

11-11-1996

Van Tatenhove, Julia Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Phyllis Booi

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses_holland



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

Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Booi, Phyllis, "Van Tatenhove, Julia Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"" (1996). *Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"*. Paper 153.

http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/ses_holland/153

Published in: 1996 - 1998 - *Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"* (H88-0234) - *Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project*, November 11, 1996. Copyright © 1996 Hope College, Holland, MI.

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

Oral History Interview with
Julia Van Tatenhove

Conducted November 11, 1996
by Phyllis Booi

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Julia Van Tatenhove
November 11, 1996
Interviewer: Phyllis Booie

PB: Why don't you tell us your maiden name?

JVT: Julia Vander Hill. I was born in 1911. In Holland. 240 West 10th Street and that was, at that time, the block between Washington Avenue and Van Raalte Avenue. And that block was like a family. We had wonderful times together, picnics and social activities and went swimming after the park became Kollen Park and then the whole neighborhood would go swimming down there and the fellows would fish and I could go on later for the winter sports.

PB: Was it like a beach then?

JVT: Well, it was a small beach, not like Lake Michigan. Not a sandy beach, but nice.

PB: The water must have been clean, very clean.

JVT: The water was very filthy.

PB: Oh it was! (Laughs)

JVT: Very polluted, because the whole shoreline was dotted with manufacturing companies. And they moved or located there, because all the pollution, all the waste could be deposited in that lake so you can imagine...sewage. Everything!

PB: You never got sick?

JVT: I'm here at 85 (laughs)! I don't know. I used to swim in that lake and swim even during August what we called "dog days" with the algae about two inches thick and I was always diving under and swimming. I loved to do that and I would come up and

move the algae so I could come up out of the water. And I am sure that much of it stayed in my body, I would think.

PB: What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in Holland in quite a few years?

JVT: Well, I would say that, of course, was the greatest change, perhaps. The rest would be the neighborhood stores, which we miss a great deal, because we had a store on 12th and Washington and one on 10th and Maple Avenue. One on 13th and Maple. Steffens was our store. That was 14th and Van Raalte. Across from that corner was a meat market. I don't recall the name. We also had what would be comparable to strip malls on Central Avenue between 15th and 16th and there was a bakery on the corner, Dumond Bakery, and Boven's Dry Goods. They just had anything you could wish for. Then there was a grocery store, Nykerk Grocery Store. I think that was about it. Across the street was the Smith Drug Store, we called him "Smitty".

PB: You didn't have cars then?

JVT: No cars. We had... the first car was a mailman, Mr. De Boer, lived across from our home, and he had some type of carriage and a horse and then he had I think the first little Model T. In the winter, he had a cutter and a horse. At that time I went to Junior High School, which was located on East 10th. That, of course, has all disappeared. Just beyond Central Avenue. And then I would watch for him to come and then he would stop and he would give me a ride. In the winter it was great in that cutter.

PB: I bet! That'd be fun!

JVT: He'd let me off at the postoffice and I'd just have that short distance to walk.

PB: Was that postoffice always there on 10th?

JVT: In my time. Now, it wasn't evidentially always there. I don't recall.

Do you want me to tell you about our grocery store? Steffens Grocery Store. They would come and take your order in a little Model T Ford, and the engine would idle all that time he would be in the house, because if it stopped, they didn't know if it would ever start again with the crank, and they were worried about that. So all day long, every customer, the motor just ran. I guess gas wasn't a dollar and a half a gallon then. Then he would deliver them in the afternoon.

PB: Oh! Then you didn't have to try to cart heavy groceries.

JVT: But then I would have to go for just the little things my mother would forget. But usually in the summertime then I would have roller skates or a bicycle so I could even do that in the noon hour when I came from Washington School.

PB: Oh. You came home for lunch every day.

JVT: I would come home for lunch ever day.

PB: Times have changed, have they not. Now let's see, you have always lived in Holland.

JVT: Well, except for a few years at Summergreen out at Hudsonville.

PB: That was later on. That was in the 70's or 80's?

JVT: Yeah. It would be the '70's because we lived here 16 years.

PB: What are some of the negative aspects of Holland? Do you think there are any drawbacks to living in Holland?

JVT: Not for me (Laughs). I enjoyed it. Particularly the neighborhood, when we were

younger and then the kids at school. We'd all go as a whole group to the ball games together. I had a friend living on 12th across from Centennial Park. We'd all meet there and we'd walk to Riverview Park and come home when the ball game was over maybe 11 o'clock at night. Think nothing of it. We'd all disperse, go our own way, alone.

PB: And it was safe.

JVT: Safe. Absolutely safe.

PB: What about locking doors?

JVT: We never locked doors. Well we didn't lock doors when we lived many years on Lawndale Court. That's before we moved to Summergreen, and we didn't lock doors there. Before we had central air, we had a small air conditioner. So we'd want the circulation to go through the hall and through the two back bedrooms and I didn't lock the screen door. It was perfectly safe. I think the worst thing that could happen, the kids did, was to steal Christmas light bulbs. They didn't do any more than that (Laughs).

PB: And that's nothing. Nowadays they would take the whole tree!

JVT: They'd take the whole house, perhaps.

PB: I know you were involved so much in church life since you were a child. Why don't you tell us, - you were Reformed Church, of course.

JVT: Right.

PB: Now, why don't you start with your great-grandfather when he came over with Van Raalte.

JVT: Well, these are all stories, because I was a baby when my grandfather died. I didn't know them at all, but the stories... I had more stories told me about my grandfather then about my great-grandfather. He just loved singing and he directed the choir after his father passed away.

PB: Now his name was John.

JVT: His name was John. The other was Frederick John. He was the great-grandfather.

PB: What's the Dutch word for, for...

JVT: Don't ask me about Dutch. I'm sorry. That I never...

PB: But he was called here. I mean Van Raalte wrote to him.

JVT: Dr. Van Raalte wrote to him and asked him to come and direct the singing because he had training and had a beautiful voice, and the singing was atrocious. He couldn't stand it any longer. My great-grandfather packed up what family there was and came over. I think that one child died. Then they built a log cabin on Lincoln and 16th Street, and then he built many log cabins for other people. From the log cabin he built their home on West 10th Street, 255 West 10th Street, across from where we lived. My great-grandfather died in the log cabin, but my grandfather died at 255 West 10th Street. And he, being the leader of singing, could not go to this building they erected. So they came to his home, and he directed them until he did died.

PB: Now you said they did have a singing school.

JVT: That singing school was eventually the Van Lente Choir, but it was originally called the singing school. I suppose they thought the choir was a more appropriate name. At that time, they erected a building, but I don't know the location. It was just a bare

building, they had to bring their own chairs. I remember that. My grandfather composed and transposed music. In our attic, we had stacks and stacks of transposed music because they had no books.

PB: Do you have much of that music anymore? Not even something hiding someplace?

JVT: Nothing, nothing.

PB: That's a shame.

JVT: We had in that attic a Civil War cap, a Civil War sword, and the pitch pipe they called it at that time, that my great-grandfather used and he used. I recall my mother saying at one time that Frank Van Ry, who was the oldest cousin, loved music, too, and I think she gave it to him. But the rest I have no idea.

PB: That would be something to have in the Archives I would think.

JVT: He's been dead for years, too, you see. And I'm eighty-five (laughs). Most people aren't living any more. That's the problem. I can't ask. I think, I'm going to call my sister, call somebody, and there's nobody! I can't ask anybody anymore. I'm the only one.

PB: Now, your great-grandfather, Frederick Van Lente, he helped to build Pillar Church or the pillars on the church? He was a cooper?

JVT: Right. He and his son, who was my grandfather, and Henry Vander Hill, his nephew, the three of them. They made them all by hand and as my mother always said it was an act of love.

PB: They probably even donated the material.

JVT: Could be.

PB: I don't think there was much money available for building projects.

JVT: The little log cabin, I think, is still at the cemetery, was the first log cabin church.

PB: Now, you were talking about the church, the Pillar Church, that was really the Reformed Church...

JVT: They called it the Pilgrim Church, I imagine because they were the Pilgrims who settled here.

PB: Now, was there any trouble when they wanted to boot some of the people out to start First Reformed Church?

JVT: The trouble, if I recall correctly, was the Masonic Lodge. Some people thought you could not be a member of a church and be a member of a Masonic Lodge. I don't like to go into detail because I'm afraid I won't recall accurately. But there were definitely great differences and they could not be solved.

PB: So they broke up somehow.

JVT: I'll never know why the people who started the church, they were the Reformed Church people, why they didn't stay in the Reformed Church and continue there and let the others leave if they were unhappy. But it was in reverse. They left and built on the other corner on Central Avenue and 9th Street, and then that became the First Reformed Church. Then other became the Ninth Street Christian Reformed Church.

PB: I see. That's right! That's what it was called.

JVT: And now it is the Pillar Church which is a more appropriate name for the church I would think.

PB: It's a beautiful church.

JVT: A beautiful church and it's outstanding with those huge pillars.

PB: Did people get rather ugly about this church? Were they unkind to one another?

JVT: Yes. The stories I hear, they were very unkind. That was the problem. They couldn't stay together. They had to separate, which was very unfortunate.

PB: Well, you were always involved at First Reformed when you were younger. You went to that church.

JVT: Until we were married. Dr. Kruithof was the pastor and we were close friends, Bastian and Marie, we always said we would go to Third Church if they ever moved. But we would not move if they stayed, because we were very close friends, and when he received another call, we went to Third and we've been members there for almost 50 years. Jane made confession of faith there, at the age of twelve, unusually young. They admitted her because we knew the Rev. Chris Walvoord and he said, "I know the family, we'll admit her into the church." She wanted to make confession alone. I can still see her stand in front of that tall pulpit at Third Church. She was so little, and made confession of faith and she said, "I know what I'm doing."

PB: That was wonderful. You were very active in the church. You were telling me, both of you were, about the plays or something. Was it a youth group or...?

JVT: Well we had charge of a youth group, Mel and I. Mel belonged to a men's group, and I belonged to the Ladies Aid, and then that was changed to RCW, Reformed Church Women. We were active in many of the programs at Third Church, particularly Christmas programs. We directed many of those and enjoyed it very much. In fact, we had one, and Dorothy Muller Van Eck was a good friend of mine,

we put on a... they called it a spectacular. It was an English play, "On the Road to Bethlehem," Dr. Harry Frissel, who was our friend, asked me in the summer, when they returned from Europe, will you do this for the Christmas program?. Well, one does not say they can't in the summertime (laughs). So we did and it turned out so well. We brought in stumps at the side of the road, one of Mel's renters made burlap, so we got all this burlap and made robes with the burlap and had a manger scene. We wanted it a bit different, so Alvin Cook, a member of the church, let me explain what I would like. He made barn woods with knot holes in so you could see through. We didn't want the manger scene visible. Then we had a light projected the star from the back over the manger and then that would grow brighter and brighter, until the birth of Christ. It was a beautiful presentation, I think, and the cast and assistants did a wonderful job. We had such marvelous people with whom to work, so talented and they loved to do it.

PB: Has Third Church always been such a service oriented church?

JVT: Yes, I think so.

PB: Is that true of all of Holland, I mean...?

JVT: Well, I wouldn't really be able to make a statement about that.

PB: Well, some of your neighbors if they didn't go... were they very service-oriented, were they very helpful to people who were in need or...?

JVT: I really can't answer that. I imagine they were, they were kind people.

PB: I know Third Church is now very much so.

JVT: I would think perhaps all of the churches would be like that. I think Holland,

generally, is generous and kind. I think so as a group.

PB: I think it still is. Do you feel that way?

JVT: Yes.

PB: Now, was there ever any trouble in Holland?

JVT: No (laughs)

PB: You never had any big problems here. As you said the children, when you were a kid, they might take a light bulb out or something.

JVT: Yes. We lived on Elmdale Court, you remember the house, it had a long walkway in the front, and then the planter, and then all down that planter in the front of the rest of the house was lawn. We had all lights on there so they had a great time, and it was a little annoying because they really smashed them. They'd just break the bulbs.

PB: But that was all they did.

JVT: That was it. And then I recall... I won't mention names, three kids broke street lights, they'd throw stones up there and break the street lights. Their parents felt terrible about it because that was just a very, very bad and destructive thing to do. Even the students I know at school, even as far as high school, the teacher would give us instructions and we would do it. We didn't even question, maybe we were a little naive or stupid, I don't know, but we didn't question, we were always taught that. The teacher knows what's right, and she's the authority figure, and you listen to the teacher.

PB: You had a brother who was a minister.

JVT: Right.

PB: And his name was the Rev. La Vern Vander Hill.

JVT: Right.

PB: And then your sister, Adeline, was married to a minister, the Rev. Thomas Ten Hoeve.

JVT: Now his son is at Third Church, Dr. Thomas, Jr.

PB: What about Hope College? Has that changed? When I was at Hope your husband was in charge of all the vending machines?

JVT: I don't know what they would have now. I haven't the slightest idea.

PB: The campus obviously has changed...

JVT: It's so large that... But I think the students are more independent today, I think thinking and wanting their way about certain groups. They want to form certain groups. I don't think the students of that time perhaps weren't that creative, I don't know, or demanding. I don't think they would go to the administration and say, now, this is what we want.

PB: Oh heavens no. I wouldn't have in my time.

JVT: No. I think that this is a great change and I think some of them... I think one of the articles I've read stated that they told the students that they were in charge and they should have done that a long time ago. And if they can't appreciate this, then go to another school. They don't belong there.

PB: No, they don't.

JVT: They can't change every thing.

PB: And they shouldn't, I don't think so. How do you think the Dutch heritage plays in

the community today?

JVT: Well, it's so diminished that (laughs) you hardly read Dutch names anymore. When I read articles in the paper, the Literary Club and Garden Club and these various organizations I don't even recognize a name.

PB: Really?

JVT: None of them! Well, perhaps one, like I happen to know personally is Judy Nykamp, and her mother was my best friend, and I know Judy but outside of that, I read names that I can't even pronounce. All nationalities. In fact, I would think that perhaps the Dutch could even be the minority at this time.

PB: I have no idea.

JVT: That's just conjecture. I don't know either.

PB: I think of the community still as small. Do you think so too? All the Dutch know the Dutch, let's put it that way. Is that a good statement to make or not?

JVT: I don't think so anymore. I think there was a time perhaps, but then they were all Dutch. So you had to know Dutch people. You dated Dutch boy friends, because they just happened to be Dutch.

PB: Because they lived here.

JVT: And we communicated with them, and we were together all of the time in all the activities. Now our grandkids don't marry Dutch girls.

PB: Now let's see. Do you think the Dutch interact with these other people, these other nationalities?

JVT: That's difficult for me too. I was so active in the community with the various

organizations, and I have not been for a long time now. We had the Church Women United, and I was on that board and for the various churches the... I can't think of the names anymore, it's been so long. The Classis and Synodical and, it would be mostly Reformed but they weren't all from Reformed backgrounds. Especially the United Church Women's groups were from all the churches and all the nationalities there. I worked with many people that weren't Dutch, but nothing like today.

PB: When I was at Hope in 1946-50, I felt that I was accepted, even though my maiden name was Sherman. I never felt that I wasn't part of the community, and so I think that the Dutch in this area treated people... At least that's how I felt. Your daily life, you talked about the grocery store, and how they delivered. What about medicine or the doctor. Did you ever see a doctor?

JVT: Oh, saw him all the time. Dr. Fisher was his name, and he lived on Maple and 14th Street. The drug store where we got some of the medicine was on 13th. That was another little strip mall, another grocery store on Maple. There was Lage Drug Store. There was a grocery store, and you could get non-prescription medicines there. But, usually, when you had to go to the doctor, he would prescribe and give us bottles of medicine, and we'd just take that home and drink it, large bottles of medicine. It seems now it would be a great amount to take in medicine.

PB: Did he come to your house?

JVT: He would come to your house but you could go there and he had a special little addition to his home where the reception room was and where he had all the

medications, I guess. But he would come to our house at any time, night or day. In fact, when my sister was the oldest and she had pneumonia as a little girl, and they said she was such a precious little baby so beautiful and they loved her so much, and she had pneumonia, and they thought she was going to die, Dr. Fisher came, I think, several times that day. Then, this is very personal, (they can delete it), they thought she would die and the doctor thought so, and my father and mother knelt beside her little bed and they just prayed: "Well, we had her and we thank you, dear God, for her. But, if you want to take her back home then, that is it." The doctor came in a short time later, and he said something has happened here. He went to the bed and he said, she's going to be well.

PB: Prayer is marvelous.

JVT: She's going to live.

PB: Prayer was answered. They put it in the hands of God.

JVT: Just in the nick of time. That's what they had to do. She certainly led a marvelous, useful life. As a ministers wife she was really...

PB: Oh she was great. I could speak first hand about that.

JVT: ...a dedicated minister's wife. She had a mission in life, and her life was to be spared. I can't believe doctors... but I don't know again... I haven't had experiences like that... I don't know if they would be that caring. I don't know. But he was a wonderful doctor. He lived to be about a hundred.

PB: And how many doctors did you have in town? Probably one, maybe two?

JVT: Well, we had Dr. Leenhouts and that was before Dr. Fisher. He was my parents'

original doctor. Then Dr. Fisher came and I don't know if it was because of location or what. We went to Dr. Fisher. Then there was Dr. Winter. Mel's family always went to Dr. Winter. That's Bill and John's father.

PB: Yes, I remember. When I was at Hope, there were two twins or brothers.

JVT: But this was their father, and the father was the Van Tatenhove family doctor. Well, I think there was a Dr. Brower, but I never knew who he was, and he had an office also, in his home, at 18th and Pine. I think somebody from Third Church lives in that house. It's red brick facing, 18th Street. Then on Pine Avenue, there's a little building, and performed surgery there. Well, minor [surgery], like when Tom Ten Hoeve was at college, he went there and the doctor removed his tonsils. He stayed there, I think, at night, then left. But I never knew him.

PB: Was there a hospital in Holland at that time?

JVT: Yes, we had a hospital where the former museum was. It was a hospital and then a museum. It was the first hospital we had in Holland.

PB: Where were babies born, -in that hospital or at home?

JVT: Most of them at home.

PB: You were born at home.

JVT: Yes.

PB: My mother would've been too.

JVT: So then later they were born in the hospital, and I don't know if that was this hospital or whether if it was the old hospital that's on 12th and Central, the big house. It was the Holland Hospital.

PB: Do you think Holland would have grown as much as it had if it didn't have the industry that they have today, if Haworth wasn't there...?

JVT: No, I don't think so because I think that the surrounding cities, some of them, they haven't grown, small cities.

PB: Like Borculo and little towns.

JVT: I don't think even like Hamilton. I don't...

PB: Or Fennville isn't that large, is it?

JVT: I think Allegan, Otsego, way up there. I don't think they're very large. I haven't been there for so long. I remember Allegan seemed so distant. When my brother-in-law was still in college he bought a Model T, and he was so proud of that, and he said, we'll take a ride and we'll go to Allegan. That was a long trip. We got to the Allegan hill and he looked up there and he said, I don't think we can make it. We had to turn around and go home. It was a Model T. It didn't have any power. I imagine four cylinders at the most if not less, and the trouble is they didn't seem to start with that crank.

PB: You married Mel Van Tatenhove. What year?

JVT: 1935.

PB: So you've been married 61 years now. Was his family one of the original families to come here?

JVT: I was after my family but I really don't know when they did come. They never even talked about it. Mel's dad was very well known. He had three shops down on 8th Street, and he was very active in the church and very active down town, civic affairs,

Boy Scouts. In fact, the night before he died, he was 70 years old, he was out on the Civic Center on that floor putting up booths for the Boy Scouts for their jamboree or whatever they had. He died that following day. He was very active. He was down town many years. He had the French Cloak and the Little Miss shop and the Modern Hat Shop for many years. Of course, 8th Street is completely different. We used to know everybody on 8th Street. Boter's were personal friends of Mel's folks. He had a shoe store and a men's clothing, and Steketee was a member of our church. That was a women's clothing. Across from the French Cloak, which was Mel's dad, was Rose Cloak and that was there for years. And Westrate's... None of them, they're all gone of course.

PB: How do you like the looks of 8th Street now?

JVT: Oh, it's beautiful, I think.

PB: Do you think that its helped the economy?

JVT: Oh, I would think so. It's beautiful.

PB: It is lovely. I didn't ask this before, but did your mother speak Dutch?

JVT: I didn't hear mother speak Dutch. She may have spoken to my grandmother. She never spoke it at home or she never spoke it to us. That's why we don't know Dutch, if that's an excuse, I don't know.

PB: Oh, no, no.

JVT: My parents didn't speak Dutch.

PB: Probably your grandparents must have then or not? Maybe not?

JVT: I don't remember my grandmother speaking Dutch. She didn't speak Dutch to me.

Because I always spoke with them, and I couldn't ever speak Dutch or understand. I spoke in English to them.

PB: I think that the Dutch were... even in New Amsterdam when they came over they spoke Dutch then but I think as soon as they...

JVT: They assimilated. Also in church, in which they should be doing today, I still think. I don't think we have to have all these segregated little groups and teach them their language and their culture. I think that they should be absorbed into the community. We had one neighbor, _____ is her name. They had several children and those children learned quickly the English language.

PB: Yes. It doesn't take long. It's just that if they're in this country... That's how I feel, they should...

JVT: My sister didn't speak Dutch, and my brother didn't either. I think it's because it wasn't spoken at home.

PB: Had never been spoken at home, evidently. Your family has been here so long. That makes a difference. They've been here a hundred and fifty years. When did they start speaking English? Was Hope Church the first English speaking church? Or was it First?

JVT: I think they spoke first because they didn't sing in Dutch, I don't think, when my grandfather... It said Psalms and hymns, didn't it? I don't think he transposed in Dutch, I don't think.

PB: Because in the seventeen hundreds, it's like 1787, all the sermons in the Dutch churches in New Amsterdam, in New York, were in English then. So it didn't take

the Dutch long in New Amsterdam to leave their Dutch language.

JVT: I don't recall at First Church. I've never heard a Dutch sermon. The first I think was English speaking, I don't like the...

PB: I'm sure when they first came it was Dutch. That's the language they knew. Your greatgrandfather would have known... I imagine by the time your grandfather... they were speaking... they had an English service.

JVT: I would think so. According to these articles it seemed like they didn't sing in Dutch. I don't know.

PB: The Psalms, is that what they called them? Dutch Psalms?

JVT: They still sing Psalms.

PB: But they sing it in English now and not in Dutch. I know the people responded well to the Civil War here. How about World War II?

JVT: I had two cousins that fought in the World War I, and my grandfather fought in the Civil War.

PB: Did you have anybody else fight in the...

JVT: I had an uncle who also fought in the Civil War. That part of the family, that was my grandmother Van Lente, whose name was Jane Bowman. Her brother settled in Fremont, Michigan. So then we had relatives... we traveled to Fremont, and that was an event. My uncle had what they called seven passenger cars. Mel's folks had a house and then their's was a Buick. They had little seats in between. We'd all go to Fremont, and we'd stay several days.

PB: Did you do anything special during World War II, Red Cross or...

JVT: I must have been too young, because I don't know why I didn't do anything, because I usually found something to do for everything. I helped with the migrant program a great deal. I went out to the camp. I think if there was anything available I would have done it, so I, no doubt, was too young.

PB: When did they start having migrant workers come here? Were they always here that you remember when you were a little girl?

JVT: No. I don't remember them. I remember being told about the Indians at Kollen Park and down at the shore. Indians lived there. You would see Indians. I didn't. My aunt would tell me about the Indians. They camped there.

PB: Did they camp there in the summertime then, and then leave for winter?

JVT: I would think so, but I don't know that either. She would just tell me about the Indians living there.

PB: Do you think there's a generation gap, or at least was there a generation gap when you were a youngster?

JVT: If there was I don't think I knew about it, because I was the youngest one in my family. My cousins were all older, and I went around with my sister and the older cousins a great deal. I used to play tennis with an older cousin--get up at five, six o'clock in the morning and go out to find a court because they were scarce and we'd have to drive sometimes way out to Waukazoo or the Pine Lodge, and we had to have our own net and we bought our own net. So the kids today... We had to create our own activities, everything. I remember we used to... because cars were scarce... we would go out in the yard, and build cars with cardboard or wood or whatever we'd

have and have some little gadget for the key, the accelerator, and the pedal and the steering wheel, we always had a steering wheel. Our parents would help us build the thing. We'd have a group and we'd travel all over as far as our universe would be at that time. Which probably wouldn't be very far. But we'd get out and we'd talk and we'd visit. Oh! We had imaginations and it was fun. Doll houses. Now our daughters had the most beautiful commercial doll houses you could ever wish for, but I don't think they ever had as much fun as we did (laughs).

PB: I know your father built Joan some...

JVT: He was a hand carver, my father.

PB: I remember Joan having a darling doll bed, I think a four-poster.

JVT: He built furniture...

PB: Did he do things for you when you were little like that. Do you have anything left over?

JVT: Oh yes. Nothing. I taught Sunday School for years at First Reformed Church and I had the primary group and we had... I know at one time he helped me make an ark and it was beautiful. It had the poles in the ark. He carved the angels facing each other, and it was pretty. We painted it with gold. He helped me with things like that. Then I chiseled a house, Jerusalem, with the bricks. He made part of it, and I would do all the finishing touches and carve out the little brick lines of the bricks. The kids would get an idea of what this would all be all about. I just enjoyed doing things like that and he was always very helpful. I'd have charge of programs, and I know at one time we had... I don't know if they do that any more, they probably

don't... In our Guild, we had each season of the year. Each group took a season of the year, and we had January. I happened to be in charge and made a whole winter scene. I had all mirrors and little skaters on the pond and then he made a couple like--I can see them yet--little red sleds would turn up, the old fashion sleds with wood, and painted it red. We'd take the branches and stick them in pins, the floral pins...

(tape ends)

PB: ...things that you did as a child.

JVT: The ice was I think a great deal thicker. We must have had colder winters, because the ice was thick. Down a block, it would be on the curve at Van Raalte Avenue, going north there's a curve. There was an ice house, Superior Ice House, and they would go out and cut ice and I think they were 30 inches thick. They just seemed huge. They would store them in the ice house. My friend lived down the block, Mabel Fairbanks, and he was one of the owners of the ice house. They would be busy, he and Mr. Naberhuis were in business together, and then Mabel and I would be able to sit in the office at the desk and take messages and we thought that was really important. But the ice was thick enough for ice boats, for ice fishing, for ice houses--shanties where they fished a great deal on that lake in the wintertime. Both winter and summer. But in the winter in these shanties. The older boys would have the ice boats, and they'd take us out for a ride, the younger ones, on the ice boat. The wind would catch that and then you'd sail over the ice. It was fun. I happened to do a lot of ice skating. We lived in that block, and then Kollen Park was right at

the end, so I could get freezing cold. My feet, I think, were numb. I'd quickly run home. My mother would have hot chocolate and cookies to get warm, and then I'd go back again. So we'd have to go out, and the older ones were just as kind to us who were so much younger. They were always very nice and we always had the activities together, for games and everything. They included us, which I thought was really very nice to do. But I would skate and I'd have dreams about skating. I don't know what a psychologist would say about this. But in my dreams there would be no barriers. We had a certain pond and that was it. I would just skate and skate until I awakened, and that was the most wonderful feeling. I'll never forget that. Now I don't know how they would interpret that. I just loved to skate. We would have winter festivals and competition, all kinds of racing, and we had some refreshments, I don't remember what they brought out there. Our whole neighborhood would go out to Getz Farm once a year. I don't know who planned these things, I guess it was our parents. Getz Farm was a zoo. We had a great time there. Do remember where Getz Farm is on the end of Lakewood Boulevard?

PB: Yes I think I remember hearing about that.

JVT: So we as a group had a very nice neighborhood. St. Clairs lived next to us and they were a delightful older couple. Then next to them was one of my good friends, Winona Peterson. Her father, Oscar Peterson, was the city clerk for many years, and prior to that was some supervisor at the Holland Shoe Company, so he could take off early in the afternoon. They had a big boat at one of those boat houses down at the end of the street. We'd go out and have picnics and just beach the boat. Then we'd

often go out and swim until it was prohibited. They finally prohibited it, because you can imagine the pollution from all those factories. The sugar beet and several others. The sewage was terrible. Evidently none of our parents realized the danger. They located there because of the lake.

PB: I guess everybody thought the water would take care of itself. The sunshine would cure all?

JVT: I don't know if they even thought, I don't know. But they located here. That's why the pioneers stopped here because of that lake. They should have gone farther and taken Lake Michigan. We could have settled right there and been like Grand Haven. Then we'd have had a lot of problems solved. Well, its pretty nice in Grand Haven right on that beautiful shoreline. Because this was called Black Lake because it has an absolute muddy bottom. The older boys, and my brother included, would dive off all those boat houses, they had a great time diving off the boathouses into the water. There was a dock out there, too. In college, during the summer, he was an instructor at the Manitolin Camp, and director. He would give diving exhibitions for the family night, and the people would come up and say, "Oh, who was your instructor? You're such an excellent one," and he'd say, "King's dock! Off the boat houses." They couldn't believe it. That lake was a great lake even though it was polluted. Now I don't know if thats open for swimming even today. I doubt it.

PB: When my son was at Hope, he graduated in '74, he said they called it Macasewer, Lake Macasewer.

JVT: They didn't say Black Lake, heh?

PB: No, he called it Lake Macasewer.

JVT: So they changed the name to Lake Macatawa?

PB: Because he said it was so terrible. But it isn't now.

JVT: Well they're going to clean it up they keep saying.

PB: To me it looks nice, because you can go swimming on the north shore.

JVT: It should be cleaned. It's a lovely lake. We'd go out and visit Vern at Barlow Lake, and that was clear as crystal. You could see the white bottom. That was beautiful.

This one will never be like that because of the bottom. That's why they named it Black Lake, because it stirred up all that mud. That's why the lake wasn't clear.

PB: Probably good farm soil.

JVT: But we didn't care. It was a place to swim.

PB: Tell me, how do you think the role of women has changed in the past fifty years? Do you... Are you a "women's libber?" by any chance?

JVT: I'm not a "women's libber," but I pretty much did what I wanted to do. And Mel never cared. We did things together, but he never was domineering or... I always did what I wanted to do, so I didn't really care about women's lib. I did what I wanted to do. When I'd go out to shop, I bought what I wanted to shop. We didn't need women's lib in those days. You just lived together as two kind people caring for each other and I would help him and he would help me.

PB: And I imagine your mother was the same way, your mother and father. That's what marriage is all about.

JVT: Didn't need women's lib.

PB: No, no. They've missed something along the way, somebody has in that movement, I think.

JVT: I can't even say Mel always made the decisions. I think it always seemed that either he or I did, and it didn't really make any difference. One would decide, and that was fine. With the finances, with everything.

PB: Well, if you decided one time, perhaps the next time he did?

JVT: And one didn't care enough to object.

PB: You said that you had jotted some things down. Why don't you talk about that.

JVT: Well, I think that's about all of it. I was going to mention about they have all these beautiful playgrounds that are beautiful to look and the kids must have a great time, but we had great times also. We played on the corner of Washington Avenue and 10th Street. My grandmother lived on one corner and the James and the Bennetts lived across the street on the other corner, and the Macarthys on the other corner. We never went beyond that next block. They never played with us. It was strange. Because Masselinks, I think he was the dentist, and Tilly Masselink and Deurs were down there, but they never played with us. It was just our block. It's so strange. We'd play under that street light. Every night we'd go out there in the summertime and play until dark and then later, off course, we had to go in and do school work. But under the street light we'd play games and I can't recall all the games that we played. One was Rover Red Rover, let this person come over. We'd choose sides, some of the younger ones, and some of the older ones. So it was pretty equal. They'd call your name and we would go over and break through the line. Whichever

team would be the larger after saying all the names, would be the winner. We played another one, I think was "Johnny says, Johnny does, don't do what Johnny does... Johnny says 'Jump up,' and otherwise you'd just say, "Jump up." I can't really remember other games, but we played games until it was dusk. We played marbles, we loved marbles. I used to win all the marbles, I was so good at that. Finally my mother said, "You may not win any more marbles." I had a big box full. She said, "You're going to have to start sharing." It broke my heart, but I thought, I guess I didn't need them all. We didn't play marbles like they play them today. You'd take about three squares of the cement, and then roll them until you hit a target. The target was what we called a set up, I don't know... It was a larger glass, a pretty one. We just called them a set up. They were beautiful, the big ones, all colors. Sometimes we'd put nickels up there. My mother never liked that. I'd come home with nickels. She didn't think that was right.

PB: No, I don't imagine she would.

JVT: I guess that was too close to gambling. But we had more fun. We'd block off the street and we'd roller skate, and sometimes it would get real icy; that whole block would be like glass, and we'd ice skate out there.

PB: No cars to bother you.

JVT: No cars in the center of the road.

PB: Did you ever play jacks.

JVT: Yes, but that was with just a few girls, the same way with my tennis. My brother was my best teacher, I guess, because he was an excellent player. I loved to serve

like he served, you know, overhand, over that net real hard. Then I'd play with the girls and (sigh) they'd go like this. But then Janet Van Allsburg came along, you know who I mean. Oh, she was really good. Then Geraldine Wolvoord and I, played together. We'd play in the evening when she was through, she worked at the Holland Furnace. We played a lot of tennis. Just loved it. We didn't have any of these beautiful facilities but we certainly had a good time.

PB: You never got into trouble then, did you.

JVT: We never got into trouble and we could play by the hours, we could play with dolls. In junior high school, we played with dolls and now they play with drugs and sex and how this happened I can't imagine.

PB: I think the television has ruined a lot of children.

JVT: It must have.

PB: Of course, mothers aren't home when the children are home now.

JVT: I think that maybe they have too much because at the time we had to make a doll house, and make the furniture. It meant more than... In fact, that house was huge. It was beautiful. We gave it to the church. They wouldn't have it any more in the new nursery, but they had it for years, and we figured that those kids would enjoy that. But I think our kids enjoyed it. I don't think they had the fun we had.

PB: Because they didn't make it.

JVT: I think so.

PB: That could be. You always had mother home, though.

JVT: We had bicycles. I had the first bicycle on the block, a little one. And then I had a

medium one, and then I had a real large one. I was always taught to share. I'll never forget that. I'd ride, but then I would let my friends down the block have a turn, also. I enjoyed doing that.

PB: Well, that way you had friends, always.

JVT: My dad always saw to it that I got the bicycle. Well, he saw to it, pretty much, that I got everything. First the little bicycle, I don't remember what that wheel is, and then the medium one, and then the adult one. We had the first television on the block, and all the kids would come to our house and watch television. We just had a very good childhood. Fond memories. It's just sad that these kids have so much and they just misuse it.

PB: You had a loving mother and father. When you came home cold, who fixed your chocolate? Not you, it was fixed for you, cookies had been made for you.

JVT: I would not feel well, and I remember my dad would to the bakery. That was another one on 13th Street. There are several stores. Little strip malls are what they are now. This was a long time ago. There was one on 16th Street that was very good, Dumond, too. This was 13th and Pine and he would get me a creampuff and they weren't cream puffs like they are today. They were really cream puffs and they were delicious. And an orange. I'll never forget. Whenever I didn't feel well.

PB: What did you get in Sunday School at Christmas time?

JVT: Boxes of candy with an orange, and then Mel sold boxes of candy for years. He'd sell all the candy. A couple of times they asked him to pack, and then the kids and I would help him pack the little boxes. But then I think they finally realized, too, they

had a few chocolate drops, we don't like them anymore and I never really did care for them because they weren't nice chocolate and they were solid. But the kids wanted chocolate. They didn't want for the hard candy any more. So then we started to get chocolate candy, and then finally he started to get boxes of chocolate like little Hershey's and things like that. See, kids' tastes change too. But I don't know. I like chocolate. I don't care for hard candy. Geraldine, my friend, loves hard candy still, loves it.

PB: Well, look at your list. You jotted down some notes and see what else.

JVT: I think everyone knows about Kollen Park. Mrs. George Kollen gave that property to the city. It was originally owned by DePree Chemical. She bought that property in 1921, and then they started developing it in 1927, and then they dedicated it in 1929, and that is on the pillars. So that was a marvelous gift, and that woman certainly had foresight; to see that piece of rubble, and I mean rubble. It was a disaster area. We would go down there. A guardian watched over us all the time, I guess, because they had the King factory, a basket factory, burn down. Evidently they had huge vats, they called them. I don't know if they dipped baskets in there. Huge, maybe eight... deep, deep. They had walls, thick walls around it, sections like rooms. We would go down there and play on those walls and run races. You don't think a guardian angel was watching us.

PB: Somebody was watching you, that's for sure.

JVT: They were in the section that is the sloping part. They filled that all in there. What could they do there with all those vats? See, when people looked at that, Mrs. Kollen

was a very visionary person, because you had to look at that. But she saw beyond that and she saw the lake and everything that could be done. She must have visualized it or she wouldn't have bought that heap of junk. It was 19 acres of property there. It goes now, if I recall correctly, from 12th Street to 9th, not as far because around the bend there's Superior. So I think it goes that distance, 19 acres.

PB: That's a lot of land to give the city.

JVT: The boat houses were behind the Superior Ice House.

PB: We talked about the ice they chopped and so forth in the cold weather. They saved the ice for people's ice boxes.

JVT: Right. There's another thing that we did, I'm surprised I lived to be 85 years old. We'd follow the iceman and a nice ice man would give us chips and we'd suck on those chips from that polluted water!

PB: I did too, in New York. Its a wonder you didn't get sick. But a lot of young people... I wonder how many young children know that the people had to have to have iceboxes.

JVT: We had a back porch, they enclosed that, so the refrigerator could be there. They called it an ice box, there were no refrigerators. Then the ice man could deliver the ice without coming into the house. But we ate those ice chips... You did that too in your day? I can't imagine. But, oh, that was a treat. We'd look for the iceman. They had a lot of ice because they would supply the whole city and perhaps more.

PB: Your food that you wanted to save would be outside or in the icebox.

JVT: The milk we would leave out on the steps in the winter. The cream would come to

the top and we would have an inch or couple of inches on top of the bottle, frozen.

PB: Glass bottles.

JVT: A glass bottle with a little paper top. That would shove up, and I'd love that.

PB: My mother would save some for her coffee. So I had skimmed milk years and years before it was fashionable. What else do you have on your list? Something we may not have covered.

JVT: I think that's pretty much it. After that park was dedicated, the Lions Club had a fund raising project, they bought some equipment for a play ground. Now they have much more. I haven't been down to Kollen Park for ages. In 1930 the band shell was erected. I think its a new one now. Then they also had a covered area for picnics. I haven't been there for years. They have large crowds, don't they?

PB: Yeah. It was a freezing night. I had a winter coat on and a winter hat and this was June.

JVT: The one fond memory I have of the 10th Street block is at the end of the block, there was a little lady, seemed like a hundred years old to me, but may have been fifty, I wouldn't have any idea now. My mother had a beautiful flower garden. She had flowers all summer. That was the way it was arranged so that something was blooming all summer. I would bring that nice little old lady flowers, and then I would visit with her a little while. One day I went to see her and she said, "I have some news for you." She always called me Little Mary Sunshine. "I have some news for you, Little Mary Sunshine. I'm going to move." I don't remember where or anything else. She said, "I have something real precious to give you." She came

out with a little (you've probably seen it at our house, I've had it all these years), a little cloisonne teapot with that long spout (I think you've seen it). Jane loved it. So, it wasn't long ago she said, "Write down what Mrs. Williams said and what happened." Now Jane has it in her home, and she loves it. I enjoyed it for all those years. I was maybe five or six years old, I don't know.

PB: Well, on 10th Street, Aunt Esther and Aunt Toni lived on 10th Street.

JVT: Aunt Toni lived next door to my grandparents, the house they built. So she always knew them, and Aunt Esther lived with my grandmother in the house later that Joan and Paul had. I went past there the other day (I hadn't been there for years).

PB: You shouldn't have gone down.

JVT: I can't believe it. Our houses were all nice and the one next door I always thought was a cute little house because they had a stone front porch. I always loved that stone front porch. All beautiful gardens and lovely lawns.

PB: Why don't people take care of things any more?

JVT: I don't know, unless they're rentals and don't care or the landlord doesn't care.

PB: I would think you would want to take some pride on the outside of your house, keep it painted and wash a window once in a while.

JVT: We rented for a very short while on 20th Street and Mel painted everything, we did everything, just as if it was our own house. But evidently people don't... If the landlord didn't do it didn't get done. I think a lot of landlords don't. Mel did the same thing with the warehouse. He had renters and he never wanted to raise the rent, we're not good landlords. We were too good. We rented the house on Pine Ave.,

too, we'd buy extra curtains and make it all nice and clean, but I see we don't get rich. But we have all we want.

PB: But you can look at yourself in the morning and...

JVT: What more could we want?

PB: Now what about the houses? To me, since 1940 or 1950 when I graduated, some of the streets don't look as nice as they used to. They used to be so spotless. I mean spotless! There wasn't a blade of grass out of place.

JVT: Maybe it is the Dutch. They say "the clean Dutch". We wouldn't know anybody on the whole street.

PB: It doesn't look the same that way.

JVT: Some of these people who haven't been used to keeping up a home and haven't had a nice home. Well, how are they going to keep up a house if they haven't been taught or don't care? Never lived in a nice one?

PB: Because they were always so clean. That was the thing that impressed me.

JVT: So they always said, "Dutch clean."

PB: Well, can you think of anything else? You know what would be nice, if maybe you would tell something about your grandfather's obituary or was it your great-grandfather's?

JVT: Great-grandfather. I'll read it and then you can stop. "Throughout the history of our colony there were several musical groups mentioned, and we gather that the Dutch were a music loving people. When the first Dutch settlers in Holland in 1846, there was no musical group of any kind, but the Hollanders enjoyed singing the Psalms and

Sunday would find them en masse at the old First Reformed Church singing lustily under the leadership of Frederick Van Lente. For eleven years, after the settlement of the colony, no musical organization existed, and the formation of the Van Lente Choir was due in large part to the discordant singing of the Psalms at the religious gatherings. Fred Van Lente, who was a superb tenor and had been trained in the Netherlands, assumed the leadership in conducting the singing at the Sunday service, a position which he held for twenty-five years. Mr. Van Lente who reached Holland with his family one year after the Van Raalte band had settled, was a cooper by trade. He erected a log cabin on the corner of Lincoln Avenue and 16th Street. He had given much thought and energy to improving the quality of the song services and two young men at that time requested that he organize a singing school. The movement found favor, and the first meeting in October, 1856, had twelve boys and two girls in attendance. The school was organized along very strict principles. The first officers were Van Lente, president, W. Van Appeldoorn, secretary, John Van Lente, treasurer. A constitution was adopted. The group had strict rules regarding attendance and punctuality. A valid excuse was necessary for absence and in case of misconduct at meetings, a fine of two cents was imposed even for trivial offenses such as whispering. In a few years the organization had grown so much that the homes proved too small, and a building was erected that was thirty-two by eighteen feet. It was used for the singing school and a debating school, which was organized later. English hymns were introduced and the leader's two sons, John and Heim (?) were the instructors. The organization disbanded in 1912 after having been in

existence for about fifty-six years."

But I suppose like that music... well you can imagine the stacks... they met every week and he had to transpose everything. They had no books. But he just loved it. And then when they would come to his home, that would be the one on 10th Street then he would say... he couldn't lie down because of dropsy. I'm not acquainted with the effects of dropsy. But evidently you can't lie down and he would sit in the chair and then he said toward the end, "I am just sitting here waiting for God to take me home, but evidently He's not ready yet. I'm like a ball of yarn and it's gradually unwinding and unwinding and I just have to wait until the ball is completely unwound.

PB: That's a nice statement... testimony to his faith.

JVT: I think they were quite simple but quite outstanding men, both of them it seems.

PB: They were leaders in the community.

JVT: They contributed a great deal. They had to clear the woods, build a log cabin, you can't even comprehend it.

PB: I think if any of us tried to do it today, we'd probably die of a heart attack.

Well, can you think of anything else?

JVT: I think I've done enough talking.

PB: Oh, it was so interesting.