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McGeehan, Al Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Tracy L. Bednarick

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

Interview #5
Mayor Al McGeehan
Holland's Past Fifty Years

Conducted by:
Tracy Bednarick
June 19, 1996

Abstract (subjects correspond to general order of appearance in transcript): Family, student life at Hope College, Sundays in Holland, changes in Holland, ethnic make up of Holland, "All-America" City award, work on City Council, Growth, community organization involvement, Holland Public Schools, interaction of the city government and local governments, Dutch Heritage, crime, industrialization, HEDCOR, church in the community, youth of Holland, sister city in Queretaro, Mexico, women in Holland, positives and negatives concerning Holland, and the Mayor's turning points.

Interviewee: Albert McGeehan (AM), Current Mayor of Holland

Interviewer: Tracy Bednarick (TLB), Oral History Student Coordinator

Place of Interview: Temporary location of City Hall, in the Mayor's office at 900 Brooks Avenue.

TLB: What I first want you to start out with is: just state your name, date of birth, where you were born. If not in Holland, when you came to Holland.

AM: Albert H. McGeehan. [date removed], 1944. Born in Staten Island, New York. A longtime ago.

TLB: What year did you come to Holland?

AM: I came to Holland in 1962. It was September. It was September fourth. I came to attend Hope College. Go Hope! Half way through Hope College I got married. By the time I graduated Holland was home to me, to my wife. We called it home and we decided that this is where we wanted to stay.

TLB: What is you wife's name?

AM: Her name is Marsha.

TLB: Do you have children?

AM: Sure do. I have three.

TLB: What are their names?

AM: They are twenty-nine, twenty-seven, and twenty-five. The oldest is Laura Lynn and she is a teacher in the Hamilton School District. My oldest son is our middle child. That is John. He is an engineer with General Motors; lives over in the Detroit area. He is the proud daddy of two boys, who happen to be my grandsons. The youngest is Michael. He is married. He lives in Petosky and he is an engineer with Greiner Incorporated.

TLB: When did you graduate from Hope? What was you fist job?

AM: My first and my only job. I graduated from Hope College in 6-6-66, June the 6th, 1966. By that fall, I was a teacher in the Holland Public Schools. I spent thirty years teaching Social Studies at Holland Junior and Holland High School.

TLB: What year did you first run for mayor?

AM: Well, I first ran for City Council back in 1975. I lost. Then I ran again in 1977 and I won. I was on the City Council for sixteen years, four terms, four times four, four elections, sixteen years. Then three years ago I was elected to my first term as Mayor. That was 1993. I have been Mayor for three years. The question you asked is when I first ran for Mayor? That answer is 1983. But I lost that one. But I have been involved steadily here at City Hall for the last...now twenty years.

TLB: What were your first impressions of Holland, when you came here as a student at Hope College? And how was it different from New York?

AM: I was born in New York City, but I was not born in downtown Manhattan. I wasn't born in the steel and glass and concrete jungle of New York City. I was born on Staten Island, which was very rural, much like around here in Western Michigan. They were very small communities, but they were very compact. They were tied together. They were on an island, so they were linked together. They were tied together with street, highway system, and rail system. Still it was within a thirty minute train ride and a fifteen or twenty minute boat ride to Manhattan Island. I lived on the island that the Statue of Liberty looks at. I decided to stay here, because Holland was smaller, warmer, warmer people, greener, bluer. It was homier; it was friendlier. The community just opened its arms and invited me to hang around for

awhile.

TLB: How did you come to choose Hope College?

AM: The Reformed Church in America has two seminaries. One is Western Theological here in Holland. The other one is New Brunswick Theological and that is in New Jersey. When I was about fifteen years old, my parents moved from Staten Island and moved to New Jersey. It was a time of subdivisions and little "cookie cutter" houses that all looked alike, in the late fifties. We bought one of those little homes. The church that we attended was always a training ground for new ministers. It was within a mile of New Brunswick Theological Seminary. I got to know, and my family got to know very very well the young people, well they weren't so young, 22, 23, 24 year olds. They were all studying to be pastors in the Reformed Church. And one after another as I met them in my church, they all told me that I was going to go to Holland, Michigan and go to a place called Hope College. And now you know the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say. [laughter] They were right.

TLB: What were some of your first interactions with the "natives" of Holland like?

AM: The first interaction I ever had here in Holland, was probably the first weekend that I was here as a student. My room-mate was from Long Island, New York, and I was from Staten Island, New York. Sunday afternoon, we grabbed our tennis racquets, walked across the street from Kollen Hall at Hope College to play some tennis, right across from the Dow Center. A police cruiser pulled up, and an officer walked across the tennis courts and said, "Boys, I would like to talk to you." He pointed out a sign to us that said, "No Sunday playing." That was my first realization that

Holland was a little different place than where I had grown up. That was my first contact with the people. [laughter] By the way, when the officer told us that, we both said, "Yes, sir," and went back in the dorm and studied. Times have changed. As I said we both said, "Yes, sir," and went about other business.

TLB: That kind of brings me into my next group of questions. What are some of the biggest changes that you have seen in Holland since you have been here?

AM: There's been a lot of them, Tracy. A lot of good, some of them not so good. On a whole, I would say a lot of wonderful changes. Certainly, the number one change has been growth. Holland, Michigan was a sleepy little community when I first came here. It seemed to me at that time that it was almost another world. We used to joke about how we wondered if people who lived in Holland even knew that there was a world beyond Zeeland. Now that was through the eyes of a young person who thought that he knew it all, as well.

Holland was rather singular in its ethnicity, at that time. I am not being critical at all, it is simply an observation. The first year that I taught school in Holland and for many years, as a teacher I kept a grade book, and there might be thirty students in a class. The students would all be numbered 1,2,3...down to 30. When I got down to about student six or seven I was in the V's. The V's for Van's and Vander's was the whole rest of the class list. That is not the case any longer. Today, Holland, Michigan has more than one third of the young people in the public school system are not Dutch. That is not good. That's not bad. It is just a statement of fact. I came here from someplace else. The Dutch who came here, came from

someplace else. Today there are a lot of people coming from a lot of different places. Even you who says, "I'm from Cadillac." But now Holland is home for a period of time. Today you hear a number of different languages on the streets. You see a number of different colors of skin. And again, that is not good or bad, it is just a statement in the whole big vastness of this universe we inhabit a very small little planet. We all share that planet. Here we are now rubbing a little bit closer together in Holland than in the past. Holland is becoming a microcosm of the world. That is the way most world communities and societies are changing today.

TLB: How do you think Holland is dealing with that, making that happen in a harmonious way?

AM: If I told you that when it came to race relations in our community, that everything is perfect and this is heaven it would be a lie and you would smile or laugh. On the other hand, I think that Holland, Michigan is setting the tone for the nation for the way that we react to each other, the way we embrace each other, stand for each other. If the United States didn't recognize the way that we deal with our differences in Holland, we would not have recently been named and "All-America City." As recently as last Saturday night. Am I proud about that? Yes!

TLB: How is that determined?

AM: That was determined as a result of filling in a ten page application. Working on that application for one solid year. Then being selected as a finalist and then doing another presentation, a live presentation with twenty-nine other cities. And then being bombarded by a series of questions from the jury. And based upon your scores and

all of this, ten communities last Saturday were named "All-American" cities. The way that we deal with each other, our people, our programs, our neighborhoods, our relationships were all part of that evaluation. The National Civic League, which makes this award, recognizes the fact that Holland is leading the nation in its ability to get along.

TLB: How have you been involved in some of the changes that have occurred in Holland?

AM: Up to my ears. As a member of the City Council you do a lot of dreaming. You do a lot of "blue-skying." And a lot of times you work toward bringing dreams to a reality. The City Council and I can't take credit for everything that has happened. When a company decides to locate here we don't go out and find that company and tie a rope around them and bring them here. There are others who do that. I think that with the City Council, in the twenty years that I have been a part of that process, has put in infrastructures: streets, roads, waste water, electrical capability. This helps to beckon businesses here. I think that we have done an excellent job of creating new neighborhoods, and recreating old neighborhoods. The creation of parks. The desire of and creation of programs to enhance our Historic District and enhance our downtown. You could go to a lot of cities across this country and not find a downtown that is as neat as Holland. You can find bigger. You can find fancier, but I don't think you can find better.

TLB: What do you think has been the cause of the growth in Holland and the other changes that have occurred?

AM: The reason for the growth is: there is nothing that breeds success better than success.

I liked what I saw, so I came here. That was over thirty years ago. There is a lot of other folks who are looking at Holland. They come to Holland. They visit Holland. They have friends in Holland, family in Holland. They say, "I want that." I came to Holland, Michigan, as the first member of my family to ever come here. My brother came to Hope College and stayed in Holland, Michigan. Our brother came to Hope College and didn't stay in Holland. Our sister came to Hope College. After four kids came to Hope College, my mom and dad decided that there was nothing left in New Jersey and moved to Holland as well and they live here now. And that is what happens in family after family after family.

TLB: Right. I have heard that a couple of times in my interviews.

AM: When a community is going downhill it will go downhill fast. When the reputation out there is a positive thing, people will beat a path to your door.

TLB: Have you been involved in any other organizations beside City Council or what you do as the Mayor, that works in the community?

AM: Where do you want to start? [laughter]

TLB: Tell me as many as you want to tell me.

AM: I'll have to get out my resume here. [joking] We have been Little League coach, Boy Scout leader, Cub Scout leader, we have worked for the United Way. I've worked on the library board, the museum board, the Board of Public Works, the Planning Commission. I have been a member of so many school millage campaigns, so many building committees. I am now a member of the Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Oh my!

TLB: Speaking of school millage. Where I am from, we have a hard time getting school millage. Do you notice a difference in the Holland community toward's people's ideas about education?

AM: Just this year the public in Holland, Michigan were asked to support a technology millage and it was passed 3 to 1. That is not the way every school election has ever gone since I have lived here. But it is the way most of them go. Even though many of our citizens choose to send their own children to a private school system, whether it be one that is church affiliated or one that is not church affiliated. Most of the people that call Holland home, see a real value in public education. They support it. When you are supporting two, three, four school systems I think that shows real commitment.

TLB: Definitely. What are some qualities that seem to stand out concerning the city of Holland? The people? The city in general.

AM: Caring. Decisive. Visionary. Risk-takers. Characteristics that describe the community and its leaders: very careful planners, and people who can work in a collaborative effort. One of the least commonly heard terms, I think, in this community is the word, "my," or "me," or "I." What I hear when I am in meetings of the Chamber, or the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, or the Holland City Council I hear "we," and "our." I think that this speaks volumes about this community.

TLB: Can you think of something that has happened that was directly determined by that community effort?

AM: Sure. In most communities around this country there is open warfare between the city, the central older control part of an area, and the surrounding townships or suburban governments. That used to be the case here in Holland, Michigan in the late 50s and early 60s, there was an extreme bitterness between township and city. Today it is a collaborative effort. Today we talk about building a new library, we talk about doing it together. Today we talk about a dredge disposal sight, which isn't the most attractive thing in the world, but we do it together. Today we talk about an area center to bring ice staking, conventions, concerts and a new civic center, and we do it together. I think that that is exactly what you are looking for when you ask that question. To demonstrate that spirit of cooperativeness.

TLB: What do you make of the increasing diversification of the Holland community? How is that working? What is helping that to work?

AM: I was a history teacher, Tracy. I know and my friends and neighbors in this community know what will happen, what has happened, and what can happen to a community where you refuse to get along with your neighbors where they are new and different. I don't want a repeat performance in Holland, Michigan. We don't want a repeat performance of what happened to other American communities over the last 100 years.

TLB: How do you feel that the Dutch heritage still plays in the community today? And how does it interact with the other cultures that are also present in the community?

AM: The Dutch are known for their conservative approach to things. That is still here. I think that is good. Especially when that comes to financial matters. We don't risk

much when it comes to our investments, for example. The Dutch also have reputations. In the Dutch culture, Monday has always been a day to clean, clean the house, do the laundry. The term Dutch Clean, it an appropriate title. The Dutch are fastidious when it comes to cleaning of their homes, their property, themselves. I think that continues to show in the community. I'm not Dutch, not at all. The Dutch like to take an awful lot of pride in what they own, how they show what they own. That doesn't mean that aren't other people out there who do the same thing. It is still one of the main ingredients in this community of ours in Holland that whether it is our streets or our parks, our downtown, our homes, our neighborhoods: Dutch clean.

TLB: Does it seem that just being in the Holland community, you kind of pick that up in your person?

AM: If it wasn't part of where you came from, yes, I think it does.

TLB: How do you feel that the problems affecting the general citizen of Holland have changes since you came here?

AM: How have the problems of the citizen changed?

TLB: Any problems that might be facing the citizen. A change in crime? A change in...

AM: I was just going to say. . .There has been a change in crime statistics. There is no doubt about that. There has been nationwide in the last twenty, twenty-five years more of a sense of lawlessness on the part of some. There has been a lot of learning going on, on the part of some and a I emphasize some young people, on how to be disrespectful, how to hurt your neighbor, how to hurt yourself, how to disrespect other people. There has been a lot of teaching of that going on in our culture, in our

music, in our movies, in our literature. Young people are quick to learn. I am saddened by that reality, but I am not throwing my hands up in the air and say that there is nothing that we can do about it. In Holland, Michigan we don't tolerate at all, not one iota; we don't tolerate violence; we don't tolerate disrespect. We don't applaud those who do violence. We don't applaud those who turn walls of buildings in to graffiti. In fact, we take it down immediately. We try to support all those citizens, young and old, business people, social service providers who spend their days trying to elevate their neighbors and improve the community.

TLB: Are there any negative aspects to living in Holland? Any drawbacks to living in the city? I know that this is a hard question for you to answer because of your position.

AM: Again, it is not heaven. Every time someone is hurt due to violence in this community, and thank God it is not in any kind of number like it is in other cities, we are all diminished. I would call that a negative. Every time there is an act of violence we are all hurt. But again, that is a negative.

Some of the drawbacks in this community. One would be that we are running out of land. We don't have the ability to "grow" this community. The president would use that term. To "grow" the community of Holland. We are becoming rather boxed in - in the city. We can't go over the water; we can't go out over the lake. There are other communities that surround us. Certainly one of our biggest frustrations is that we are surrounded and we know it.

TLB: And people want to keep coming, but...

AM: That is right. And that creates another big negative as we grow. My wife and I,

when we bought our home we could see apple trees, apple orchards, a farm, and cornfields across the street. Today that is all condominiums. As we grow, we are diminishing the number of acres that we have for agriculture or just nice country side. Yet, many of the people growing up in Holland who want to stay in Holland, they want new homes, or new neighborhoods, or different neighborhoods. Those people moving to Holland want to new neighborhoods, or just a neighborhood that is new for them. Whether it is brand new or not, is not important. We are gobbling up raw land at a very very fast rate. And that is a concern of mine.

TLB: As Holland became more industrialized how did the public react? And what effect did the increased industrialization have on the community?

AM: One thing that happened with the increased industrialization is that we had more taxes to use in the city, to use for more things, to build more parks. Some would say that we wouldn't need new parks if we didn't have all the new industry coming in. It is a case of the chicken or the egg. What was the first part of the question, again?

TLB: How did the public react to the changing of Holland as it became more industrial?

AM: There are always in any community, and there are those in our community, who want Holland to be just exactly as it was the day they were born or the day that they pulled in. Whether they pulled in, in a U-Haul trailer, or a Mayflower moving van, they just wanted their part of Holland to stay that way forever. That tree across the street that was there when they bought their house, they want that to stay there. There is some frustration on the part of citizens who are saying Holland is changing too much too fast, it is growing. They feel diminished. Now we know how the Native

American Indian population felt when the first of us arrived here at this place called Macatawa.

TLB: What is it about Holland that has helped bring the industry in?

AM: What's brought the industry? It is one of those Dutch things again, I guess. The Dutch have been extremely well known for generations as very industrious. It is called the work ethic, the Dutch work ethic. Now the Dutch are not the only people to be good workers and strong workers, don't take that. The Dutch simply have a reputation world-wide of giving a dollars worth of effort for a dollars worth of pay, and being extremely creative and problem solving. That coupled with all that clean water we are talking about, all over this planet there are places that would love to have industry, but without water you can't have it. Without electricity, you can't have it. We have the second lowest electrical rates than any city in the entire state of Michigan. We have an unlimited supply of water. We still do have land. We still do have some people, not many, looking for jobs. We have a reputation that Holland is a good place to do business. If you couple that with, we've got a freeway. We've got a railway line. We've got an airport. We have a shipping port here that can go to any other port in the world because of the Saint Lawrence Seaway. I would call that a pretty good equation for success.

TLB: How do you think HEDCOR has influenced it at all?

AM: The people and the vision of something called HEDCOR is probably one of the two single most important reasons for our success. Back in the very early sixties, a group of men and some women who said, what do we want the vision of this community to

look like, what do we want to look like by the 1990s? They created a plan. They created opportunity. And our hats should be off to them for insuring the fact that our kids and grandchildren, if they want to live in Holland, they can find a good job.

TLB: Are you involved in the church at all and if so how does the church play in the Holland community?

AM: It is another one of those ingredients that we need to talk about. This thing called the American society was not created by government laws only. I firmly believe that most of our laws in this country were based on religious principles. We are what we are, because of the tradition of strong religious affiliation. Holland has been joked about as being a city where there is a church on every street corner. Well, there are other communities where they are joked about that they have a bar on every street corner. Our churches have, are, and will continue to play a vital vital role in who are and who we want to be. And we need to know that. They're the fertilizer for the quality of the fruit that this community bears. Our fruit are our people and our children and our grandchildren. I can applaud those who are in our churches and working with our citizens and giving them hope and strength, faith, and strong morals, and strong values, because that is what makes our society.

TLB: Does that exclude people from the Holland community at all?

AM: Well, the reality is in the census that was done in 1990, I think I am right when I say that 40% of the people in Holland, in that census, indicated that they weren't members of any church at all. That is probably a higher number than a number of years ago. If that number continues to grow, I think that Holland will be diminished,

rather than enhanced. I'd like to see it go the other way. Our churches need to get out there and beat the bushes a little bit, not for people who are already members of other churches to just get them to move around within the churches. We need to find people that aren't in any church and bring them in under that wing.

TLB: Have you noticed a generation gap at all between the ages in Holland? Where, when, why?

AM: I guess on various points and issues there will always be a difference of opinion between the younger and the older generations. It is the way it has been since time began. I think most young people of this community embrace the values of their parents and grandparents, respect their parents and grandparents. I know that because I worked with young people for thirty years. I was in a classroom today with forty young people. I have not severed my relationship, I still do some teaching. I meet with young people all the time. Most of the young people in this community are great, wonderful, fantastic, super people who will become the leaders of this community tomorrow.

Are there issues on which they differ? Sure. Will they always argue about which way to wear a hat, what length hair to wear, whether an earring goes in the ear, the lip, the nose, or the eyebrow? I guess those kinds of things will always be there. Whether shirts should be tucked in or out? Do you tie your shoes, or do you leave them untied? Do you wear socks or not? Every generation will try to find its thing to say that we are different from an earlier generation, but if they're not careful and if they look back in the history books they will find that what they are doing is

something that a generation did 100 years ago - 200 years ago or more.

TLB: You talked a little bit about how your family moved here after you had been here for awhile. Could you tell me a little bit about what you have heard others from other communities say about Holland when they come and visit?

AM: The mayor's office all the time is asked to take various groups on tours. In fact, I have one here, this group of people coming from Germany. I've got to set up an appointment to meet with them.

TLB: I remember during Tulip Time, I was working at the Knickerbocker and you came with the people from the Netherlands.

AM: Here is a letter from Mexico, from the President-Mayor of the city of Mexico who came to Holland just a few weeks ago to talk to us and see our community. Whoever comes here and has an opportunity to see Holland, Michigan is absolutely amazed. Astounded about our degree of success, our image, our cleanliness, our economic vibrancy. They always say, "Do you realize how lucky you are in Holland, to have what you have?" And I say, "Yes, but tell me again, because it feels good."

TLB: Do you want to talk a little bit about the city in Mexico? Are you trying to set up a sister city?

AM: Oh it is done!

TLB: It is done.

AM: The city of Queretaro. It is a city about three hours north of Mexico City, three hours by automobile. It is a city of rich history and culture. A city filled with Philharmonic halls, museums, symphonies, and architecture. It is a city that is 475

years old. It is a city that is the epitome of what Mexican culture, architecture, music, and history should be. We are very fortunate that the City Councils in both Queretaro, Mexico and Holland, Michigan have during 1996 signed letters of understanding and we are officially sister cities. I am very please by that, because of all the Windmill Island that we have downtown and all the Windmill plans, like you see right here, which is an emphasis of Dutch connections, we need to remember that 18% of the total population of Holland, Michigan is Hispanic. They are not all Mexican-American: some are Puerto Rican; some are Cubano; some are from Nicaragua, Chili, Honduras. They are from all over the Latin America area. The greatest percentage of our Hispanic are of Mexican ancestry. And I am so glad that we can elevate those members of our community. Say, "You are important too," by having and official relationship with the oldest, most historic city in all of Mexico. I will be going there in two and half weeks to bring words of greetings.

TLB: How exciting.

AM: From here to them!

TLB: Wonderful! Okay, concentrating on Holland, how do you think the role of women has changed since you came here as a student?

AM: Big time. Big time. I have been on the City Council for nineteen - twenty years now. I have served with 1,2,3,4 different ladies. I don't believe that there was ever a lady on City Council before the time that I was here. In my of knowledge of business in the community more and more women are assuming higher and higher levels of leadership in business, industry and politics, banks, and industry. We even

have CEOs of major businesses in the city who happen to be women. We have one of our area representatives just happens to be a women. She is not a representative because she is a women; she is a representative because she is a good individual and she has a keen intellect when it comes to political issues. We have more and more women assuming leadership roles in the churches. I know that is controversial. We have many many women, I know of now, in roles of leadership in our educational system. The superintendent of schools in Holland, Michigan happens to be a lady, but an excellent superintendent. I don't think that it matters one bit the gender of the individual. What matters is their interest, their vision, their heart, their desire, their leadership. I guess I am lucky, because for thirty years I was a teacher and half of my colleagues with whom I taught were women. And there was never ever a hint of difference between the male and females that were teachers at the Holland Public Schools and that was probably just good training for me. Maybe everybody should be a teacher for awhile, and if we were then we wouldn't have any gender issues bothering some people in society.

TLB: It seems to be one of the places that it doesn't exist as much, in the educational field.

AM: Look around this building. Look at the leadership we have in city offices. The Treasurer of the city of Holland happens to be a lady. The Clerk happens to be a lady. The Assistant to the City Manager happens to be a lady. My wife happens to be a lady.

TLB: I just have a few more questions. Tell me about one task you've had as Mayor or as City Councilperson that you really enjoyed doing.

AM: If I didn't enjoy so many of the tasks I wouldn't have been here for nineteen years. Now you are asking me to pick one out and say, "What was really fun? What was really enjoyable? What was really great?" Maybe I could answer by saying something by answering. Now I know that this is audio and not video [shows interviewer design of master plan for Windmill Island]. When this Windmill Island Village, this new neighborhood will be created. We are going to start creating it next month with the arrival of a building from the Netherlands. When we get the new area center that is going to be a very joyous time for me. But there has been no higher point to being Mayor of this city, none, than just this past weekend when I was handed this award and asked to take this back to Holland as the All-American city of 1996. It doesn't get any better than that.

TLB: Now my follow up question: has there been any disappointments or frustrations?

AM: Disappointments. Sure there have. I have lost some votes on the City Council, if that is what you mean. I have felt very strongly on things, and wound up with a majority of my colleagues on council saying, "No we have a difference of opinion." The good news in this community is that when that meeting is over, we all walk out as friends.

In a more serious vein, probably the saddest time for me is when three young people in this community died because of acts of violence, when many other young people were hurt, wounded by gunfire, stabbed, beaten, one way or the other. Now that doesn't happen often, but if it happens once I am going to be saddened about that as Mayor of this community.

[phone rings...Mayor McGeehan answers it]

TLB: I have one more question. Explain a major turning point in your life.

AM: Hmm. You mean, like when I graduated from High School and someone said, "You are going to Holland, Michigan?" And then I was accepted at Hope College? I would call that a major turning point. You mean, when I found the lady who I married? I found her when I was in high school and I married here halfway through college. I would call that a turning point. Do you mean, when the two of us had each of our three children? I would call that three major turning points. Do you mean, when I was allowed to be both a public employee, a teacher in this community and an elected official; which is very uncommon? I'd call that a major turning point. When I was defeated in my first attempt to run for City Council. When I was defeated in my first attempt to run for Mayor. I would call those turning points. When I won each of my three elections, and I have won six of them now. I would call those major turning points. But probably the most important turning point in my life so far is when I became a grandpa, two and a half years ago. Now just last week we have had another grandson. I like turning points.

TLB: Congratulations!

AM: Thank you very much.

TLB: Do you have any final comments, or things you would like to say about Holland, Holland's history, the community?

AM: I would just like to say that like many many people I like to travel. I have been very blessed. I have had the opportunity to travel to many many places in the United

States. I've had a chance to visit Canada. I have had a chance to visit Europe. I've been lucky enough to be to Alaska, Hawaii, Tahiti, and next month I am going to Mexico. But all those places that I visited are just that - they are destinations to visit. Holland, Michigan is home. I can't think of a better place, of all these other places that I visited, I can't think of a better place to call home than this community. I'm proud to call myself a Hollander. And thank you very much for doing this.

TLB: Thank you.

AM: I am glad to do it.

[end of interview]