?

MDV: Oh, Judy Javorek. She's an Australian woman and very, very bright. An unusual person. She's got brains, they just pop out of her ears. She knows that field and she's had some difficulty though because the pressure of the thing...She took a leave of absence for a little while.

EDV: I'm always impressed with the fact that way back, early on, Mrs. Kollen was on things.

BM: And then Mrs. Telling got involved. She was chairman of the Red Cross.

MDV: And she was very high in music areas. You don't know this, but Mrs. Telling had a daughter, Barbara (I buried her...married her and buried her), but Barbara was a contralto. Edith was a soprano. Mrs. Telling was a soprano...

EDV: And she gave me all of her music.

MDV: She gave a couple of boxes of sheet music, two pieces each, to Edith because she said...

EDV: Seventy-five cents to a dollar for each one of those pieces and I had a pile like this

that I carried home.

MDV: I think some of them might be worth something now.

EDV: And double copies of everything because she always had one for the accompanist and herself. I still own that music. It's really something.

BM: Well, I think too it's time for more women to get on the City Council. But, like you say, so many women are employed these days and to be mother and...you can't do everything.

MDV: Superwoman!

EDV: Well, and then you can't do anything well.

[Tape ends]