

3-13-1999

Muller, John Oral History Interview: Class Projects

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Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Jonker, Zach, "Muller, John Oral History Interview: Class Projects" (1999). *Class Projects*. Paper 63.
http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/class_projects/63

Published in: *History 201 Oral History Interviews (1999) (immigrant residents of Holland) (H98-1351)*, March 13, 1999. Copyright © 1999 Hope College, Holland, MI.

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Interview with John Muller
Interviewed by Zach Jonker on 3/13/99
History 201 - Larry Wagenaar's Michigan History Class
Spring 1999 Semester

ZJ: What part of the Netherlands did you emigrate from?

JM: Amsterdam. We lived also in Enidhoven where I worked for the Phillips Company, but Amsterdam is where we were living when we moved out of the country.

ZJ: How old were you when you emigrated?

JM: Born in 1917, emigrated in 1949...32.

ZJ: Then at the time of your emigration you were working in a good job?

JM: I started out going to high school, then I took the Merchant Marine Academy in Amsterdam. I graduated when the war broke out but never sailed a ship till after the war because the ships had already been moved to England and the ships on the ocean were told not to come to the Netherlands because the war had broke out. So there was no ship. But then I was forced labor for the Germans in a shipyard in Amsterdam. From 1940 until the winter of 1945 and then my wife and I escaped Amsterdam, it was not easy to do. My wife had just lost a baby so she was very weak, and the food was hardly anything. Winter 1945 was called the hunger winter, particularly in the Western part of the Netherlands, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and the big cities, were hit very hard. People were dying right on the street and nobody would pick them up unless some Dutchmen did.

ZJ: Would you be willing to talk more about the forced labor situation that you endured?

JM: Either they shipped you to Germany, and I didn't want to work for them anyhow. They were our enemies. They took our country. So my dad had a friend who was a CEO

for a big shipyard company in Amsterdam. I also had signed up as a Merchant Marine engineer for a steamship company, and we lived on the company property so I was heart and soul for that company. My dad's friend was the CEO of a shipyard in Amsterdam, drydocks. So I asked him if he could ask the director, Mr. Feinhart, if they had a job for me. He said sure you can work here, but it was all occupied by the German Navy. I never told the Germans that I had a degree in Merchant Marine engineering. They found out after two years. I was called in the office of the German Navy and was balled out. They told me that they could shoot me because I had lied. Lied? "You never told us." "You never asked me." Well, it went back and forth and I decided to pipe down because you can't win from the Germans. They said, "We can punish you and send you to bad areas in Germany where you would get bombed every night." But they didn't do it. So in '45, like I said, we left. We walked all the way from Amsterdam to the province of Drenthe. It took us a whole week. We had a little cart behind us with my wife pulling, as weak as she was, and I pushed from behind. We could not do many miles because you were not allowed on the streets after 8:00 at night. There was a curfew. If they found you, they shot you.

ZJ: Why did you escape to Drenthe?

JM: Because there was food, and my wife's (Tena) sister and her husband lived there in a remote area in the countryside with much more food than we had in the big city.

ZJ: Can you describe some of the other conditions of Amsterdam during the period of 1940-1945?

JM: In the beginning the Germans were very easy going, they did not put the screws on.

But very soon it came out that they were going to push us down. The Dutch are very stubborn because they fought so many wars for independence and this was something uncalled for--to march in the country without any reason other than that they wanted the land. The Dutch were not easy-going. So the Dutch obstructed the whole regime that the Germans had put in. The Germans started out with the Jews. We lived in Amsterdam and they rounded up 30,000 Jews in one day. They did it! On a Sunday they went with big trucks through the streets and used microphones to say that any Jews had to come down from their apartments or houses to the front door. Twenty-five pounds of luggage, that was it. All the non Jews could not go out onto the street. I did go on the street and I saw what happened, it was horrible, horrible. They beat them, people had done nothing, not done any bad things against these Germans, but they did it. Slowly on they were put in the gas chambers. First, they put them in concentration camps. Some were in the Netherlands, none like Auschwitz, but there were concentration camps, and then they shipped them out. There are still some old concentration camps in the Netherlands that can be visited and we have seen them, particularly in Drenthe is a good sized one. The food was rationed immediately.

ZJ: This was 1940?

JM: It started in 1940 and slowly got worse. First a loaf of bread, then later on two slices of bread. First one or two pounds or kilos of potatoes...

ZJ: Was this per day?

JM: No, that was per week. But then it ended up as one potato a day. When we left, we had one potato per day per person, one slice of bread, and watery soup that you could

get in some kitchens that they had put up. You know needles? When you fall in these they sting, these plants? They cooked them. I never dreamed that I would eat these things, but you would go with your pot and they would give you one scoop per person.

We lost an enormous amount of weight, everybody was very weak. Cigarettes were not available--on the black market maybe some. They gave us milk too right away, with a little coupon. Everything was on coupons.

ZJ: Would you go to a German-run store to redeem those coupons?

JM: You would go to a Dutch grocery store where the shelves were mostly empty. If there was something, there was a rush on these stores and in five minutes it was sold out. I traded my cigarette coupons--they give you cigarette coupons but it wasn't tobacco. They took tree leaves and ground them up for people to smoke. Smells terrible. I took my cigarette coupons and traded them for milk. One time I decided to go outside Amsterdam, there were some farms there, but it was so dangerous to do that. The Germans were all over the place standing on the roads, blockading the roads, roadblocks. I came home on my bike, and by the way, there were no rubber tires anymore--I had wooden tires. They were strips of willow, they bend, and they put springs underneath and fasten it on the wheel. It was a horrible noise, of course, these bicycles. You couldn't ride on the wheel without anything on it or the wheel would be busted. I came back with a sack of grain. Knowing Amsterdam, I knew all the side roads and that is how you sneaked in. And if you saw a roadblock you wouldn't go any further, you would take some side street. I finally got some food because I traded for it with the grain. Grain we wanted too, but we want other things too. Meat was unheard

of. So 1945 was the height of the hunger in the big cities, then we disappeared.

ZJ: Talk a little more about your escape.

JM: We got machined gunned from the American fighter planes. There were announcements made over the clandestine radio from the BBC. I had a radio hidden. There are so many stories that I can tell you. My dad had a radio and my mom had a nervous breakdown. When they found a radio in your house you got shot. Death penalty, because they know you use that for listening to other stations in a foreign country. I could just pick up London BBC and for two or three minutes everyday they would give announcements. It was hidden in a bookcase with hollow books in front. I was first bombed when I worked on the shipyard. Two big formations of B-17s flew over and dropped bombs. We were never bombed before; they always flew over to Germany. I think that killed 1,000-2,000 citizens next to the shipyard. That was scary. On the road, the BBC said anything moving would be shot. Cars, trains, trucks--anything. Civilians or military. We crossed a bridge and were stopped by the Germans guards. We showed our papers and my wife's were fine, but mine were falsified. But he let us go. Only one soldier, big gun at his neck. We were just over the bridge and somebody yelled. We got a ride in an old truck with a wood burner. No gasoline, they used birch blocks. It could only go twenty-five miles per hour. So we took a ride and we were barely on the truck and somebody yelled "airplanes." The bombers were flying over all the time, day and night, that was nothing new.

ZJ: So you didn't think much of it at first?

JM: Well, they were our friends, but zap they came down! We barely made the ditch. Two

guys, one plane, a mustang, and another one right behind each other. I still have the bullets at home. They machine gunned the truck and missed us. I fell over my wife, you do everything at the spur of the moment. It goes so quick, one pass over the truck and then up again. There were two other guys on that truck, but you never talk to them because you don't talk to strangers during the war. You never know who they were. Then they start talking and yelling, "I thought you were our friends," to these two planes.

ZJ: What then finally prompted you to leave in 1949?

JM: I joined the Canadian Army, would you believe it? The Canadians came marching through to Gronigen then to Germany. The Germans were fleeing ahead of them. They threw their weapons in the canals and they just ran. They had no shoes on. They had rags on their feet, it was a pathetic site. I saw them coming in Amsterdam in 1940 and they were an up to snuff army. I saw them leave and they were a mess. I didn't care. They asked for food and water, that's all, and they walked as fast as they could--they wanted to go back to Germany. I said to my wife we go to Assen to look. We were in a small village on our way there when all of a sudden zip! I said to my wife, "What was that?" They were grey little vehicles with soldiers on them. I said "Germans? It can't be." They stopped. A couple more came behind them. Jeeps!! We had never seen jeeps. That was a crazy jeep with a machine gun on the back with a guy there. Guys with red berets on. Must be allies, must be Americans. Everything we thought was American was not. They got out the jeep and said "Parlez vous francais?" "Un peu." "Tres bien." Hop on and you are our guides. I said, "No no." I said, "Who are

you, you speak French, are you French troops?" "No, we are Canadians from Quebec." They could speak English and my English was much better than my French so they started talking in English. But I didn't go on there, it was against international law. If you crawl on there as a civilian they could shoot you, the Germans. "Are there Germans?" "Yes, all in the woods here." "Okay, thank you," and they took off again. I joined the Canadian Army and they took me to The Hague. Then a short time later, I was sent a telegram from my company. You have to go on a ship and the heck with the Canadian Army. I said I can't walk out of here.

ZJ: This was the steamship company in Amsterdam?

JM: Yes, the steamship company, "The Netherlands," they called it. So they put some big wheels on it and before I knew it I was out of the Canadian Army. I had fun in there because I drove a Colonel to Brussels. All the bridges over the Rhine were blown up and I had to take these pontoon bridges. Can you imagine? A guy who was never in the army. I was in the navy for five days, but I had a permit to study, they sent me to Den Helder. A big Navy base. Five days later I was back home. My dad said, "What are you doing here, you are a deserter. You have to go to the navy." I said, "The war is over."

ZJ: So you were in the Dutch Navy for five days in 1940 but then they said the war was over and sent you back to Amsterdam?

JM: Yeah, they sent us back, but then the Germans started bombing this Navy base. I was glad I was out! People don't understand that Holland was run over in five days. They bombed Rotterdam. My dad took me down there and that is how I got acquainted with

the Red Cross. That's why I'm still on the Ottawa County Red Cross Board of Directors. I never told my wife that I was joining the Canadian Army. They recruited you right on the street.

ZJ: So your wife stayed in Assen?

JM: I couldn't call but finally I got to The Hague and called. She said, "Are you out of your mind? You didn't even tell me." I said, "It was so quick; they had signs on the walls and I signed up." I drove a truck, I had never driven a truck. My dad had a car before the war, a Ford. I could drive that thing, but not a big truck. So they put me in a truck on the highway with officers standing there with clipboards. They gave me a small truck in the Hague to try it out. I was driving down a narrow street and a big Canadian truck was coming at me. I said, "Hey, this is my country," and I went. Ripped the canvas right off the side of that truck. It was all radio equipment. The guy started swearing at me in English, and I said, "Me no speak English." He said "What are you? Oh, a Dutchman. That figures."

ZJ: Did you eventually meet back up with your wife?

JM: I went home and I rejoined the Netherlands Steamship Company. They put me on a big ship that took me all the way to Australia. I was gone four or five months. They had freighters that came in from the war. They had to be fixed first in the same shipyard where I worked. However, a lot of the drydocks were all blown up by the Germans so it was very primitive. Most of them were repaired in England. Then they put me on an oceanliner. In 1948 I quit. My wife felt like a widow and she didn't like that. Then I moved to Enidhoven to work for Phillips, and being a Merchant Marine

engineer, I got a good job there because they were short on good engineers. When I was in America, I visited Grand Rapids; that was in 1946. My first trip, I came into New York, and a guy came walking on board the ship.

ZJ: This was with the steam ship company?

JM: Yes. First time in America. Everything was big. The guy from Western Union came on board and ask for Officer Muller. He had a wire. The wire read, "Come to Grand Rapids. Your brother-in-law, Bert Koops." I never met him because I married Tena in 1943, and she told me that she had a sister living in Grand Rapids. They had moved there in the 1930s way before the war, and he worked for General Motors. So I sent back a wire, "Have no money, cannot come." It was an hour later and the guy came back on board. I had to sign for \$200. Then I had to go to Chief Engineer, but he said that we had too many repairs to make in America, unless the Captain lets you go, it is up to him. So I went to the Captain and he said, "Nah. Unless somebody died." I said, "Somebody will die, if I don't go there." "Oh, you're clever. Okay, three days." I tried to get an airplane, but no way. The Merchant Marines were not counted as belonging to the Armed Forces. They did a "whale of a job" during the war with all their ships carrying soldiers and freight while getting torpedoed. Years later, not too long ago, they recognized the Merchant Marines all over the world that had sailed during the war for the allies as part of the Armed Forces. So I had to take a train, it took forever to get there; almost a day. It was hot, and I had to wear my black uniform. So I came to Grand Rapids and the groundwork was laid for immigration. My brother-in-law invited everybody from there church. It was so bad because they

announced it from the pulpit because I was one of the first ones that came right from the war to America and to a Dutch area in Grand Rapids. When I arrived there, people were standing outside the front door to get in. I talked until three in the morning; I had no voice left. It was so bad that the people would come, get a little refreshments in the kitchen, listen and ask some questions, and out the back door. Question like do you know the DeYoungs in Amsterdam? Yeah right. 800,000 people and there are probably 1,000 DeYoungs. I told them what happened there during the war. I came back on board the ship and the Captain was mad because I was four days gone. He said, "I almost called the FBI, I thought I had a deserter. I'm glad you are back." They could have fired me for that, by not showing up on time.

ZJ: So 1949?

JM: May 15, 1949, we arrived. We went to the American Consulate and they were very strict right after the war. You had to roll up your sleeves to see if you had any marks from concentration camps or anything that had to do with the German occupancy, like tattoos. They asked you everything. What did you do during the war? Were you a quisling? A quisling was a traitor. Did you work in the underground? I worked in the underground for a short period of time in Drenthe with another brother-in-law who was an ex-military. They were dropping weapons and it was pitch dark in the wood. We had to be silent. We heard the plane coming. The thing went over a few times and they give signals with flashlights. Did you know that the Germans did not even want you to light a match at night in the big cities? An airplane overhead can see that. They had a morse code through the flashlights where to drop. Then I heard these parachutes

that had big boxes with all kinds of weapons. We took the weapons and took off. That scared me, I almost needed clean underwear. Was I scared! There were Germans around and they were watching. They knew they were dropping weapons, but they couldn't find where. I told them that I didn't do much. I guarded some prisoners right after the war. My brother-in-law in America would be our sponsor, you needed a sponsor. It took awhile, in the meantime I was working for Phillips. I told my wife in a letter from New York to go to the American Consulate in Rotterdam and sign-in for immigration. She forgot.....she forgot. I came back and asked what did the Consulate say? AHHHHHH! So we had to start over. We were far behind. There finally came word that we could go to America, we had a visa but we had to leave within a certain amount of time and we had to find a ship. Planes were out, they weren't for civilians yet. We found a ship, I paid my passage, but then we found out we could not take the ship. It was overbooked. The Captain was a "traitor" during the war and was sent to prison. We got put on a real old Liberty ship. There was only one cabin on board. Four weeks later we got called to Rotterdam for an interview. They milked us for everything. We could take only \$250 per person. We had a rented house from Phillips, but we had furniture, it wasn't much. We sold everything and had to give the money back to the government. We came to America really with just a red hankie. It took us fifteen days on that old crackety Liberty ship. It was horrible. All the way around the Azores, Spain, and then to Baltimore because of bad weather on the North Atlantic. The captain didn't trust the ship. My wife was the only woman. I had to watch her like a hawk. We had two kids--my son (lives now in New Orleans) was

three, and our daughter was nine months. My wife's first impression of the United States was horrible. There was a custom officer who was sitting on a rocking chair who made us open all of our luggage. Everything. We had blankets from the Netherlands; they made good blankets in the city of Leiden. He said, "They're new?" I said, "No, we used them for fifteen days already." The captain had said sleep in these things, then they're used. Otherwise you pay high import duty. He said, "I don't go for that baloney from your captain. That's new!" So much for duty. And then he wouldn't put it back in the suitcase. You know how it goes, you sit on them at home to get everything in them, particularly when you immigrate, you want to take as much along as you can. Then I noticed he had a bottle and was drinking. It had booze in it. I should have turned the guy in!! We took the train from Baltimore to New York Central Station where we would catch the train to Grand Rapids. We sat there and Tena wanted something to drink. My boy had a little suitcase. He put it next to his chair. In there was a silver spoon that my mother had given him, which was custom in the Netherlands when a baby was born. A silver spoon and silver rattle. Within five minutes it was gone. "They" heard us talk a different language and knew that we were immigrants. We were told later on that they thought there were jewels in there. We then took the train to Grand Rapids and I got a job with Grand Rapids Fibercord, a cardboard company that did a lot of work for General Motors. Then I started working for American Laundry in Grand Rapids--(that's gone already). They needed some people in the boiler room. It was horrible, slave labor. I had to shovel coal by hand. Then I quit there and went to a furniture plant. There was a German engineer in the

laundry there who told me that I would get somewhere but that I needed to write to employment offices. He said, "There is a lot of call for good trade people; you're one of them because I see you work here. But this is not for you, to shovel coal with a diploma." So I did, and I sent 500-600 letters out. I got one letter back, amazing. It was from Parke-Davis in Detroit saying that they were going to start a new plant in Holland, Michigan, and they needed an plant-engineer. I called and talked to Mr. Anderson, the head of engineering. He asked me to come to Detroit the next week. He asked me how I was coming, by car? I told him that I didn't have a car. "Not a car? How do you move around?" "By bicycle." Mr. Anderson said, "When you come to the train station, don't walk. We had immigrants here before who walked. It's about twelve miles through the city to our plant. Take a taxi, we'll pay." Than it started looking good. I went down there and was interviewed for a whole day by the engineering department, chemical engineers, mechanical engineers, civil engineers, you name it. They took me on a tour of the plant, I had a dandy lunch they paid for. I thought that was unusual, but now I find out that is normal. They had a big room with an oval shaped table. I was sitting all by myself on one side while everybody else was on the other side, Mr. Anderson on the head. He asked everybody what they thought of me. Here I sit and they are talking about me. Can you imagine? But, the results were tremendous. One man, a chemical engineer, said, "Mr. Muller is capable of being a plant engineer at our new plant in Holland. All the mechanical and maintenance of everything." But the chemical engineer said, "There is one thing. He's not a chemical engineer, and we're starting a chemical plant." Mr. Anderson said,

"Listen, I worked with a young Dutch Merchant Marine at one of our plants in Sydney, Australia, and was amazed at what they teach there in this academy for engineers. I think he can make it. He won't need to know much about the chemistry, they'll have chemical engineers like you. You can help him if he needs some help." They voted and unanimously they took me. They had a company house for me right across the street. (They tore it down when I left Parke-Davis sixteen and a half years later). They said I can start right away. I phoned Tena and told her that I got a job and that we were moving to Holland, Michigan. They were still remodeling the plant, it was an old tannery, now they have a whole new plant with all those plastic windows. I was there when they built that plant. We went through the house with the head of the construction company and Tena told him everything she wanted. Anything we wanted we could get. They put three phones in there: one direct to the company, one direct to my office in the company, and one for our private use. I started working there. There was still much construction, and they said, "Your job is to watch what goes under the ground here, very closely. We'll have prints, but I want one person, that's you, John, to walk all day and make notes because once it is covered up, we depend on blueprints. But I want to depend on somebody's brains too." I had to hire my own personnel: boiler operators, mechanics and maintenance workers. I worked there 16 1/2 years, and Parke-Davis decided to close their plant in Detroit. I was directly responsible to the plant manager, highest person in the plant. When the Detroit plant closed, they had about fifty engineers they didn't know what to do with. A lot of them had seniority, were old-timers already. So here came Muller, a young whipper-snapper, I was in my

thirties, and I was dealing with all these old-timers who didn't give a toot about me. They put one guy between me and the plant manager--he was an Italian, he was a pain, a terrible guy--and I couldn't get along. So right there I thought, "I'm leaving." So I left. In America, if you know a trade as an immigrant, you are much better off than if you come here and you don't know anything. If you don't know anything, you are in deep trouble. You have to start from scratch and that is very difficult. We have a male friend who came over, he didn't know much and had a rough time. He retired with very little to show. We made out all right. When we had to get out of the house from Parke-Davis--they tore it down because they wanted it for parking--then we had to find a house. My wife was clever.

(end of side one)

ZJ: You were telling us about your wife and the lots on Lake Macatawa...

JM: One Sunday afternoon we drove around with my brother-in-law from Grand Rapids. There was a beautiful lot with these old trees--that's Indian country, Waukazoo Woods. We bought it on land contract. We started clearing the land and built a house there. We had that house for twenty-five years and then we sold it and moved to a condo. I got sick and tired of shoveling snow, the leaves were terrible in the fall, and there were all these old trees. The language was difficult, not for me so much; I had to learn French, German, and English, and my own Dutch language. My wife was an orphan already when she was five years old, her parents both died of cancer. She was brought up by her older sister, who is still living, and had no chance to go to high school, only grade school. That was it, then she started working. Her English was nothing, she had

to start from scratch. She went to high school courses in Grand Rapids and started talking English. We were in Grand Rapids, shopping at Meijer--Meijer had one store there on Eastern Avenue--and my wife said, "There's a guy following us all the time when we walk through the aisles! There he is, coming again." A young fellow. Finally he said, "Are you immigrants?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Are you Dutch?" "Yes." He said, "_____." (in Dutch) It was old Mr. Meijer, he's dead now. He said, "I'm Mr. Meijer, I started here by selling house to house and now I got all these stores. I wish to welcome you to the United States." My wife thought that was something. Later on, when she spoke a little English, (the neighbors couldn't speak Dutch) she managed. Up to this day I can't understand why certain nationalities don't want to speak English in this country. They want to live here, they want to take all the goodies, but they don't want to speak the language. They say they can't. That's baloney. My wife did. My boy was three years old when we moved here, he played on the sidewalk in Grand Rapids. He picked it up from the kids. The kids didn't understand him, so finally he started picking up the language and he could converse with them, not right away but after so many months. He came home and spoke English to my wife. She said, "I can't understand you. You have to speak Dutch." So he spoke Dutch--two languages. By that time he was four years old. He learned a little bit from some professors from Calvin. They had Dutch parents so they knew a little Dutch. We have two daughters and two sons who all did very well. Bill went to Grand Valley when it opened, when it was brand new. He was in the first group that graduated. He was helping building dorms to make some money--we were not rich

people. He goofed off there, and in 1960 he went to Calvin and he goofed off. Finally the Army took him. Two years in the Army, driving big Sherman tanks, and we thought he had to go to Vietnam. He found out that during the Vietnam War if you wanted to go back to college, you had so many years in the Army, you could get out early. He did, his friend was sent to Vietnam and got killed. He never got over it. He went back and graduated from Grand Valley, never went back to Calvin because he had to go to chapel and he didn't like that. Then he went to Western Michigan University to get a masters degree in archaeology. Then he met Gale, got married and moved to Texas A&M to get a degree there. He's pretty clever. While he was there, the Corps of Engineers from New Orleans came and were recruiting archaeologists for the Mississippi River. One of the professors said, "I've got a fellow here, he was in the Army already so you don't lose him there. He's working on his masters degree and has a degree already from Western and Grand Valley." One of the recruiters said they wanted to interview him. He took the job. He was happy until he saw the corruption going on in the Armed Forces. He said it was terrible. Then he quit and started his own computer business. He would repair them and had two guys working for him. He had big business from the oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, mainly to find their drill bits back, they lost them at so many thousand feet--you can't get divers down there so computers found them. He did good until the oil crisis came. No more business, sold it and started working for an English firm, also in computers. It's funny how he went from archaeology to computers. He's now working for NASA, which he really likes. The other son went to electronic school and has a real good job for Toshiba, the big

Japanese company that makes these magnetic resonance machines (like CAT scans). A million and a half each. He has now 25 engineers working for him in California; he is manager of the service department. He does a lot of travelling. One of our daughters has a store on Eighth Street, The Holding Company, and the other was with her in business but now has moved to the Outpost where you buy sport clothes. They both went to college.

ZJ: Could you talk a little about your church affiliation here at Pillar Christian Reformed Church?

JM: We were Christian Reformed in the Netherlands. We came here and I went to Central Avenue, that church on the corner. I didn't know where to go. My wife was home with two small kids, and we lived in that house by Parke-Davis, so I walked. That's quite a walk, but not for me. During the war we had to walk, and after the war we liked it; Dutchmen do a lot of walking. So I came out of church after the service and a guy came to me and said, "I'm Dr. Brouwer. Are you new here?" He was in the consistory, he was an elder in the church. I said, "Yes, I'm new here." The minute I opened my mouth, "Are you a Dutch immigrant?" "Yes." "Where do you live, the big house across from Parke-Davis? Do you have a car? Do you have a bicycle? How do you get here?" "I walked." "Walked! Get in my car and I'll bring you home." That was at the morning service. In the afternoon, two o'clock, a knock on the door. "I'm the brother-in-law of Dr. Brouwer. I'm here to pick up your wife." "Pick up my wife for what?" "There's a Dutch service there at two, and I thought maybe your wife would like to go." My wife said okay and I stayed with the kids. At night, six o'clock

another knock on the door. Now what? Dr. Brouwer saying, "I'm here to pick you up again..." I said, "Three times on a Sunday!" When I came home I said, "That's not the church for me--three services is ridiculous." Right away we were marked as "no good." The people who marked us as no good are our best friends still up today, Dr. Brouwer is dead, and his brother-in-law Klaus Bushouse passed away. We joined that church; we found out that we don't have to go to that Dutch service, and we don't have to go three times. That was a relief. These two fellows, the doctor and his brother-in-law, decided to start a church on the north side of town because that's too far away from people. So they started Calvin Christian Reformed Church on Lakewood Blvd, just a small church. We joined there, we were charter members and proud of it. Right away elect you of course as a deacon, I was the clerk. We had a preacher there that was not too "kosher." He was hanging around with a beautiful married girl in the church. I said I'm leaving here, this is no good. Consistory didn't see it, didn't want to see it. We then joined Harderwyk. We were happy there, but then we sold the house on the lake and moved to 32nd Street. Pastor DeVries was more or less let go in that church, they had something against him. They made it so miserable, and they told him to leave. I said if he leaves, we leave too because we live here on 32nd Street anyhow. Then I noticed that this church was interested in Michael DeVries. I love that man, he is a nice guy. So we joined here, and that is our affiliation.

ZJ: I appreciate you taking the time out of your Saturday afternoon to record this piece of history.

JM: Well, we did all right and are very thankful that the Lord brought us here and blessed

us. My wife had cancer and almost died. She is cured now, but struggled for two years. They cut a lot out. Now she has some trouble with her leg, but she is tough. Her father was Frisian and her mother was from the province of Gronigen, and the Frisians are tough cookies. I almost died two years ago. I got an awful pain and it turned out to be an aneurism in my aorta. They had to put new tubing in there. We have two little grandchildren in New Orleans who we adore but don't see much. So that is our experience in a nutshell.