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## Huttar, Charles Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with  
Charles Huttar

Conducted September 4, 1997  
by John Maassen

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project  
"150 Stories for 150 Years"

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project  
Interview with Charles Huttar  
September 4, 1997  
Interviewer: John Maassen

JM: Good afternoon. Am I to call you Charles, or are you Doctor?

CH: I go by Chuck most of the time.

JM: And your name is?

CH: Chuck Huttar.

JM: And your formal name is?

CH: Charles Adolph Huttar.

JM: What nationality would that be?

CH: My father was born in Austria.

JM: And your mother?

CH: Near Wilkes-Barre, PA.

JM: And your father's name was?

CH: His name is Adolph Huttar.

JM: He is still living?

CH: Yes, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

JM: Were you born in Pennsylvania?

CH: I was born in Texas through the circumstance of his having attended law school there.

So that's where my parents happened to be.

JM: And what was your mother's maiden name?

CH: White.

JM: That seems to be more important here in the Holland community where everybody seems to know each other. What is the date of your birth?

CH: [date removed], 1932.

JM: And do you have siblings?

CH: I have two younger brothers, both with doctor's degrees in the broad area that mine is in, in language. My brother, David, has a degree in the biblical languages and teaches at Nyack College. My brother, George, is a linguist currently in Nairobi teaching and working with Wycliffe.

JM: Sounds like your family has a fairly strong Christian background.

CH: Correct.

JM: And you are a graduate of Wheaton? When I was younger I heard of two Wheatons. There's a Wheaton in the east and there is a Wheaton in Chicago. And of course I understand they are quite different.

CH: Well, the one is a women's college or was at the time. So there's no problem in figuring out which one I went to.

JM: Why did you go to Wheaton?

CH: Well, it had a good academic reputation. I'm a little vague about this, but I think that a pastor at an early stage in my childhood had gone there. And that sort of fixed it in my mind.

JM: Tell us something about your educational career in terms of your preparation for what you are doing now.

CH: Well, I became an English major in my sophomore year after the common freshman

experience of bouncing from one idea to another. And that happened largely through the influence of one teacher. I decided at the same point that I wanted to teach. This man was I would guess in his thirties and still finishing a doctoral degree, and he said if you possibly can go straight through. And I took that to heart. I graduated in June of '52 and started summer school at Northwestern the same month in Evanston. And finished my residence there for the doctorate in June of '55 and completed my dissertation that fall and got the degree.

JM: And you are married?

CH: Yes.

JM: Tell me something about your wife, how you met and who she is.

CH: Well, we met in college. She was from Evanston at the time although her home and what she thinks of her roots are in Philadelphia. Her father was a pastor and bishop in the Reformed Episcopal Church and taught at the Philadelphia School of the Bible from which he was called to be dean and then president of Moody Bible Institute. And that's what the situation at the point where we...

JM: So you were married through grad school then?

CH: Yes, we were married the summer after graduation from college.

JM: And did she get a graduate degree as well?

CH: No. She taught for a year and a half in the Chicago school system. Hated it! Began raising kids. About twenty years ago had the opportunity to fill in as organist of our church and was given the permanent position on a part-time basis at which point she began taking organ lessons and decided to go for a second bachelor's degree in music.

She had been an English major at Wheaton. She took a degree in music at Hope. Most of her core requirements were taken care of from her prior studies, but there were a couple of general courses that Hope required that she had to take. One was math and the other was philosophy. And her teacher in philosophy was John Luchies, then retired and filling in in the philosophy department at Hope. We had both had courses from him at Wheaton twenty-some years before.

JM: You have seven children. You want to tell us about them? With seven children we may not have time this afternoon (laughs).

CH: (Laughs) Well, I don't know. When we moved to Holland, I didn't expect to be here very long but it proved to be a congenial relationship with the College and also a good place to raise kids. We had some apprehension that our children would all marry Dutchmen, but in most cases that didn't happen. I won't say whether that's a good or bad thing but...Our oldest is now beginning seminary at forty-three. She lives in the suburbs of St. Paul and is hoping to be ordained to the Episcopal priesthood. Our second lives in Holland next door to us and works in the Hope College Bookstore. Our third lives in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, married to a former Reformed Church minister. Now they're in preparation to go to the mission field under Arab World Mission.

JM: Oh. What would his name be?

CH: David Vos.

JM: I think you've given us three, is that right?

CH: Number four. We finally had a son. Charles Nathan, named after my grandfather.

He does computer work and lives in Naperville, Illinois. Julia is in Ann Arbor - an organist and director of music at St. Clare's Episcopal Church. Betsy is in a law firm in Baltimore; and Tom lives in Holland and also does computer work and hourly wage labor.

JM: What was your first occupation when you graduated from grad school, or did you teach while you were in grad school?

CH: No. I did not go for a (laughs)...I was such...in a sense so bent on quick achievement that I didn't go for an assistantship because I wouldn't have been permitted to take a full-time course of study. Instead of that I got a job in a business in Chicago. Worked about thirty hours a week. Did an awful lot of reading on the Elevated going back and forth. Sometimes I would go up to classes in the morning, then down to work for a while and back for a seminar in the afternoon. That was an organization called, at the time, Wade, Wenger and Associates, which has since developed into Servicemaster, Incorporated. Which I think is fairly well known.

JM: We spent sixteen years in the Chicago area, so I know about it. I know where the offices are. They are west of Chicago.

CH: Out in Hinsdale maybe? But that was my work while I was in graduate school, and then I took a faculty position at Gordon College. I was there for eleven years.

JM: That's in the east, isn't it?

CH: It's in the Boston area.

JM: Was your preparatory career totally in the English field?

CH: Yeah.

JM: And after Gordon College then...?

CH: Then Hope.

JM: How did you wind up at Hope? What was the process?

CH: My last year or two at Gordon, I was actively looking for a new position and had some interviews. But the invitation from Hope came out of the blue. A phone call from Lars Granberg who got my name from a Wheaton classmate, Jim Malcolm, who was teaching at Hope in the speech department. I already at that point had an interview scheduled with Central Michigan in April of '66 and I tacked on a visit to Hope on the same trip. I had a valid comparison between two institutions and picked Hope.

JM: One was state and the other was private, of course.

CH: Right. One was graduate level, which I had thought I wanted, which I still think would have been a good use of my talents and interests. But it didn't work out that way. And what made the difference was I thought the intellectual quality of students at Hope was higher.

JM: What year was that?

CH: 1966.

JM: And who were the president and provost at that time?

CH: Cal Vander Werf was the president. Bill Vander Lugt was filling in as academic administrator and William Mathis was just coming on board that fall as dean.

JM: What was the school like in those very early days of your tenure? Tell us something about the size, the mood. Was it on the ascendancy? Had it already achieved quite a



level of achievement?

CH: Oh indeed it had! Yes! It had a fine reputation, and I felt when I came that I was encountering a level of professionalism that was new in my experience and from which I was prepared to learn a great deal and did learn a great deal - from people like John Hollenbach, from a whole variety of the way things were conducted. The college had about 1800 students, which was three times the size of the one I'd left. About the size of my undergraduate institution. There was some concern at the time that it was growing too big. And in fact one of the faculty members in my first year or two resigned and went somewhere else because he felt that it was getting too big. And that's an interesting commentary on the concerns that have surfaced more recently as it has grown considerably larger than that.

JM: 1967 was about the crest of the Vietnam era with its concerns about the campus revolution, what have you. What were your impressions as you came to Hope and began to see that develop? How did it compare to Gordon? How would you evaluate that?

CH: One of the differences at Hope was that there was a sizeable group of students who were politically active. There was an organization of students...I'm not sure if I have the name right...I think they called themselves the New Democratic Left. Some of whom I've kept in touch with.

JM: And have probably moved to the right!

CH: No! No, I don't think so! One I have in mind particularly is at this point a colleague on the Hope faculty and very socially concerned in many ways. I would say over the

next six or seven years that spirit characterized much of the student leadership. It had a significant presence in the faculty as well.

JM: Was it a period of unrest would you say? Or did the administration deal with it rather constructively?

CH: (Pauses)...I have to think about that. I'm trying to come up with specific ways in which the administration dealt with things. I don't recall that there were any clashes. There was nothing of the sort that engendered adversarial relationships at Hope to the extent that we heard about at Berkeley and Wisconsin and places like that.

JM: Your background would not seem to indicate then that you considered Hope to be radical. In other words, your background is quite conservative but that didn't mean that Hope was quite different from that background.

CH: Well, I think Hope was different. But I liked it! My connections...my associations had a lot of the quite conservative in them, but I wasn't entirely comfortable with that. That was partly why I was looking for something else. It was fairly early in my time at Gordon that I became confirmed in the Episcopal Church (I'm sure I was the only Gordon faculty member at the time with that affiliation).

JM: And you're not talking about your father-in-law's affiliation.

CH: No, not the Reformed Episcopal...but the Episcopal Church. And those associations have contributed a great deal to my education and sensitizing.

JM: When were you tenured?

CH: At Gordon?

JM: Here.

CH: Here. I don't know.

JM: Rather soon I assume?

CH: I think three or four years after I came in. It was a very informal process. John Hollenbach came to me one day. He was the chair of the department, and said in effect, "By the way, the trustees have voted to give you tenure." And I said, "Thanks!" It did not involve the volumes of paper work that it does now.

JM: We were talking about the mood on campus. Was there a town and gown tension in that period because of what might have been happening on the campus and here we had a very conservative community? You weren't aware of that?

CH: No, I don't recall if there was. One thing that struck me about Hope from the beginning was the unusually fine town-gown relationship. I was a little surprised about one thing, because it differed from what I was used to, that the college did not have its own print shop that did all its printing but made use of local businesses for that. And that, whether rightly or wrongly, seemed in my mind to characterize the kind of mutually beneficial attitude. I remember one year...I'm trying to pinpoint the year. I think it might have been '71 or '72. It might have been earlier. When some Hope students demonstrating against the Vietnam War made their way into the Tulip Time parade. This had to have been before '74 because I think the fall of '73 was when Hope went on the new schedule and graduated before Tulip Time (laughs). But they were simply absorbed into that. I think there was tolerance, if not approval. And I personally applauded the students for their gumption. I remember another time there was a sort of spontaneous \_\_\_\_\_, not literally, but a demonstration in

Centennial Park. Very quiet and very serious following the assassination of Dr. King.

JM: Oh, yes. Now when you came to Holland you obviously had children in and ready for school. Right?

CH: Right.

JM: What was your experience with the schools? At that point what was your impression?

CH: Well, we had one who was going into junior high. I guess four in Washington School and one was an infant. And we felt that they were getting a good education. We appreciated the instrumental musical program. They all made good use of that, taking good advantage of it. We were glad to have them in Washington School as opposed to some perhaps more pure white district. We felt it was good for them to rub elbows with people of various ethnic backgrounds.

JM: That would assume then that you purchased a home probably in that general area?

CH: We have a home in the Historic District a half a block from Washington School.

JM: Could you give us that address?

CH: 188 West Eleventh Street. My wife and I came out in the summer, I think in June of '66, house hunting. We spent two or three days with a realtor whom I won't name. He took us all around to various places that he thought we might be interested in. Someone called our attention to the sign out in front of this house. And he didn't want to show it to us. He said, "That's not an area you want to be in." And this is, in my view, one of the great residential blocks in the city.

JM: It says something about the attitude even then of what was happening in Holland.

CH: That's right. And I'm told that attitude still exists on the part of realtors.

JM: It would not be surprising to me. I've lived in Orange County, California, and in south Chicago, so I know something about those dynamics. This then is the only address you've had here in Holland all those years.

CH: That's right! I hate to move! (laughs). I hate the thought of moving!

JM: You, of course, became a member of Grace Episcopal I suppose almost immediately?

CH: Yes.

JM: And in that sense, especially in those years, you were not in the mainstream of Protestant life here in Holland. What was your experience working for a Reformed Church in America school? You were in the midst of a sea of Dutch Reformed people of one kind or another. Where you considered to be a little different? Did your colleagues look upon you a little differently? The neighborhood...?

CH: Well, I can't say how they looked upon me. It was never an issue.

JM: You felt comfortable.

CH: Yes. And I was not the only faculty member going to that church. Two names that come to mind right off are David Marker and David Clark. There were probably others. Since then there have been quite a significant number of others. But no one made an issue of it, though it was clear that some things that would be talked about in terms of say RCA politics would take me a little figuring to catch on. Where with others they just knew those things.

JM: Even for me, coming out of the Reformed Church background, it amazes me to see the headlines and the use of "CRC" and "RCA" as if everybody in Western Michigan knows what those initials stand for! As a person who's been raised here and been

away for a long time it still amazes me. That's a little sidelight. How has Holland changed in this period of time?

CH: Well, one very visible thing is that there is an awful lot more traffic. There are some other things that come to mind. The influx of the Oriental population as a result of the southeast Asian crisis. That was something that didn't happen before.

JM: How did that develop in Holland as you see it? I mean, why did it affect Holland or what were the forces that brought them here?

CH: I don't know much about it. I would guess that the largest thing would be the leadership taken by a number of churches in sponsoring refugee families. And then the openness of the community to have those in turn bring members of their extended family and perhaps friends. Secondly, and this is pure guess, the word might have gotten around quite independently of church sponsorships that this was a good place to come to.

JM: My observation is that there are an above average number of multi-racial families because of cross racial adoption. Would you agree with that?

CH: Well, I know there are a lot of them. I don't know what the average is.

JM: They have a float in the parade for one thing. What changes have you seen at Grace Church?

CH: The rector at Grace Church when we first came was William Warner, a well-known and revered figure in the community. He had a kind of civic ministry, I guess you could say. And he was known as Father Warner. I'm blessed to have known two years of his ministry. He was in Holland overall for twenty-five years. He passed

away very suddenly. The church called to replace him a Hope graduate named Robert Winter, a much younger man, very different in some ways and much more liberal in churchmanship I would say. It was around that time that I got involved on the diocesan level. This doesn't answer your question but maybe it's a good point to include. I got involved through a member of the cathedral staff who was serving our church on an interim basis after Father Warner's death. I got involved with the Christian Social Relations Commission of the Diocese. This was a time when there was a very strong conservative thrust in the Diocese of Western Michigan. The United Farm Workers, under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, were urging the boycott of lettuce. And this commission I was a member of was urging endorsement on the Diocesan level of this move. And my involvement with this was a great learning experience both in something of the issues - the issues of social justice connected with that and also how to deal with people who didn't agree with you (laughs).

JM: You probably became much more aware of the Hispanic presence in this area.

CH: Yes. And it was about this time I think that they were getting organized. I'm trying to think of the name of the group. What they called themselves that preceded the LAUP. Bob Winter wasn't at Grace very long, but he played a key role in organizing a group of churches called Churches United for Social Action. My impression was that prior to that time there had not been an active ministerial association unless perhaps largely for fellowship. This group set several goals. One of them was to organize what was called at the time Community Action House and having accomplished its goals, the group after a few years disbanded. But Community Action

House is the permanent legacy of that movement back in '69 to '71-'72. Your initial question was how has Grace Church changed. And I would say that it has grown.

We added a sizable addition to the building a few years ago. It has developed a much greater element of social concern and liturgical...I think it's sort of forward looking in every way.

JM: Has worship changed a good deal through these years? Would you have characterized it as "High Church" when you came to town?

CH: It felt like High Church because we came from Massachusetts. For example, I was not used to calling the rector "father" and still am not. Our rector in Massachusetts was a younger man and he wanted people to call him "Skip." Getting some perspective on it, I realized that we're not really high church. In fact, the old categories, say the nineteenth-century categories of "high" and "low" and "broad" don't really apply anymore. Though there are some that are pretty spikey. And since Vatican II, I've had members of St. Francis tell me that they feel right at home in our church and even appreciate some things that in their own Roman Catholic experience they no longer come across so much.

JM: From my perspective, the Reformed churches and especially the Christian Reformed churches, are going through a revolution on worship. The singing has a much more contemporary sound and everything else. I was just curious to know whether that had developed in Grace Church too at all.

CH: There has been pressure in that direction, and about three or four years ago we put on an additional service on Sunday. Up till then for quite a long time we had a...well, let



me back up. The Episcopal Church nationwide went through a lengthy modernization of its prayer book. I don't know how detailed you want me to be, but one thing that was unprecedented was the process by which this was done. The last time it had been done, what came out was the 1928 Prayer Book which wasn't that much changed from the 1892, and in fact not that much changed from ones going back to the sixteenth century. The process for the present Prayer Book involved a wholesale attempt to bring into the worship of the church the experiences of a greater variety of Christian traditions and not just the Anglican which goes back to medieval times. So the present Prayer Book includes prayers from the Greek tradition and from the Church of South India and the Syriac, all of these. A concerted effort was made to do this. But the process involved a sequence of trial liturgies that ran across about ten years where parishioners were urged to use the drafts that were offered experimentally and were encouraged to provide feedback.

JM: So in a sense it is like a controlled change. Would you say that? Here I see churches that have strongly been in the creedal context and so forth suddenly throwing everything aside. In your tradition that would not likely happen?

CH: We could not do that. And when I said that the process was unprecedented I meant the repeated inviting of grass roots feedback to things that were being proposed. And Father Warner in 1967, although he was himself very conservative, he was also a believer in obedience to those in authority over him. He said, "The Church is doing this and it's our responsibility to try it out," and he led the parish in a positive attitude toward these new developments and thereby avoided some of the problems that other

parishes have had who really opposed the new Prayer Book. Well, the upshot of it all was that our Prayer Book now has basically two alternative services, both for morning and evening prayer and for the communion service. One in more traditional language, one in more contemporary language and with a number of other alterations. Our own practice locally has been to have an early service on Sunday, at 7:45, which is spoken only, no music, relatively short and uses Rite One which is the old, the traditional service. And then the present eleven o'clock service has the full choir and hymns and Rite Two, which is the more contemporary language. And then what we did three or four years ago was to put in between those at nine o'clock a service with guitar music and with a different musical style and to a certain extent a more informal style of liturgy.

JM: Yours is of course the only Episcopal Church in town. There are some within the county at least and in Saugatuck.

CH: There is one in Saugatuck and one in Grand Haven.

JM: Now with which congregation in the city would you feel the closest kinship or might you have the most relationship? Would it possibly be Third Reformed or Hope Reformed or First Presbyterian?

CH: Individually many of our members have good relationships with both of the Reformed churches you mentioned. We have had - I would say for twenty years, maybe more - we've had since the time when Ernie Freund was the Presbyterian pastor - we (Grace and First Presbyterian) have annually had a joint Thanksgiving service. Alternately at our church and at the Presbyterians. We have occasionally had joint services with

Peace Lutheran, and as you may know, there's a movement still alive on a national basis for closer relationships between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

JM: I would suggest we take a break. (Tape pauses) We were talking about ecumenical relationships with Grace Church here in town. Have you noticed a change in the community as far as ecumenical relations are concerned? Is there more of a crossover from one church to another do you think? How has religious life in Holland changed particularly in practice?

CH: Let me start with something fairly recent. I think that a very significant indication of how things have changed was when St. Francis had its fire. Hope College's Dimnent Chapel was made available right away for them to have services in.

JM: Third Church.

CH: Third Church also. And I expect that either one of those...I'm pretty sure about Hope College...would have been unthinkable from the standpoint of public relations.

JM: What would have been a negative then is a plus now.

CH: Yeah. Absolutely!

JM: Which leads me to comment that ecumenism in the sixties was a national organizational kind of emphasis. Today I think it has become a grass roots emphasis rather and that's much more wholesome. We were always talking about church mergers. The National Council, the World Council. Now we're not so concerned about that but we're crossing over. How had religious life changed at Hope College? What was your impression of it when you came and what do you think about it now?

CH: I don't know much about the visible, audible level of religious life. By that I mean the chapel program in the last few years because when the present emphasis began I tried to go once or twice and was so turned off by the music.

JM: It was alien to your own experience.

CH: Yeah, I felt that it was deleterious to me spiritually. Clearly there is quantitatively...

(Side A ends)

JM: You were talking about religious life at Hope College, and you felt there is a quantitative increase, in other words there are more students involved in chapel.

CH: This is a complex question. I was starting to say I have no knowledge of what sort of depth of spiritual challenge they're receiving. And so I won't say more than that. My own experience as a college student was that this was a period in which chapel services awakened me both to the intellectual solidity of the Christian faith and to the richness of the musical tradition. And I have always felt that a college, like Hope, is ideally situated to provide that as part of the student's educational experience. And if it's the case, and I can't say from first hand experience that it is, but if it's the case that Hope's chapel is not doing that now, something really serious is being forfeited. My first response to your question had to do with chapel. But I realize even as I was getting into that that the religious atmosphere, the religious activity on the campus, is a much broader thing.

JM: One has to realize, of course, that when suddenly much, much more money is being invested in the chaplain's office, you're going to have a change in program. We only had one chaplain; now we have two, three. My impression has been that, at least from

the outside, Hope appears to be a much more specifically Christian organization than it once was. In other words, it tends to emphasize that element.

CH: I would say much more specifically Christian in a narrower sense.

JM: That may well be.

CH: I think back to times when there was a great richness of ministry opportunity for students both off campus and on. They were encouraged to take part in the ministry aspect of it. That and counseling were probably a more important part of the chaplain's function. Or at least equally important.

JM: You and I are both facing a generation gap when it comes to expression in worship and that sort of thing. It's a vastly different area than we are accustomed to.

CH: Well, I wouldn't simply settle for that. Because generation gap it may be, but again you want to return to the topic of worship. I think that a college like Hope has the responsibility - a liberal arts college has the responsibility to help students be historically aware of the tradition, and as I said of the richness, the variety of resources, and not simply take the line of least resistance and cater to what they already know and love. There is an educational function. But I was moving away from worship and into other things, areas of ministry, and I don't know whether there's that emphasis any more on ministry and service.

JM: My impression that the impact of the college student body is not so much on the Reformed Church now as on some of the larger mega churches in the area.

CH: That could be.

JM: Central Wesleyan and churches like that.

- CH: A very significant thing is that a sizable Roman Catholic presence has emerged. I think that's certainly something to be noted at Hope. I don't know much about it. I'm just aware that it's there. Another thing - thinking about more informal kinds of ministry, I'm sure there's a lot that goes on in student life in the dorms. One negative thing about this, I have heard that students are often made very uncomfortable by other students who pressure them to conform to their particular mode of Christianity.
- JM: Isn't it interesting that every generation has its pressure to conform. Because there was the era when the Calvinistic Dutch expression of the faith was probably the norm for Hope College. And the concern of a lot of people was because there was a variation in student body, and even variation within the church itself for various regions, that that conformity was threatened. Now you have a different kind of conformity.
- CH: You're looking back to a time that I don't know about.
- JM: That's true. Back to the days when I was there and there were things that were forbidden and that sort of stuff.
- CH: Oh yes indeed. And that was still recent history when I first came. They were just beginning to have their first dances. But I look on the early part of my presence here as a time when there was a greater acceptance. At least if what I am told about student behavior is true. And yet - well, I just don't know!
- JM: I know that despite the fact that on the surface it would appear as if something great is happening at Hope, that there are honest people who have real reservations. I have a granddaughter at Hope who has reservations. We'll let it go at that.

CH: And there are students who come to Hope fed up to here with the church. Maybe they come because this is where their parents are paying or various reasons. Students whose spiritual aspirations have a strong element of the intellectual inquiry, I question whether their needs are being met at all by the chaplain program. But again I don't know. But this brings me to the other thing I wanted to say in answer to your question. And that is that a significant aspect of Hope's religious atmosphere has to do with what goes on in the classroom. I think Hope has always tended to have a sizable proportion of instructors who for one reason or another sort of keep that out of the classroom as a separate thing. But there's also a significant degree to which very good work is being done in a classroom situation having to do with encouraging students and helping them understand how being Christian is a vital part of their lives.

JM: HASP is presenting a program on astronomy, a four class session. I am impressed by the Christian emphasis on the part of the presenter who I think is very definitely scientifically qualified, but he's also presenting his emphasis in terms of a creationist concept, not in strict Genesis terms, although that's going to be something we're going to study. And I think that's quite interesting.

CH: I would mention particularly in this connection the development of the senior seminar program.

JM: Are you talking about the Hope Academy of Senior Professionals?

CH: No. The senior seminar has been a core requirement, a capstone course. They call it "values," but in almost all cases it's been some aspect of the integration of Christian faith and learning.

JM: Now, if you were here when Vander Werf was the president, then the president who has had the longest tenure in your period was Vander Werf? I mean, Gordon Van Wylen.

CH: Yes, Gordon Van Wylen.

JM: Would you like to comment on his tenure?

CH: I think he did a lot for the college. I tend to value him as a leader. I value his integrity. He and I didn't always see eye to eye, but we had a good relationship. He was my sponsor for the Rotary Club. I thought he did a fine job, and I was sorry he reached the point, as people do, that he had to retire.

JM: When you use the word "integrity," and I was on the Board while Van Wylen was president, that is the term that I would try to relate to him. When you get close to him, he's a very graceful individual, but still "integrity" is the ramrod.

CH: I think it's important to say that he brought to the college a level of leadership. My impression is that he was the one who set directions and then the trustees played their role, but it was not a management role.

JM: You mentioned Rotary. Are there other organizations in the community that you are involved in?

CH: Apart from the church, the only one is a very small group of people who call themselves the "Recorder Group" or "Recorder Society." My wife and I had begun playing this relatively simple wooden instrument, or plastic many of them are, before we came here, and we found an interest within the music department of Hope and faculty, faculty spouses, and it spread from that. Now over thirty years later, there is a



small group that still meets every month playing a variety of music from medieval to modern, occasionally performing in a low key way. None of us are professional by any stretch. Early on though, I was part of a group that performed in chapel one morning and was involved in a couple of recitals.

JM: Is your wife quite musical also?

CH: Yes, more than I am. She's the organist at our church.

JM: Oh yes, you mentioned that. It's amazing how many strong musicians there are in this community. When you think about worship today there are many communities where good organists are hard to find. Here we have them in abundance.

CH: Yes, and they're getting fewer because the market for organists is shrinking and so people are not encouraged to go into that. My wife observed when she was a student back in the early eighties that students of a certain bent in their mental makeup, interested in precision in performance, might be tending to go into computer science rather than keyboard work.

JM: We have a daughter with a masters degree in music and it appears to us, not only because of her, there seems to be a kinship between mathematics and music.

CH: Indeed!

JM: I'm not sure why. But anyway that seems to be definitely the case.

CH: Well, that's a venerable tradition. Music was a branch of mathematics in medieval education, and most of what we know about Greek music, none of which of course was recorded, is through comments in mathematics texts and the like.

JM: Now, you mentioned the Rotary Club. What has been your involvement in Rotary,

and how do you feel about the organization? Has Rotary changed a bit through the years you've been a part of it? What about service organizations today?

CH: Well, the most obvious change has been the admission of women as members. A year or two after I joined Rotary, I was asked to be on the committee to revise the constitution in order to bring the written document into line with practice that had developed and with Rotary International guidelines. That was my first extensive involvement. Up to that point, it had been essentially a weekly fellowship sort of thing that I enjoyed very much. I felt that I was meeting a whole group of people that I had no prior contact with either in church or college, my two main associations. A year or two after that another constitutional change was required by the admission of women. But that was court mandated, and it was fairly simple.

JM: Is the Rotary Club getting older in membership, or are the younger people able to come in as well? I've heard that service clubs with the pace in the work day world today are having some difficulty in maintaining their membership.

CH: I think that our average age is higher than we would like it to be. We have more senior active members than we have active members, and we wish that weren't so. But I don't think it's significantly changed in that direction. We have to make a real effort to bring in younger people. But over the years, such efforts have been made and I think we're keeping pace pretty well. I was persuaded a year ago to accept the position of secretary of the Club, and since that time, of course, I've been much more involved.

JM: Now, you have some time still before retirement.

CH: No, I retired in May of '96.

JM: Oh, you are retired!

CH: Yes.

JM: Oh, I did not know that. Have you thought about membership in HASP, or hasn't that occurred to you?

CH: It has occurred to me. My friends who are in it have seen how busy I am and not pressured me at all.

JM: All right. So you're retired. I didn't know that.

CH: I think of myself as retired from the classroom, retired from the regular pay check. In order to continue my professional work on the level of writing and publication and service, I remain very active in the Conference of Christianity and Literature, which is a professional society of maybe 1500 members which I helped to found in 1956. I continue to go to conventions of various organizations. I was in London the 31st of May, having been invited to give the address at the annual meeting of the Charles Williams Society. I've completed maybe half a dozen papers over the first half of this year for publication.

JM: In what particular element? I assume it's in literature...

CH: Well, most of those were on C. S. Lewis. One combined my interest in Lewis and the Renaissance period. It was on C. S. Lewis as a Milton scholar. And one was on a sixteenth-century author and translator. I would say that my primary specialty has always been literature of the Renaissance, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. But I have a whole spectrum of interests.

JM: Have you published at all through your career?

CH: Yes.

JM: Tell us more about that.

CH: I've edited a book of essays and co-edited two. Published a fair number of articles and reviews. Have two books currently in progress.

JM: Who are your publishers?

CH: Well, there've been a variety of scholarly journals.

JM: So they are really journals for the field, not in the category which we might call "popular."

CH: No. I've published a little bit in the Church Herald. Early on in Eternity Magazine. But it's mostly been scholarly publications.

JM: Is there a strong professional association on campus of your peers either in the retirement category or amongst the faculty themselves? Is there a strong social structure? Is it a community unto itself because you are faculty, or do people tend to go their own way?

CH: Well, one product of the growth of Hope, and already when I came it was well advanced in this direction, has been that the community of social support tends to be by departments more than the whole faculty. I wasn't sure whether you were changing the subject or carrying on with the idea of scholarly output. The English Department is a congenial bunch and we do some good socializing together. A lot of it has been involved with mutual support and encouragement. Critiquing of one another's professional activity, both student related, classroom related, and also in

scholarship.

JM: You're very much aware of course of the age-old rivalry between Calvin and Hope which perhaps is more on the basketball court than elsewhere. But how do the faculties relate?

CH: Well, I have some good friends in the English Department at Calvin, a couple of whom I knew before I ever came to Western Michigan. So that association goes way back. I've developed other associations there. Steve Van Der Weele, when he retired from professor of English at Calvin, asked me...they have a nice custom of observing retirement with a lecture...and he invited me to be the lecturer for his retirement. I think it was in '87.

JM: I think it's also interesting how much Calvin has contributed of their sons and daughters to the faculty at Hope College. I'm thinking about the provost. I'm thinking about Allen Verhey. I'm thinking about Gordon Van Wylen. These are all people who had their backgrounds at Calvin.

CH: But you couldn't say the opposite.

JM: No, that's right.

CH: The Hope faculty is much more diversified.

JM: Yes, and I believe that until very recently at least, you virtually had to be a member of the Christian Reformed Church to be on the faculty of Calvin College.

CH: Though some would convert in order to be.

JM: Yes, I suppose that's true.

CH: Just one more piece in response to your question. For several years the English

Departments of Hope and Calvin alternated playing hosts to a departmental dinner where the other would come and there would be some form of entertainment. They'd go to a play or hear a paper presented. That sort of petered out because the attendance dwindled. But I would say it lasted for eight or ten years.

JM: It's rather interesting that you have spent your entire teaching career within the context of a Christian liberal arts college, is it not?

CH: Yes, it is! Especially since when I first left such a college and went to graduate school, that was the last thing I wanted to go back to.

JM: And isn't it also true that they have thrived beyond what one might have expected when you were in graduate school. The Christian liberal arts schools seem to have thrived, at least the ones I am acquainted with.

CH: Yeah. They've grown, but the whole educational establishment has burgeoned.

JM: That's right.

CH: I don't have any reference points to...

JM: I guess I'm thinking about our own Reformed Church institutions of which there are two of them in the State of Iowa which is not exactly what you would call a promising geographical area for undergraduates, but they seem to be doing extremely well. Now, getting back to the Historical District. You live on Eleventh Street. Do you lock your house?

CH: We do. Yes.

JM: Did you lock your house in '67?

CH: I don't think so. No.

JM: It's that recent? That's something that comes up in almost every oral history interview - how things have changed. "I never thought to lock my door."

CH: Well, I don't think I want to go into detail on my security arrangements. (Laughs)

JM: No. But I'm trying to suggest that perhaps there has been a change in terms of your feeling of security in that area.

CH: Yeah, I think so. One is aware of intruders in the neighborhood. It's come to seem prudent. Though I must say that on a warm summer night when we've had the cellar door open all day, closing up for the night I may just forget to close it. And we're fine in the morning (laughs).

JM: Holland is an All America City. Can you list five reasons why indeed it might deserve its designation? In other words, what are the particularly good things about this community?

CH: There's a lot going on culturally. I've known people who felt Holland was not busy enough for them and they've had to move to a metropolis, move to Chicago. But my calendar is too full. There are concerts, theater that I would like to go to and just don't have time for.

JM: What contributes to that do you think?

CH: Hope College contributes a lot. (You were fishing for that).

JM: Not for Hope College, no. (Laughs) I would agree with you, but there's a certain temperament about the community that seems to foster that.

CH: Well, I think also Holland has attracted a significant number of executive level persons. Many with quite cosmopolitan backgrounds. And I think those things

contribute. I think one thing that contributes to the demand for or appreciation for cultural awareness is the number of Dutch immigrants! The number of people who spent their formative years in the Netherlands and developed the taste of the arts there.

JM: And if one is true to his Calvinistic background, then he should be. In other words, we're not fundamentalist or separatist in our concept of culture. And on that basis, we ought to be very active in the culture. We ought to be shaping the culture beyond the walls of the church. I would like to believe that that might be a factor.

CH: I think that Hope's acquisition of the theater which is now the Knickerbocker, granted that it was part of the whole concern of the institution to keep its neighborhood alive, but that's been a very salutary thing for the community.

JM: When you came to town, of course, Tulip Time was already a thriving institution. You have no Dutch background. A tulip was just a flower I'm sure when you first came to Holland. How do you feel about Tulip Time? How do you feel about its impact on the community? What may be pluses? What may be minuses?

CH: Oh, I don't know. Obviously, it's been a great economic asset. We haven't gone to Tulip Time events, parades or anything else for quite a few years.

JM: Been there, done that!

CH: Yeah. Except that my wife always plays in the Tulip Time organ recitals, has for fifteen years I guess except for one time when we were abroad and were simply not around. But this year, for example, I said that we went to London in May and we planned our trip to start well after Tulip Time so that she wouldn't miss that. Apart from that, I notice the people going through and don't pay it that much attention.



JM: How do you feel our community is dealing with the rapid changes that are taking place? I'm thinking especially about the ethnic changes and perhaps the economic changes. Would you like to make some comments about that?

CH: I don't think I know enough to say anything very sensible.

JM: You haven't been involved in town government or anything of that sort except as an observer?

CH: Right.

JM: What about the economic life here in Holland? Is Holland a more prosperous community? A more obviously spending community than it was in 1967 and the early seventies?

CH: I think our whole nation is a lot more spending. The whole culture has gone that way. We have a different idea of what affluence is all about and the importance of it.

JM: Now you are virtually on the threshold of your retirement. You've only stepped over the sill. So you have some years ahead of you. Are you staying in Holland?

CH: At present.

JM: If you could make some changes over the next ten years, what changes would you like to see in Holland from your perspective either as a retiree or as a long term citizen?

CH: Well, I know my wife would say, "Build some mountains!"

JM: Ah! Yes!

CH: (Laughs) That's...

JM: I've got to have a fix too every once in a while. Maybe we should build a Mt. Trashmore like they have northwest of Chicago! (laughs).

CH: I don't think in those terms...

JM: Once you are retired the concerns of traffic aren't quite as great. I think that's a pretty widespread concern.

CH: I think that some very good thinking has gone into some recent changes in the traffic patterns. The re-routing of Ninth Street and what's going on on Sixteenth and Seventeenth as you go on towards South Shore. That's smart.

JM: Your children grew up in Holland so for them Holland was really home, is that right? They never felt that they had to get away from it or that it was too provincial or anything like that?

CH: Well, yeah.

JM: It happens to every kid, I guess.

CH: Sure. I think of one in particular who dropped out of college to go and live in Chicago and work and came back pretty soon, and she's the one that's still in Holland! Others have gone, some to larger areas. Only one, I think, just didn't like Holland for that reason.

JM: Well, your church affiliation helps in that respect. In other words, you're in a little more cosmopolitan ecclesiastical set-up than many people here in Holland. And being part of the college has helped in that respect. So you're in a little different orbit or field of experience than many people who might have been here. I think there are people who either have wanted to leave Holland or otherwise cannot envision leaving Holland. This is their world! And I have difficulty with both of them. (Laughs). Well, is there anything else that we should talk about?

CH: Oh, I'll probably think about things later.

JM: Yes, I probably will too! It's been a great delight, and I think you bring a perspective that perhaps many others will not bring. We've sort of emphasized Hope College and we emphasized Grace Church, but that's part of Holland too. So from that point of view, it's important to get your input as well. Thank you very much!

CH: Thank you, I've enjoyed it.

## Initial Contact Form

Name: *Charles A. Hutter*

Date of birth: [date removed],

*1932*

Place of birth:

*Austin TX*

Mother's name (include maiden name):

*Leora E. White Hutter*

Father's name:

*Adolph H. Hutter*

Siblings' names (include birthdates if known):

*David R.*

[dates removed]

*George L.*

Spouse's name (include wife's maiden name):

*Joy Anne Culbertson Hutter*

Date of marriage:

*23 Aug 1952*

Place of marriage:

*Mexico PA*

Children's names (include dates and places of birth):

*Lydia*

*Sarah*

*Rachel*

[dates removed]

*Chicago IL*

*Beverly MA*

*" "*

*Charles*

*Julia*

*Elizabeth*

*Thomas*

[dates removed]

*Beverly MA*

*" "*

*Holland MI*

Date of death:

Place of death and burial:

Religion and church membership:

*Episcopal - Grace, Holland*

Schooling and/or other training:

*BA Wheaton College 1952*

*MA Northwestern Univ. 53*

*PhD " 56*

Residential history (list all residences chronologically, noting the dates lived at each):

*Austin, Texas 1932-4*

*606 Utica St., Ithaca NY 1934-41*

*412 Holcomb St., Watertown NY 1941-3*

*1911 S. Geddes St., Syracuse NY 1943-52\**

*3633 N. Pine Grove Ave., Chicago IL 1952-4*

*928 Elmwood Ave., Evanston IL 1954-5*

*52 Raymond St., Magnolia MD 1955-6*

*9 Kimball Ave., Ipswich MA 1956-9*

Occupational history (list all occupations chronologically, noting the place of work, the type of work done there, and the approximate salary):

*52-55 Wake, Wenger & Associates [now ServiceMaster, Inc.] - Chicago IL part-time - c. 3600*

*5-66 Gordon College, ~~Wenham~~ Wenham MA - faculty member*

*6-66 Hope College*

*Office work - admin. asst.*

Membership in clubs and organizations (note dates of membership and offices held):

*Mod. Lang. Assn 1956 onwards*

*Conference on Christianity & Literature*

*Rotary Club of Holland 1983 -*

*since 1956 (founding member) - Sec. since 1996*

*Pres 1966-68 - various other offices*

Other general information:

*Travel in UK & Europe*

*Annual summer visits to residence in Mexico, PA for past 47 years.*

*13 Veranda Circle, So. Hamilton MA*

*1959-66*

*188 W. 11th St., Holland MI 1966 -*

*\* incl 1948-52 at college*