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Lappinga, Edith Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Edith Lappinga

Conducted May 27, 1997
by Ann Paeth

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
AP: Could you just state your name for the tape, and, if you would, your date of birth and where you were born?

EL: This Edith Lappenga. I was born in Chicago in 1915 on [date removed]. I spent my growing up years there. I think it was a wonderful privilege to grow up in Chicago. We had opportunities there that, looking back, I wish my children had had. It was the Chicago of the 20s and the 30s, so it was a wonderful time and place. We lived right near a Chicago park, it was practically in our back yard. They had a wonderful branch library there. That was a big, big part of my growing up, because I lived at the library, lived at the park. There was loads of good activity for children. We were part of all of it. We went to school, we could walk to school. It was about four short blocks. We walked to church. Church and school were the center of our lives. I met my husband in 1931. He was born in Holland. Then his parents moved to Volga, South Dakota, then to Minnesota, and eventually to Chicago, where we met and married. Then, we came to Holland in 1942. It was an unexpected, unplanned, precipitous move. But, I think the hand of God was there with us and directed us here, because it’s been a good place to live and raise a family. We’ve always felt it was a right move at the time. I did see real changes moving from Chicago, where I lived in the middle of maybe seven or eight different ethnic people on our block. I went to a Chicago public high school with blacks, whites, everybody. So we were
accustomed to living among many kinds of people, we were not just with the Dutch.

One of my very earliest impressions of coming to Holland, we lived right on 18th street, near Washington Square, was going there to shop for some meat. I was waiting to be served. A couple of men, I don’t know who they were, were talking with the butcher, and he was telling them that a Jewish family had just moved into the neighborhood and bemoaning the fact. And I thought, what’s the matter with you people. That was one of my first impressions of Holland, and it still is with me.

And we know that it’s here. It’s everywhere, sad to say. But living near the square was really positive. Of course, it’s lost to us today. We could walk to the square, and do all of my shopping there. I remember the grocery store, I think Jerry Hoffmeyer was there already then. And VanderMaat’s Dry Goods Store, De Loof’s Drug Store, Heerspink’s Jewelry Store. Ben Frens had his garage and took care of our cars. Draper’s Meat Market. We still miss Barbara Jean Bakery, I’m sure lots of people do. They had the best raisin bread and raisin buns that you’ve ever tasted, I’ve never tasted any so good since. I still remember the day of the Vogelzang fire. I had two children. I remember we ran down there, along with everybody else. We stood on the corner and watched. It was tragic. I remember hearing that the Volkema boy had run across to Dr. VanAppledorn’s office. I believe his clothes were burning. He died later in the hospital. Other than that I don’t remember too much about that day. I think the store was used for a while, whether it was rebuilt I don’t recall. Finally, of course, they moved down town. They’re still there.

Vogelzang’s is tradition in Holland. We lived on 95 W. 18th. I thought it was
interesting, after we moved there I found out my neighbor on the corner was the widow of Dr. Brouwer. I never knew Dr. Brouwer, but I've always been interested in him because, when my husband was born, he was born with a clubfoot. Dr. Brouwer attended his mother, and when Arnold was 10 hours old, he operated on that club foot. It was really very, I think, courageous of that man to tackle what he did. He evidently, took the Achilles tendon, which is a wide, thick tendon, and split it into three. By doing that, he was able to stretch it and form a heel, he had no heel at all. It was in a little cast about six inches long, and we just gave it to my grandson the other day. We had two little casts, because he was operated on about nine months later, too, and there’s a little larger one. My grandson is hoping to be a podiatrist. He just graduated from Hope College. He was very interested in it. We gave those to him for a memento. Here we moved to Holland and moved right next door to Dr. Brouwer’s widow. We did become acquainted with her, but at the time, I don’t believe I even knew it was Dr. Brouwer who did the surgery on Arn. That was a handicap to him in his early life. He could never learn to run and play like children did. He remembers very much that he was never picked for a baseball time. He couldn’t run. But on the other hand, he has walked on that foot all his life. He just turned 85, so it’s served him a good step.

Another store I remember, going down town, I think there were two sisters, Van Putten dry Goods Store, down town. I think it was on River Avenue. Next door their brother, Van Putten, had a grocery store. I remember that grocery store because there was seldom much groceries in the store. In the window there were just
a few cans of something. It was pretty much on its last legs. But the dry goods
store, to me, was a treasure house of antiques. Looking back, I wonder where it all
went. They had the button box, old fashioned, and the spools of thread in those old
boxes. It was just fascinating just to go into that store. I like to sew. My sister was
a dressmaker, so we had all learned to sew. I often wish I had taken her in there. I
wonder if I ever did, I don't remember. That was special. So really, walking down
town, even to 16th Street where we had Boven's dry goods, that was a treasure
house, a wonderful store. Triumph bakery. We were close by, we didn't need two
cars. Arnold started working at plant number five, Holland Furnace. That was on
the north side. He went into war work. That was really why we came. In Chicago,
he and his brother had been operating a grocery store together. When the war was
declared, the draft followed soon after, and his brother was in line. They had learned
of other young fellows who had started up businesses, and then got their draft notice,
and maybe in two weeks they were on their way to a training camp some place. So,
they didn't want to get caught in that trap, because it was hard to dispose of
everything in a couple of weeks time. They got rid of the store, and Don did get
called up. Not immediately, but he did, he had to leave. We had one daughter at the
time. Our move to Holland was very abrupt. I came here for a week's vacation with
my brother and his family. Then, Arnold was going to pick me up on labor day
weekend. He arrived here on Friday night. He had quit his job. He knew he had to
find something different. Saturday, he went around with his brother-in-law, because
he was looking for work, too, so he put in applications here and there. Sunday
evening, we were planning to go back to Chicago the next day. Sunday evening, he got a phone call. We were staying with his brother and Arnold’s sister and her husband and family, and Holland Furnace called: would he like to start work at midnight. While he held the phone he looked at me and he said, "Do you want to live in Holland?" I said, "Yeah." That did it. He went to work at midnight, and I went back to Chicago to pack up and move to Holland. So we did just that. It wasn’t easy. Living in Chicago, my family was all there. But, looking back, it didn’t take very long, and his parents followed us here. Came back home, for them, because they both were from Holland. Some years later, when my father retired, they came here. My sister had moved to Washington state, and decided not to stay, so after about six months there, they came here, stayed with our family until they found a job and a house, moved to Grand Rapids. Later, my sister and her husband retired and moved to Holland. A little later, my other sister and her husband retired and moved to Holland. So, the whole family eventually came. We’ve been here now 55 years, and 52 of the years have been spent in this house, so we’ve sat here and watched changes. I guess to me, one of the memorable times was when the Van Raalte homestead was torn down. I’ve always been a history buff, so when I came here I think Pillar Church was a real attraction to me. But because we lived so close to Maple Avenue Church, and the minister’s son was renting our apartment upstairs, we just sort of naturally gravitated to the Maple Avenue Reformed Church. But when my father came here, he was very much interested in the Pillar Church. He even went there one day, he told me this later, and talked to the janitor. He said he would
love to sit in Van Raalte’s chair, could he do that? At that time it was being used in
the consistory room, still sat at the head of the table there. "Oh sure," he could go
in. So my dad walked into the consistory room and sat down in Van Raalte’s chair.
He was quite proud of that. He was a history person, too. He was interested in
people, past and living. I like to remember him. He lived until he was 90. By the
time he that age and for some years before that, he was in a wheelchair. When he
was able to walk, he walked with two canes, and the children started calling him
Grandpa Cane. He’s still remembered as Grandpa Cane. But he would hang those
two canes on the handle of the wheelchair and push it outdoors. Then he’d get into
the wheelchair and he’d push it down town from East 20th Street. He’d push it down
town to pay his bills at the bank, and he’d go to City Hall to pay bills. He couldn’t
get up the steps, of course, so he’d sit there until somebody came along who was
going to pay a bill, and he’d ask them if they’d take his, too, and they’d give him his
change. If he got tired he used to go to the paint store on 10th street. That was run
by a friend of ours, Lambert Ekster. He would say, "Are you tired Fred." He’d say
yeah, so he’d put the wheelchair in the car and take him home. We have a lot of
good memories of my dad. I could call up, and if he wasn’t home, I knew he was
somewhere.

But the Van Raalte homestead... I remember going there once. Some party
that we were at, we’re having a scavenger hunt, and part of it was to go to the Van
Raalte home. There were horses, people were evidently renting it at the time, and get
some hairs from the tail of the horses. That was my only visit to the Van Raalte
home. I remember another story I was told, too. I'm not certain if it was the president of Calvin College, but he was in Holland, and he was driving past the Van Raalte house, he wanted to just go see it. So he did stop and he went up there, and there were renters in it and children were playing. They had papers that they were drawing on and coloring, and he asked to see their papers. They were papers of the Van Raalte sermons. He was a little bit horrified. The children were playing with things that he considered very important. So then he went back to Hope and talked to somebody there and asked if he could come and take them, if they would mind if he would take them for safe keeping. So, as the story was told to me, he came back the next day with someone else, and Van Raalte's papers were all there in the house, maybe in the attic, I don't know. He rescued them and, I believe, they're in the Calvin Archives. I think that's interesting. I don't know how true it is, it sounds possible, I guess. At the time, I still don't understand how they could let it go. To me, that would be such an attraction today to have that Van Raalte house still standing, but it isn't, so that's past. And we hope the papers are safe some place, whether they're at Hope or Calvin, why, isn't really all that important.

My husband has a hobby. He's always worked with metal, he's a machinist. But working with wood is his hobby. He loves to take something old, restore it, and make it look new. Our house is just full of that stuff. There used to be, on the corner where the minute mart now stands, a grocery store, this was before my time, but I was told it was Maas Grocery Store, it was before Maas Furniture, I think they're out of business, too, now. It used to be on Tenth and River, I believe. There
was a fire there at one time. A friend of Arnold was moving out of a house on 13th Street. He asked Arn, he said, "Could you come and help me get some stuff out of the basement, it’s got to go to the dump." So Arn went over there to help him, and one of the things that was going to the dump was an old roll top desk. He’d been using it to set paint cans on and varnish. It was a mess, spilled paint, spilled varnish on the top of it all. A mess. Arnold has an eye, and he sees possibilities where most people wouldn’t. He says, "Do you mind if I take it to my dump?" "No, no, take it home." So, Arnold took the desk home. It’s in the other room now if you’d like to see it. He refinished the whole thing. In the bottom drawer, there were stuffed a lot of little order pads, you know they used to have these little pads, Maas Grocery and Meats. So we assume that it belonged in the Maas original grocery store, and I’ve been using it for many years. The grand children are already looking at it. They’d like it.

Another thing, too, that was a rather interesting find... There was a house that I believe belonged to a Dr. Manting originally, many, many years ago. It stood on 40th and Washington where the Arendshorst Eye Clinic is now. Do you remember that brick house? Or is that before your time? Probably. It was a big brick house, a very old house, and they were having a yard sale. I believe the Takken family was living there. I’m not sure if at that time, or what. But out in the yard there was a rocking chair. It had claw feet on the arms, and it was in a sad state of disrepair. There was a big hole and the stuffing was just falling through. So Arnold, I think, bought the chair for about $2.50. He restored it, refinished it, and
had it reupholstered. It’s a treasure. In fact, I saw a picture of one very identical to it, in an early American magazine, and the date given in that one was circa 1835. I don’t know, but it’s beautiful right now. Arnold had another friend who was moving to California and getting rid of stuff that had been in the house when they bought it. One was a love seat, and they wanted to get rid of it. So, another thing, Arnold said, "Well, I’ll take it to my dump." It sat in the basement for some time. We finally, quote, unwrapped it, because it had a slip cover on it, and under the slip cover were, I guess I’d call it upholstery, after a fashion. Somebody had taken mattress pads and cut them up and rolled them around the wood, whatever it was, we didn't know really what was underneath. We just unwrapped and unwrapped. Finally, when we got all the wrappings off the love seat, it literally fell on the floor like the one horse shay, it just gave up. Arn could see form the shape of the wood that it had been something pretty. But it laid for a long time, just like a heap of sticks. When he got time, he finally started putting it together, and I think he needed one little piece to strengthen a certain spot, and then he got it all together, restained it, refinshed it, we had it reupholstered by somebody who was an expert in early American. I wish we could learn more about it. It’s over a hundred years old, because he could tell from the frame with all those little tiny holes in it, that it has been reupholstered more than once. We have that piece too. Our house is kind of filled with things that Arnold has done. It makes it precious to us, and interesting for us, anyway.

I guess now that we are in our eighties, we feel as if somehow or other, we don’t quite belong here anymore, because when we drive down the streets, you
remember so much of the past that is gone. I have a book, my daughter gave it to me many years ago, and she bought it in Chicago, and the name of the book is Lost Chicago. That book, somebody had forethought enough to write it and take pictures of it and tell the history of buildings in Chicago, how beautiful they were, magnificent buildings, and they’re all torn down to make way for free ways, drive ways... And neighborhoods destroyed, which makes a real difference. When I grew up in Chicago, too, the area that I grew up in was ethnically diverse. Then, just across Halstead street, now I say across Halstead street because I, quote, lived on this side of Halstead street, but then primarily there was a Dutch area, I guess we’d call it a Dutch ghetto. But then I had friends, a very good friend, and I still have her for a friend today. She lived in a Greek Orthodox neighborhood. She was Lithuanian. I’d go visit her, and it was a whole different ethnic group. Coming here, I was accustomed to diverse people, and I like to see that developing here in Holland. I don’t know what nationality you are, but it’s good. In fact, we have a granddaughter who married a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. So now we have a Cherokee-Dutch great granddaughter. I think she’s a lucky little girl. She’s going to get two rich cultures growing up with her. She’s going to grow up with two pluses. At least, that’s the way I see it. So, it’s pretty wonderful. Life now, we sort of feel like we sit on the porch and watch the world go by.

AP: Would that diversity be... You talked about the different advantages you felt you had by growing up in Chicago, that you children didn’t have here.

ED: Oh, I think so. That’s true. Holland, when we came here, was a pretty closed
society. I can still remember people feeling sorry for me when they learned I had grown up in Chicago. I couldn’t quite understand it. They thought Holland was the only place to live. I’ll admit it’s a nice place to live, but I don’t think we should have such closed minds that we can’t recognize good coming from some place else.

But I do remember people almost saying to me, that’s too bad you had to grow up there. I do remember, too, somebody, I think they had accepted me by that time, and yet, they were upset that so many people were moving here from Chicago, because I do know, after 1945, that was the beginning of a massive movement of blacks from the South. It was after the war. Many blacks had served in the armed forces. They were looking for opportunity, too, and of course, they were finding it in the big cities, because they didn’t have it in the south. That made big changes in Chicago, because the blacks tended… At that time I lived on the South Side in Englewood. I know that shortly after we came in 1942, after 1945, they came in massive numbers, and it made a real change for the neighborhoods there. It wasn’t easy for the people who were living there to accept them. I think other people could tell that story better than I can, because I was no longer living there, but I do remember hearing about it. The big exodus to the suburbs began. Many, many people… Finally, even the church was sold. And the white, Christian grammar school that I attended, that was sold. Big changes. Many people did come here to Holland, too. People were troubled by that. I guess they saw us as a threat, or, I don’t know. But, it was a real traumatic experience for people that went through it. I do remember friends of ours, and they came here to. They did have a dry goods store right in Englewood, and
shop lifting and thievery became so bad, they actually put screens over the
merchandise to protect it from thievery. Which is sad, and it becomes difficult for
people to live that way. It had been a neighborhood store for many, many years.
They finally gave up, came to Holland. I don’t think there’s any of them left
anymore. So many of them came and have died. That’s what a lot of our talk is
about as Arn and I sit and talk together so often about, remember this one and yep,
they’re gone. So Memorial Day is a day of memory for us, as it is for everybody.
It’s been good. Our children have all grown up here. They all graduated from
Holland Christian. We have had two graduates from Hope College. Two of my
children have graduated from Calvin, so when they get together, we hear both the
Hope and the Calvin songs. I don’t know who’s the loudest. We’ve got two more at
Hope now. One is still in High School. That’s the last one. But it’s been a blessing.
Both schools are wonderful schools. We have graduates from both, and we consider
ourselves fortunate. Where did you go to college? When did you graduate?

AP: I went to Hope. I just graduated.

EL: You did. Did you know Matt Lappenga? It’s so big, I guess. Ben Lappenga? Ben’s
in the chapel music program, I think. He helps with the chapel. He’s quite a
musician, quite a kid. Now, his brother Dan, who was given an appointment to the
Air Force Academy, he went there to check it out, but he turned it down in favor of
Hope. Which is quite a thing. He thought carefully, and he prayed about it, I know
he did, but he felt he should go to Hope. So, we’ll have two there again.

Where else do we remember about Holland history...? One thing we do
remember, Arnold worked at Dunn Manufacturing Company for 41 years after he was finished at plant number five. Once the war ended, of course war work ended, too. And I think plant number five had been turned over exclusively for war work. But Dunn still was doing war work when he started there, I don’t know what they were making. But then when he retired from Dunn’s and Dunn finally closed down, Arnold liked to keep busy, he liked to go to work. So even though he was close to 75, he started working at Western Tool, which, I guess, we both feel should be turned into a museum because it certainly is a museum piece just the way it stands there. Arn worked there for a couple of years. Then he quit again. Then one summer day, a car drove up into our driveway, and Mr. Bosch’s son came to the door and wanted to talk to Arnold. Arnold wasn’t home. I invited him in, I said, "He’ll be home shortly if you want to wait." "No, we’ll wait in the car." So this beautiful Cadillac sat in the driveway, and Mr. Bosch and his son were sitting in it with the air conditioning going, I think for a half an hour. Finally Arn came home. Mr. Bosch, who was 90 plus years old then, talking to Arnold, who was 75, and asking him to please come back to work. I guess when I look at my nephews today who are retiring at 57 and 60, here’s this 90 plus old man asking Arnold, who was 75, to please come to work. I don’t think he did. By that time he was content staying around, taking care of the house. Even now as he is 85, he’s still managing to keep the house and the yard in shape. Which is pretty good for our people. But, I look around and I visit friends in the nursing homes. I do believe, if we can physically keep ourselves active and busy doing worthwhile things, we’re much better
off. But everybody can’t. Physical limitations are such a real thing in the lives of old people. I feel for them because we feel them ourselves. I think the effort that is being made to keep people in their homes is worthwhile. I think a lot of that is happening. Evergreen Commons contributes to that. We were both volunteers there for some years. But even that, we’ve had to give up. So you increasingly see that age takes its toll. Evergreen Commons is a blessing, I think, in this community. I’m sure many people can attest to that. I’m glad to see it’s even going to expand.

AP: Why don’t you describe what you did there?

EL: When Evergreen was going to open, I was excited about it right away. I remember Judy Dykema was the first director of day care. I’ve always had a feeling for elderly people. I still do, even though I’m one too. I like to go visit old people. And I know so many people don’t, and they’re so lonely. They’re so much in need of a visit. Just to be a listening ear is just a plus. But, I started volunteering in day care. I think they were all feeling their way at first, but it was really a good experience for me. I think I was there four to five years. I’m also a typist. I used to type at Holland Hospital as a transcriptionist, so I was able to help them in that area, too. Type up all the care plans for each patient and what they’re problems were and things that we had to watch for, because, as volunteers, we were asked to read over the care plan for each patient, and to try to recognize the needs of each one. A stroke patient, you treat differently than perhaps an Alzheimer’s patient. You have to know the difference and why people behave as they do. There are so many different forms of Dementia, that you should know a little bit about the different kinds. I remember, I
think she died, there was one there, and she didn’t really have any physical problems, except she was lonely. If the family was home, she was living with the son… But if they work all day, then they spend the day alone. If they’re friends are gone, or no longer living, they get pretty lonely. She was an interesting person. She had been in the WAVES. When I learned that, we talked about what she did in the service many years ago. She could sing beautifully, too. If John Bright, who comes there regularly to volunteer, we tipped him off finally that she could sing. If he could get her, she’d sing and he’d play, and it was beautiful. Gave her a little bit of a feeling that she was still worth something, and that’s necessary. My husband, of course with his wood working, he volunteered in the wood shop as a host. Much of the wood working tools there are geared to bigger things. My husband is used to making and handling smaller stuff. I guess it’s always amazed me that in the basement, he has such a small area where he worked. I’ve heard of people building workshops in their basements, too, but mostly they’re much bigger and far more luxurious than Arnold’s is. But he’s turned out so much. I wish I had kept a log of all the things he’s made. It’s so much. It’s in the children’s homes, it’s in our home. Arnold finally, he said, "I can do more in my own basement than I can do at Evergreen Wood Shop." Hopefully I think that’s going to be expanded, too, and maybe they’ll get some of the machines in it that he uses, so people can do more of the things he does. But of course, that’s a personal preference. A lot of stuff comes out of that wood shop over there, that’s for sure. It’s amazing to watch. People like Stan Nieboer is one, and there’s another one Arnold knew, too. He used to make hobby horses, and they were
beautiful. Arnold has made hobby horses, too, for his grandchildren. I think they’re pretty well distributed yet. Another thing Arnold made for many, many years, he just finished another 25 of them, I think. He’d make little cars, Volkswagen cars, shaped like one. He makes that, those little ones up there [small cars on window sill]. So, he’s kept himself busy, and he’s left a lot of it behind. I bet he’s made a couple hundred of these [small vases], and we used to give them to babies. Whenever a baby was born in church, they’d get a little carve from Arnold. People used to watch for them. But, working at Evergreen, volunteering, was a good experience. It’s been a blessing for us. I often think, I wonder, if it’s a blessing that comes with staying in the same house. We were fortunate we could do it, I think, because it’s a small house. Four children used to eat in this kitchen three times a day. It’s not exactly big. I remember at noon, the children walked, they were all at Central Avenue school, which is long torn down. But they’d come in in the wintertime in snow pants and boots and mittens, and have to try to dry them quick while they were eating lunch, and get them back to school. But I never had to chauffeur them here there and everywhere. We were living right in the center of town, so they could walk to the library, to the tennis courts, to church, and to school. I didn’t need the car to bring them here and there as so many parents have to do today. Many mothers feel like they’re a hired chauffeur. That’s necessary in today’s world. We were fortunate that we didn’t have to. I could stay home. I was a home mother until my son was in high school. Then somebody asked me once if I would like to work putting together the Eat Smakelijk Cook Book. There was a group printing... at that time. I said that
sounded like fun. It was fun. We went there together and we were both hired. I had never worked in a print shop before, I guess they called it gathering, stacks of the book... from page to page. You walked around the table, taking one off of each pile. At the end of the time, you'd have a book put together. Then you jogged it, stacked them up. Then you kept walking around the table and had another book, walk around the table until you had another book. Finally they would take them and they were all trimmed and put into a book. Later we had a machine and we put that ring binder on them. I worked there for quite some time. I remember Don Schreur asking one day, "Edith, can you type?" Well, yes, I could type. I had always kept a typewriter in the house because I liked typing. I had an old Woodstock, I think. I never typed on an electric typewriter, but I didn't tell him that. So he gave me something that had to be typed up quickly. I sat down by that electric typewriter and it went fast. My didn't go that fast. But I got by, and I learned to do a lot of typing there, so I stayed on there, even after the book was finished, just part time. I helped out whenever they needed help with gathering or whatever. It was fun, I liked that. I remember why I left there. It was a cement floor and I did have arthritic problems, and it was a cold cement floor. I could tell after I worked there, especially in the winter, your limbs hurt, and I thought, this isn't a good place for me to be all winter. So, I did leave there. I saw an ad in the Sentinel asking for a medical transcriptionist. I was always interested in medicine, I used to do a lot of reading on medicine, I just was interested. So I thought, hey, I'll take a try. I had typed one letter, I remember, for somebody from a tape, and they asked, "Have you ever transcribed." I said, "Yeah,
I did, once. I didn’t tell them once, but I said, "Yes, I have done it." I took a typing test and it was perfect, so I was hired. I do recall that learning the medical terminology was not a problem for me. I had read so many books. If anything came up... My daughter did develop epilepsy when she was three and a half or four years old, so then I read all about epilepsy, everything I could... So then I worked at Holland Hospital for eight years, and I thoroughly enjoyed that job there. I just loved typing the doctor’s dictation. I’d type op notes and I liked that best of all. I just felt as if I was in the operating room with them, and tried to follow what they were talking about. I even bought a Gray’s Anatomy. I don’t know what I was going to do with it, and a Merke’s Manual. I learned quite a bit. I don’t know if it was good or bad for me, but it was interesting. Now it turns out, I have three grandsons that are all married to nurses. This was one of them that just dropped in. They just graduated from the Hope-Calvin Nursing Program, so I’ve given all of my books to them, so they’re carrying on the tradition. I can remember, many years ago, my aunt, who’s been dead for many, many years, she told me my grandmother, who lived in Muskegon, she was called the neighborhood doctor. I don’t really recall her much. She died in 1921, I was only six years old, so I couldn’t have known her well because we were in Chicago, but my aunt said if there was anybody sick in the neighborhood, they’d come over and call for grandma to come over. She would take care of them and figure out what was wrong with them. I thought that was interesting. So, now we have three doctors in the family, and now we’ve got three more nurses, plus several others who are older, and probably retired by now, so
medicine is rather interesting to us.

Now we’re at an age when we’re watching the changes in Holland. Very exciting, I think. I like the idea about Windmill Island turning into a village with people living there and working there. I hope that gets carried through. I guess I’m not as excited about the arena, but probably because I’ll never be able to play basketball there. I would have loved to at one time. One of the changes I’m glad to see is girls are finally getting into the sports program. So much emphasis was always given to the boys, and finally the girls are catching up. I remember at the Hamilton Park, where we lived right near it, they had a big tennis program going when we were growing up. At one time, my son, who was very active in the tennis program here in Holland under Joe Moran, right here at the park over at 22nd street, and John was really involved. They used to have these summer programs where they’d go to other towns and play other teams. But, there was an instructor at Hamilton Park when I was growing up, and he came here to Holland at one time and I thought, I remember that name. And it was the same person. I can’t remember his name right now. After all, I am 82. I thought that was exciting. John, I think I told him that, too, and he talked to him one time and said that his mother remembered him from Chicago, and that was a long time ago. So Holland continues to grow, and it’s great. I hope people here learn, as maybe we haven’t learned yet, to tolerate each other, to listen to each other. To give each other a boost, instead of a kick down, give them a hand up. There’s so much need. Now, especially, welfare reform is certainly needed, that’s true. They have to learn to recognize people aren’t always where they
are because of any fault of their own. Some of it is, of course it is, but some of it is part of the system. If people get caught in the welfare system, I don't know how they find their way out. I remember reading a book some years ago, it was called *Rachel's Children*. Some journalist wrote it, and he had followed several families through two years of being caught on the welfare system, on how they got into it, and how they couldn't get out of it. It's pretty tragic. I wish I had a copy of that book. And then we hear the horror stories of children growing up in the projects. So there's much to be done for the next generation, and you're it, Ann. Lots to be done. We haven't handed you the best of worlds. But, I guess my children at Hope are going to be part of the solution, and my grandchildren. So far, we're just thrilled and happy with what they are doing with their school opportunities. We're so grateful that they've had the opportunities for college, that they appreciate it, and use them.

AP: Were you and your husband able to go to college?

EL: No, my husband started Tilden Vocational School, that was a big boy's school. I think he attended first semester, I'm not sure if he even... But this was 1928 or 29 and the depression hit. His father was working in a school as a janitor, but the school couldn't pay him, so he got what they called, technically it was an I.O.U., they'd get a scrip, I think they called them a scrip. But he never did collect pay for a long, long time. So Arnold literally quit school and he went to work full time. For many, many years, he gave half his pay to his parents, and because he did that, they were able to save their home, otherwise they would have lost their home. He did that until shortly before we were married. You did what you had to do.
AP: Did your children go on to college?

EL: Yes. My oldest daughter started Calvin, but she wasn’t too happy there. She was interested in x-ray, so she switched and went into a program at Blodgett Hospital, and took up x-ray. When she graduated from that, she worked at Blodgett for some time, but then she got married and moved back over here to Holland. I believe, Dr. Mahaney saw her volunteering at Holland Hospital, and he said, "What are you doing?" and she said, "I’m just a volunteer." He said, "You shouldn’t be doing that. Go on to Zeeland Hospital, they need an x-ray technician." So she went to Zeeland Hospital, and she was there for 32 years. Now she works at Western Seminary. She’s in the office there, her name is Judy Bos. She’s very active in G.O.C.N. Gospel in Our Culture Network. George Huntsburger is the director of that program now. She’s very active in that, she likes it very much. Our daughter, Cathy, had motor skill problems from her epilepsy, she had literally hundreds of seizures a day for several months, so she was damaged, and she’s married and living in Grand Rapids. She did not have children. Our daughter, Mary, her name is Huisman, she was education director at Central Reformed Church. Now she is working at Calvin College, temporarily. My son, John, graduated from Calvin. He has three sons. They’re all at Hope and doing well. My daughter, Judy, has a son, Joel Bos. He works for Holland Motor Homes, and he went to Grand Rapids Community College and graduated. Elizabeth graduated from Hope, and then she went down to Kentucky, Appalachia Area. She literally volunteered there for two years, under the Reformed Church, working with Appalachian people. Now she’s working with
Kentucky Environmental Health. She’s very much interested in environment, and fighting the government, literally, for nuclear disposal waste. They’re trying to build these big disposals in that area, and they’re fighting that. So, she’s been to Capitol Hill a couple of times, and she’s been to the U. N., testifying. So she’s gung ho, and she has her new baby. The baby is six months old, but she keeps pretty busy. She’s still working, she will. So, yes, the children have their education, and they’re using it. We’ve had a pretty wonderful life. We love Holland. It has been interesting for me to see so many people come from Chicago here. In fact, I’ve had two experiences when I worked at Holland Hospital. Another woman came to work in medical records, where I worked, and, as you get acquainted, you talk, and she grew up about six blocks from me in Chicago, and here we both ended up in Holland, Michigan. Later on, I worked at Dr. Meeuwsen and Dr. Baum’s office, and he had a long time employee there, too. As we got acquainted and talked, she grew up about six blocks from me in Holland, too. She knew all the places and went to the same places as I did, but we never met there. That’s how the city changes. People come, enrich it. It’s all about living.

AP: How has the role of women changed?

EL: Oh dear, that’s a subject I’m very interested in, because I had the best of both worlds. I could stay home when my children were small. At that time, women just didn’t think about going to work. Now, I see my daughters... For the most part, Judy was able to... She worked on call at Zeeland Hospital, which meant that from about five o’clock at night until about seven the next morning, she was on call. So if
an x-ray had to be read, she could go in, no matter what time of the night, and do it, read it and take care of the patient. She wasn’t allowed to, quote, read them. But if the doctor was too tired and in bed and he didn’t want to get up and come down and read it, he’d ask her to read it. Which, of course, is taboo. But anyway, she was able to stay home during the day. Which, of course, is good. Then later on, when the children were over, she went full-time, regular time. Cathy did work at Holland Hospital, too, for a time. But she was in a position where, because of her seizure problem, which was never completely controlled, but fairly well controlled, but, under pressure, she would crack up. So she had to work in a controlled atmosphere.

And you can’t find that. People are not too tolerant. She had a good place at Holland Hospital. She worked and fit it in there very well because the director of the kitchen told me, "Don’t ever worry about her ever needing work." She said, "She does OK. She’s not fast, but neither does she take cigarette breaks or coffee breaks. She’s regular. I can depend on her." But eventually, a new director takes over and boom, out go all the people who don’t meet their requirements, which was too bad. And rather ironic because he was the chairman of the committee to hire handicapped people. That’s the world. She never did find another place where she fit in like that.

So, at present, she is on social security disability. But, she could be productive if she was allowed her own pace. And I think that’s true of many, many people. But, Mary, she’s very much, I suppose we call them feminists. Maybe we all have our own definition of that. But my girls, they have worked. I look at them sometimes and I think, oh dear, they don’t have just a full time job, which they do, they also
have a full time job at home, they’re mothers. But, I personally feel they’re good mothers, and I sometimes think they’re good examples for their daughters, and I think children learn to be more self-sufficient and independent if they’re given that opportunity. At least, I see mine behaving that way. But you can’t draw any generalizations. Everybody’s different, every family is different. But I do feel for women who have it pretty rough. I’m very glad to see Christian Reform Church’s Diaconate Program. They’re opening up these child care places, I think two of them are open now. At least, at Harderwyk one is just going to open. I think that is a big need to take care of children properly. I hope that helps with the problem. Here the government is telling these young, teenage, welfare mothers, you have to get off welfare and go to work. Well, who’s going to take care of the baby or the children? They can’t do it all.

AP: We haven’t looked at child care as a community activity for a long time, and we might need to start doing that.

AL: That’s right. I think so. I think that’s what this Diaconate Program is doing. It sounds good to me. I have one granddaughter whose chief ambition is to have children, but she knows that the order is marriage, then the children. Thank you, Lord. But, she loves children and babies. She has an interview at 12:30 at this Montersori School, and I hope she can maybe get a summer job there. She’s seventeen. She’s a very good baby sitter. So, we’ll see where she goes. This past year has been a difficult one. She’s had lots of physical problems, and, consequently, she had this year as home schooling. Physically, it’s been good for her. I’m not sure
where she is grade wise. I think last week ended her semester. But physically, she
did much better this year, so that was a plus. It’s not always easy, maybe you’ve
found it along the way, too, Ann. We sort of have one doorway, one size fits all.
But one size doesn’t fit all. The ones that don’t fit through often find it a little bit
difficult along the way. I know our Cathy did, because she had the epilepsy. We
never made it a secret, but there’s a stigma attached. I’m an epileptic, too. But mine
didn’t develop until I was in my sixties or almost seventies. Although I still
remember somebody asked me after they knew I had epilepsy, well how can you
work at the hospital? I guess they assumed that all of a sudden I got the diagnosis
and I was also retarded.

AP: And there are so many different severities of epilepsy.

EL: Oh yes, that’s right. Nobody ever recognized that I had what they called non-
convulsive epilepsy. It’s interesting. So I read about that and learned all about that.
Anyway, it’s been an interesting life. I guess, I think about my husband who just
turned 85 the other day. He often puts himself down because he was not able to
finish high school. He’s so glad his grandchildren are finishing college. He did not
have that opportunity. He sort of equates education with intelligence, which somehow
doesn’t always add up.

AP: Right. My grandmother does the same thing. She wasn’t allowed to go to high
school, and she was so sad. She said she just cried and cried when she found out she
couldn’t go. And she’s so proud that all three of us got to go to college. But she
thinks that she’s dumb. And she’s not. She’s spent a lot of time educating herself,
she reads a lot, and she not at all [unintelligent], but we can't convince her of that. We can't.

EL: No, that's right. I say that to Arn, too. Because, he has a real talent. When you can look at a piece of junk sitting in a yard sale and visualize what it’s going to be when you get through with it, that's talent, a real talent. We have so many people that over the years: we’ve got a chair, it’s broke, can Arn fix it? Of course he can fix it. When he gets through fixing it, it will never need fixing again because it’s better than what it was the first time. If he had had an education, he probably would have been an engineer or an inventor of some sort, because he has that kind of a mind. He can see a problem and make the solution. But, I understand because our society is set up that way. We think a successful person is someone who earns a large salary. That does not, necessarily, follow at all. This is the way we are, so we have to adjust.

But, in the mean time, Holland is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Pretty special time. I think Al McGeon is a good mayor, I like him. I hope he gets the support of the people one more time. I guess one of the things we always chuckle about, and I guess it’s a good lesson that maybe all of us needed to be jolted, when Phil Tannis won the mayor bid. He was still at Hope College, I believe. I think he was a student yet. And Bill Sickel, we thought he was well liked, and I'm sure most of the people thought probably Bill would get in, but they didn’t get out and vote. Bill Tannis did. He slid right in. I thought, well, that tells us you have to get out there. We hope Al gets another chance. I’d like to see some of the plans that he’s
involved in carried out. Ken Freestone is dropping out. I think he was a good
councilman, too. I like to see the young people keep moving in there, getting
involved. I think this is interesting for you. Do you enjoy it, too.

AP: Oh yes. It's very interesting all the different... You know, we ask similar questions
and people talk about similar topics, but it's just very interesting how differently they
can answer each question. It's very fascinating.

EL: We've been here 55 years. That's one thing that I feel about this town, too, as we've
made friends, you're never really quite accepted. I don't know if I'm saying that
right, because in a sense we are accepted. But somehow or other, "Oh, you're from
Chicago." Yet Arn was born here, but he moved when he was two years old, so he
didn't grow up here.

AP: I read an interview with somebody who came over here from the area my family is
from, the Saginaw area. She said the difference between that area and this area is
that, in the Saginaw area, people look at you for who you are, and here, they want to
place you into categories, like you're from so and so, you're from this are, you're
from this background. That was one of the big differences she noticed coming here.

EL: I know my daughter, Judy, who was four years old when we moved, now that's
young, she was educated, she's spent all her years here in school, I think even she
would say that, too, "Oh, you're from Chicago." We're still from Chicago, even
though it was a long time ago. My mother's grandparents came over in 1867, and
my grandfather was four years old at the time. I remember, I was told this, anyway,
he was on that boat. Of course, little four year old boys are usually pretty cute.
He’d always go to the galley and there they’d give him a rusk and put butter on it. Oh, he loved butter. So he’d lick it off and pretty soon he’d come back and they’d put some more butter on it. He’d lick that off. By the time he got off the boat, he gained a few pounds. This is the grandpa I remember. After my grandma died, he lived with my aunt, for the most part, in Muskegon. But then he’d go visit us in Chicago and stay for the winter, so we got to know grandpa pretty well. At on time, I remember the occasion, but I don’t remember how old I was, I think I was married already… My name is Edith Hannah, and his wife’s name was Hannah, or Jannah, and his mother’s name was Hannah. And he had a sister who was, they would translate it Edith now. So I guess I was named for his sister and his mother. So he gave me a pair of shoes, a little pair of brown shoes. They were tied with red ric-rac. And on the ric-rac was a wedding ring, which was his mother’s wedding. I could find and identify the initials inside. So, at Christmas time, my little granddaughter was here, she is named Hannah Rain. She is named for great grandma and Rain for her Cherokee heritage. So I typed up the Hannah connection, I called it, and told about great grandma, and I told about my mother, who was Hannah, and I am Edith Hannah, and that’s the Edith Hannah connection, and now we have Hannah Rain. Then I rolled that up real small and took that wedding ring from my great grandma and put it on there and we put it in a memory box for her, along with little gifts from everybody in the family. So Hannah will have her Dutch history and her Cherokee history. It will be interesting. I hope we can be around to watch her grow. She’ll be here in another two weeks, and then we’ll have a wedding in the family, so
she will be coming here for the wedding. Interesting things happen to families.

We’re thankful that our family still stay together. We still have birthday celebrations.

Mother’s day, father’s day. The poor kids are always buying cards. I’ve got so many cards. Do I tell them, hey, it’s time to cut it out? No, it’s fun. Now I see my oldest daughter is a grandmother. That tells me where I am. I have lots of friends who already have many grandchildren, great grandchildren. We have seven grandchildren. But that’s a blessing. I don’t know if I’ve told you anything important or not. Have I?

AP: I think you have. Why don’t you talk a little bit about your family’s trips up here from Chicago that we talked about before we sat down.

EL: You mean on the Alabama? Family was so important to my mother. I guess the important thing that I remember was when my mother was not married to my dad. My dad wanted to go to Chicago, I think he wanted to move there. He always told me, he said, "My mother was so possessive." He said, "I had to get away from her." He was a little on the frail side, and she had already lost one son to TB, so I think she was afraid. Anyway, he wanted to get away from her. His brother was living in Chicago. My mother was not going to lose sight of my dad, so she said she’d like to come along. So my dad wrote to my aunt in Chicago, and he said he’d like to bring a friend along. She wrote back and she said, "If it’s a girl friend, fine. I’m going to have a baby I’ll need some help." Well, dad took his girlfriend, my mother, along. They stayed there. This was in the Summer. Then I guess my aunt had the baby. In October, my mother and dad got married, and stayed, I guess, with Uncle John and
Ella for a time. At least Aunt Ella and my mother were so close. She was a part of our lives. Then summertime, of course mom wanted to go back and visit her family, they were all back in Muskegon. The only way to get there at that time, my dad didn’t have a car, and the Alabama was a regular route—Holland and Muskegon. So we would take the Alabama. I can still remember, my mom and dad couldn’t afford state rooms, so you just stayed in the lounge all night, and I remember my mother putting blankets and pillows down on the floor and the kids would all lay there and we’d sleep in the lounge. The next morning, we’d wake up in Muskegon, and visit the family. It was fun. I loved going to Muskegon. In fact, we still have a cousin’s get together. We’re having it June 5th at Evergreen. My mother’s name was Japenga, so we call it the Jappinga Cousin’s reunion. We get together at Evergreen twice a year. We’ve been averaging twenty people. It’s all the women who come. I’d like to, very much, extend it to men, too. But men don’t show an interest, you know what I mean? They’d just as soon skip the reunions. So far, it’s just women, but, we’re all getting older, so I don’t know how long it’ll last. But those trips on the Alabama… That’s why the boats are interesting to me. Arnold remembers riding on the City of Holland, don’t you. Did you ever take that from Chicago? I don’t remember that boat.

AL: Yeah, I remember. Sure, we rode on that. We left at Chicago and we came here to visit. That was our transportation.

EL: Then when we finally got a Model T, my dad had that Model T… There were no windows. I remember we put up Isinglass, side curtains. In the running board, you
had a rack there, you’d put your suitcases in there. Then we would come up, we’d make our stops. St. Joe was an interesting stop, I don’t remember why. I think there was a beach.

AL: The road ran right along the beach those days.

EL: OK, that’s why. It would be an all day trip. I remember waking up early in the morning and leaving almost in the dark, and it’d be night by the time we’d get here. There’d always be at least one flat tire. Tires weren’t what they are today. What else do you remember? Changes in Holland? Lots of them. Too much traffic.

Educational opportunities, wonderful. Good schools, yeah. Playgrounds, parks, got to keep those up. Last year yet we were able to walk these two blocks to the park.

That’s so pretty over there. We met people just sitting there, they’d come and they’d bring there lunch, chat a little bit. I don’t think I’d make it now, anymore. Walking is pretty difficult. But it’s been a pretty wonderful life here in Holland.

AL: Have you lived in Holland a long time?

AP: Jus the last four years I’ve been here at Hope.

EL: She just graduated form Hope, too. What field are you in?

AP: I had an English major and I’m going on in the fall to get my masters at Ohio State.

EL: So you’ll be moving? Where abouts in Ohio?

AP: It’s in Columbus.

EL: That’s where my niece is. That’s an interesting story. Right now, my niece, she’s in Columbus, Ohio, she and her whole family, she has four children, the third daughter had a job in Alaska University, I’m not sure what city.
AL: I think it was Fairbanks.

EL: Anyway, she was teaching anthropology, and then she got her masters there. Whatever work she was doing, or who for, I’m not clear on all the details, but she was sent up to this little island, and she’s living there. They built a small… no plumbing… I don’t know what her heat is or anything. But she met this Alaskan Indian, and they’re getting married on Saturday. And my niece and her whole family, all the children and the grandchildren, are all out. The only way they can get there is by plane or canoe. There’s no motels or hotels on the island, so they’re all going to be farmed out amongst the people. And there’s going to be a wedding there on Saturday. I wish I could be there, but I can’t. So that’s another Indian in the family, so the cultures are blending, somewhere, sometime. Well, they always have. We just didn’t know about it.

AL: We have two grandson’s at Hope. You don’t know them, I suppose.

AP: I’m sure I’d recognize them. You at least recognize everyone.

EL: Ben’s a tall boy.

AL: He’s into music.

AP: I think we’re almost out of tape. Are there any final comments?

EL: I believe it. No, except, thank you Holland.

AP: Thank you.
Additional Note by Edith Lappenga:

Two important topics that I had in mind, but got bogged down in family, which for me is easy to do. But these changes were real, too.

When we first moved to 20th street, there wasn't a fence on the block. It was just wonderful green grass from Pine to Maple, and the children could run from yard to yard, and since there were close to 50 children at one time, there were plenty of playmates. Now the fences are up, including our own. They say, fences make good neighbors, and I agree, to an extent, especially if dogs are to be kept in check, and pool, etc. But that is a real change. Another interesting fact if that one of the residents here has lived here all his life, and, being an only son, inherited the home and still lives here. At one time, I was told be an "old" neighbor that this stretch of land form Pine to Maple was all planted in tomatoes by Heinz for their catsup.