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## Giddy, Monika Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Tracy L. Bednarick

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The Hope College Oral History Project for 1996

Interview #1  
Mrs. Monika Giddy  
Holland's Past Fifty Years

Conducted by:  
Tracy L. Bednarick  
May 26, 1996

Abstract (subjects in order of general appearance in transcript): Childhood in Germany and Argentina, Spanish, ESL, Holland Public Schools, first impressions of Holland, Crossroads Chapel, a bilingual community, celebrations of different cultures in Holland, acceptance of differences, pains of growth in the city, socio-economic issues, women working out of the home, changes in Holland, downtown, migrant workers, church sponsored immigration of Asians, importance of understanding differences in culture, Lincoln School, youth, Holland school system, social programs, traffic, Dutch work ethic, Haworth, subsidized housing, working with Spanish speaking families, graduation celebration for minority children, demand for workers, other changes in Holland.

Summer Oral History Project 1996

Interviewee: Monika Giddy (MG), Director of the Bilingual Education Program for Holland Public Schools

Interviewer: Tracy L. Bednarick (TLB), Oral History Student Coordinator

TLB: The date is May 26, 1996. We are here with Monika Giddy, at the offices of Holland Public Schools. Please state your name, date of birth if you'd like, where you were born, and when you came to Holland for the first time.

MG: My name is Monika (Idiga?) Giddy. I was born in May of 1945, in Germany in a small town called (Strata?), Germany. I was about three and a half/four years old when my parents immigrated to Argentina. So we spoke German at home. We maintained the traditions and some of the cultural aspects regarding family life in German. My whole cultural upbringing was done in a Spanish speaking country, with neighbors that only spoke Spanish, in schools where all the instruction was done in Spanish.

TLB: How did you pick up the Spanish?

MG: Very well. That is why I think sometimes that the job that I do now is so perfect for me. I can base it on my own experiences, as growing up. I picked up the language. First of all I was a small child immersed in it. Outside my home only Spanish was spoken. All my friends were Spanish speakers. As I played and as I attended school

that is how I learned the Spanish. And Spanish is really my, next to English now, is really my other strongest language. A language is not that hard to pick up when you...well my German was a very solid German. All the concepts and my vocabulary was well developed. At home my parents read to us. They read a lot in German. When you have all that basis it is not hard at all to make the transfer in to another language.

TLB: Do you want to talk a little bit about what you do for the Holland Public Schools?

MG: You bet. Do you want me to tell you when I came to Holland?

TLB: Sure.

MG: We immigrated to the United States after I had lived 16 years in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I got a degree in the United States, in Michigan in Special Education. {what was the school?} I lived in the South for awhile, for about three years. Then I came to Holland in August of 1974 and I was the first English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher that the Holland Public Schools had. We had some children spread out all through the high school to the junior high school and in about four elementary school that required instruction in English. They were multilingual Spanish speakers. I was a travelling teacher. I would go and pull them out to and have instruction with them and teach them English, English as a Second Language.

TLB: Where you married when you came to Holland?

MG: Yes, I was married and I already had a little boy. {Mrs. Giddy, could you answer the following questions? When is the name of your husband? Where and when did you meet him? What is the name of you son?} And we came to Holland because it

sounded like a beautiful town, it is close to the water, and we were ready to establish ourselves. It was kind of exciting, you pick a town and fortunately... And I called to find out...my husband was an attorney, so he was looking for employment. He wanted to open his own practice, and I needed to be assured an income. I had a degree in special education. So I called here, Holland, and I talked to the special education director. I said, "Do you have a position open in special education." He said, "No." But since I had an accent, he said, "But we do have a large Spanish population. We just got some grant money. We need to hire some people." Well I said, "I'm fluent in Spanish." So I was employed. And as I said, I was the first English as a Second Language teacher.

That was in 1974, we now have seven full time ESL teachers in Holland, covering elementary, middle school, and high school.

TLB: Do these teachers have more permanent places?

MG: Yes. We have four elementary. The four elementary ESL teachers cover six schools. They don't have to travel to that degree. We have a couple of them split, but they would be in the mornings at one school and then in the afternoon in the other one. So it is a very permanent stable arrangement already.

TLB: What were some of your first impressions when you came to Holland? You said it was a beautiful city. How was it different from the place you moved here from? You said you lived in the south, where did you live there?

MG: Yes, we lived in Birmingham, Alabama. It wasn't that different in that sense because Birmingham, Alabama is still part of the "Bible Belt." Everything was closed on

Sunday, so we came to Holland, Michigan and everything was closed on Sundays it didn't bother us at all. When we came to Holland we were looking for a place to live. We were told that we couldn't do laundry on Sundays and hang it outside. We couldn't wash our cars on Sundays and we shouldn't do yard work on Sundays. We were told all that very very specifically.

TLB: When you were looking for a house?

MG: Yes. The other things are that when I was looking for child care, because I was employed I was told quite often and very distinctly that a mother's place is in the home and she should not be working outside the home. Okay, well I said, "But we have got to eat." [laughter] My child needs to eat! I would like to eat!

TLB: Right! So your interactions with the people in Holland were a little bit different that they were in Birmingham or no?

MG: Oh no, it was just that that was how it was. Our life was so busy that we that really...our interactions were mostly delegated to the work place. Later on to the church, the church we attended. No, it didn't bother us. It was just something that we just said, "Okay."

TLB: Can I ask you if you stayed with the same church that you started out with?

MG: No I did not. We started visiting a lot of churches. I joined one church, Hope Church. We enjoyed it while the kids were little. Later on we just did not find that it was what we were looking for. I now go to...I am a member...in a Reformed church, but it is a bilingual church. I go to Crossroads Chapel. Which is bilingual. There are several things that attract me to it. It represents the variety of the

community. The service is done bilingually, Spanish and English. The membership has a combination. There are people that only speak English. There are people that only speak Spanish. A lot are in between. But it just is more like an outreach church. It meets what I look for in a church. It does that better.

TLB: Have you noticed changes in the church, in general? What about the interaction between the church and the community in Holland since you moved here in 1974.

MG: I think there are more Spanish churches. There were some when I came to Holland. I think there is more. Like at Crossroads Chapel it is a direct evolution of the community...of a bilingual community. A community that does not feel totally comfortable in an all Spanish church or an all English speaking church. A median has to be accomplished. Many of the parents may only speak Spanish and some English. The children will be speaking mostly English and just understanding Spanish. There had to be something that meets those needs.

TLB: Right. Do you think that this helps the students going to a bilingual church, instead of going to an all Spanish church?

MG: It helps to keep their identity. And it helps to keep kids to know where they belong and helps maintain their identity without having to question it. It helps them to feel certain, and assured, and positive about who they are. That is very very important. That is something that we need to continue really fostering in this community, because we are a very varied community. We are not just all Dutch.

Something that I do through all my jobs, through the bilingual program, I have to do something called the home language survey. In it we ask newly enrolled

parents to write which language is spoken in that home. We ask, which language was the first language the child spoke, or was it exposed to? And whether or not other member of the household speak a language? And all the years that I have done it and I have been with Holland since 1974; I've done this specific part, that specific aspect for about 15-16 years. Of all of those years, there is only one time, one single time, that somebody wrote down Dutch. One time. This was a family and they didn't stay long. They wrote down Dutch. Close to 22 percent of the children in the Holland Public Schools are exposed to a language other than English. That doesn't mean they speak another language, but in their homes somebody is speaking another language other than English. And nobody is exposed to Dutch.

TLB: Yes.

MG: That just tells you how much the community has changed.

TLB: What are some things that can be done in the community to help people that are of nonnative backgrounds that have come to the Holland community so that they may hold on to their heritage?

MG: Respect, acceptance, celebration, empowerment. Those are all good words. Part of it, we just celebrated Tulip Time, we just finished with that. But we also celebrate the Cinco de Mayo Fiesta at the Civic Center. And that needs to continue, that is one opportunity for everybody. Eating Spanish food and dancing to Spanish music and feeling comfortable around their peers. Celebrating among their peers. That is very very important. I know that the Cambodians do their own Cambodian New Year. Laotians do their Laotian New Year. And of course, the Vietnamese do their Lunar



New Year. Those celebrations and the city does several things in which they value, and let different groups be showcased. And it needs to be done so that at all times children, students, adults feel that they can identify and have something that they can look forward to.

TLB: Do you think that the relationship between people in the community is changing in Holland? Has acceptance increased, or is it still a long way to go? Or...?

MG: I think it has increased, but it is going to take. I think it had increased because Holland is such a, the whole town has a lot of new people coming in - a lot of newcomers. It has increased, but we still have a long ways to go in a total acceptance and total lack of not just attributing and blaming different minorities for bringing different problems to the community. That is just not so. If we have different situations here in Holland, crime increases. It is not just an attribute to the minorities. Which some people in Holland like to believe. They just believe it, that it is directly related to the minorities that we now have. That is something that we need to stay away from. What we are experiencing is growth. And growth always brings pain with it. And it really is...and we need to deal with it effectively. But not to the degree that we believe that all of the problems in the community are related to the new growth...with the new minority, with the increase of minority representation in the city. It is not a minority issue. It is a socio-economic issue. It is a variety of other issues.

TLB: Right.

MG: The city needs to address, especially when it comes to our youth, the city needs to

address the city, the community needs to address more things. I'm very excited about the Boys and Girls Club. I also feel very saddened that they have not been able to find a sight yet, because there is no place in this community for youth to hang out. There is nothing to do productive and healthy. We want everybody to behave, but we do not provide alternatives.

And you know the whole social, the whole community, the whole social strata. The fact that 22 years ago, when I came to Holland I was told a mother's place is in the home, if you look now in the community of Holland how many mothers are working. It is way beyond. I mean it is really up to level...the national level. It is past 50% - 60% of the mothers work outside of the home. Not because they really want to, but because it is necessity. We have a lot of employment around here, but it is not, in a majority of the cases, it doesn't net that much money. It is decent, but it is still going to be working poor; if only one works they can't make ends meet. Rent is high, the cost of living is high, and one salary just doesn't do it.

TLB: Well, you have your list of changes so why don't you just highlight some of the biggest changes you've seen in Holland since you've been here.

MG: I think the biggest change in Holland, is that stores are open on Sunday. I remember when Meijers used to be on the Northside where now D&W is located. The old Meijer store, when they decided to stay open on Sunday big ads in the paper were taken out. Do you have that in your archives?

TLB: Yes, I could look.

MG: I mean it was the whole back page of the Sentinel. Sunday is the day of the Lord and

you are not supposed to be shopping, or anything like that. I remember that it was very hard even getting a prescription filled on Sundays. I mean on Sundays, this town went to sleep. It's nice, it really is nice. I personally don't really like to go to drive to another town on a Sunday and see them putting a roof on a house, or see them painting a house. I don't like that. There's got to be a day of...I do believe, if you should go to church or kind of tone down things down a bit. Now not do heavy duty work. But yes, you've got to do some things. You can't stay totally restive, because on Monday you are going back to work, so when are you going to do these things.

TLB: Right.

MG: Again, that is changing. It used to be that yes you could make Sunday truly a day of rest, because on Monday the housewife would stay home and the husband would go to work. The housewife could then do these things. Not putting on a roof, but at least washing cars, or doing yard work. Doing all of those outside chores. Times have changed for better or for worse, that's how it is. It has to be done.

The big thing was on Sundays. You couldn't even get a prescription filled. I remember Model Drug had just barely, just a Pharmacy. And sometimes, they were open just a couple of hours. It was so limited. And Town and Country was the other store that was opened on Sunday. Town and Country is where the Salvation Army has its clothing store. That was a grocery store that was open for a few hours on Sunday, in case you really ran out of something and if you needed to get something you didn't have to drive to Grand Rapids. Other than that there was nothing open.

The store would close at 5 o'clock on Saturday and you were out of luck if you needed anything, or you would have to drive to Grand Rapids.

And I remember the only place you could shop was downtown. There was no mall. Unless you drove to Grand Rapids you were limited by the downtown merchants. Which if you really had to have something you could not do comparative shopping. You had to buy what you needed and pay for it what you had to pay for it. Let me see what other changes. That was a big one. That is the biggest one.

TLB: I don't know if being involved with minorities you've noticed a difference in jobs that are available for more people, because I know that there has been a large increase in industry since.

MG: And that has attracted. What that has done...The first migrant workers came after World War II and they were hired by Hienz. Hienz manufacturing are the ones that hired the first migrant workers, because they needed the workers. People were tied up with the war and they needed workers. Now what happened is that many of those workers ended up finding work here in Holland. And ended up staying. You have first/second generation now of people staying in Holland. A good one to interview for the Archives would be Andy Ferro. He is the minister of Crossroads Chapel. He is 46 years old or so and he graduated from West Ottawa. And he came as a migrant in the migrant stream. He would be a great one. Another one to interview for the archive would be Tina Reyez. And I think he was on the board...the museum board.

TLB: His name sounds kind of familiar.

MG: He used to work at Heinz, and he came in with that group. What happened is when

people found employment they ended up settling out. Because what is truly the dream? The dream is not... To be a migrant is not a dream, it is a necessity. It is a way of making a living. Once you find steady employment and you find housing the hispanic, the migrant family wants to settle down and wants to provide a settled out lifestyle and steady lifestyle and steady schooling. They realize the need for the children to have steady schooling, to be able to get out of that migrant stream. So if you really look back, our migrant, our hispanic families, the original ones came from migrant background. I think that it is something to be very very proud of, because it is a very hard working background. Not too many people can make it as migrants and survive. Their ethics are very strong; their sense of family is unique: strong and solid. The family works together, and travels together, and makes it together. It is something extremely commendable.

TLB: There's got to be a lot of inner-reliance between the members of the family.

MG: It creates a really strong sense of unity. The hispanic family had this anyway.

Hispanics have a very close sense of family. Not just their own immediate family, but their extended family. That is really how the migrant families - the hispanic families came to Holland. We now have other families represented from Chile. We have families from Venezuela. I came from Argentina.

Then in 1979-80, well 1975, the churches sponsored the Vietnamese after the air lift in Vietnam. So we received some Vietnamese families. Then in 1979-80, the churches fully, heavy-duty, major time sponsored Cambodians and Laotian families out of the refuge camps. The Christian Reformed Churches sponsored them.

Brought a unique set of difficulties with it. Unique, unique, unique. Nobody even knew where those countries were. Nobody knew the language. Nobody knew how to communicate with them. Because of the genocide that had happened in Cambodia the families we received were mostly from very agricultural background. It was a challenge. They had gone through extremely traumatic times. I remember one student. She was a middle school, junior high school, student. She would just sit and every once and awhile burst out into tears. I mean we are talking extreme hardship that the families had gone through. They had escaped. They had walked through mine fields. They had been in camps. And then they were sponsored by a church. Which I think is very commendable of the churches to do. To get them out of there; to provide them a new means. But what happened was that the churches were not equipped either to... The churches were just equipped to bring them over here. They were not equipped to provide them any means of support here. Some sponsors were incredible and they still are sponsors of some of these families that you see attending all of the functions. It is just incredible how they really made it part of their family, this extended family.

Overall in general, the school systems were surprised. The Christian Reformed Churches sponsored these students, gave them to us, and the school district. Didn't put them in the Christian schools. Okay. They gave them to the public schools. Why did they give them to the public schools? Weren't they middle class enough or what? We received them and we were supposed to deal with them. And we got them from 1 month to the other. We had huge numbers of a language

we didn't understand. Children who had not been in school. Children who had no...I mean you're transporting them from a pastoral society to our 21st century, totally industrialized, computerized society. It was incredible.

TLB: What are some things that you eventually did to help the students?

MG: We immediately started going. We scrambled. We tried to get all the information we could. We contacted sources all over the United States. We were able to get somebody who could in-service us about traditions. We didn't know anything about religion. We didn't know anything about culture. We didn't know anything about traditions. Teachers, even now, sometimes will pair up a boy and a girl. They said, "Well, they're both Asian, they can do this task together." Not understanding that Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians when they just arrive from those countries have a lot animosity, because they have been at constant war for years. They are not going to get along just because you put them in a classroom together. It is just going to be too hard for them. And also, boys and girls aren't paired up. All those cultural implications. Also, they don't speak the same language. The languages are very very different. We had to learn that very fast and try to disseminate that information out there so that the children's needs would be met.

We had a wonderful person and she spoke. She was a missionary to India or something and she ended up being one of our ESL teachers for many many years. There was an incredible outreach that she did. And worked with them in after-school programs. She was constantly available to them, to help these children with their school work and become kind of enmeshed. Of course, we also provide English as a

Second Language services. Now we have a Vietnamese paraprofessional available full-time at the Holland Schools and two Cambodian ones. Now we can have that parental contact immediately. We contact them, they contact the parents, we know what is happening. Now also in the community is Cambodian Christian Reformed congregation. There is a Laotian Christian Reformed Congregation. Yes, it is quite a change.

I think we have the largest concentration of Cambodians in the state of Michigan here in this area. Those are changes.

TLB: Do you do training for new teachers so that they are aware of the customs, etc., of the students they will encounter?

MG: Yes, not in a totally systemic way, but new teachers are talked to. I familiarize them with some of the information so that they know who to contact if they have some of those situations.

TLB: Yes it is very important to know your students' background.

MG: And it is also very important for the teachers to keep their minds open as new teachers enter the district to know how this community is put together. It is not a Dutch community anymore. It has very strong roots in that, it has its tradition, and it has its heritage, but it is now enriched by the diversity that has been added on to that. The foundation is solid. It is a wonderful solid foundation. Now the house in itself is having different facets and different architecture added on to it.

TLB: It is interesting how a lot of the minorities that do come into the community end up becoming Christian Reformed or joining the Reformed Church.



MG: That is because a lot of the churches have sponsored them.

TLB: Right.

MG: The strong churches. It is interesting, but some of them do keep their Buddhist traditions, and they call it cultural. Because the Buddhism is so enmeshed in their culture. Some weddings, Laotian weddings or some Cambodian weddings, I have attended quite a few, they have the traditional ceremony. Which when you really analyze it is quite Buddhist. And then they have the Christian Reformed Ceremony. It is a combination. And it should be. They should value their heritage.

Yes, changes in Holland. The other things that I remember that the Warm Friend that is now a retirement home used to be a hotel. I remember that we used to have in the Holland Public Schools. There was Federal School. Which is the Lamsey building. Which is across from Hart & Cooley on 8th street before Russ's. There was a day care center there. That used to be a school, part of the Holland Public Schools. Where the Baptist Academy is, that used to be where Montello Park School. That was part of the Holland Public Schools too. As that area got more industrialized, the Federal School, like Lincoln school now, enrollment went down. Because Hope College is buying up so much; the expansion of Hope College has been extraordinary. There are not that many homes, so of course the enrollment in Lincoln school has gone down. The same thing had happened to Federal School, at one time they decided to sell it.

TLB: Do you have a feeling that eventually Lincoln School students...How do you feel about Lincoln School and Hope College buying up more property? Do you think that

the school is threatened?

MG: There are some things in the making to keep Lincoln school as, I don't know what they are going to call it, but it is some kind of collation or partnership formed with the Arts Council to make it a very unique school, so that other students can be bussed in and keep it alive. We need Lincoln school; Hope College needs Lincoln School. Together the partnership that can be established is incredible. They can help both and it can be a training ground for teachers. It is just needed to meet the needs of the student population that we have today. I would hate to see Lincoln School not be Lincoln School anymore. It would be a shame and a waste. Federal School, when Federal School was sold it was understandable. It was an older building, it had limited classroom space. Montello Park School, but the Baptist Academy is really making that go. It was just like six classrooms in it.

We are now a school district with our enrollment steadily increasing. We gain 80-100 kids a year. It has been. We are going to run out of room. But the pockets are different. The pockets are now over there were Federal School, Lamsey building is. Kmart used to be where Big Lots is.

What else? It has really grown. It is just incredible. The only hotel when we came to Holland, Michigan. The only hotel that I recall was the Holiday Inn, which is where the Best Western is now, and the Wooden Shoe. Now look at all the hotels that have sprang up.

TLB: It had become a big tourist...town.

MG: Yes. It has really grown in size. Then downtown, I remember Steketee's was

downtown. Dumous (sp) store was downtown. That's where you did all you shopping. There really was no other place to go shopping, unless you went to Grand Rapids. No malls.

TLB: Do you see any negative aspects of Holland? Any drawbacks to living in Holland?

MG: No, I don't. I think Holland is a terrific town. It just needs to be aware of the diversity of the changes. It needs to plan accordingly. We need to be prepared, especially for our youth. I do not think that we are doing enough to accommodate our youth, empower our youth, and make our youth feel truly contributing members of this community. If they are not associated with a church, it is very hard for young kids to really find something positive and something to do. Again necessity has driven that many households both parents work, which leaves a large number of kids on their own. And we are not talking just minority kids. We are talking working parents. We are not talking the professional where the mom still stays at home. The necessity obligates that both parents work. Factories and plants have not made the necessary accommodations. I do sincerely believe that factories and towns should have special concessions for mothers. If you have your children in school you will be made to work 1st shift and not 2nd, which takes you away from your children all day long. That had not been happening. There needs to be more child care concessions, through the factory. So we take care of our youth. That is our future, and we are not really doing what we need to do with them.

We need to have more youth and recreation centers. Some of the improvements this town has gone through make it a very pretty town, beautiful,

yuppie resort town. That is not the reality of Holland, Michigan. It should be meshed to keep it diverse. It should be both things. If we don't do that. If we don't watch it very carefully then we are going to end up with an inner city and we don't want that. What has made it so rich is the variety.

That is why I am really thrilled and excited that Holland was able to pass the technology millage, because that is going to make us very competitive again with the surrounding school districts. Let's face it, people move into a community...Holland is land locked, there is only so much building that can still be happening. Therefore what we need to do is maximize, so that people that move into Holland want to move into Holland because the schools are so good. If people with families if they look around here think that our schools are lacking they are going to go move to West Ottawa or to Zeeland because that is where they are moving. We have to keep a real competitive edge going. But again, a lot of people like this diversity, so they are trying everything possible to move into the city of Holland so we have to make sure that we offer at the same time competitiveness with the other districts. So that we keep on the cutting edge. We have some very unique things. We really truly represent the global market, the global economy. We need to continue fostering that.

TLB: It seems, almost desirable for the industry to do something to create something for the youth. Maybe to find a place for the Boys and Girls Club. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

MG: There seems to be a wonderful committee, a wonderful board that the Boys and Girls Club has. And they are working very hard on that, but you are still talking money.

Somehow we find money to renovate 7th street, which very few people drive on, but connects the Senior Citizens' Center with the downtown and makes it all very wonderful and pretty. There was a study done some years back, after they renovated downtown, that you have to have a median income of at least \$50,000 to be able to shop downtown. Now you know that, you can't do any bargain shopping downtown. You have to go to Walgreen's here. [Points out window at Walgreens store on River St.] Or to Meijer's. We need to make sure that everything stays equitable. It is wonderful if they do that and I like downtown; it is beautiful. It was just at its best during Tulip Time, but everything else needs to be taking care of too and not neglected. It needs to be balanced. We have to keep a balance to be able to keep this a safe city.

Holland was able to obtain a wonderful Weed and Seed and that has been very very positive. I love the idea of the community police officers, but we still have not done all that we need to do to provide alternatives: positive and viable alternatives for our youth.

We're faced with challenges. We are definitely faced with challenges and it is up to us to make it work now, as a society. It is not dull, it is not a stagnant city. It is a city that is bursting, and it is a city that is alive. The city council and the mayor, they have got their jobs cut out. There is so much happening.

The streets are, even now, when I check the traffic it is incredible. It takes me, depending what time I leave, I drive on to 32nd street, I used to just go straight on to it. Now I have to wait and wait. There is just a steady flow of cars that I can't

turn on. And I don't even turn left, I turn right. There is just a steady flow of cars. And the traffic lights. There is a traffic light here at the corner (16th and Pine). Do you know how many crashes happened at that corner that I can tell you about? It was at least once a week, a fender bender. 16th street and Pine were just lethal.

TLB: Before the traffic light?

MG: Yes. There is something that you have to have so many accidents and then you can establish a traffic light. What a foolish thing. [laughter] I doesn't make that much sense. It is reactive instead of proactive. Every time we turned around, screeching brakes and bang! What is this?

TLB: I am from a small community and we have more traffic lights than Holland has traffic lights. I've never seen a four way stop until I move to Holland. It is like when do you go?

MG: This wasn't even a four way stop, people just went. [laughter] It was just incredible. My office used to be located in what is now the Community Education building and we were right there at the corner. One time we called; we asked the police officer, "What is this? Every week a least one fender bender." He said, "Well you have to have such and such." Another corner that was lethal was the one of State and 32nd and Lincoln. Now they put a five way traffic light.

TLB: The way Holland deals with traffic just amazes me.

MG: And they are talking now about doing some of these road, making them one way. I don't want to see that. That is going to take away from the community, the community flair. Holland has some very good, wonderful things, but you have to

keep your eyes open and you have to projected on the future, and not close your eyes. That you do have lower socio-economic representation in the community. Not everybody makes a lot of money. You do have to take that into consideration and make the necessary accommodations. We do not have enough for our youth! Youth is more restless, now.

TLB: Speaking of youth, have you noticed any type of generation gap between the ages in Holland? Do you think that there may be a lack of understanding of the youth today for the people that are spending the money in the community and the city?

MG: I don't know and I don't want to judge that either, with the neat things that are happening. I view it as a challenge, not as a judging. The way Holland has moved forward it really has been neat. There is very wonderful key people that are always voicing a concern and trying to make sure that things are done to represent everybody. I think in general, like any generation gap, especially because we have a new group people culturally diverse people in the community some old-timers, people that have been here grown up in Holland lived here all there lives and attended Christian Reformed Churches all their lives; they at times find it a little bit puzzling, the differences. The challenge is up to both sides. It is up to the youth to be courteous. I don't know any culture or any tradition that does not honor and value their elders. That needs to continue happening. And at the same time the elders need to keep an open mind. You do see that; you see some older folks that have the best attitude in the world and the best sense of humor. Those that say, "Oh, just kids!" It seems like, especially, when you are talking grandparents and grandchildren that

really connects. The difficulties are with just one generation. But the second one that connects.

You see a lot of blocks that are very interracial mixed. You don't really see in Holland slum areas, a really inner city area, or area where they say, "Oh, I don't want to drive through there." It is still a relatively safe city, no matter what few little incidents. That is part of growth...those growing pains.

TLB: You were talking a little bit, earlier, about [flip tape...conversation turns to the subject and responsibility of the oral history project for the summer of 1996, and some of the interviewer's personal history including the slow growth of the interviewer's hometown, Cadillac, Michigan.]

MG: Well, Holland has the Dutch work ethic. There is a couple of things, it is a Dutch work ethic, it is a Seventh Day Adventists' work ethic. It has attracted very hard work ethics people. If you stop to think that one man in his garage started building the S2 Yachts and start thinking that one man in his garage started making office furniture. It is just incredible. And these people are alive. Mr. Haworth is alive. Haworth is just the third largest office manufacturing company in the world.

TLB: I've met Mr. Haworth. He sponsors my scholarship.

MG: Yes, he started it.

TLB: He just got up one day and said, "I don't think I want to teach anymore, I think I am going to start a business." And he went off and he started a business.

MG: I know it!

TLB: It is amazing.



MG: It is amazing. It is good stuff. It is good products that they are making. I mean look at the clocks that are being made, the grandfather clocks. There is Sligh, their is Howard Miller, the Lifesavers' goodies. [laughter] Yes, all the Lifesavers are made here in Holland, Michigan. Pickles are made here. Pickles are processed here. A lot of food processing too. And that is part of the agricultural surroundings of Holland. You can find work. Also we are close to the lake. You always need water to be able to maintain some of these...and accessibility. I don't know, we just got a lot of industry here and a lot of people are moving in. The problem with Holland right now is that there isn't enough housing in the city of Holland to accommodate the workers, because housing is expensive. The work is available, but it is and \$8/\$7 an hour job. So that is the difficulty, because it doesn't really mesh. It brings in the factor that both parents have to work to be able to make ends meet.

TLB: What I haven't really notice, which we have a lot of in Cadillac, not necessarily low income housing, but rather housing that is not as expensive. It is still a community of houses that are at less cost for the individual families that are living there. I haven't really notice those.

MG: Subsidized housing?

TLB: Yes.

MG: Well there is down on Washington, across from Family Fare. They used to be called 40th West apartments, now it is called some really fancy name that is really cute. It is Harbor something. And then also Meadow Lanes Apartments, those are all subsidized. They have really gone through a change. Again you need to make sure

that subsidized meshes with the other ones, so you don't have pockets of subsidized housing. And you need to make sure that there is a variety and enough options available. Churches are stepping in with that. I know that Youth for Christ does quite a lot of things with Meadow Lanes. I don't know if Central Wesleyan is, I think they were beginning to get involved with that. Keeping the youth occupied in a very positive fashion, so that they won't look for trouble. When they don't have anything to do and there is nobody really at home to guide them kids are going to find each other and they are going to get in trouble. Because they do want to belong, and do they want to feel worthy, and they do want to feel meaningful and powerful. Everybody does. Nobody wants to be just an ant in the corner.

TLB: Tell me about one job or activity that you had to do while you were employed for Holland since 1974 that you really enjoyed, one situation that you had to deal with or something that you really liked doing, or something you just got a lot of enjoyment and fulfillment from.

MG: First of all, my position, what I do right now with the assistance of my office, the staff I have here, we work with the language minority. We work with the families and the students that don't speak English, that are fairly isolated, that are new to the community. One of the things we do here, is we orient them to the community. We network; we even have a booklet that we have translated, how to get around your community, how to know your community. And we network and we facilitate all that. That has been very exciting for me, to be able to help people who are searching for a better life, who are trying to establish, trying to do the right thing, provide a better

future for their students. To be able to facilitate that to make it more accessible so they aren't at lose. I always make sure that these students are really involved at the right programs at schools. So that has been very exciting. It has also been exciting working with parents. Mostly though it has been exciting watching students arrive that don't speak any any English and then watching them graduate from high school a few years later to being able to handle English and having done well in their classes, and then going on to higher education, be it what ever, specific training or college. It has been very exciting. That is what makes it all worthwhile. This office doesn't just do grants and facilitate money. We make sure that the money is utilized, properly. And that it is used on the kids. And that is what makes it very very meaningful to us. Because we see the progress, we don't just operate in numbers; we operate in faces and names. And we have over 400 students in the Holland Public School right now that are classified as migrants. And in our English as a Second Language we have over 250 kids.

TLB: So you still have students that...How do you classify a student at a migrant?

MG: It is when the parents come to Holland with the purpose of finding agricultural related work. That is their purpose. That means working at Heinz, working at Request foods, working at Bill Mar, working at all of those. Or working in the fields: working at Zelinka (sp), working at Vans Pines, working at Walter Gardens. There is a lot of seasonal agricultural work around here.

One of the things that we do, and we have done this now for 16-17 years. Is that we recognize, we have a big graduate celebration. I have a few pictures here

[Shows me the picture of 1996 graduates at the celebration]. (invitation and program are included in oral history folder) We honor the high school students, the culturally diverse high school students, that graduated from high school. This year from the surrounding are high schools we had 124 culturally diverse students that graduated. Now in Holland, that is about 25 percent. Zeeland graduated 18 kids. West Ottawa had, I don't know I do have the list. This is something my office has started and I continue doing so. We celebrate the accomplishments, because we are aware of the fact. Our feature speaker was Mr. Yelding (Hope College Education Department). We just did it last Thursday; we do this each year.

TLB: Do you have an extra program?

MG: Yes, you can have this. Mr. Yelding was our feature speaker. The whole theme was "Success, the best is yet to come." That was the theme for this year. Again this is the 16th or 17th year we have been doing this. These are all the graduates from the surrounding schools [refer to program]. And we celebrate that. It is not...it is for minority students harder to graduate. It is almost like it is not expected of them. It is an accomplishment for them. It is a reason to celebrate, for them and their families. Alone they didn't make it. They did not operate in isolation. There was somebody there...well, actually she did [points to a student in one of the pictures] but her teachers carried her through not her family, but all of these kids their families carried them through. Incredible families. We celebrate their accomplishments. We celebrate the culturally diverse students, and it is not just hispanic; it is sispanic (sp), it is African-American, and its Asian. Like I said, a lot of mainstream white families

are going through struggles too, but the struggles that a minority child faces are far superior than the struggles that a main stream child faces. So they need more parental support, family support, family belief, to be celebrated. It is a real cool party. There are about 225 attend, because its families and kids. Not all the students show up. It is about 50% of the students that show up. Really nice evening.

TLB: A lot of these questions we have covered just in talking. What do you think some of the...Well no...Holland has gone through a lot of changes since you have been here, what do you think some of the causes are these...you did cover some of this...can you think of any other causes besides the general outlook of the community and the get up and go that a lot of people in the community have?

MG: Again, there is a solid need for work. I remember when I came, I think their was only Manpower operating, now look at all the temporary placements that are operating now. So there is work. Also, people like to move to a town where they are not isolated. Of course that is what happened. More Cambodian families move to second migrations, because there are Cambodian families here. Hispanic families...if one family comes they feel isolated so they start contacting their brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles. They say, "Hey listen, you can find work here." And so they move in; that is how it expands. It's one family that comes and contacts others. And wouldn't you? I mean I even did that with my own family. I didn't work. I told my brother and sister, "Wait a minute we could use you here." They are both teachers. I said, "We could use you, with your skills so we could use you here." If they would have taken me up that would have expanded my family locally.

TLB: One question I want to ask before I forget it, then we should probably get on to wrapping up so you can get on to the rest of you appointments: You did mention migrant workers, do you have students that come to the school temporarily and leave to go in search, their families, for work somewhere else? Are your services different for those students?

MG: Well, the services...we really try to move fast, put them in the right programs, and encourage them to stay. I do that individually. If I know there is a situation where if I know that is possible for them to stay we will encourage that because if a child is going to be...it is very hard to be successful...but yes there are success stories in the migrant. A lot of kids do that. If they move back from here to Texas there is an exchange program. Texas will take our credits, and we just validate that. The students can continue at that level.

TLB: Do you have any trouble getting the parents to bring their students to the schools?

MG: No, because we are the clearinghouse. They come here; everybody know us. And everybody knows my migrant recruiter; Magda Flores, my homeless coordinator, Mercedes Langejans, and everybody knows us. We have been in existence a long long time. And people know how to contact... They just come. I mean for us to have a family of ten walk in, is nothing unusual. It is just like a doctor's office. Then I will talk to them, "What school do we need to go to? Do we need English as a Second Language Services? Where are we going to facilitate all of this?"

TLB: What were the names of the other people that work in this office with you?

MG: Magda Flores. My secretary, Ester Ramirez, who has been with me 22 years...well,

we've been with each other for 22 years. Actually, I was pregnant with my daughter and she was pregnant with her son. And they are good buddies. It was a riot...Heidi and Jay. Their birthdays are just one week apart. Mercedes Langejans. And I have a social worker, a bilingual migrant social worker, Sarah Lujan. And then our other gal that helps us with the homeless program is Rebecca Garza. This is the office and we help do this, together with the other district. [points out the people in a picture] I am in charge of Title 1 reading too. [points out Title 1 secretary] We have a very active parent advisor; he is our chairperson: Andres Ferro. He is the other one you want to interview about changes. And this Adin (sp) Ramirez, he is my counterpart in West Ottawa.

{Mrs. Giddy...Do you have homeless students in Holland? If yes, how aware do you think the general community is of this?}

Do you want Andy Ferro's phone number?

TLB: Yes.

MG: I think you...just play with that and we will talk some more as we look at it. And as you think about something, I'm available. Thank you for the opportunity.

TLB: No, thank you.

MG: It was neat; it was a riot to think of all the changes. The stadium wasn't there, McDonald's, Burger King was downtown where the Knickerbocker is. Yes.

TLB: I can just imagine how much it is going to keep changing.

MG: Yes. Where Richard DeVos has his house on South Shore Drive, which is a huge sprawled out house there used to be a really beautiful old home there. Huge. They

moved it like 200 yards. It was a huge home. It is now on Marigold. And you won't believe it when you look at it; they moved that house. And we all went and watched it. They moved it inch by inch by inch.

TLB: I bet.

MG: It was a beautiful home so it was great that they didn't just tear it down.

TLB: I think that that is one thing that Holland really cares about, is there historic...

MG: The historic, yes I like that too. The fire too. I think the Christian schools used to have a building on 16th street, but it burned. We watched it. Different areas burned and then new things were built.

TLB: Right.

MG: Like Walgreen's; this used to be Montgomery Wards.

TLB: Really.

MG: Yes, that used to be an old Montgomery Wards store. So not that we needed to keep a Monkey Wars, but Walgreens is a cool store. [end of interview]