

7-19-1996

## Lampen, Barbara Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Tracy L. Bednarick

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses\\_holland](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses_holland)



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), and the [Oral History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

**Repository citation:** Bednarick, Tracy L., "Lampen, Barbara Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"" (1996). *Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"*. Paper 68.

[http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses\\_holland/68](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses_holland/68)

**Published in:** 1996 - 1998 - *Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"* (H88-0234) - *Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project*, July 19, 1996. Copyright © 1996 Hope College, Holland, MI.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Interviews at Digital Commons @ Hope College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years" by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Hope College. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@hope.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@hope.edu).

The Hope College Oral History Project for 1996  
The Joint Archives of Holland

Interview #11  
Ms. Barbara Lampen  
Holland's Past Fifty Years

Conducted by:  
Tracy Bednarick  
July 19, 1996

Abstract (Topics correspond to general order of appearance in transcript.):  
childhood, father's professorship in math at Hope College, Hope College, University of Michigan, formation of the Teachers' Union, teaching in the Holland schools (more on this also appears later in the transcript), WWII, Hope College after the war, the "opening up" of the Holland community, churches in Holland (more on this also throughout the transcript), industry, A.A.U.W., League of Women Voters, work for Willard Wichers, change in Holland, problems in Holland, Dutch influence, change for women, Vietnam war and effect on Holland, housing in Holland, War effort during World War II, Tulip Time, new schools in the Holland area, youth, new and different influences on the city.

Interviewee: Barbara Lampen (BL): Retired History Teacher for Holland Public Schools.  
Interviewer: Tracy Bednarick (TLB): Oral History Project Student Coordinator.

Brackets [. . .] indicate a section added to the transcript during the editing process, and do not represent an actual part of the taped interview.

TLB: The first thing that I need you to do is just say your name, when you were born, and where you were born?

BL: My name is Barbara Lampen. I was born in Gladwin, Michigan, in 1916. My father was a graduate of Hope College, but at that time was superintendent of schools in Gladwin, Michigan. Later on he came back to Holland, and was a professor at Hope College for about forty years.

TLB: What did he teach?

BL: He taught mathematics. The Lampen Math Prize is in his honor. There are pictures of my father in the Math-Science Building.

TLB: When did you come back to Holland?

BL: When I was just a couple years old. We are an old family. The first Lampen came in 1857. There are four or five generations around here now.

TLB: You had family already in Holland, when you came back from Gladwin?

BL: My mother was born here, and my father's family was here.

TLB: What was your childhood like in Holland? Were there any special activities that you remember doing?

BL: No. Holland at that time was a typical small town. I went to Froebel School, which is no longer in existence. I then went to Holland Junior High School, and Holland

High School. It was through the Depression time, and we didn't have that much money. I liked school. I think that I don't have anything special that I have to stress about that. It was quite normal.

TLB: Where did you play? Was there any places that you went to play?

BL: No, just in the playground. We played on the street quite a lot. I remember that. I was never very good at games, but they would play baseball on the street and we would chase each other around the houses quite a lot. I think that there was more freedom to be outside and play with no supervision.

TLB: Where did you live when you came back to Holland?

BL: 86th East 14th Street. That house is still standing. I think that it will be taken over any day now, by Hope College expansion, but the house is still standing.

TLB: Do you want to tell me what you did after you graduated from High School? Did you go to school?

BL: I am a graduate of Hope College, Class of 1938. Then I got a Master's Degree at the University of Michigan in 1939. I am a teacher. I taught various places, ended up teaching about thirty years in the Holland Public Schools.

TLB: Do you want to talk a little bit about how teaching has changed in those thirty years?

BL: Yes. I think that it is fashionable today to blame teachers' unions for all the troubles. I don't agree with this at all. I became a very firm believer in unionization, and fighting some of our own battles. I think that we have been kicked around too much. I was a strong union member. I helped to supervise getting a single salary schedule in Holland. Even in the early 1950s, women were not paid as much as the men.

They find it hard to believe, but that is true. We became strong union members.

There was a strike here in Holland. I participated in that. It is very fashionable to say, "Why do teachers do that?" I think that we were sort of driven to it. We had to take some of this into our own hands. So we did. I have never been ashamed of it, not in the least.

TLB: Do you remember how the community reacted when there was the strike?

BL: They didn't like it very well. Some people did, and some people didn't. I did not picket. At that first strike we didn't picket. It went to the State Supreme Court. There was a legal injunction. It is quite a long, interesting story. Later, teachers would picket. I took part in the first strike here in Holland. This school district has had a lot of problems with labor relations with the school board. I was right in on that.

TLB: What happened to resolve those problems?

BL: We would resolve. We would compromise. Teachers make a lot of money today, compared to what we did. I think that they have to be grateful to some of us, who started this back in the fifties, and sixties. We fought some of their battles, and I don't think that they always appreciate it.

TLB: You lived in Holland all your life then. Do you want to talk about what a typical day was like for you when you first started teaching at Holland Schools?

BL: A young teacher asked one time, "How do you keep going?" I said, "Well, you just get up and go to work." We started about eight, in the High School; I taught High School. We usually had five classes, then we would have some free time, and a

lunch hour. I had work to do at home. I worked hard at it. I taught history, and usually enjoyed it quite a bit. We usually had five classes, that was a typical day. Five or six classes, in a high school situation.

TLB: Do you want to talk a little bit about what Holland was like during World War II?

BL: Those of us who lived through World War II remember it very clearly. We all shared certain experiences. I remember one summer I worked in a factory; I worked for the Holland Furnace Company. That was considered patriotic. We worked on armor plate, and things like that. It was very very different from anything that we have ever done. We had rationing. We had these points for shoes, stocking, and sugar, butter, and meat. All kinds of things. We had gas rationing. We couldn't do as much traveling as we wanted to. I never had a car until after the second World War. Then I bought my first car. We followed the war. It was a great patriotic war. That is hard for young people to accept today, but we all believed in it. That is why people have very fierce remembrances of it. I had a younger brother, but he was deferred because he was a chemist. He was deferred, because of what he was doing. Later on, my youngest brother went into the service. He served for a year at the end of the war in the Navy. Those were some of my experiences.

TLB: You said that you didn't have a car until after the war, how did you get to school everyday?

BL: Walked. We lived close enough. Our family had a car, but I did not have my own personal car until after the War.

TLB: What was it like when everybody came back from the war? Was Holland different?

How did Holland react?

BL: You can find very interesting things in records about Hope College. It was flooded with all these Veterans. My father would be teaching courses to help them catch up. They wouldn't wear beanies. Those Veterans wouldn't wear the beanies anymore, so that was the end of that. They hadn't fought through Iwo Jima, and some of those things to come back and be a freshman and wear a beanie. Hope College was simply flooded with people. On the place where the DeWitt Center is now there was some things called the "T-Barracks." That is where the Veterans and their families lived. They flooded Hope College. It was the G.I. Bill of Rights. They flooded the universities. Hope became very small during the war. Mostly women. There were only about four or five hundred students then. It was just flooded after the war. There are interesting things in the Archives about that.

TLB: I have been reading about that. What are some of the biggest changes that have happened to Holland in the past fifty years?

BL: I think that we have become a much more open community. We have all kinds of people moving up here. This is a big boom area; you can see that. We were rather parochial in a sense of being a very Dutch community, but it was never all Dutch. There were all kinds of people coming in here, but now they are just flooding in. It makes a big difference.

I think that another big difference is that churches cooperate much more than they did then. I would be unheard fifty years ago for the Catholics, and the Protestants to get together. But for instance, at Third Reformed Church the Catholics

are using our church. Their church is burned out. They are using Hope College buildings, and all that sort of thing.

It is a much more open community. I don't begrudge it. I think that it is interesting and I think that it is fun. I like to see us opening up, and I enjoy seeing all the new changes. Some people regret it. They say, "Oh, it was so much nicer." But it really wasn't. There is terrible traffic now, and the roads are not up to it. We all have to learn to fight this.

TLB: That is a big complaint, everybody mentions the traffic. What do you think some of the causes of the change that Holland has gone through have been? What has brought more people to Holland?

BL: They came up in the first place to harvest pickles for Heinz. Then they came up to pick blueberries, and all kinds of things. Now they just come, because there is work here. This is an industrial town. It always has been. Right on the lake front, you have the big factories. Now they are moving out into the industrial parks. Holland is a pretty town. We have beaches, and we have nice drives around here. It is a lovely area in the summer. It gets pretty cold in the winter, but they seem to live through that. I think that they like the climate.

I find it hard sometimes to understand why they are all coming, but there is work here. People go where there is work.

TLB: Where you involved in any organizations other than the teachers' union? Do you want to talk about some of those?

BL: I belonged to eight years to A.A.U.W. and I am a life member, which is the



University Women. I worked with the League of Voters for awhile. The League of Women Voters. I tried to be active in the community, I did other things.

TLB: I noticed your name on a lot of the Archival stuff.

BL: I worked for Mr. Wichers for six and a half years, after I quit teaching. When I quit teaching in 1976, I worked with Mr. Wichers for awhile. I did a lot of typing, and lot of re-editing of some of that material.

TLB: What are some qualities that seem to stand out concerning the city of Holland? You mentioned the beaches, and that it is a pretty town, that there are jobs.

BL: I can be critical myself, but I get mad when outsiders criticize. It is really not a bad place to live. We have some problems, and nobody would deny that. Still the houses are nice, there are a couple bad areas in town, but compared to some of those New Jersey towns this looks like paradise. That is what everybody says. We can be small minded. It takes us a long time to make up our minds, and then we think that this is the only thing that every existed. Now we are having big arguments now about this expansion. Everything at once, the library. A new Civic Center. A new swimming pool; that passed. We have all these things. The town is growing so. It causes some problems.

There is a little friction. Sure. Now these people are moving in, and they shoot each other. That seems strange. It is different. These problems are moving north as they come from the city. People come here to avoid the cities, and then they bring the city's problems with them. And we know this. Many people are trying to do something about it.

TLB: What do you think of the things that the city is trying to do to deal with the problems that are coming from the city?

BL: I think that most of them are pretty good. The city is having meetings. They have commissions and so on. There are so many church groups, and private groups that are doing a lot too. I think that we are trying. I don't think everybody in this town is a hypocrite, and they really want to help these people. Sometimes it is a little shortsighted, and we overdo it. I don't do anything right now, but I feel as if I have done my share. I appreciate this. I contribute to Community Action House, The Mission, and Center for Women in Transition. I try to give them some money, and that sort of thing.

TLB: Have you been involved with the church, and how do you feel about how the church interacts with the city?

BL: I have always belonged to Third Reformed Church. I am not very active, and I am not as "gung-ho" as some other people are, but I am a long time member. I do give them money. I approve of what they are doing. Through their budget, they contribute to many of these things that I like. So I give them money. I sang in the choir for fifty years. Right now, I am not very active.

TLB: How do feel about how the church influences the city of Holland? Do you think that is different from other cities?

BL: That is changing too. We have these groups from outside. There are many more charismatic groups moving in here. They are changing the attitude of the established churches that have been here a long time. I am trying to be liberal. I have watched

what they do, but it is a new pattern for the town. I think that we find it hard to know what to say, and what to do sometimes. Not every church is for everybody. I have always believed this. Some churches are more open, and some people don't like that. Some people like a much more closed service where you don't wave your hands and make a lot of noise, and so on. It depends on the church. For instance, at Third Church we spent a lot of money remodeling and building that beautiful new edifice which we have. We use it for a day care center which is fine. There is a playground right on the corner there. I think that is great. I think that that is what churches should do.

TLB: Do you think that it helps to have the churches working together to get that understanding between the differences?

BL: Yes, there is a group of those four or five churches right in the inner-city that are working together. That is great. Otherwise, we would all be competing with each other. The Methodist, and St. Francis, Hope Church, and Third Reformed Church have a sort of coalition. They are in about a two block area, and they are all quite big. They are working together.

TLB: How do you feel the Dutch heritage plays in the community? How does this interact with the other cultures that are present in Holland?

BL: I am a part of that. And we have this Tulip Time, which has become a big thing. I don't mind if the Spanish people have their own day. Some people get upset, because they don't automatically speak English. They had Dutch services in Holland even until the 1920s, and even into the 1930s at a few churches. It just takes awhile to

assimilate a new group. We have to assimilate all these people. The Mexicans, I shouldn't call them that, they like to be called Latinos; I think that they are assimilating very well. Now other groups are coming. We have Laotians, Koreans, and Cambodians. Holland High School is a mixture of all different kinds of people now. Much more than when I was there. There was some mixing, however, even then.

TLB: Do you think that the teachers have more to deal with now than when you were a teacher?

BL: Well in some ways, yes. Especially at the grade schools. They teach something called ESL, which is English as a second language. I think that is quite necessary. You have to deal with those little kids. I never had a teacher's aid. I didn't want one. I think that someone in these lower grades profits by having a Spanish speaking aid, for instance. It makes the job easier.

TLB: Do you think that kids are different than they were when you were a teacher?

BL: In some ways, but they were mouthy. It wasn't all perfect. We faced the sixties when they were sort of anti-war. You had to deal with all these things. I had a couple classes where things were quite difficult. You had to learn how to handle them. I'm glad that I didn't have them when I first started, because it is difficult. They expect too much of the new teacher some times. She is supposed to be able to handle five classes, know everything, and now what to do in every case. It isn't just enough to be a friend. You aren't their friend, you are their teacher. I used to have a lot of student teachers. I used to say, you are not their friend, you are their

teacher. Just always remember that.

TLB: What were some of the problems that you had, when you were a teacher, with the kids? Can you think of a specific example?

BL: I was not a natural disciplinarian. I learned. Part of it was that I knew my stuff, and that was important. I could usually make it interesting. I taught history. I could usually make it interesting. Sometimes when I got a class interested, you had to be flexible. I would get a lot of boys in a history class. Some of those boys when they got to know it found that they liked it and found it quite interesting. I remember I had the Detroit Free Press for awhile. In one class, we always had five minutes of sports first. Then we would have history. That was fine. I sang songs, and I told jokes. I did anything. I always said I would stand on my head to make it interesting.

I had a student teacher one time, the best disciplinarian I ever saw, but he was a big flip-up. He didn't know anything, but he had great discipline. Nobody was learning anything, because he didn't know anything. The kids were sort of half asleep. It works both ways. I would not like to have a class which is just absolutely automatons, and didn't react to anything. If you could get attention, but sometimes it was hard. It was not always due to poor kids or anything. There could be kids from some of the very best families in town who are handfuls. Basically I liked teaching, and I think that I did a pretty good job.

TLB: Concentrating on Holland, how do you think the role of women has changed in the past fifty years?

BL: We have women elders in the Reformed Church now, not that I ever wanted to be

one. I do support the principle. We have women ministers. I think that women are beginning to find their place. I can remember the time some years ago, when I started a charge account at Penny's. They said, "Now we have to have the name of your nearest male relative." I said, "Oh, no you don't!" I think that we have become more aggressive. I learned that too. In teaching, I worked with a whole bunch of men, and we got along fine. I had to be just as good. I had to know as much as they did. You had to be working as an equal on that basis. I was single, so I was just like they were, I had to have that job. I was supporting myself.

TLB: Where there any frustrations that you remember early on that came about because you were a women? This can be even before World War II.

BL: I don't think that we were conscious of it. I wasn't very aggressive at that period. We always said there were some things that we didn't do. All that we could really look forward to, in those days, was to be a teacher, a secretary, or you could be a nurse. Very very aggressive women got to be lawyers, but not very many. And there were a few women doctors. That was about it. Now everything is open.

TLB: What was it like at Hope College when you were a student there? Do you remember if there was a dress code, or any rules that were different?

BL: We just dressed. We wore silk stockings to school, when I was in high school. We liked to look nice. And those were the days when nobody had any money, but we still looked nice. We still looked pretty decent. Nobody was playing up that way, we didn't even think of it. [To this day I will not wear denim. The poorest of the poor wore denim in the 1930s. I have never seen a denim outfit I would wear.

Somehow we managed decent clothes.]

TLB: Where the rules at the College different than they are now?

BL: The girls had much more stringent hours about coming in and out. I lived at home. I didn't live in a dorm. No town girls lived in the dorm. Nobody even thought of it, there wasn't enough money. They just lived at home. Hardly anybody had an apartment by themselves. There weren't any apartments, except sometimes a few on the upper floors of houses. All this apartment living is something new, something different. That was the way it was.

TLB: Can you tell me about something that you really enjoyed doing for your job, in the past fifty years? Such as something that you got a lot of enjoyment from while you were teaching?

BL: I enjoyed what I taught. I think that that is the important thing. I thought that it was important, and something that they should learn. Sometimes it is down graded, because we have all this science and so on. I felt that what I was doing was important. I did a lot of traveling. I felt that that helped me out, because I would have pictures and things of where I had gone. I went to Europe a lot of times, did a lot of traveling.

TLB: Was there any time or situation that you really did not enjoy dealing with, that you can remember?

BL: Well, of course. Who goes through life, without having things like that? We all have to deal with unpleasant things. Not all of this was fun, but you have to learn to live up to it, and get your way through it. Otherwise, you can't live with yourself.

TLB: Do you want to talk about a turning point that you had in your life or a time when there was a big change?

BL: Not exactly. It just sort evolved. Nothing special. I haven't got any great experiences to discuss.

TLB: Do you remember what Holland was like during the Vietnam war? Was it different from World War II?

BL: Sure. You could see that from the news. People went. Hope College got a little bit excited. I remember some kids coming one time; they wanted to talk to my class, but I wouldn't let them. I felt that they would just come in and harangue the kids. One of them wanted to look at my textbooks. He said that they weren't fair and all that sort of thing. We tried to analyze it. I didn't know how I felt. Most of us didn't know how we felt. I was teaching the "Domino Theory." If Laos fell, then Cambodia would fall, and so on, and so forth. There were some doubts and some difficulties. There were some problems in Holland. Hope College wasn't as bad as some other places. It wasn't a hotbed, but they had some people that were dealing with this. It affected the kids.

I remember that we had a dress code at Holland High School for the longest time. They weren't supposed to wear shorts. The principal wanted the kids to tuck their shirts in. I think that he spend too much time having the shirts tucked in. Then they fought the hair for awhile. The important thing was to be able to teach. It wasn't that important with the hair. We all came to terms with that. Then one day two very pretty girls came to school in very nice shorts. The principal called their



father, and he said, "I don't care what they wear." This man was the president of the school board, so the dress code toppled. That is really true. Now you know how they dress. I hate the way kids look, I must say that. But still, it really doesn't have much to do with what you can learn.

TLB: Can you tell me what you have heard other people say of Holland, such as family from out of town, or friends from out of town? What do they say when they hear of Holland City, or come to visit?

BL: I meet a lot of people here (Freedom Village), most of them like it here. They come here because this is a really nice place that has opened up in the past seven years or so. You can take part in the community here. None of the people that come here are on welfare, and they all bring money in. The people of Holland really didn't think that this place would go. They thought that it would go bankrupt. People said, "What do you want to go there for?" For me it is perfect; I haven't got much family. Now it is sold out, and we have a waiting list of two hundred people. There is one hundred percent occupancy. It is for profit. This is not a religious charity. It is a for profit organization. For me it has been wonderful that I can be here. Most of these people seem to fit right into the community. They say that they can't find their way around, which I think is strange. I don't think it is that bad. "I can't figure it out; how do you get there?" They have a lot of trouble with the traffic. Well, okay.

TLB: I can understand that.

BL: Not everybody likes it, of course some people don't like it. But I don't think that it is so restrictive anymore. There are all kinds of people here.

TLB: Holland seems to be working really hard to try to make the people coming in comfortable.

BL: It has always been respectable to read a book here in Holland. It is not an anti-intellectual community. We have always had the College. The people here think that it is great. They go to the College for concerts. I belong to HASP. I am a HASP member. A lot of people here (Freedom Village) are eligible for that. They find that very good. Our lives are quite full then.

TLB: Do you remember any controversies that have risen between the city and the community?

BL: Sure, in the fifties we had the big annexation controversy. They tried to annex all the way up to Macatawa Park. They tried to annex the West Ottawa district. It resulted in the resignation of a school superintendent, and lots of trouble. There are church controversies. People are always fighting over little things. There are some controversial things about races, mixing, and so forth. Of course, that is what makes the Sentinel interesting.

TLB: What was it like when Holland started to become more industrialized in the mid-fifties and mid-sixties?

BL: It has always been industrialized. It was a big furniture town. Holland Furnace Company, that was before your time. It has always been industrial. That is how it is different from Grand Haven. Heinz. This is not a farming community, although there is some farming around here. This has always been an industrial city. Now with the growth of Prince, and Haworth, some of these other big companies, it is

much more so. One of the smartest things that they ever did, was to take the land south and east, and to make it into an industrial park, and to make it look nice. That is what has brought all the industry in.

TLB: What about Holland keeps the industry here?

BL: They say that it is the work ethic. People expect to get up in the morning, and go to work. Some of these people come in. There are plenty of service jobs, but you can not support a family on seven dollars an hour. It has never been a strong union town, I think that is why there was some opposition when teachers unionized and so did the Board of Public Works. We have these big corporations, that are quite local. They employ a lot of people. They come in from all over the place. Zeeland, a few miles down, has another bunch of big corporations. There is a big wage base here. If you have any skills you can get in. I know that there is not enough affordable housing. This is a problem. They have to find places for these people to live.

TLB: Do you have any ideas on what Holland can do to help solve the housing problem?

BL: They are doing it. Some of these places are income based. You rent at income base. If that is handled right, I think that that could work. There are these Habitat for Humanity Houses. There are a whole bunch up on 27th and 28th Streets. They are little houses that are kind of cute, if they could just keep them up. It is nice, if they will keep them up. They are brand new, on a little narrow lot. I think that thing can be made to work.

TLB: I am going to backtrack for a minute. You talked about the Holland Furnace Company. You worked for the Holland Furnace Company?

BL: No. It was a big thing in Holland. It was up by 24th Street. It was a huge factory. They made furnaces. That is a long story. Look it up in your Archives. It went bankrupt, and people went to jail. It is a long story. I can't cover that here now. But everybody in Holland was aware of the Holland Furnace Company.

TLB: Where did you say you worked during World War II?

BL: Excuse me. Yes, they did have a factory out north across the bridge. It was called Plant 5, they made armor plate. They were working for the War industry. The main Holland Furnace Building was on 24th and Lincoln, up in that area. That is what I thought you meant. The office building is still standing. Baker Furniture is in the other building. That is what I thought you meant. This was just a war building.

TLB: Where there a lot of factories that switched over to do things for the war effort?

BL: Hart & Cooley did. Holland Furnace did. I am trying to think of what some of the other factories were at that time. Many people worked in that sense.

TLB: Do you want to talk about how Tulip Time has changed?

BL: It started out in the early 1930s and the 1920s. The stupid blue and white costumes. I was never a Dutch Dancer. There weren't that many. I have seen it grow. It did not happen during the war. They skipped it. Another women and I, about '46 and '47, we had a piano on a truck. We played that music with four hands on one piano. They would move us around from place to place. Pretty soon they put it on a record. They have standardized that Dutch dance. At first it was just Holland High School. We always said let's keep it that way. It got beyond that. Now it is Holland High School, Holland Christian, West Ottawa. West Ottawa school district did not exist

before 1950. They came in to Holland Schools. Zeeland, Saugatuck, I am not sure about Saugatuck. Hamilton. Some of those come in. All those bands come in. It is a big thing. I don't mind it. I think that it is sort of fun for a few days. It overwhelms us. It is like the Olympics, which is overwhelming Atlanta right now. We're not as big a town, and we have a lot of people in a few days.

TLB: Do you remember when West Ottawa became a school district?

BL: After the war, they had some grade schools first. Holland wanted to annex that, but that fell flat. I don't think that it will ever become part of the city of Holland now, because there are more people there than there are in Holland. It is growing like crazy, that high school is huge. They seem to have quite a bit of money, they get whatever they want. They just added a big addition. This whole area . . . Zeeland is building a big high school, a huge one. Grand Haven is building a big high school. I don't know where all these people are coming from. There certainly are new high schools going up here.

TLB: Have you ever noticed a generation gap between the ages in Holland? Between the youth, and the adults?

BL: Sure. I'm not teaching anymore, I think when I see these kids with these big tennis shoes on, and these boys with the long pants all around their ankles and practically falling off, I think that it is the dumbest style I ever saw. Sometimes their shoe strings are opened. I said to a kid one time, "I hope you trip." He didn't think that that was very funny, but his shoestrings were open and flopping around. I don't really know any young people very much right now. I don't have any nieces and

nephews that are in town. I have some a long ways away, but I don't see them often enough.

TLB: Are the problems facing the general citizen of Holland different from what they were in 1950 or before?

BL: I think that you have to be more careful in Holland. I used to meet a girl on the corner, for instance, we would walk to the store, then we walk home, and then we would leave each other. I don't think that kids can do that anymore. Yes, there are problems like that. There is more open drinking, and drugs. We didn't have drugs. They may have been around, but we were not aware of it. There wasn't this drinking problem. Even when I was still teaching you had to be very careful about parties. A kid would have a party and say that it was a Holland High School party, but it wasn't. He had a party at his house, and a hundred kids would show up. They would have a keg of beer. They would say, "Oh, that is Holland High School again." But that wasn't so at all. These things would come up. I think that the drug problem is much more serious. I think that kids have some problems that we did not have. It was relatively simple, we didn't have any money. You've got some money. You think that you haven't, but you have. We made do. You could buy something for a dollar, that you can't do that now. I worked in Woolworth's, when I was in college, and in the summer. I made ten dollars a week for a forty hour week. That is different.

TLB: Do you remember what the High School did, if there was a party like that?

BL: It wasn't our party, unless it spilled over to something that happened in school.

Unless it was athletes, you had trouble with that. Hope had its problems too. Not bad, but some. A man here (Freedom Village) just said that he had lived in Lansing. He thought that the problems of Hope College with the students were very minor compared to what happened to East Lansing. He said that there was a real fight between what he called "town and gown." He said, "My it is peaceful here."

TLB: Between the college and the community?

BL: Yes.

TLB: So you would say that Holland and Hope seem to get along pretty well?

BL: Yes, I think so. Some people think that the College has too much to say. They are growing. They are spreading out all over. That huge new building, but I think that on the whole, it has been a wonderful thing for Holland.

TLB: I have kind of exhausted my questions here. When I asked you about qualities that stand out concerning Holland, you talked about negatives too. Are there any other drawbacks to living in Holland?

BL: I think it can be a little narrow minded sometimes. We always had fights. When we were kids we would argue about the Christian Schools, and the Public Schools. I think that is somewhat different now. That has changed a lot. You get little controversies that suddenly flair up. I really didn't ever have any occasion to live anywhere else. This is where I had friends, and established myself. At one time I thought about moving, but it didn't happen. I thought about going off and getting a PhD, but I thought that I was too old for that. I didn't have any money; after I quite school I had to work. There weren't these big grants that you can get today. I got

my master's right away, and then I had to go to work.

I think that one of the big changes you ought to put in there, is that television came after the War. Television changed all our lives. Now it is computers, and I don't know anything about computers. I am computer illiterate, and I am not going to learn anymore.

TLB: Did the church react at all when the televisions came?

BL: Not in our church, but some people didn't know whether it was right to watch on Sunday. There was all these big soul searching things about when should you watch it? Should you watch it? If you didn't watch it, could your kids go next door, and watch it? We had a television set quite early, but nobody said anything.

TLB: Do you think that the churches in Holland are becoming more liberal, or is there still that incentive to keeping things conservative?

BL: There are a lot of churches in Holland that are a lot stricter about all kinds of things. And there is also all this charismatic stuff [tape flips].

TLB: Does the church have a strong influence on the city?

BL: Yes.

TLB: Do you think that it has always been that way?

BL: Yes.

TLB: Do you think that it is changing at all?

BL: No, I think that there is another group that is coming in now. Their wants are different, but the Spanish people have their own church feelings. They are bringing that forward. We are having to learn to accommodate. There are these big big



churches, like Central Wesleyan, and Christ Memorial; they have a lot of influence and attract a lot of people.

TLB: Is there any final comments that you have about Holland, how it has changed, or anything that is really unique about Holland that stands out?

BL: Well, Tulip Time. Are we unique? I don't think this town is as narrow minded as people make it out to be. I think that there are a lot of different opinions, and viewpoints. There were always people here who weren't Dutch. There are a lot of factories. There seems to be a lot of money. If you look at the houses around, especially outside of Holland. Somebody is building those big houses, and living in them. I would like to see us build that civic center, and have a decent concert hall. I am in favor of the civic projects, and to get this all settled and straightened out. I think that we have enough tax base that we can do it. I don't want to see us get so big. Holland can't any bigger. But it is the outskirts, Holland township, and Laketown township, and Filmore, those are the ones that are growing. All the way between here and Zeeland too. That is what is growing.

TLB: What do you see for the future of Holland?

BL: Right now it looks pretty good. Maybe not. I hope that it stays on the upward path like this, I think that it is sort of interesting. I don't bemoan it, and say, "How terrible." At least we are alive. When I was out East, I have relatives there. They said, "Do you want to see Camden?" We don't know what a town that is running downhill is. We fixed up the downtown. There are big things opening up around here. I don't know what they all do. There are home improvement stores, and all

that sort of thing. They must feel that there is a future here.

TLB: Do you have any final comments about the history of Holland?

BL: Well, I worked for Mr. Wichers. I know quite a bit about it. Next year will be our 150th anniversary. I think you will be quite sick of it by the time we get through, according to some of the plans. Some people want to name Centennial Park as Van Raalte Park. Well, that was a Centennial Park, it was founded in 1876, that was the first Centennial. I wrote an article about that, which should be in the Archives from when I worked for Mr. Wichers. It was about why it was called Centennial Park, and so on. I think that we should hold on to our heritage, but accept others.

It is an interesting story. I have been in the Netherlands. I was an exchange teacher for a year in the Netherlands. 1955-56. I know something about the industrial background there. I went to the place where my grandfathers were born. I did a lot of travelling, and so on.

TLB: Do you think that people kind of pick up the Dutch heritage when they come to Holland?

BL: Oh, some of them are more Dutch than I am! They want to go work at the Cappon House, I don't want to do that. I am sick of it. Yes, they fall on it with glad cries of joy. They have discovered this. Yes, that is what happens to newcomers.

TLB: I think that is it.

[end of interview]