8-30-1997

Jellison, Jim Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Ann Paeth

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Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Jim Jellison
August 20, 1997
Interviewer: Ann Paeth

AP: Please state your name and where and when you were born.

JJ: My name is James L. Jellison, James Logan Jellison. I was named for my
grandfather's Civil War commander who was John Alexander Logan, a general in
Illinois who subsequently became Senator John Logan, and his equestrian statue is
now opposite the Hilton Hotel in Grant Park in Chicago. John Logan was the
founder of Memorial Day in the United States. He was a leader in the post Civil War
era. I was born June 3, 1922, in Chicago in my parents' home on the northwest side,
and it is said that I was born in our living room. Two years later my sister was born,
but how quickly things change. She was born in Grant Hospital, Chicago. So my
mother had her first delivery in the house at home, and her second delivery two years
later under hospital conditions. That is my background. I'm not native as indicated,
not native to Holland, but I came here first in 1955. I was a long-term employee of
General Electric Company, and when the General Electric Company built this plant
here I was transferred in. Actually I was a sales representative for that segment of
the company that manufactured small electric motors. I was located in York,
Pennsylvania, until 1955, but all of my background was with small electric motors
and of the motors of the type that they built here. My work in York, Pennsylvania,
was with York Corporation that manufactured central air conditioning equipment. I
came here, but I really wasn't here long enough to establish residence because they
wanted me to work in Louisville, Kentucky, at General Electric’s Appliance Park as a field engineer, so I went there for five years and then eventually moved here to Holland in 1960. My wife said that she liked Holland so much after we had lived here a year or two, she said, "Don't take any more promotions or transfers, I want to stay here." We have been very happy for thirty seven years, since we moved here.

We had one son that was born in Fort Wayne in 1954 and then we had two daughters that were born here at Holland Hospital. No, they weren’t born in Holland Hospital, my wife returned to Fort Wayne to be with her mother for confinement, so they were born in Parkview hospital in Fort Wayne, but they came home as soon as they were able to leave the hospital, and my wife was able to be released. My children all went through the Holland School system, and all three attended Hope College. My oldest daughter graduated from Hope College in 1984, my son transferred to the University of Michigan, and my youngest daughter transferred to Lansing, Michigan. She subsequently graduated in restaurant and hotel management and she is presently the night manager at Marigold Lodge, that has had association with Hope College, but is now owned by Herman Miller. Most of my experience in Holland is subsequent to 1955 and 1960, all of the those years I was in Louisville, I was up here a couple times a month in relation to our business. Most of the time I stayed downtown in the Warm Friend Hotel and I have many memories of that time. My boss was Dave Hanson and all the management of GE remembers the Tavern Club. In the 1950s and '60s the Holland Country Club was owned by the American Legion and they didn’t serve meals and drinks at noon time. So they all had membership in the Tavern Club
because they served alcoholic beverages. That was an interesting time. The Tavern Club was on the sixth floor of the hotel building, and we would usually adjourn there about 11:30. We’d take an 11:30 to 1:30 lunch hour because it was fun. They had a long bar there and a very congenial bartender and opposite the bar there was a long row of seats, the kind where you’d get your shoe shined. They were elevated above the bar and we’d amused ourselves by throwing peanuts at the bartender, trying to catch him unaware. After about a half an hour of doing that, having a drink and throwing peanuts at the bartender, we would adjourn to the large room adjoining that where there were about 4 pool tables. We’d spend the rest of the time, until 1:30, playing pool. During that period, we’d place our lunch order and the lunch order would go down to the Tulip Room kitchen, on the main floor. Then it would come up by dumb waiter, which was very noisy. Almost invariably, we’d have bratwurst and sauerkraut and german potato salad. It seems to me that was our meal most of the time. So we’d play pool till 1:30 and then we’d decide it was time to go back to the office again, and that was how we’d spend our noon time. Those were good memories of Holland. It seemed as though whenever I stayed at the Warm Friend Tavern I was awakened at five o’clock by the garbage men. Every time I was there, they’d be making the loudest racket throwing those trash cans around downstairs. That is one of my memories of that. Actually my family association went back earlier. My father was in the construction business, he was an ornamental plasterer, and he came over here in the early twenties when the Warm Friend Tavern was being built by the Holland Furnace Company. He was involved in the ornamental plastering
in that building. When he came over to visit me, after I moved here in 1960, he said he could remember that very clearly. He remembered going up on the roof, the unfinished roof of the Warm Friend Tavern, to have his lunch which he brought with him. He said he remembered looking out over Lake Macatawa. It went through his mind how pleasant it was here and what a nice city to visit, so he was pleased when my family and I moved here. Subsequently, he died in 1961 and my mother moved in with us from Chicago, and she lived with us until her death in about 1972. Most of my memories here in Holland have General Electric associations. Of course, all of the friends we made here over the years - as soon as we moved here we found that all of the residents here were very receptive and very friendly. My wife almost immediately joined the Garden Club, and she has been in that ever since. So many of her friends are ladies that she knew through the Garden Club. Many of them have passed on by now. One of her close friends was Mrs. Oma Champion who lived on River and 12th Street there in the corner house. Everyone participated in Tulip Time and every year the kids were involved in that to a great extent. We very much enjoyed Holland. Even though now my wife and I are both retired, we elect to continue residence here because we don’t know of anyplace more enjoyable where all of our friends are.

My wife had a lengthy career here. From 1968 until 1988 she was the executive director of the United Way here in Holland. Then, in 1988, she transferred over to Zeeland as the director over there and continued until just July of this year, 1998. So, it was close to thirty years that she was involved in a leadership role in the
United Way. I don't know how many millions of dollars she was involved in raising during those years, but it was a significant amount of money.

Those years with General Electric, I became well acquainted with Mr. Ray Herrick, who was the owner and founder of Tecumseh Products Company. Of course, Mr. Herrick is the reason General Electric built a plant here, because Mr. Herrick was the largest private customer General Electric had. Our electric motor sales to Tecumseh Products for years was centered around fifty million dollars a year and you could at least double that in terms of present day dollars. As I stated above, Tecumseh Products was the largest private customer for General Electric. They were not as large as government organizations, but Tecumseh was the largest single customer.

Mr. Herrick was accorded great deferential recognition, and he had instant access to the General Electric C.E.O.s, whoever it happened to be at the time, Mr. Cordner, or his successors. If he decided to talk, he'd pick up the telephone and was put right through. He was important. When he went to New York, he was received as a visiting head of state, I would say. They really recognized his importance to GE.

Mr. Herrick's associations with Holland go back to his childhood. He lived on West 12th Street as a child and spent his apprenticeship as an adolescent at the, I guess it's Western Machine and Tool now, that building that is presently owned by the city around on 9th Street, right by Kollen Park. He had a great sentimental attachment to Holland and it was through his bequest that the Herrick Library was conceived and constructed and exists to this day. The Herrick Foundation is still supportive of the library. Then, of course, he endowed the Hazel Fortney Art Center at Holland High
School. Mr. Herrick was really a unique individual. He was so unpredictable. Every year we negotiated a contract with him, and he did that personally on behalf of his company. I was in marketing at General Electric and was involved in those negotiations annually. They were so often unpredictable because Mr. Herrick’s objective was to get the most advantageous price in buying electric motors from General Electric, and our objective was to get the most advantageous price for us. So we were always talking in terms of price increases and he was always talking in terms of price decreases, so it made for an interesting time. I recall, he would, as a rule, very rarely come over here. Most invariably we went there, a negotiating team, to his office there at Tecumseh Products in Tecumseh, Michigan. On this one occasion, we just weren’t getting anywhere at all. We were not budging and he was not budging. He was pleading the case for a lower price on the motors that they were going to buy, and so the conversation virtually ended. As everyone was sitting trying to decide what we’d do next, Mr. Herrick abruptly got up and climbed up on the conference table, sank to his knees and raised his hands to the heavens and began a lengthy prayer for our enlightenment. His prayer was that we should see the error of our ways and do the right thing, etc., etc. And finally he ended his long prayer and got down off the table and sat down. We had no idea how to handle this. Finally one of the salesman that called on that account, started laughing, which, as it turned out, was the best way to handle it because Mr. Herrick looked very grim up until that point. Then he burst out laughing and said, "Well I have to do something to get your attention." He was quite a profane man, swore quite frequently.
AP: I heard he was very particular about his community involvement as well. If conditions weren’t right...

JJ: He didn’t want recognition - everything in life he wanted on his terms. He wanted things the way he wanted, when he wanted, and what he wanted. On one occasion, in later years, 1964-1965, there was a rumor going about that Mr. Herrick was going to endow a community swimming pool. I guess he had talked about that, but someone from the Holland Sentinel made a special trip to Tecumseh and asked for an interview. I don’t think he actually had a formal interview. I think he encountered Mr. Herrick in the lobby of his office and said that he was there to check up on the details on his endowment for the City of Holland for a community swimming pool. Mr. Herrick denied any knowledge of it at all. Actually there was some fact to it, but he didn’t want any recognition of that. So that whole thing fell through for the most part. There were some anonymous donors for the pool that was built there. I think that was opened in 1968 and I think Mr. Herrick made some contributions there. He was such a different person, which probably accounts for his great success in life. In the ’70s, he went through a religious experience, today I guess we would say he experienced being born again as a Christian. One day a sizable lectern showed up in the lobby of Tecumseh Products with a very large Bible on it. It became his practice every morning when he came in to leaf through that Bible and select a passage and put a ribbon on that as the passage for the day. It became known to business visitors, salesmen, etc. that they better know what the verse was that day and be able to recite it. So everyday the sales reps would be out there in the lobby trying
to crowd around to memorize the verse of the day. The strange part was that Mr. Herrick would say, "People don’t think I’m a religious person, but I’m the most blankety-blank religious person in the state of Michigan." His swear words didn’t quite go with what he was saying, but that was his manner. It’s interesting, Mr. Herrick was a very good personal friend of Henry Ford, and he was funded by Henry Ford back in the early 1930s when Mr. Herrick’s original company, Hillsdale Machine Tool, was on the verge of bankruptcy. Henry Ford gave him money to continue the business. Now, Henry Ford had a son named Edsel who was much in his shadow and died tragically at an early age and was always dominated by his father. Edsel had a son, Henry, the second, who was, in his personality, very similar to the original Henry Ford...was very successful during the '50s, '60s and into the '70s as a CEO for the Ford Motor Company. The same thing seemed to be true of Ray Herrick, the senior Mr. Herrick. He had a son named Kenneth, whom everyone called Kenny. He was know as Kenny Herrick in a somewhat disrespectful way, in kind of a patronizing way, because Kenny was viewed as very much the same personality as Edsel Ford. He was just not a strong, tough type of person. He was a nice guy, not well cast as the CEO for Tecumseh Products Company, although he functioned in that role for a number of years. It’s interesting because Kenny then had a son who I believe is today the CEO of Tecumseh Products Company and his name is Todd. Todd was very similar in temperament to his grandfather Ray. He served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, and was very personally courageous and aggressive and positive - very similar to his grandfather. But I don’t think we have
ever seen much of Todd here in Holland. He just doesn't have personal relationships
the way his grandfather did, and to the same extent his father did. We saw Kenny
over here quite often. Kenneth Herrick. That's about all I can contribute here about
the Herrick family. Where should we go next in this interview?

AP: Why don't we talk a little bit more about GE as far as what kind of impact do you
think it made on Holland?

JJ: I think the greatest impact General Electric had in Holland is that it was the first time
that a strong union based employer came into the community. The pay levels were at
least double what was prevailing in the community at that time. The work force at
GE had a strong I.B.E.W. (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)
membership, and they brought in the attitudes that prevailed in the national labor
market. That was a real shock for employers here in Holland because it raised the
expectations of other workers. It was really disruptive for other employers and for
that reason General Electric, and its managers, were not too popular with the group
that was probably best represented by the Chamber of Commerce. I know Ab Martin
was the general manager all during the '50s and '60s and he did not support the
Chamber. Later he grudgingly would maintain a membership, but he felt he was
persona non grata in Holland as a GE manager. He did his good works in other
ways. He was a founding member and probably the principal leader in HEDCOR,
the Holland Economic Development Corporation. He was very instrumental in
establishing the Holland Industrial Park, the one on the south side. That was his
contribution. I think he didn't join in with the Chamber of Commerce because there
was a lot of friction there. General Electric was not well liked by the other controlling business interests in the community because they upset the apple cart as an organization.

AP: If I understand anything of Holland, I think to an outside corporation coming in, bringing outside people in, it might be something that would be disruptive of Holland.

JJ: Yes. That was kind offset by the attitude of the people that came in because they immediately brought a strong sense of volunteerism. They got involved right away and they started things, so they made good contributions in that fashion. Also, they became active immediately in the annexations to the city of Holland. The GE managerial type employees were very active in all the annexation. Their activities in that respect were very welcomed by the leadership here in Holland. The political and business leadership. That support was very welcomed. Those General Electric people who came in were from mostly Fort Wayne. They were Indiana people, but then there were other representatives from all throughout the northeast particularly, not too many from the south, and not too many from the west, west of the Great Plains. We had a lot of people here from Nebraska and Kansas. My boss was from Kansas. So those people brought in a little different perspective. There was virtually no Dutch. I don’t think there was a person of Dutch ancestry that came in from Fort Wayne. There were Pennsylvanian Dutch, but not Netherlands Dutch. So, I’d say by the mid-sixties all of those people had become stalwarts in the community and were very well appreciated and well-liked.

You might be interested to whatever happened to GE in Holland. Why doesn’t it still
exist? What happened is the world economy. As we know, the prevailing pay rates, even right up to the very end of GE's existence here in Holland, were substantially double what were the prevailing pay rates were in the community. In the '80s, ten dollars was a fairly good rate of pay. At General Electric, a man or a woman started as a sweeper at twelve dollars, just to sweep the floor, and that was the lowest pay there was. When you took into account the benefits afforded to General Electric employees, most of the pay rates were between twenty and twenty five dollars, including benefits. Having twenty-twenty five dollars in the seventies and eighties was probably thirty dollars or more today, so the pay levels were really very high. When you make a basic product like electric motors, those products can be made, and are made, in many other countries like Italy, Japan, Brazil and Singapore, and even today in China. I was involved at that time in marketing administration, and I was contacted regularly by presidents of the Chamber of Commerce at Juarez City, Mexico, and all of the cities on the Mexico side of the border. They'd write me letters trying to interest us in a maquiladorra setup or project in one of those locations to build our motors. At that time, the prevailing wage in Juarez City, opposite El Paso, was eighty five cents an hour. That's one twenty-fourth of what was being paid here. Many American companies set up manufacturing operations on the Mexico side of the boarder and employed all native Mexican citizens in those plants. All of the management of the plant, including the engineering people and the financial people, all of the technically oriented people, lived on the American side of the boarder, in this case El Paso. Every morning they'd have these machines set up to manufacture
certain models of motors. If you change the motor model being manufactured you have to reset the machinery and that is done by manufacturing engineers who are known as setup people. Every morning those people who lived in El Paso, went over the bridge into Juarez City to the plant, and they would manage the plant operations. Mexican citizens would be doing the actual manufacturing - winding the motors, and putting them together, and packing them up and everything like that. As a rule, because of their educational background, their motivation, their work ethic and all, you’d get about half the output with Mexican citizens working. I think that really prevails today. You get about half the output in Mexico as you do the equivalent of right here in Holland Michigan. But when you are paying a fraction of our U.S. wages, you can employ many more workers in Mexico. We would usually have, at the best, a thousand workers here in Holland. You can have 5,000 there and still make money. It is just the economics involved. Those conditions extended really all over the world. In the ‘60s we realized that our customers, including Tecumseh Products, Copeland, and all of the manufacturers of hermetic compressors, refrigeration compressors, were being solicited by Japanese motor manufacturers to buy hermetic motors at half of what we could sell them for. So that pressure went on and on. During the ‘60s and ‘70s, we had six plants producing hermetic motors. We had a plant here in Holland, one in Fort Wayne, one in Tiffin, Ohio, one in Scottsville, Kentucky, and one in Singapore (Asia). But at any rate, during the sixties, this competitive foreign competition pressure was increasing, so we started investigating the possibility of building motors abroad, outside the country. The first
place we looked at was Italy, which was a good possibility. They were making electric motors and had a trained work force and all, but there were negatives there. We didn’t feel very confident in the Italian government. The Italian communist party was very strong and we just didn’t know where that was going. Then we were in the midst of the Cold War. We had no idea that it was going to evolve as it did. We just were not too confident that was the place to go. Well, we didn’t. We looked around, all over the world, including Mexico, and we selected Singapore as the place to settle a plant because there was, as there is today, a very strong authoritarian government and the people are very cooperative, good work ethic, and there we would be paying about the equivalent of $1.25 an hour for labor. And even though it was clear on the other side of the world, we could ship steel from Australia, copper wire from Japan, bring it into Singapore, build the motors, ship the motors all the way back to the U.S. and to the eastern part of the country, to Louisville, Kentucky, to our appliance park location, and make a substantially higher profit doing that than we could by building them in the U.S. Right to this day, there is a large General Electric facility in Singapore to make small versions of the type of motors that we built here in Holland. The motors we built here in Holland all went into room and central air conditioners, the ones in Singapore have always gone into refrigerators, they’re smaller products. So that pressure continued all through the seventies. The profitability of the Holland plant dropped each year until by 1980, it was operating in the red. During the last few years the Holland business operated, General Electric was subsidizing it to the tune of a million to two million dollars per year. (end of side
AP: So the plant was operating in the red...

JJ: The Holland plant operated at a loss all during the '80s. From 1980 until it closed in 1991 or 1992 thereabouts, it was a losing proposition. For ten years it probably lost 15 million dollars. A person would say, how long did it take to realize that this was a losing proposition and pull out and close the place down? There was no doubt of the ultimate outcome, but surprisingly enough, it is expensive to close a plant. We closed a plant in Tiffin, Ohio, in about 1980, and the out-of-pocket cost to do that was between 20 and 25 million dollars. In terms of the people, the workers, all had to have terminal pay, benefits which were defined by contract, and you had to get rid of the machinery and real estate - just a lot of close-up costs. We had the same thing with the Holland plant. That cost, I'm sure in the high twenties, probably close to 30 million dollars. I have no idea what it finally wound up, because they had more trouble after the plant was closed and all the employees were taken care of. There was a problem with the EPA. And they claimed that there was pollution. We couldn't sell the property because of the threat of polluted ground under the plant. So experts drilled wells and pumped the groundwater out, and spent a lot of money in clean up. General Electric Company has had a lot of experience in disposing of manufacturing locations, and the policy is very strong that GE will not sell a plant location unless it is clean. They want to maintain good relationships with the Environmental Protection Agency and they are very worried about secondary liability, in other words, having a subsequent purchaser of the property coming back to GE for
cleanup costs. They don’t sell property until the EPA says it’s clean, and from there on it is the federal government’s responsibility. So that is why the GE plant here in Holland took a long time for disposition. There are thirty-five acres in that property, in a prime location, and it’s still very desirable. We don’t know to this day what the ultimate role of that property is going to be. But it is interesting, at the time the plant was closed, there were approximately five hundred to six hundred employees to be terminated and most of those employees were older. Most were over forty and they had very liberal benefits. Each person was paid a terminating amount equivalent to two weeks of pay, for each year of service, so that if you had twenty five years of service, which was not uncommon, then as you left, you were given a lump sum of fifty weeks pay. Then, of course, if you were 62 or older, you were eligible for the lump sum benefit, a full pension and Social Security. If you were between 50 and 62, in addition to the lump sum benefit, you were paid $8.00 an hour, or $320 a week. So if you were fifty, you automatically got $320 a week until you reached aged 62. But if you went to work for another employer, you lost that. So, for the most part, those people that were in that age group, 50-60, went off the economy. So many of the GE employees didn’t become re-employed. What became very popular was to find activities off the economy. The manufacturing/engineering people and some of the maintenance guys became local entrepreneurs to do repair work for people, cash basis only, no checks, nothing identifiable, and that’s what they’re still doing that today. Of course, it’s almost 10 years now, and most are on pensions or Social Security. The reason the General Electric plant closed is because of
international competition. Products can be built at much lower cost outside the United States. Even in the case of the U.S., the same group that operated this Holland plant still operates three plants now, one in Mexico and one in Singapore and one in Scottsville, Kentucky. The plant in Scottsville, Kentucky, is not a union plant, and so their pay levels are more competitive and that plant is still in existence because there was no union and the pay rates are lower. The plant, by and large, is a victim of world overpopulation. People who live in subsistence economies will do things for a fraction of our pay levels, and they have a different standard of living in those locations. It was really foreign competition that was responsible for the General Electric plant closing here. And the economy here in Holland has changed. We have a robust economy in the Industrial Park area, in HEDCOR, and there is one up in the north side too, but we now have Prince Corporation, Haworth, and continuing Donnelly and Herman Miller, so we have a lot of new manufacturers. Here is a good illustration. One of my daughters is a manager for Herman Miller at Marigold Lodge, and my other daughter is an executive with Castex, which is a subsidiary of Tenant Corporation in Minneapolis. Castex makes floor cleaning machines and they employee about five hundred people there. So that shows you where the next generation goes when they find employment.

AP: Let's talk some more about the City of Holland. Maybe if you could describe your impression of it when you first moved here?

JJ: If you wanted to see what Holland was like when we moved here in the fifties and sixties, you should visit Zeeland, Michigan. Zeeland today, in its demographics and
community values and the way people are socially, is more representative of the way Holland was in the '50s. I think the biggest change in Holland is the demographics. The changing origins of the citizens in the community. Different dietary requirements...you go into all of the markets and you find Asiatic foods, bak choy and all these foods with which most of us of Dutch background are not familiar. Also, the Hispanic or Mexican, Latino influences become strong. Their culture has really become so much our culture. We all find attractive the culinary arts of the Latino culture, everybody eats Mexican foods. Almost to the point where we've adopted it and we think it is part of our background. The influence of the old Dutch families has really been diluted to a great extent. It still exists. My daughter married Aaron Kronemeyer, who is a member of extensive local family here. The Kronemeyers came here in 1847, the same year as Albertus Van Raalte, but on a different boat, because they weren't part of his congregation. They came here at that time and settled in Hamilton. The Kronemeyers had their family reunion this summer at the old family farm, and I think close to 300 attended that. I say "we had" because my daughter is now a Kronemeyer, and my grandson is a Kronemeyer. In fact, my grandson is the seventh generation of male Kronemeyers to live on that family farm since 1847, and his name is Delaney Earl. The Steketee family just had their reunion, it was in the newspaper... Were they at Castle Park? Then there was one over at Beaverdam too. That was the Bekins. The Bekins were originally Bekius, and they found people were having trouble pronouncing the name, so they turned the "u" upside down and it became Bekins. It is interesting how these populations are all
co-mingling because my daughter married Aaron Kronemeyer, and Aaron Kronemeyer has a brother named Derek, and Derek married Melissa Murillo who is Hispanic. Now they have children, and those children are going to have the last name Kronemeyer but they are going to be half Latino in their ancestry, in their heritage. It is like Margaret Mead always said, people seem to be upset about losing their identity. The anthropologist said, "Don't get all upset - in a thousand years, barring nuclear disaster, we are all going to look the same anyway." In a thousand years, all of these racial strains, particularly here in America, are all going to be co-mingled and we are all going to wind up looking the same. It's interesting to think what they'll look like. So, as Margaret said, "Don't get yourself all upset, there is nothing you can do about it anyway." There are so many little things. We had people move here from Fort Wayne, and most of my close friends at General Electric were engineering and marketing people, and one of them was Frank Fleischer who was a descendant of an old German family in Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne was founded by German people, as were Cincinnati, St. Louis, and so many other places. It is interesting, people descended from German ancestry is the largest identifiable group in the U.S. population today - about 24%. There are twice as many people of German ancestry as there are African American today, but they aren't so readily identifiable. Frank was from that background, Fort Wayne German, and a very precise and meticulous engineering type. Soon after moving here, he complained, "I don't know how to deal with these people. I go to this hardware store called Vogelzangs downtown and I never know what to pay for what I get. I go in there
and I see these people go up to the counter with something they are going to buy and they’ll say, 'Well, that’ll be $3.50,' and the guy will slap the counter and say, 'Take $3' and the guy says, 'That’s done.' I never know what to pay because I always feel as though if I pay what is on the sticker I’m getting swindled, being taken advantage of." You wouldn’t dare do that in Vogelzangs today. You go into Vogelzangs and you offer a lesser amount of money and one of the younger Vogelzang of today would say, "Are you out of your mind?" But that is the way things were done. When I moved here the principal store was the A & P store on River Avenue which is now occupied by Walgreens. The Kroger market on South Washington is now the site of a Burger King. There wasn’t even a Meijers at that time. Meijers came in the '60s, up in the north side, where D & W just moved out of that building on the north side of Douglas. That was Meijers’ first location. So you got your groceries at the A & P or Krogers, or out on the west side at the Central Park Market that still exists. There were little IGA stores all around. There was an IGA down by where the Clark gasoline station is on South Michigan. Across the street and a little further south from the hospital, there was a Town and Country Market, a sizeable IGA. But that’s where you went to get your food items in those locations. One by one they all disappeared. Kroger gave up and the A & P gave up and many of the IGAs. There was no McDonalds, there was no Burger King, no fast food. Russ’ was the only thing we had in terms of fast food, and at Russ’ they had the drive-in. At the old original Russ’ on 8th Street, you’d pull in there and a young lady would come out, take your order, and then bring you your food on a tray that you’d clamp on the side
of your window. Do you recall any of that?

AP: They still do it at A & W, but that is the only place that we have been to that had that.

JJ: Well, when we were here we became good friends with Russ and his wife, we knew them personally. Everybody seemed to know one another. I know presently it is quite rare if I go down on 8th Street that anyone says hello to me that I recognize. But back in the '60s and '70s, I could go down on 8th Street and almost every block I'd see 2 or 3 people I'd know. Even the politics has changed. I remember at the time I was voting here, the mayor was Nelson Bosman. He lived across from Centennial Park on about 12th and Central, I believe. I remember the way things were done in the 1960s here in Holland during Nelson Bosman's tenure as mayor. Ward Hansen owned the drug store that now is occupied by the 8th Street Grill. That was Hansen's Drug Store. Ward Hansen liked the role of being behind the scene, the mover and shaker. People would complain that they were dissatisfied because so much of the city business was done in private before the city council meeting when they all had supper as guests of Ward Hansen. It was Ward Hansen's practice to entertain the whole city council for the evening meal before the city council meeting, and everything was pre-ordained on the basis of what was discussed there. They said it was pretty much the way Ward Hansen wanted it to go, one way or the another. That has changed significantly. We have whole new generations of political leadership here in Holland. It has always surprised me, in more recent years, with the size of our Hispanic population, that we don't have more Hispanic representation
on the council and all. More proportional. One of my sons classmates has been a
councilman, Craig Rich, graduated from Holland High School in 1972, and he’s been
on the council for many years. Some of those old giants passed on. Bill Wichers
comes to mind. We were close friends with Bill Wichers. He was a close friend of
half the city, I think. He was the unofficial Netherlands Counsel here in Holland. Of
course all of the Hope College people, generations of them we knew, because of our
children attending Hope College, and we tended to have good friends on the staff
here. Mr. Wolfert comes to mind. It is always remarkable where people wind up.
Mr. Wolfert now owns the old Netherlands Museum which has been converted to a
Bed and Breakfast. He taught German, or tried to anyway. All three of my children
took German classes with Mr. Wolfert, but I have yet to hear any of them say
anything intelligible in the German language. It’s just not "cool" I guess. What else
can we talk about? It’s going to take two days to transcribe this I’m afraid.

AP: On something to wrap up on, if you could briefly describe what things you most
appreciate Holland. What made you and your wife decide this was where you were
going to stay?

JJ: The people. All of the friends we made. The thing that attracted us, or made us
happy here, was that it is a good Christian community where people have the values
that we grew up with our families. My wife was from northeast Missouri and their
attitudes and all were the same that we found here. People were just friendly and we
found people that were like us. That is the most pleasant thing about the local
population. It is the people. The climate is not bad. Who really can speak in
enthusiastic terms about the middle of winter in Holland? This year my wife and I may go down to Florida for a couple of months, but we have never done that because she has always been employed by the United Way through the winters, so we have just had to tough it out here. It is a resort. If everybody else is coming here to spend their vacations, there must be something great about it. Another thing that impressed me is that I live out on the west side a couple blocks away from Rich De Vos, the owner of Amway, and a few miles from Jay Van Andel, and if it is good enough for some of the richest individuals in the world, it must be pretty good. So that is what we like about Holland. My ancestry is more English/British than any other identifiable group, my wife is the same way. In my case, my grandfather, my father’s father, came from Rehobeth, Ohio, northwest Ohio, and he was born in 1842, and I was born eighty years later, 1922, an incredibly long time between generations. He moved to western, mid-central Illinois, just west of Springfield as a five-year-old child in 1847, and that was the same year Albertus Van Raalte was coming here to Holland, and the Kronemeyers. So they settled there in Macomb, Illinois, and were a large family. They were pretty strong abolitionists because they felt very strongly as Christians, and just personal values, against slavery. So when the Civil War began in 1860, my grandfather and his father, and five brothers all enlisted in the army and went off to war. There were about four sisters and a mother left, then, on the farm. Then two years later, the women were on the verge of starvation because they hadn’t been able to grow enough food to sustain them. Three of those brothers mustered out, as well as the father, that was my great-grandfather.
Then, my grandfather and one of his brothers re-enlisted and they got a $200 bonus for re-enlisting which supported the family for the rest of the time during the war. That is the background I came from. Agrarian people of English history, for the most part. Other names in my family, on my grandmother’s side were… paternally, my grandmother’s name was Wheeler, St. Johns. And my mother’s maiden name was Reynolds but then her mother’s maiden name was Spahr, which is Pennsylvanian Dutch. And so here we wind up in Holland and my youngest daughter is married into an old Dutch family here. My older daughter married a man from the Upper Peninsula named Peter Kallio, whose great-grandfather came here from Finland, from Helsinki. They were potato farmers. So she is married to a big, blonde Finnish man, and Jenny is married to Aaron. My son lives over in Ann Arbor, and his wife is of English extraction. We don’t have too much Dutch. Only through my youngest daughter and her son are we very much part of the Dutch heritage.

AP: What things are you involved in currently?

JJ: Right up until last July 1, I was principally involved in the Zeeland United Way, helping my wife. I have been involved in the United Way activities as a volunteer since 1965, but I doubt that I am going to be doing too much in the future. Most of my activities revolve around HASP as does my wife - the Hope Academy of Senior Professionals. So many of our closest friends are involved in that. My wife, as I say, has been 35 years with the Holland Garden Club. She spends a lot of time with that. All of these people tend to overlap. We are not a member of the First Reformed Church on State Street, but we have so many friends in that congregation.
We went to Europe with them in 1990, with Bud Ridder and Lenora who were pastors, or on the pastoral staff at First Church. Bud was with the Crystal Cathedral for a number of years, and he is in HASP, so we keep overlapping. We also have ties with the Second Church in Zeeland. I guess one of my wife’s closest friends is Evelyn Van Dorp, Evie Van Dorp, who is a member of the DeBruyn family of Zeeland. Evie still lives in Zeeland, on Central. Her daughter, Ann Query, another very close friend of my wife, is director of the Zeeland Chamber of Commerce. For the last ten years, the Zeeland United Way and the Zeeland Chamber of Commerce had the same office location, and so my wife was in daily association with Ann Query and then with Evie Van Dorp, her mother. Evie Van Dorp, at one time owned the Duchess Shop in Zeeland, retail ladies ready-to-wear. Evie is in HASP as well. We winter together - Evie has two condos in Puerto Vallerta, Mexico, and we go down to spend winter vacations with her in Puerto Vallerta. It’s like one big family, I would say. We have so many very close friends of many years standing, so I couldn’t stand the thought of moving to Florida or to Arizona. It just would be too lonely, I’m afraid.

AP: Are there any last things that you would like to speak about that we haven’t touched on?

JJ: I’ll probably think of something as soon as we sign off... I might say, that in my own case I grew up in Chicago, as I say I was born in Chicago. I graduated from Kelvyn Park High School in 1939 and then I went to a community college, Wright Junior College which is now a full four-year institution, Wright City College. Graduating
from there in 1941, I continued at De Paul University in downtown Chicago and took my degree in early 1943, went in the military and came back in 1946 and decided I wanted to become a professional engineer. I enrolled at Northwestern University, graduated there in 1948. Later, when I was in Louisville, Kentucky, from 1955-1960, I went on to take an MBA. at the University of Louisville. In 1960, I ended my formal education. As I say, I grew up in Chicago and was very familiar with the city until 1948. I never again resided in the city. I was with GE and I started in Boston and then Fort Wayne, Philadelphia and then York, Pennsylvania and then here and then Louisville, and then back here again. So during the earlier years, I moved around quite a bit with General Electric. I have good feelings about GE. They were always a very good employer and very successful for one of the largest corporations in the world. I think it's directed by good people for the most part. For the most part they mean well. As with many of the major corporations, they get a bad rap with some segments of our society. But there is not much you can change about that. I'm very proud to have worked for GE and made my contribution. All those years, about 38 years all together. After I left GE, I took more or less a voluntary early retirement. At age sixty-three I was told my job was being transferred to Fort Wayne, and I was not enthusiastic about that. My family was so well established and my wife was well employed I said, well, maybe you could live in Fort Wayne Monday through Friday, and come back here on the weekends. But then they offered me a retirement package which I took. Then I was fortunate enough, after I did that, a few months later, I was taken on as financial services officer for D and N Savings
Bank in Grand Rapids. D and N is today the largest banking institution in the Upper Peninsula. They're headquartered in Hancock. Back in the eighties, they had aspirations to become part of the banking industry in Grand Rapids. They were already well established in Flint and Detroit and then they came over here. I was involved in getting operations set up here in Grand Rapids. But then there was just a big uproar about de-regulation of the banking industry, and in 1989 the whole operation fell apart. So I was retired once again, involuntarily. I think I'd still be working for them today if that hadn't happened. There was no age problem in working for D and N. They employed me when I was 63 and I worked for them until I was 67, and so there was no age discrimination problem, which I guess is illegal anyway. Well, it has been enjoyable chatting and when we get we get off the air we'll have to talk about a few other things, about your background perhaps.

AP: We have a lot of good information, so thank you very much.
OBITUARIES

James Jellison II, 76


He was born and raised in Chicago, and was a veteran of the U.S. Army serving in World War II. He received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

He received degrees from DePaul University, Northwestern University, and the University of Louisville.

He moved to Holland in 1960, and was employed as a manager of marketing research for 37 years at General Electric Co. until retiring in 1984. He also had been employed by D&N Bank from 1985-90.

He was a member of the American Marketing Association of Western Michigan, Professional Engineering Association, H.A.S.P., American Legion, and Fountain Street Church in Grand Rapids.

Surviving are his wife, Charlotte; children, James Jellison Jr. of Ann Arbor, Jeanene and Peter Kallio of Holland, and Jennifer and Aaron Kronemeyer of Holland; one grandson; sister, Doris Garrard of Knoxville, Tenn.; brother-in-law, James Scott of Ft. Wayne, Ind.; nieces, a nephew and cousins.

A memorial service is planned 1 p.m. Monday at Hope Reformed Church with the Revs. Bruce Bode and Marion de Velder officiating.

Visiting is 7-9 p.m. Sunday at the Mulder Chapel, Dykstra Funeral Homes, 188 W. 32nd St.

Memorials may be made to H.A.S.P.

Joseph Moran, 91

Moran died at his home Friday, July 24, 1998.

Arrangements are by the Dykstra Funeral Homes.

Clarence Tysse, 89


He was preceded in death by his wife of 44 years, Kathleen, in 1976.

A former resident of Cedar Springs, he was son of Gerrit and Eva Tysse, and received degrees from Hope College, Michigan State and the University of Michigan. He spent his career in education as a teacher, principal and superintendent with the Cedar Springs School System, retiring in 1972.

Surviving are his children, John and Wilma Tysse of Midland, Dr. Thomas and Michele Tyssle of Grand Rapids, Paul and Della Tyssle of LaCrosse, Wis., Vance and Judy Tyssle, and James Tyssle all of Grand Rapids; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; brother, Kenneth Tyssle of Saugatuck; sisters, Cornelia Hartough of Milton Head, S.C., and Lois Strom of Holland; nieces and nephews.

Services will be 11 a.m. Saturday in Cedar Springs United Methodist Church with the Rev. Ben Lester officiating. Burial will be at Elmwood Cemetery.

Visiting is 7-9 p.m. today at the Bliss-Earl Cedar Chapel.

Memorials may be made to the Kathleen P. Tyssle Memorial Scholarship Fund, C/O Cedar Springs Public School System.

Kenneth A. Van Lente, 95

Kenneth A. Van Lente, 95, of Holland, and Carbondale, Ill., died August 19, 1998, in Holland of illness, Cynthia Van Lente-Ward of Rhode Island, Johanna and Phil Vandrey of Illinois, and

Horror stories

Tales of uncovered treatment are countered by firms own positive anecdotes

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stephanie Ulrich has a horror story to tell about how two insurers wouldn't pay for the rehabilitation that helped her walk and speak again.

She has told the tale in thousands of newspapers. She has told it on “Good Morning America.” It has also been sent to 1,000 federal and state legislators and reporters, rolling off the fax machines of California senators last month as they pondered a bill giving patients the right to sue HMOs.

America’s health care debate is being fought out via horror stories and personal anecdotes from both sides.

Consumer groups are marketing stories like Ulrich’s in one-page faxes, complete with name and photo, in an effort to win support from legislators and the public for proposed HMO reform.

Managed care companies have long lamented “legislation by anecdote.” But apparently conceding that personal stories hold the power to drive the health care debate, they, too, are telling some tales of their own.

The patient advocacy group Consumers for Quality Care circulated Ulrich’s tale as part of a daily HMO “Casualty of the Day” campaign. That effort inspired an employer group, the Healthcare Leadership Council, to counter with its own daily fax to reporters and legislators, dubbed “Medical Miracles.” And Aetna U.S. Healthcare plans to weigh in with an advertising campaign this fall featuring member testimonials.

Among the recent “Medical Miracles” headlines: “California Woman Praises Health Plan”; “Clinic Helps Little Girl Beat Odds”; and “Ohio Woman, Once Homeless, Now Plays in Symphony Orchestra.”

The stories are anonymous, and they face stiff competition from patients willing to offer the confessions of family members.

“I want the 100,000 people to know what real people should have to say,” said Ulrich. “I want them to know what real people should have to say.”