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Fabiano, Paul Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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AP: The first thing I have everyone do is state their name and where and when they were born.

PF: My name is Paul Fabiano, I live at 324 W. 27th, Holland, Michigan. I was born on [date removed], 1931 in Holland, Michigan.

AP: How did your family come to Holland, Michigan?

PF: My father came with his father in 1902. They heard of a little store for sale, and they came and they bought it, and that's how Fabiano's got started.

AP: [to Esther] Where did you come from and how did you meet?

EF: In Lansing, at an engagement party.

AP: Could you describe what Holland was like growing up?

PF: Well, Holland was good old little Holland then. You walked the streets without fear of violence. I went to St. Francis De Sales for eight grades, then I went to Holland Public Schools, graduated from Holland High in 1949. Back then it was predominately Dutch. Being a Catholic and an Italian in Holland, Michigan was the minority. But we survived without any scars. It was a pleasure living in Holland, especially to raise kids.

AP: What was St. Francis like?

PF: Back then St. Francis had eight grades, two grades to a room in a little four room
school house. The principal taught seventh and eight grade. We had about a hundred kids probably. All nuns. Nowadays, nuns are scarce. We still have the St. Francis school, but there aren't any nuns teaching or principal or anything anymore. It's all lay people. Fond memories.

AP: Do you still go to St. Francis?

PF: Yes, we still go to St. Francis. We're hoping to be back in our church this fall or Christmas at least. That was quite a tragedy that place burned.

AP: How has it been in the interim there?

PF: Well, I think our neighbors, Third Reformed, Hope Reformed, Hope College—we meet in the chapel, two masses every Sunday. It just seems like it brought the community closer together. Even once, I think, we get back into our church it will bring St. Francis closer together. We were having different fund raisers trying to raise some extra money, because you never have enough from your fund drives. But we have a great leader, Father Dudek, smart young man.

AP: Could you tell me about your family's business? Your grandfather came to Holland...?

PF: Okay, 1902. Then my dad bought his dad out. Then my grandfather moved to Rochester near Pontiac. My dad used to have the retail store, and then the wholesale fruits and vegetables. We used to get carloads of bananas in. This was right on 8th Street. He built the building they were in right after the first war. My two brothers took that over in 1952, and my oldest brother, Joe, took the wholesale end when he got married. Then when I got back from the Korean Conflict, my dad was young and he wanted something to do, so he started a second store, called the Holland Peanut
Store, which my immediate family right now is very active in. My wife, myself, my four kids all partake in it. Started on River Avenue, moved to 32 E. 8th in 1960. In 1972 we moved to our present location, 46 E. 8th Street. The bank wanted more room, so we made a deal with the bank. From 1954, when we started the Peanut Store, to 1979, we had two stores. My two brothers ran one, and my family ran the other. They closed there's in 1979. They didn't have any children to pass it on to, and they were sick of the business and wanted out. So now we just have the Peanut Store going. Hopefully my kids will take it over.

EF: We have a fifth generation granddaughter working in there right now, she's just starting.

PF: She's catching on fast.

AP: Great. What has that been like having a business downtown? You've probably seen the downtown change a lot. How has it changed? How have you kept a business fitting in there through the changes?

PF: Well, years ago, downtown was it. No malls, no Meijer Thrifty Acres, no Target, Walmart. The dime stores were downtown, there's a good draw. Your department stores were downtown. We reaped the dividends. The big guys drew them downtown, and the more people in our business, because a lot of it is the impulse of buying. The bigger the crowd, the better our business. We, especially in the old store, where we had an ice cream fountain in there, where we don't here, that was a good draw. But from our immediate business, the Peanut Store, we started small.
We’re still small, but we’ve seen the downtown, in 1988, the malls came in, and street scape was put in, the downtown was all dug up. That was a tough year, but we survived. After that, Ed Prince, through the Lumir Corporation, that’s his real estate farm, he did a job for downtown. I think the people of Holland can thank him for everything downtown is. Without their help, I think it would have been tough.

Downtown is good. We’d like to see a department store downtown, but most of them want to go to the malls. But we have some good stores, Lokker Rutgers, Bass, the Peanut Store. (laughs)

AP: And now Talbot’s.

PF: Talbot’s is coming in. That should be a good addition. I heard they might put some offices or apartments upstairs.

AP: So the other Fabiano’s location, I’ve heard from people that that was kind of the hang out.

PF: Yes. We had the ice cream parlor and booths and juke boxes in those days. It was a good gathering place for teenagers, and even adults. They used to come in and enjoy an ice cream sundae or soda or malt.

EF: Whenever I used to take the kids to the pediatrician, Dr. Vern Boersma would remark, "Oh, I can remember hanging out there as a kid."

AP: A woman the other week told me about always going there to get a tin roof sundae when they saved up enough money.

PF: Ice cream, chocolate, and Spanish peanuts.
EF: They made their own chocolates. They made their own ice cream. They cooked all their own nuts. It was a family project. All eleven children worked in the store. Plus they had to hire outside help.

PF: We lived upstairs, so we couldn't escape it. We started picking out rotten bananas in the basement, where my dad used to store his bananas in. Then we graduated on up, cleaning the back room, washing the dishes. In those days, everything was glass. No paper. We used to serve the ice cream in a fancy glass dish. Then we had to wash dishes.

EF: They even made a lot of their own candies. Their own candy canes. I even did that. They used to roll those candy canes in front of a long gas burner. First they used to pull them like taffy. Then you roll it and cut it with a scissors. Then you sit there and roll it to get it even. Then at a certain point you'd have to turn it. We used to make six foot canes that hung in the window, and they graduated down to two inch canes. Then we had to stop because then they made a new law that said everything had to be wrapped, even though we kept them in the window, and kept them covered and away from the public hands. So finally we just could not afford to package them each individually. So then we quit, but that's an art in itself. They made their own syrups, ice cream, cooked their own peanuts, dipped their own chocolates.

PF: It was where Gazelle Sports is now. Half of Gazelle, the west end used to be Fabiano's.

EF: They left part of the beautiful tile floor in Gazelle Sports. And the Fabiano name is
still on the building.

AP: Why don’t we just talk some more about Holland in general and how you’ve seen it change.

PF: It’s more diversified now in ethnic groups. I don’t have any figures from the past, but if I had to guess, I’d say it’s 80-90% Dutch. Now that’s not true. I think years ago, there were the Fabiano’s and there was a family called Varano’s that lived on 22nd Street. I think we were the only two Italian families in town. Now there’s quite a few. Having the store, a lot of people come in, and knowing we’re Italians, they introduce themselves. The Hispanic group, they say 12% is Hispanic in Holland now, I don’t know the figure. But I think the kids growing up today, it’s more like they see the world as it is instead of the past. I think there’s not as much prejudice today as it was years ago. Being primarily Dutch, a lot of people looked upon us as foreigners, even though we were here since 1902. People could get off the boat from the Netherlands and come here and call us the foreigners. (laughs)

EF: That was done once to my father-in-law.

PF: And growing up, I would ask girls for a date, and they’d say, I’d like to, but I can’t go with you because you’re Catholic and Italian. So you felt a little prejudice there. But maybe it’s a good thing. I wouldn’t have met Esther then. We’re bigger today, but we’ve got more problems. Like I say, we used to walk the streets, we used to go to church at night, and walk just as kids, and have no fear of anything. Now, especially now with our grandkids, you fear for their safety, with all the nuts on the
loose, and all the psychos. Holland is not escaping it. I guess no place is safe.
Holland has been, I said before, a good place to raise kids, and it still is. Holland
has treated us well, and I think we’ve treated Holland well.

AP: How many children do you have?
PF: We have four. Three girls and a boy. We have five grandkids. Right now they’re
all in Holland. At one time, one was in Florida, one was in Minneapolis… My third
daughter graduated from St. Mary’s across the street from Notre Dame. She was an
elementary teacher. Right now she’s in the business. She’s got two kids, and she
wants to raise her own kids, so to speak. That’s why she gave up teaching. She
was a marvelous teacher. My son, more or less, is the manager of the store now.
All three girls work part-time. Like my wife says, our oldest grandchild, fourteen
years old, is starting to work now, too.

AP: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
PF: I came from a family of eleven. Four boys and seven girls. There’s six surviving.
EP: He’s the baby.
AP: Are you? What was that like growing up in a big family like that?
PF: Oh, being the baby I was well taken care of. (laughs) I was born in ’31 and I was
young during the depression. I didn’t realize what it was. But my oldest brothers
and sisters tell me it was tough.

AP: How many years apart are you.

PF: I’m 66, my oldest sister would be about 85 today. So about twenty years. They
were quite close together, the brothers and sisters. I didn’t have it as tough as my older ones did. It goes down the line. Each generation got it easier. My kids had it easier than me, I think my grandkids had it easier than my kids, so forth and so on.

AP: Do you think that will keep happening?

PF: Well, so to speak, yes. Not as drastic as between our generation and say the grandkids generation. There’s a difference. There’s more freedom. We both came from Italian families, and kept under the thumb, so to speak. We were more lenient with out kids than my dad was with us. I think my grandkids have it more lenient than my kids had it. How much more lenient can you be, as you go down the generations?

EF: I think the pendulum is swinging back a little bit. I really do. For a while there, in the 70s, it went way over, and I think it’s starting to come back a little bit. I think we’re realizing, the people that are raising their children now know what they went through and the things they felt that they should have been allowed to do were really not in their best interest. The pendulum is swinging back, slowly, but it’s coming. It has to, or we’re going to self-destruct. Time will tell.

AP: What kind of things were your parents strict about that parents aren’t strict about now?

PF: Dating at a young age. My sisters probably felt that more than the boys did. But if we took the car, my dad said be home by eleven or so, if you came in five after eleven, he gave you a lecture. If you wanted something or to do something and they
said no, you took it without asking why. Today the kids want an explanation why the answer’s no. Just little things like that. We walked to school, walked home for lunch, walked back to school after we got out. Now everybody’s got to be bused or driven.

EF: Of course, they were closer, too.

PF: Well, yes, you didn’t have the outlying districts then, out on 64th Street it was all farm or just plain gravel roads and that was undeveloped. But now, you’re three, four, five miles from school.

AP: Have there been some organizations you’ve been involved in the community?

PF: Active in the church. I belonged to the Knights of Columbus, and served on different committees with St. Francis finance and stuff like that. I was active in the Elks one time, about thirty years ago, but priorities change. That was before my kids started growing up. Once they got active in sports and cheer leading and band, that was the number one priority. You drop your other organizations to follow them. I used to belong to the Optimist’s Club at one time. I was in the Chamber of Commerce, but never really active, I paid my dues. I’m really not a guy who wants to get too involved with all these things and have your picture in the paper and all that stuff. I took sides when they wanted to make it a downtown mall and close 8th Street. This was back in the early 60s. I was opposed to it. That’s how street scape developed.

AP: Do you recall any major issues or controversies in the city?

PF: Well, the one I just mentioned about he downtown mall. That was a big diversion
there. I don’t know what else right off hand. One way streets were quite the topic of conversation when they first came out. A lot of conservative people were in Holland, they didn’t want a change, it was hard to accept for some of the old timers.

EF: Closing some of the streets for Hope College was a big issue at one time, which we were all for, bettering Hope College. The college was a core part of the city, and if they needed a street closed, then it should be closed. That was our feeling.

PF: Hope has been great for the city, great for downtown. We get a lot of business from Hope, the summer seminars and the camps, like these little ballerinas that were there a couple weeks ago. They came in, and they had money to burn, they weren’t afraid to drop it.

EF: They came in all sizes and shapes, I tell you. They were a good bunch. They also came from you could tell, very neat families. They had their cut off jeans on with their white leotards they never take off. They were adorable.

AP: I’ve been in the dance department at Hope, and you don’t do that anymore, and we call them all the bun heads, because you can tell.

PF: Is Maxine DeBruyn still active?

AP: Oh yes. She’s more active than she has ever been. The department is booming. Too many students.

EF: We met her once. She was a delightful person.

AP: So you see Hope as a very important aspect of the community?

PF: Yes. Look at how many people it employs. Not only the professors, but secretaries,
and... We have a good working relationship with Hope. A lot of professors and teachers and coaches come in. My son knows about every guy in sports. We have seen the presidents come and go to way back when Dr. Lubbers was president. I got to be pretty good friends with Dr. VanderWerf. He was quite a man. Dr. Van Wylen and Mrs. Van Wylen, what a great couple they were, and still are. It was a pleasure to have them come in and just treat you as a human being. They didn’t act like they were above you or anything. A lot of people come in and, yes, they’re doing me a favor, but, wow, they treat you like dirt. They act like, "I’m spending money with you, you bow down before me." Which I guess you have to do in the retail game. Being a small independent businessman, you have to grin and bear it.

AP: Have there been any other issues you can think of?

PF: There’s the area center. That is the big topic now.

EF: Is it so much the area center, or the placement of the area center. I think they definitely need an area center, and I think it’s going to go through. It’s just a matter of where they want to put it. Which I think is going to be the big issue.

PF: It’s too bad they didn’t come up with this location on 6th and College before they announced the site. First it was only two sites, now they come up with a third site. That’s what the big issue is about. Being in business downtown, I’d like to see it downtown.

EF: Not only for that purpose, but just the purpose that you’ve got Hope students. You’ve got the high school here. I know it’s supposed to be for the whole
community, but still your downtown is your core. It’s the hub of everything. Nowadays everything is being shipped out. Why not have it in the core? To me that’s like the core of the family, the home. This will be the core of the city. My favorite place would have been at the foundry, but displacing a lot of people... I can remember when the big issue was Ed Prince wanted to build a building and displace Curtis. Everyone was up in the air. Now the building is named after the man. Now every time you go buy it, or the Curtis building is mentioned, I think of that little old man that used to live in the little red brick house. Ed Prince incorporated that with that, and I think that’s wonderful. Yes, a few people will be moved, and I imagine that would be hard, and I can understand that. But so many Hope students don’t have cars. A lot of activities, even kids, it’s easier to get downtown and be dropped off. I’m not sure if there’s enough parking. Parking is a big issue nowadays because everyone does have cars. But I would like to see it be the center. Downtown, if it had died, could you imagine the slum area that would be there right next to a beautiful place of higher education, what that would have done to Hope College? To me, it should be more centrally located. So you go out of your way a couple blocks to get to the place. I hope the center is not issue, because I think Holland is big enough and they need one. It’s just a matter of placing it.

AP: Have you heard about what they want to do in Windmill Island?

PF: Yes, I read something about it. I don’t know if we’re feeding a dead horse or not. I don’t know what the answer is. There’s better heads than me trying to figure it out.
I don’t have any comment on what they should or shouldn’t do. They pay umpteen thousand dollars for a study, than that’s the people’s business. What ever they come up with, we just have to accept. I don’t get too involved in any of these controversial issues. If they ask my opinion, I state it. I go to the voting booth and vote the way I want. But to take an active part in anything, you’ve got to be careful being a small businessman in a small time. Years ago, somebody wanted me to put up a sign for a certain individual running for sheriff. I said no, even though he was one of my best friends. Being in business, if one of my best customers is for the other guy, he won’t come in. He had a great big sign up in his window, he’s in the insurance business. A couple weeks later it was gone. I asked him, "Hey, where did your sign go?" He said, "You were right, we go a lot of people that called up and said, unless you take that sign down, I’ll drop my policy." That’s always the stand I took with politics. A lot of people want to come in and want to talk and argue religion. I say, hey, you go to your church, I go to mine. Let’s be friends. There’s only one guy upstairs. my dad taught me, keep your mouth shut, don’t insult people, give them a good product, good service, good price, try to be friends with everybody, and you’ll survive.

EF: What do they plan on doing at Windmill Island? Building homes? I know one guy that has voiced his opinion, he would want to purchase a home there. What are the other things that they are going to do there?

AP: I think it was mostly just making it a village.
EF: I think anything that would be an attraction to the Dutch heritage of the community would be great, if it would be profitable enough to keep it running. That’s the big question. But I see nothing wrong in having something like that. In this day and age, there’s not enough heritage. It’s coming back, though. I can go to an Amish community and learn about the Amish. If you come to a Dutch community, so there’s a place to learn about the Dutch community. The windmill has been a big attraction. I never knew how the flour was ground until I went there the first time. I think it’s a beautiful island. I haven’t been there in a few years, so I don’t know if there’s been any great changes.

AP: Has Tulip Time changed a lot?

PF: Well, they extended it to ten days, but the format is still Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday of the last week. That’s when the bands and parades and Dutch dances are.

AP: What was it like growing up? Did you not care because you weren’t Dutch? Or was it a community thing?

PF: It was the whole community. My girls were in Dutch dancing. When I was a kid growing up, I didn’t partake or see much of it, I was always working in the store. (laughs) But I think it has changed from years ago by bringing in some major names, like Lawrence Welk and a few other shows they have had they do now, that they didn’t do in the past. It was mostly flowers and parades forty or fifty-five years ago. But now it’s a more diversified festival, I think, which is for the better.
AP: Busy time in the store?

PF: Yes. Especially when there's activity out front. When there's nothing doing downtown, then it kind dies down a bit, but during the parades and the Dutch dancing, people congregate. Our store is one of those stores that appears to everyone from one to a hundred. They come in, and you to try to make it attractive in your front windows where you draw them in, because impulse of buying is a major part of our business. Tulip time is good, it's good for us, it's good for the community. A lot of stores say that during that time, it's not good for them. But as a whole, you can't buy the advertising. You go to any place in the county and say you’re from Holland, Michigan: "Oh, Tulip Time in Holland." It’s a great advertisement for your city. I think it benefits when people come in and drop I don’t know how many millions of dollars into motels and restaurants and downtown. Indirectly it helps them. If I make an extra buck, I’ll go across the street and buy an extra shirt.

AP: Last year Holland was named a top ten All American City. What qualities do you think Holland has that makes it special, that makes it worthy of being a top ten city.

PF: Well, that’s a good question. I think the cleanliness and the appearance of the city itself is an asset. I think the downtown is another one. Some people come in and they say, how can you keep a downtown like this? Hope College is another asset that brings some good qualities to town. The quality of the people, it’s a church going community.

EF: Education is very high. The arts.
PF: The Arts Council has been a great asset. I think we’ve got three great high schools, West Ottawa, Holland, and the Christian High.

EF: I think they’ve done well with the Spanish element that is here. I think they’ve been able to work well with them, and I think that has been an asset, the fact that they could work together. Sometime you get into cities where they’re so opposite, and they’re not willing to take them in. I think they’ve worked very well with the city, and that is one of the major things. Yes, we all have our problems, some more so than others. But I think Holland has handled it well. The police force has done a great job. I think there’s a lot that they tell us and a lot that they don’t tell us. There’s things we need to know and things we don’t need to know. I think we’ve been able to mesh the two together.

PF: I think the industry has contributed. It’s more diversified now. Years and years ago, it was mostly furniture. Now you have every imaginable kind here. The HEDCOR development has done great. Brought in a great tax base. I think the people themselves that are in leadership, in my estimation, they’ve done a great job. McGeon has done very well. (tape ends) I think then the leadership has steered the vessel pretty good.

AP: Are there problems that Holland isn’t addressing, or things that they still need to work on?

PF: I don’t know. It’s been a continuous battle with the younger people, so called gangs, violence, drugs, drugs and drinking at an early age. How do you fight it, how do
you combat it? I think they’re doing it with Project Charlie and the DARE program trying to educate the elementary kids. Some of the people are hard to reach. I think it all stems from the home. It’s a problem but they’re trying to fight it. I can’t condemn them for not addressing it. It seems like they’re trying to deal with the problem with traffic and everything. I really can’t condemn anybody.

AP: Are kids a lot different today, do you think?

PF: Yes, I think so. I don’t know where it started. The lack of respect. Years ago, when I was in high school, we had a principal we were deadly afraid of. The teachers themselves were great, but we showed respect. When they said to do something, we did it. We went back to an assembly, my brother was getting an award, and the principal got up there and everybody was whistling and yelling and clapping. He said, "Boy, if we’d done that when Mr. Riemersma was principal, he would clear the building." My daughter taught in Grand Rapids, and she lived with another gal that was still teaching in the inner city in Grand Rapids, and she came home all shook up one time. What happened? A second grader hit her. I just can’t imagine when I was in second grade any of us ever thinking of hitting a teacher.

EF: But they took discipline away from the teachers.

PF: That’s a good point. You can’t touch them, they’ll bring you to court. In a way, I think the courts are a lot of blame for the problems we’ve got. Every law passed seems to favor the criminal instead of the victim.

EF: Some teachers got out of hand. They were too much of a disciplinarian, which
caused part of the problem. Then again, discipline teaches a child. I’m not saying you have to swat them on the back of their head, but you could hardly even grab their sleeve nowadays without the teacher being disciplined. It’s a tough road.

AP: Is that how you were disciplined when you were in school?

PF: If we were naughty, we’d go stand in the corner. Or if we were too naughty they’d send us to the principal. The nuns whacked us with the ruler now and then.

EF: Even I grew up in a public school, and I went to school with my cousin, and we went through all the grades together. He was the class clown, and he was always disciplined. He was hit over the hand many a time with a ruler, and had to stand on the corner, and would right on the chalkboard when the teacher wasn’t looking and get disciplined again. Then he would laugh, and I would sit in the room and cry, because he was being disciplined. Today he’s a doctor. That hitting on the hand with the ruler, that was discipline--a tap on the hand, a tap on the rear with a ruler. So it wasn’t just the nuns, it was the public school teachers that were allowed to do that. I can see there has to be a dividing line. But I can remember when our youngest, Tom, was in junior high. There was a teacher being disciplined, in fact, ready to be thrown out. We were called by one of the officials and asked what we thought about this incident, about this teacher disciplining a boy that was being very, very unruly in the classroom, disrupting the whole class. The teacher was ready to be expelled. We said we were all for discipline, we were very much in favor of what this teacher had done, because he had to discipline the child in order to keep the class
in tow. I think we even had to sign a letter saying we felt this teacher did the right thing.

AP: I think years ago, even, if something did happen, people wouldn’t sue. Taking someone to court and making them pay for liability wasn’t the way people thought of doing things.

PF: I agree with you a hundred percent, people are "sue happy."

EF: You’ve got lawyers on TV: "If you’ve got a problem, I’m here to help you."

AP: Did they do detention?

PF: They had detention all the way from kindergarten to high school. You stayed after class and you some extra homework. Even in high school we had detention. I guess they’ve still got detention.

AP: I know in my grade school, if you were disruptive, you got your name on the board. That was a warning, and if you were good the rest of the day you’d be okay. But if you did something again, then you got a check mark, and each check mark was detention. Or if you didn’t do your memory assignment you had to stay extra.

EF: My one grandson, who’s in kindergarten this year, he said to me one day, "Grandma, I got sent to the principal’s office." I said, "Johnny, you didn’t! What did you do that you got sent to the principal’s office?" "I was giving that guy nookies, and he didn’t want them. I looked at his mother and I said, "What are nookies." He had him pinned to the ground and he would take his knuckles and go like this. I guess he made the little kid cry. I said, "Johnny, you shouldn’t do that, that hurts." He said,
"I know, I'm not going to do it again." I thought, if that's the only problem he ever has in school, he'll be lucky. But in kindergarten, getting set to the principal's office was more than I could take.

AP: Now they do "time out." If a child is disruptive, they get a time out. It's the same things as sitting in a corner. I used to teach dance classes to little kids, and you would tell them if they can't pay attention, they have to sit down. And they don't want to do that, so they'll be good, because they'd rather participate.

Has the role of women changed?

PF: I think they're up on a par with the man. Years ago, the mother or wife very seldom work. Now to enjoy all the goodies and luxuries, she has to work: big house, two cars, boat, all that stuff. If you were a women, you weren't in line for an administrative job. I guess to the courts, you can't discriminate, which I think is a good thing. If a woman is qualified... I can't see giving a woman a job because she's a woman. Maybe I'm old-fashioned because I can't. If she's just as qualified as me and she gets it, I say congratulations. But if she got it as a woman, I don't think I'd congratulate her. That's it in a nutshell.

AP: Do you think it's affected the family unit?

EF: Definitely. Latch-key kids, that's all it is.

PF: When our kids were growing up, we lived on 12th, and they went to school, and they loved to have mama home when they came home from school. Now, kids come home and they're alone until five o'clock, which ever parent gets home first.
They've got too much time to get into trouble.

**EF:** That reminds of a story. When my Tom was in sixth grade, we had moved into this home. I was working, and for some reason I was delayed. He had a key to get in, and I wasn't home. He let himself in and left and went and played with the neighbor boys. In the meantime, I had come home, and he came home, and he read me the riot act. He said, "You weren't home when I got home today." I said, "I know, Tom, I'm sorry. I was delayed at the store. I knew you had a key, so I wasn't worried. But you come in, you change your clothes, and you're off playing with Richard and Billy anyway, so what wrong?" He said, "Mom, when I come home, I like to find you home, even though I don't stay." I'll never forget that if I live to be a hundred. Even though he'd change his clothes, snack, and off he'd go. Just the fact that I was not home when he got home. I think kids need that, they need more of a home life. They can do without a lot of the other things, but they need that. I know there are a lot of situations where it can't be had, and those parents know how to adjust. It's not sometimes the quantity of time, but the quality.

**AP:** It must be hard if a kid feels they have to compete for their parent's attention.

**PF:** That's true. With so many broken homes.

**EF:** Even our daughter tells us at st. Francis in Grand Rapids it's awful. Over 50%, and it was growing, from broken homes. It was awful. The kids, they come to school without breakfast. She'd always have crackers, peanut butter, in her desk for children who came to school without breakfast and without lunches and no money for
hot lunch. It’s amazing. How do these kids survive? How do they grow up in the world?

AP: What are the things that you’re most thankful for in your life here?

PF: Health, my family’s health. We had four kids and they’re all healthy; five grandkids and they’re all healthy. That’s number one, I think. Number two, we were able to provide for our kids. We’re not a Kennedy or a Rockefeller, but we were able to provide shelter, food, clothing, education. Living in a community, there’s some violence, but not a lot of it. being able to worship as free individuals. Just things we take for granted, actually, are the big things we should be thankful for.

AP: Are there any things we haven’t talked about that you think we should have?

PF: Well, I think you did a great job of being the interviewer. We covered all the bases, the community, church, the social business.

EF: I think Holland should be very proud of the fact that they have continues their Dutch heritage the way they had done. You don’t see too many towns that could have developed and kept their heritages, but let it slip by. I think it’s some important, whatever heritage it is, be it Italian, Greek, Jewish, Dutch. It was very difficult for me when I first moved here in 1955 to a very Dutch community. But then I saw the finer aspects of the life, and learned to enjoy it, praise it. I admired them for their strong beliefs, even though I didn’t believe the way that they believed, that they did have the strong beliefs, and they had the strong family ties. Too much of that heritage has been lost. Being Italian, in fact, I was born in Italy, and I came over
here when I was three. I've kept a lot of my parents' tradition, even though it's difficult at Christmas time, because we're very busy. But I try hard to make the Italian cookies, and do the Italian customs. I think it's very important for the children to know their heritages. I would hate to ever have to leave Holland, but when I first moved here I kept thinking, is there a way out? There wasn't. I was married and had children right away. I love to go back and visit my home town, but I'd hate to leave Holland, I think it's a beautiful community. Even with all the Dutch people. (laughs) They're great people the way they are.

PF: A couple of years ago, my son went to a football game in Ann Arbor. I said, why don't you get to Mo's Sporting Good store and say hi to Bud Vanderwege, a Holland boy who played on a championship basketball team. So he went with a bunch of guys and they wanted shirts, he said, let's go to Mo's my dad knows the owner. So he went in and introduced himself. He said, "You know, Tom, I was at home a couple of weeks ago, I had lunch with my sister, and Holland's changed. All these ethnic groups running around there, I didn't hardly recognized the place. You know, Tom, when I was growing up, we had three minorities. The Padnos were the Jews, the Botsis were the greeks, and the Fabianos were the Italians. Everybody else was Dutch." (laughs) I got a kick out of that one. So let's hope for continued success for Holland. I think with the leadership we've got, we're probably on the right track.

AP: Well, we can probably wrap up. Thank you very much for taking the time out today.

PF: You're welcome.
EF: I hope we didn't bend your ear too much.