Goodman, Barb Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Annette Daly

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses_holland

Part of the Archival Science Commons, and the Oral History Commons

Recommended Citation

http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses_holland/46

AD: We are going through the initial contact form, so I will ask Barb your full name?

BG: Barbara Allen Goodman.

AD: You don't have to give your date of birth, but they ask for it if you want to.

BG: [date removed], 1954.

AD: Your place of birth?

BG: Toronto, Canada.

AD: Ah, you are a Canadian! Your mother's name, including her maiden name?

BG: Eloise Matthews.

AD: Your father's name?

BG: Arthur Allen.

AD: Your siblings' names, including there birthdates if you know them.

BG: They probably wouldn't want me to give their birthdates (laughing).

AD: Well, how about names then?

BG: Judith Andrews, Ardythe Lawrence.

AD: And your spouse's name?

BG: Ned Goodman.

AD: The date of your marriage?


AD: Place?
BG: Toronto.

AD: Now your children's names, we met Sean. Names and dates of birth and place?

BG: Sean, that is July 29, 1987.

AD: And place?

BG: Akron, Ohio. Lindsay. And that is December 6, 1983, also in Akron.

AD: Your church membership?

BG: Grace Episcopal.

AD: Your schooling up to....

BG: Mine? Post back, I have hours beyond my degree. I have a bachelors plus.

AD: Can you list where you lived chronologically and roughly the dates? You were in Toronto when you grew up?

BG: Yes. I was in Toronto all of my life until I got married and then I moved to.... Do you want exact towns and things?

AD: Yes, the town.

BG: Then I moved to a small town called Wadsworth, Ohio.

AD: Oh, sure I know that one. And you were there how long?

BG: I was there for thirteen years, and then moved to Holland. We have been here for eight.

AD: The jobs you have had, have you always been in the market? Can you tell me the kind of work that you do?

BG: I am a Special Ed. teacher. Since we moved here I have been a professional volunteer and just lately have become a reading assistant at one of the elementary
AD: At what school do you work?

BG: Woodside.

AD: Do you belong to any clubs in town?

BG: No. When I was volunteering, before I went back to work, I worked a lot at the Holland Area Arts Council.

AD: That is a membership.

BG: Well, yes. I guess I don't think of it as a club.

AD: Or an organization. Did you do that on a full time basis?

BG: Volunteering? Yes, pretty much. I think that is why Ned thought I should go back and get paid for it (laughing).

AD: Tell me a little bit about your family; your husband and your children. What does your husband do, for instance?

BG: He is, I guess you would call it an engineer. He has always worked in research and development. When we moved here it was because he had taken a job with Prince and was working in their advanced manufacturing facility.

AD: So that is your reason for leaving Wadsworth.

BG: Yes. That and the beach (laughing). He really wasn't intending to move. Prince contacted him and he thought he would just come and see. He got one look at the lake, and he said, "We have to move here." You wanted to know about my kids?

AD: Yes.

BG: They are thirteen and almost ten. They are active in sports and music. That is what
is keeping me running right now, all the time.

AD: Yes, that keeps you busy. The strange noises in the background, (laughing) a golden lab...Is it golden lab?

BG: Golden Retriever.

AD: He is charming, but he is noisy. Everything is all right. Have you been involved in any of the changes that Holland has seen lately? We have been growing quite a bit.

BG: How do you mean?

AD: The growth, or the arts, or involved in the library building, or fundraising.

BG: Most of the fundraising I have done has been in connection with the Arts Council.

AD: When you moved here from Ohio, what were your first impressions of this city on your first visit?

BG: The very first thing that Ned did is took me to State Park. We came here in January or February so we weren't seeing it at its best, but it really was wonderful to get there. (Phone ringing) And then, I was kind of surprised because when we decided to make the move and came here the first time, we had one of the realtors, I think it was Woodland Realty, had a relocation person. They didn’t really show you houses, but kind of showed you the area. She told us we would not want to be on the south side of Holland. She told us that we would want to be on the north side, and really didn’t show us.... At the time that we moved here also, in all fairness to her, the market had hit its high point. Houses were going up and selling in three hours, and there was not much to choose from. Everything was selling as fast as it was going on
the market. She did make a very definite point about telling us that we would not want to buy on the south side, we would want to be on the north side with all the other transients. So, now I am feeling really guilty that we are getting ready to move away because I'm thinking, "Well, there you are, I am a transient." I thought that was kind of surprising, but it was.... The picture was painted that the south side was very Dutch, and if you were not Dutch, or Dutch descent you would not feel comfortable there, you would not want to be there, and you wanted to be on the north side if you were moving in.

AD: How did you feel when the realtor talked to you that way?

BG: I was kind of taken aback at first. It made me curious, I wanted to look at property on the south side (laughing). Actually when we ended up buying this house it was not through a realtor anyway - it was for sale by owner. It was the beach that was the draw, so that was the reason that we picked this house. It seemed not very friendly, I guess. I think that I got that impression because of the way it was introduced to us. It is a very conservative place, and having lived here for awhile I can see how good that is when you are raising a family. It is not bad living in a conservative city at all when you are raising kids. I think it has loosened up a lot in the last few years. I have noticed a change just in.... And, I think once you start dealing with people and meeting people, and once I started working at the Arts Council. Now granted, a lot of the people that I worked with ended up being people who were on the north side. But I think it is.... It is hard to describe. I think that there is sort of an aura about Holland city, about the downtown and that south side
area that is kind of cold to some people because it is sort of small town. But, I think is really unique, too, and I would hate to see it lose that completely. I think that is kind of an important part of Holland. And, sometimes you do feel like you are kind of on the fringes, but that is not all that bad either.

AD: Are you explaining your interaction with the people in Holland who have been here a long time?

BG: To be perfectly honest, I probably haven’t had, with the exception of a few people that I have met through church, I haven’t had the opportunity, I guess. And, maybe that is because I haven’t actively gone out and sought that opportunity, but in the different areas where I have worked, which has been school and the Arts Council, I probably haven’t run across that many people who have lived here all their lives. I think I have run across more people who have moved into the area. If we all of a sudden moved into a really established neighborhood on the south side, I don’t know, maybe we would find that those people were right. I kind of doubt it, but we might.

AD: Are there any other negative aspects of Holland? We will get to the positive aspects too, but are there any other negative aspects that you would like to talk about, that have bothered you?

BG: No. There really aren’t. I think probably my husband had to deal with that a little bit more in his work than I ever had to because I was just doing what I wanted to do. I was volunteering where I wanted to volunteer, so I had the cake job for awhile. I think that he found that the conservative, and probably a lot of the Christian Reformed influence, was pretty heavy for the business world. I consider myself to be
a very religious person, but I think that it doesn't always mix in business. There were just a few things here and there that happened, that made us sort of stop and look, and think "well, you know." Finding a church was kind of interesting when we first moved here too because there is a Christian Reformed Church every three doors (laughing).

AD: That is true.

BG: Trying to find another church was kind of different. I think that is part of what makes Holland kind of neat because I think there is a really good work ethic, I think there is a good family ethic here that you don't find in a larger city, in maybe a more cosmopolitan kind of city, that you do still find here. For people who are bringing up kids, that is a neat thing to have. Sometimes I think it gets a little over done, or I think it is a little bit pushy, but for the most part I don't really have a lot of complaints.

AD: What other qualities seem to stand out about the town for a newcomer?

BG: I would say pride. When you look at how well everything is kept. Just us driving around and looking at neighborhoods, and looking at schools, and stuff like that. You go through neighborhoods that are way more expensive than this one, or you go through neighborhoods that are quite a bit less than expensive than this one, and everything is very well taken care of no matter where you are. I think that, to me, was very, very different from other cities where I have lived, in Canada and in Ohio, where you had areas that were run down and people weren't looking after them. I think that really stands out. I think people really notice that when they come in. I
think Michigan, as a whole, is a clean state. I think a lot of the recycling bills and things that they have contribute to that.

AD: You said that your husband was looking for a house. Why are you leaving?

BG: It's his job. We are leaving because he has taken a job with another company.

AD: Where will you be going?

BG: Actually, not too far from where we lived before.

AD: In Ohio?

BG: We will be heading back to Ohio, yes. To the Akron area. It is interesting because having been here and experienced the school system and experienced the area, we have very high standards, and we are having a very hard time finding a place that we like. I could talk for a long time about the school system, I won't get into that.

AD: Say some about the school system because you are closely involved with that in your work.

BG: I think it is a good school system, but I think it is kind of a bandwagon school system. I have seen them jump on a lot of things and then they just go by the wayside. You can't constantly change curriculum without kids missing things here and there. They have got a really good math curriculum in place right now. I hope that they don't just abandon it in a few years, which seems to be the way things go around here. They get really excited about something and then it sort of fizzes out a little bit.

AD: Why do you think that is so?

BG: There seems to be a real passion for them to be on the cutting edge. While I can
applaud that, and I think that there are a lot of school districts that could do with some more of that kind of thinking, I think that you also have to give something an opportunity. Give whatever teaching methods, or books, or whatever you are using, I think you have to give it a chance before you.... You can’t revise constantly without kids missing some things. I also think a lot of money has been sunk into technology which, yes is important, but some of it... The phones systems and things like that I wonder if they couldn’t have spent more money on personnel, to teach the kids how to use the computers, or to teach the teachers how to use the computers. That kind of thing, before we put in all this other stuff. I think they are doing a good job.

Academically, our elementary has been excellent. I’m not at all worried that Lindsay won’t have equal or better academics when she gets to Ohio. I think in the middle school kind of needs some help.

AD: That is an interesting observation from a teacher. In what way do you think the middle school needs help?

BG: I just think there are standards.... Never having taught in that particular middle school, they might be doing the best that they can. They have a huge student population that they have to contend with. But, I think that a lot of things, standards for behavior, standards for dress, all those kinds of things are laid out very nicely, but then they don’t always get enforced. At that particular age, I think it is important that you make sure that things do get enforced because they’re testing constantly. Kids are always testing, but I think especially in middle school age they are testing a lot. Most of Lindsay’s classes have been pretty good. I just feel like she hasn’t been
pushed academically. I think the new math curriculum is really good and it has pushed those middle school kids because they were diving into it and had never had the benefit of this in elementary. It is a curriculum that builds on itself, so that the kids that are starting out now - kindergarten, first, and second grade, will really do well with it as they go through. The kids that just all the sudden got it slapped on them last year had a very hard time adjusting to it. Then, you kind of wonder.... I just don’t think they set their academic standards high enough and I think they aren’t able to offer the enrichment that they need to because they have too many kids and not enough teachers, or whatever. From what I have seen and looked at and looked at test scores and things because school district is a big thing where we are moving, I think that the middle school and high school will be equally or more challenging for the kids than they are right here. And, that may get ironed out when West Ottawa gets their new buildings in place and they can lower the size. The middle school that we will be going into, any one of them is half the size of what they are in now. That causes some problems just in management when you have got those kind of numbers.

AD: Let’s talk a little about your church. Grace Episcopal is a very nice church in town. How were you accepted there?

BG: Very, very readily. We walked in and people immediately came up and talked us, and made sure the kids got into their.... I had called because I didn’t know whether we had to register the kids for Sunday school, or what happened. So, they kind of knew we were coming and it was kind of like they kind of took us in. Then I started helping out in Sunday School and now for probably five or six years I have been
teaching Sunday school there. Ned coordinates all the acolytes for the services. He started helping out with that and then the lady that he was helping went to move onto something else, so he took that over. He has been doing that for about three years. So, we’ve become quite active and I really like it. I like the people, I love the service. That is going to be something that is going to be very, very hard to replace. We really didn’t go to very many other churches because I was raised Anglican, Ned was raised Episcopal and that was the only one (laughing), so that is the one you go to.

AD: That is true.

BG: We didn’t have that choice. I have periodically through the years that we have been here tried to talk to people about the Christian Reformed religion and see what the differences are and what angle they are coming from. It is interesting I think, that there are…. I guess I kind of like to explore the differences and the compare the two.

AD: How do you feel you made social contacts, through what organizations or what part of your life did you make friends?

BG: Our really good friends have come through school. I think we are at the time of our lives when our friends are…. Before, our kids used to make friends with the children of our friends. Now, it’s more like we become friends with parents of our kids’ friends. It has kind of shifted a little. But, I would say most of them came through school, through working on PTA things. And, some through work, and some through Arts Council things, but most of them were from school. That is where I spent most
AD: Yes, that is natural contact. Have you ever noticed a generation gap in Holland between the ages? And, talk about that, if you have seen it. With the children, the parents, and seniors. There are a lot of seniors here. And, as you know many children.

BG: My kids have always been involved in things. Lindsay is in the Chamber Chorale and they go to Freedom Village and they sing or they go.... So, they have always kind of done things. They did things when she was in Girl Scouts where we took gifts over and sang at Christmas, and those kinds of things. So, I guess I’ve never really noticed that there was any division or anything like that. I think from our initial impression, I would think that people might feel that there is still that "old school" that doesn’t want anything to change. And then, there are people like us who have moved in who kind of think this is kind of cool. There is going to be a community center, there are brew pubs opening up downtown, there are more places to go and that kind of thing.

AD: You are really giving me the kind of information we are looking for here, and it would be interesting to hear what you have heard other people say about Holland. Has your family visited you and what did they think? Or friends who visited you, what did they think of Holland when they first come here and see it?

BG: We slant things a little bit because when people come to visit us, especially the first time, the first thing we do is walk them up to the lookout and have them see the lake. Of course, everyone thinks it is wonderful. But I think our friends and family have
been very taken with downtown. With things like the Farmers’ Market, all those kinds of things you can do in a town this size. I guess that is one of the things I would worry a little bit about. Coming back and finding that that is not there because it has gotten too big. And it is growing so much that the worry is there that it could happen. The one thing that is really good about Holland is that you can’t expand that way, so you have got kind of this limiting factor in being right on the water that they can probably control that. I know people that I met through school that I have gotten to know have felt that there are certain people and companies, Prince being one of them, people were always kind of treading lightly because they knew Ned worked at Prince, but, that they think have a little bit too much say as in what goes on. They feel like Holland is really…. And, I don’t know myself, I don’t know that I have an opinion on this because I…. It is kind of like when things go wrong at church, I sort of go in and teach Sunday school and leave. If people are in one corner going like this, it kind of all goes over my head. But I do have a friend that has said several times that they think there are one or two people who really control what is going on in Holland and it is not for the majority to decide. For the most part, if that is true, they are doing a pretty good job, so I would say let them keep going (laughing). I know that people that have come to visit have really liked it. The biggest attraction, probably more so than the downtown, being the lake. I think that’s where this place is very special.

AD: Do you have a boat or do you just swim?

BG: No, we sail. We have a couple of sailboats, little sailboats, that we can take down
and leave on the beach. One of these days we probably will. We are kind of hoping, if we can work it out, that we won’t have to sell this place, that we will be able to rent it. I guess maybe that goes back to the fact that there are a lot of older people in this town, it seems like it would be a pretty good place to retire.

AD: You’re not planning to leave Holland entirely then, if you hold on to this house.

BG: No. We would very much like to come back. And, if that doesn’t work because obviously that is going to be something of a financial strain to try and have two houses, even if this one is rented, Ned has already said that we will start looking for property to acquire in the future that we could come back to. He would very much like to come back here.

AD: That is interesting. You have been here eight years and that is a relatively short time, but you still would like to come back. So, how do you feel about leaving?

BG: I have really mixed feelings. Educationally, it is going to be fine for the kids, the job opportunity for him was really too good to pass up, but there is a lot that we will miss. I really like what I am doing right now and I am not going to probably be able to turn around and replace that immediately. And at some point, I would like to come back or be able to at least come back in the summer and visit because there are so many things. It is a neat place, especially living here. And, I think in some ways that if I came back I would still head this direction and head to the north side just because living here, for me, is kind of like being at the cottage. We used to go to cottage’s in Ontario all the time and that is what I had felt like ever since we lived here. It is an old cottage line up there, there are a lot of homes that are.... Well,
there are more homes now that are used year-round, but many, many people in our allotment are summer people. So, it is just kind of like…. Now people are starting to come back, and you see them again, and they have been gone all winter in Chicago or in Grand Rapids, or wherever. That is what I think has been so unique, has been that kind of environment, and still have all of the things that you need; you have got a downtown area, you’ve got the Farmers’ Market, you will have, I’m sure when the community center gets built, access to a lot of different activities and concerts and things like that. So, you have got kind of the best of both worlds.

AD: Have you taken advantage of any of the courses, or the arts at Hope College? You know they have the theater too, and I know they offer adult courses. Are you still studying for instance?

BG: I haven’t been. That is something that I probably would have started in the next couple of years. I kind of really took a kids’ sabbatical and just dove into running around and volunteering at school and making sure everybody was doing their homework and doing all of this stuff. I am not a superwoman so I cannot do it all, so I gave up that part so that I could do this. I would think that Hope, being so accessible, and of course now that we are leaving and our thirteen year old is really upset with us about the whole thing. She is determined she is going to go to college at Hope. In fact she thought that if we kept the house she could go there and just live here.

AD: How do you feel about her going to Hope in four years?

BG: It will depend a lot on what she is taking. I said I know that Hope has a really good
seminary program, I know it sure would help, thank God, but I think she needs to choose her college based on what she wants to go into, and we will go for whatever school has a good strong program in that area. If that ended up being Hope, then she would really have to get a scholarship before she could go there (laughing).

AD: Or, you could teach at Hope and she could go tuition-free.

BG: Now there, that is an incentive. I could do some of that. I don’t know, it is not that far in the future, but it seems like it should be still a long way away.

AD: It comes quickly doesn’t it?

BG: I’ll bet, yes.

AD: Did these eight years go quickly for you too?

BG: Yes, they did. At first, it really was kind of lonely before I got to know people at school and things like that. I did go to Newcomers for awhile, but I’m not really a Newcomers kind of person. I just decided to hang out at the Arts Council instead.

AD: That is a good place. They will be in a new location soon won’t they?

BG: Yes.

AD: Do you think you will get involved in an Arts Council again in Ohio?

BG: I think it will be harder because Akron is so much larger. I don’t think I would have done all those things had we been living in Grand Rapids. The size of Holland has a lot going for it in that respect. We’ll have to see. I’ll have to look into some things. I think I’ll probably dive back into the schools when we first get there and make sure that everybody is happy and settled. And, I’ll watch my daughter very carefully.

AD: We always need remedial readings.
BG: Probably what I will do is go back to school and take reading because I have really enjoyed doing that at Woodside. That is something I would like to go into in more depth.

AD: It seems to me that Holland will be the poorer without you.

BG: Well, thank you.

AD: Thank you for your time and we'll close the interview.