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Stygstra, Mary Anne Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Mary Anne Stygstra

(unedited)

Conducted December 4, 1997
by Vern Baarman

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
Mary Anne, it's interesting to have this interview with you today. Maybe you could give us some of the early statistics of your life. Where were you born?

MS: Chicago, Illinois.

VB: What part of Chicago?

MS: The northwest side of the city, called Irving Park.

VB: Let's establish your father's name, and your mother's name.

MS: My father is Nicholas Carl Bicking, and my mother was Mary Coullie Bicking.

Coullie was her maiden name.

VB: How do you spell that?

MS: Coullie. She was born in Wharmack, Scotland and my father was born in Budapest, Hungary.

VB: They lived in the northwest part of Chicago?

MS: Yes.

VB: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MS: No brothers or sisters.

VB: Where did you go to school in Chicago?

MS: I went to Carl Sheer's High School, Belding Elementary School.

VB: How long did you live there? You were born there, and you moved away when?

MS: When I went to college, basically. I went to Hope.
VB: You went to Hope College. What year did you start Hope?

MS: January, 1963, in a blizzard. (laughter)

VB: So you got acquainted with Holland very soon.

MS: Yes.

VB: What did you take at Hope College?

MS: I majored in speech, theater, English, and sociology and psychology, and became a schoolteacher.

VB: Where do you live now?

MS: At 88 Sunrise Drive in Holland.

VB: Where do you teach school?

MS: In Saugatuck. I've been at Saugatuck High School for 27 years.

VB: What do you teach at Saugatuck High School?

MS: English.

VB: Can you give me your spouse's name, and your children?

MS: There is no present spouse, but I have a child named Nicholas John Stygstra, who is presently 17 years old. He was born in March of 1980.

VB: So I guess you were married at the time he was born. Do you care to give his father's name?

MS: Sure, Ronald Lee Stygstra.

VB: What do you enjoy doing in the Holland area? Are you a member of any civic clubs?

MS: I belong to Holland Country Club. I enjoy socializing up there. It was fun working on their bicentennial project. I did a lot of research for it, which is similar to what
you are doing now, and that was kind of exciting. I found a lot of unusual items. I
do some volunteer work for the Children's Resource Network, which I find
rewarding. I snow ski in the winter. A little gardening, and things like that on the
side.

VB: You go up skiing up north don't you, in Michigan?

MS: Yes, we go up north to Harbor Springs usually a couple times a winter, and we've
been going to Colorado in the spring.

VB: And your father lives up north somewhere?

MS: Yes, he lives in Harbor Springs, presently, since my mother died about seven years
ago. He moved to Holland first and then to Harbor Springs.

VB: He moved to Holland when?

MS: Right after my mother died. He sold our home in Chicago and moved here. But
we've been kind of part-time Michiganders all of our lives, I think. He managed
Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island for 12 years, and then owned the Harbor Inn in
Harbor Springs for 12 or 14 years.

VB: I think he managed a hotel in Chicago too, didn't he?

MS: He worked for several different hotels in Chicago, and he also owned one in
Sycamore, Illinois, before the advent of motels, when the hotels were similar to the
Warm Friend. He had one in Wisconsin and one in Illinois. The Maureen on the
lake in Chicago he managed for ________________.

VB: Do you have any memories of those days when he was with the hotel?

MS: Oh, a lot of them. It was fun. I got a lot of great service and met a lot of interesting
people, especially at the Grand Hotel.

VB: Did you get involved at all with the hotel business?

MS: Just working during the summers, doing a little of this and a little of that. Everything from waitressing to bartending, to a little kitchen work and maid's work, and desk clerk work.

VB: So you had some enjoyment out of the hotel business, and now you're living in Holland and enjoying the social life at the country club. Are there any other organizations that are related to your school or that you're involved in?

MS: Not really. I've coached a lot of things over the years, but I don't do that anymore, mostly because Nicholas keeps me pretty well occupied. I'm working this year with his senior parents' group, and things along that line, getting things organized for the graduation that will come this June.

VB: Have you seen any changes in Holland, and I know that is a very broad question, since you've been here? Let's start with what attracted you to Hope College and Holland, Michigan.

MS: I wanted to go to school in Michigan, and Chicago at that time had midterm graduation, so I graduated from high school in January. It was quite difficult to get into some places. They didn't want to take enrollment for freshman at that time, and Hope would do that. So, here I am. That kind of decided it for me. I had thought about going to Michigan State and transferring, but I ended up liking it at Hope and staying for the duration. I graduated in 1966.

VB: At that time, let's see 1966, Holland was probably a little different than it is right
now.

MS: Sure was.

VB: How would you explain the difference to someone, Holland in 1966, and what it is in 1997?

MS: Well, in the first place the obvious thing would be the size. The population has grown tremendously. It's not the small little sleepy town that it once was. The main street has changed drastically. There were very few places to shop back in those days. There wasn't much around as far as purchasing clothing or anything like that. Of course now we have a lot more opportunities.

VB: Many people shopped in Grand Rapids I guess at that time.

MS: Yes, shopping in Grand Rapids. There was very little downtown. Dining facilities were basically nonexistent. There wasn't much if you wanted to go out for a nice dinner, whereas now we have a little bit more variety--some ethnic variety--which also indicates the fact that we have a lot more variety as far as the ethnic make-up of the town has changed drastically. We have many more oriental, black, mexican, white. As I talk to Nick at school it changes so drastically at Holland High. They have kids from Tibet, and all over the world now, which for many years was strictly white, anglo-saxon protestant for a long, long time.

VB: Have you been involved in any way in these changes or have you participated in any way?

MS: I don't think so, not directly.

VB: Do you think these changes have been better, or what do you think are the causes of
these changes? You mentioned growth...

MS: I think Holland has been very attractive to people because the cost of living is fairly reasonable. There are plenty of jobs, the unemployment rate is minuscule compared to other areas of the country. People have exited the city looking for the small town, the neighborhood, a good place to raise their children, to escape some of the violence that may be offered in other areas. Hence, we have more violence here, because it seems that a lot of it comes with you. So I think that would make a difference too. I worked for the police department at one point, for the community service unit, just doing some volunteer work. The problems back when I worked for them were things like neighborhood squabbles, children throwing a ball against the side of the house. They don't have those kind of problems anymore. It's much more drastic.

VB: You did this as part of your social studies at Hope?

MS: Yes, it started out that way. It was part of a sociology class at Hope. And then I continued doing it for a couple years, just because it was interesting.

VB: Do you know about HEDCOR? They were the ones that really started the growth in Holland, I believe, by bringing in a lot of industry that we didn't have before. Do you think that HEDCOR has done good for the city? What they've done has been good for the city? There are people I think in Holland who, and I'm not supposed to be leading questions but, that have felt maybe it would have been better for Holland if HEDCOR hadn't brought all of this industry here.

MS: I think a lot of those people are people who don't want any change, period. I think change is a part of it, accepting it. I think it's been kind of nice to having some
variety in town. Since I'm a Chicago girl, I like it a little bit bigger. It's a little bit small for me. Kind of cramped my style. (laughter)

VB: Can you think of any other cause that might have changed Holland? Take the existence of Hope College, for instance.

MS: Hope College has had a tremendous impact, a very positive one. I like what it has done to the core city. I think the expansion of the college campus itself has been good. I think it has had a healthy influence on some area neighborhoods that were not maybe quite as desirable. I would like to see them build the city center thing right adjacent to that, where, what's the name of that factory on the corner...Western Foundry. I would love to see that all cleared out. I think it would be nice to see it all blend into Hope.

VB: Do you think Hope has changed over the years, too?

MS: Oh yes. Hope has become much more liberal. It was a very conservative school when I went there. We had lights out, and hours, many rules that I didn't like. They don't have any at all now.

VB: Do you think Nicholas will go to Hope?

MS: He will at least for the first year. He's actually starting this spring. He's taking an art class, with Del Michel. He hopes to major in art somewhere. He will go for at least one year and then decide what he wants to do.

VB: So, just to sort of repeat just what you said, when you moved to Holland, Hope College you considered a little bit on the conservative side, as far as of your youth in Chicago.
MS: Absolutely, yes, I was not used to, I guess, the strict religious conservative aspect of life.

VB: In those days, how did the people from the city of Holland and Hope College get along? Do you think they were closer then, or do you think they're closer now?

MS: I think they're probably closer then.

VB: You think the city of Holland itself is pretty closely tied together, back when you first started?

MS: I think the local people were more involved in Hope College, or more in tune with it, because of the religious aspect, and the conservativeness of the town itself. It's not as conservative of a town any longer. We have many more people that have moved in, and don't have the same attraction, or whatever you might want to call it.

VB: So has Hope become more removed from the city itself, or from the people?

MS: From the people of the city, yes, I think so.

VB: What are some of the best qualities of Holland? Some of the things we've talked about have been somewhat negative, in terms of being conservative...

MS: It's one of the cleanest little towns you've ever seen. Someone once told me they had never seen such a well landscaped town, that everyone's home, even the worst homes in town, seemed to have some landscaping done. It's very attractive. You don't see that in many places. Its proximity to the lake is wonderful. Its closeness to Chicago, Grand Rapids, it's easy to get to by automobile. We've got good highway services to take us right out of town when we so desire. Amtrak...

VB: Not many towns have that anymore.
MS: Greyhound bus if we need it.

VB: We can get in and out any way you want.

MS: Right. I think the downtown area is extremely attractive. I think they've done a wonderful job with that. I think that they've brought in some nice, high quality stores that people didn't seem to think would happen. I'm anxious to see what will happen to the west end of Eighth street. I think that's going to have a pretty rosy future somewhere along the line too.

VB: It has a lot of potential.

MS: With the addition of maybe a marina, tie it all the way into Kollen Park, would be really attractive.

VB: They were talking about having a park right from Paw Paw Drive, along the river.

MS: That would be fun. That would be really kind of exciting. There's a lot of physical qualities that Holland has that make it attractive. The dunes, and Saugatuck to the south, there's lots of little places to go. Grand Haven to the north.

VB: A lot of tourist attractions.

MS: Yes, Windmill Island, which is kind of a fun little place. It's going to be interesting to see what they do with that, too, with the possibility of housing...

VB: Since they're trying to preserve some of the ethnic part of Holland, if they have these people come from the Netherlands and put in a little village where people actually live.

MS: It would be nice to see some addition to the Island. It's been a long time since anything has actually been added to it.
VB: Something for the people to return and look at it again. What do you think about preserving that ethnic part of Holland there?

MS: I think anytime you can preserve anybody's ethnic background is great.

VB: You know that I lived in Chicago for awhile also, and one thing I liked about Chicago is that they had their ethnic neighborhoods.

MS: Exactly.

VB: I always thought it was fun to go to Germantown...

MS: When I would go home, my father would say what do you want to eat? German, Chinese, Greek? And there was always a place to go. I liked that part.

VB: And you see how some of these ethnicities, how they live, and how they eat254.254. Yet today, they say that Chicago is probably the most segregated large city that we have because they have these ethnic areas. So when we talk about a town, I think it's nice that each one celebrates their ethnicity so that the other ones can see how they live.

MS: I think we've done some things with that with the Mexicans have had some interesting celebrations--Cinco de Mayo, and the Folklorico and some of their music and dancing have been very interesting. Now some of the Asians have started doing it too. It's kind of fun to have them come to the schools and share some of their background.

VB: Yes, it's a real fast way, for children to learn the ethnic culture of the other people. I think we can enjoy those things together. I'm pleased to see that Holland is trying to preserve the ethnicity of everyone. It's also part of what the Archives is trying to do, is to preserve all of the things that developed Holland. So we've got somewhere to go to study, to learn, about what other people living in Holland have done and where
they’ve come from, their culture and background. So we’ve talked about positive and negative aspects of Holland, the drawbacks of living in Holland, and the joys of living in Holland. Holland is also known as a city of churches. Have you had any opportunity to enjoy any of the church life in Holland?

MS: I’m not a regular participant.

VB: We talked about Hope College, and how it’s changed and how it’s related to the community. What do you think of the public reaction to some of the changes they want to make in Holland? You mentioned the area center. We can’t make a decision.

MS: I know.

VB: We can’t make a decision on US 31. We can’t make a decision on where to put the area center. Do you have any comment on how that’s being done, or why me might not be able to come to a decision?

MS: I really don’t know. I have my own opinion, which I stated, where I’d like to see it go. I think it’s sorely needed. I would love to see the whole thing come together here quickly, because it would be a...the Civic Center needs to be replaced, there’s just no ifs, ands, or buts about that. It’s outlived its usefulness at this point.

VB: Just not large enough, really.

MS: Not nearly. I think I would like to see it over near Hope College, because I think the college would make good use out of it as well as the community, and then perhaps could help on maintenance, et cetera, on it. Whereas if you put it somewhere else far removed from the college, I’m not so sure if it would have the same impact.

VB: There seems to be some concern about people, that the city is too busy supplying
things for Hope College.

MS: I think Hope College has been such a valuable part of this town. I think the things that it has done, people should appreciate. I think that they are a tremendously valuable part of this community.

VB: Hope College itself is an industry.

MS: It really is, and it's open to people to use. Its facilities are there, and that's something you don't have in every town.

VB: I guess if you're a tax payer, you're concerned about where your tax money goes. So they wanted to go to the general public. I think some people are concerned that if it starts going towards Hope College, that it's not for the general public. In your opinion, it's otherwise. You seem to think that...

MS: I think Hope is available to the general public. Its library facilities are there. Its theater department. Its art department. Its galleries. I think all of those things are not just Hope College entities. I think that they are there for the public to use. Maybe they don't avail themselves of it as much, but it's certainly not off limits.

VB: So what Hope as an industry has brought to the city, to the people of Holland, they would not have if Hope was not here.

MS: I believe that.

VB: Anything else other than the library that Hope may bring to the city?

MS: A wider variety of people, employment. I think of cultural contributions.

VB: I would say arts, the Knickerbocker Theater, the dance...

MS: The dances at Knickerbocker, right.
VB: The fine arts they bring to Holland.

MS: They have several forums and meetings that they open to the public every year, for people to hear speeches. You can take classes. You can audit a class. There are a lot of things along that line that I would like to do upon retiring. Go back and take another class for my own general interest.

VB: If you hadn't come to Holland, would your life be different?

MS: Absolutely. I'm not sure where I'd be. I'd have to think it'd probably be in the city. I still miss it. I still get excited going back.

VB: Do you mean Chicago?

MS: Right.

VB: Teaching school in Chicago would be different than teaching school in Saugatuck.

MS: It would be unique. It definitely would be a different challenge altogether. I don't know whether I'd be up to it at this point. Maybe when I was a beginning teacher I might have been able to handle it.

VB: In terms of education and schools, do you think that in the last ten years, thirty years, forty years, that they've made any changes, improvements? Changes is a very general word. Has the area school system improved since you've been in it?

MS: Yes. I think it has improved drastically, partly due to technology. Technology has become such a major role in everything we do. It's hard to separate it or divorce it from any curriculum study at all. It's totally involved in everything. Whereas it used to be in the business angle, it's now in the English, geography, math, history and every aspect of education. Children are much more adept at it. They're starting at
kindergarten or before. They know more than I do. The schools in Holland have grown drastically, too. Many of them with additions, and with those additions I think they have improved--like upgrading facilities.

VB: The nature of teaching and education, as far as you're concerned, has kept up with what we might say the national standard, or the national average?

MS: I would think that Holland would probably have a higher standard at this point, just because we're small enough that we can keep control over things, as opposed to some of the city schools. Money, as usual, is always a problem. Trying to keep up to date, since technology moves so rapidly, it's hard to stay on top of it. In the past, you worried about buying books every five years, and now you have computer programs and things like that that are extinct the day after you get them.

VB: Yes, a computer that six months ago was on the top shelf as the best computer out, is now on sale drastically cut in price. Every six months, it changes rapidly. And you say that the schools are pretty much keeping up as far as you see?

MS: Sure trying.

VB: We've built some beautiful new schools in Holland.

MS: Holland High is beautiful. If you haven't been inside, it's really...I enjoy walking the halls of Holland High. I think that they've done a wonderful job of tying it together.

VB: East Middle School or West Middle School are too.

MS: East Middle School especially is wonderful. I get lost. It can kind of be confusing whether you're in the yellow hall or the green hall, or whichever one you happen to go to. The population in the town is what's going to be difficult I think for the
schools to keep up. I don't think people understand that you have to keep putting additions on, unless you want portables sitting outside.

VB: Holland has probably, you're probably more aware of it than I am, always had private schools in Holland. The private schools and public schools. And now you have the charter schools which some see as a threat, but actually, Holland Public Schools have lived with that for a long time in the private school system. It's always gone along as well as Holland's high school. Neither one has really suffered, I don't believe.

MS: Probably not. The interesting thing about Holland and the school system is that it may have just about peaked out, as far as population is concerned, because of school districts. There is no place else to build. We pretty well covered everything within the school district itself. The outlying areas that are being built up now belong to Hamilton, Saugatuck, and West Ottawa, who are just overwhelmed because they've got a lot more farm land out there that can be built on. So Holland may be able to stabilize a little bit, but that would be an advantage to them.

VB: So you must have been in Holland and Hope College during the Vietnam War, were you?

MS: Well, '63-'66, it was kind of strange, because Holland being so conservative and kind of out of the mainstream. It wasn't until my senior year that we even discussed much about it. It was the first year that they had protesters in the Tulip Time parade. Everything else was happening on the East or West coast. We're kind of insulated here. We're kind of the last ones to get the trends or the styles, or whatever becomes fashionable in New York and California. It takes a while to work its way to the mid-
west. I knew no one who went to Vietnam. The boys that were my age, I don't think I knew anyone who even had been drafted, because a couple of them went into the teaching occupation and that meant that they were exempt. We were just a little bit too old. We just kind of missed things.

VB: Was there any reaction at all in Holland to the Vietnam War?

MS: The only time I remember it was, like I said, in 1966 when some younger students at Hope College protested and marched in the parade. That was the first time I was really even aware of what was going on. We were kind of out of step with current events. I don't think that the schools taught as much about things that were current as they do today. I don't think kids were on top of it as much, as my kids are aware. We didn't have a television in every room. We didn't know what was going on. There might be one television in the entire dormitory, and that was infrequently watched. So unless someone told us about it, we didn't know what was going on.

VB: That says that television had quite an effect on people at that time.

MS: I remember watching the Beatles. That was a pretty big thing my freshman year. On the Ed Sullivan show. Probably 50 or 60 of us jammed around one television in the basement of Voorhees. And a black-and-white old one at that.

VB: What about Desert Storm? That was later on.

MS: That was a much bigger impact because it was televised. We watched it live.

VB: Do you think it had much impact on Holland as a city or as a people?

MS: Probably not. Unless there were people had relatives or friends who were actively involved. It was fascinating. I remember Nicholas and I sitting there watching it,
saying, "How can they do this?" We were just totally mesmerized watching that.

Let's turn on the war tonight. War starts at 8:00, we have to turn the war on. It was hard to comprehend.

VB: A whole different age, isn't it?

MS: It certainly was.

VB: When they landed in Somalia, the news media was on the beach taking pictures. What a difference from D-day.

MS: What a difference that was, exactly. When the news didn't return to the states for a month.

VB: You talk about spin, but I think even then the news that we got had quite a bit of spin on it from what we've learned in history.

MS: Now I have a student who's brother is on the USS George Washington in the Persian Gulf. We have his 800 number, so we can call and check up on him any time we want. We don't even have to wait for a letter home.

VB: You don't have to go through the A.P.O. or any of that.

MS: Nothing. You can just plug into the computer and talk to Travis. And he's on a six second delay. I think that's for security measures.

VB: Probably.

MS: It's kind of interesting.

VB: Do you think today that there exists a generation gap in Holland?

MS: I'm not so sure. I'd almost like to think that it's narrowing. I think that there was one, that was much wider between old time Dutch residents who had always been here
and as they have had more children, their children are growing up, I think that the
gap has narrowed. I think that the gap was very wide when I first came to town.
And tolerance level was very low, for anything. For any change.

VB: You talked a little about some of the difficulties we're having with gangs in Holland,
and some of the things that are happening now that didn't happen before. And you
sort of related it to the people moving in, maybe from larger cities and bringing that
along with them. Do you think any of this, just Holland youth themselves, are
different from their ancestors, that maybe didn't all come from the outside?

MS: You mean that some of it came just from our local kids that have been here all of the
time?

VB: Yes.

MS: I'm sure they got sucked in on a lot of it. But it's happening everywhere. You can't
go anywhere and not have them. There are gangs on the upper peninsula. You can't
go to the back woods anymore and say, "Well, I'm going to hide from the gangs."
They're there, and they exist. When we go back to some of the ethnic stuff that
happened in town, I think that when we started having so many Cambodian,
Vietnamese families come into town, that were sponsored by many churches, and
rescued. Lord knows they needed to be. But the people that were rescued were the
adults. They brought with them children or had children here who don't want to cling
to that ethnic background that their parents might want to, and they're rebelling, just
as...

VB: Just as a form of rebellion.
MS: I don't think they want to dress in their Cambodian clothing, and eat their Cambodian food, and practice their Cambodian religion. I think maybe they've lost touch with some of it, and that makes it difficult. They haven't got that home base.

VB: But yet they seem to come together and form groups. It seems to be the Cambodians against...

MS: The Vietnamese, or at least the Asians...

VB: Or the Hispanics...

MS: And the Black.

VB: They seem to have formed gangs, and yet so that sounds, and speaks of a sort of ethnicity and built-in ethnicity as they seem to cling to and yet they want to break from the tradition of their parents. It seems like many years ago, those same words were being said in Holland?

MS: Probably. (laughter)

VB: It seems like that goes on generation after generation. And they do it in different ways.

MS: I think there was either a quote from Socrates or someone like that, complaining about the youth, and their lack of respect for their elders. I guess that hasn't changed at all over the centuries.

VB: I like to think it's one of the things that drives our democracy—the rising up of a whole new generation. They want to improve on things, and they want to make things better. They want to change the way things are being done. Hopefully, the good things, the things we need...
MS: We hope that the good shines through.

VB: The things that we need, grow; and the things that we don't need, we learn how to deal with them. Were you ever employed in Holland in a job you did not like, but I guess you've only had one job the whole time.

MS: Yes, I've never really been employed in Holland, per se. I had a couple of part-time jobs here and there, but nothing drastic.

VB: Has the role of women changed in Holland, Michigan?

MS: I think it's changed everywhere because of the breakdown in the family. Women are working when they weren't working before. The family unit and structure has changed so much, that women are head of household, as opposed to dependent.

VB: I think the percentage of single women being head of the household, has really increased.

MS: Tremendously.

VB: All throughout the country. Do you think that's true also in Holland?

MS: Yes.

VB: Do you think the breakdown of the family is the thing that causes it? I'm thinking of Rosie the Riveter.

MS: World War II.

VB: Yes. Her husband went off to war and she was left to build airplanes. In a sense, we started way back then.

MS: Way back then, industrialization.

VB: Then people got adjusted to double incomes. Even married women are working. Do
you think that Holland is dealing with this, in the proper way, thinking in terms of day care?

MS: Just recently. Day care is becoming more available to younger children. It used to be very difficult to find day care for children, or especially for very young children. Several schools have been started now that will take infants. That used to be something that had to be toilet trained before anyone would look at them. Now they are taking children very young, which could be a real asset to a lot of people. Also, the corporations that are involving day care in their company, providing it for their employees, has to provide a measure of security to a lot of women, and men. Also it is nice to know that you child is right there on the premises, and should you be needed, you can be reached easily.

VB: So you must have utilized some of those facilities in the Holland area.

MS: I had a babysitter that took care of Nick until he was three. And then he went to Montessori School, half-days, for two years before he started kindergarten. But some of the logistics for that were real tricky. Getting him from Point A to Point B, and back to Point C, and continuing.

VB: If he only went in the mornings, then he must have...

MS: He'd have to have somebody pick him up, and drop him off, and bring him home, and cart him around. It was not a small task.

VB: So when you had to do that it was before they had very many services at all.

MS: I was very fortunate to find a wonderful woman who took care of him.

VB: Do you think that has improved?
MS: Yes.

VB: The areas that could give that kind of service to single women would be the corporations, the city...

MS: Churches.

VB: Churches. Do you think they've handled it well?

MS: Yes, like I said I think they've increased a lot of it, and I think they're doing a better and better job of it, over the past four or five years at least. We've seen a marked increase in the number of day care places, and the licensing of in-home people who choose to do that, has been much more strictly regulated.

VB: That's important I think.

MS: Exactly.

VB: We're finding out where there was an awful lot of child abuse.

MS: Or just plain neglect, or women taking children into their home and saying well, they'll take ten kids and plopping them in front of a T.V. for a day. I think we're finding people who are more highly qualified and are interested in the well being of the child and education of the child. There are some watchdogs out there who implement that.

VB: I think child abuse is being reported more frequently. I think the hospitals, doctors and nurses, the teachers...

MS: Statistics would be difficult to use to corroborate any of it, because like you say, we're reporting it more, it doesn't mean it's occurring more necessarily. It's just that we're aware of it, as a problem.
VB: My daughter is a teacher and one of the big concerns with teachers now is when is child abuse reportable and is it child abuse? It's a big problem. It's a big load to put on a teacher.

MS: It is, especially with the younger ones that I'm sure she encounters.

VB: Is there any major turning point that is important in your life that occurred having lived in the city of Holland, or friends, or any acquaintances in Holland you think that make a difference in terms of how we think of Holland?

MS: You mean friends that influenced me?

VB: Yes, any big turning point in your life?

MS: Just lots of little gradual ones. I can't think of a real major, overwhelming thing.

VB: What do you think people from outside think of Holland? Have you heard anything lately?

MS: How many churches do you have in that town? That's a very typical question. I heard a lot of positive things, a lot of them about the physical attractiveness of the town, and its location.

VB: Services that are performed. I think Evergreen Commons is somewhat unique.

MS: That's a wonderful place. Our new library will be wonderful. And our new swimming pool will be fantastic. Now we need that ice skating rink and that city center right by Western Foundry. (laughter)

VB: I hear a lot of good things coming even through Freedom Village, where children working in Holland, their parents bring them to Holland, put them in Freedom Village because they think that's a good place to be. It's amazing how many people in
Freedom Village did not grow up in Holland. Coming from outside, they really appreciate...

MS: I was never real fond of the structure itself, but the location is certainly ideal for people to get to places and walking distance of downtown. Facilities are readily available. Dial-a-Ride.

VB: There is another service in Holland.

MS: Right, we've got a lot of them.

VB: That attracts people. For whatever their need might be.

MS: Right. It's available.

VB: If it's bringing up a small child, or bringing up a teenager. Or having a place to spend the rest of your life. Holland seems to have a broad range.

MS: We do. I think that if someone thinks that they have no one to help them out for any reason, they just haven't researched it well enough, because there are many services out there to help people, no matter what their need is.

VB: True. Anything else you'd like...

(End of interview)