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Grigsby, Hattie; Feuerstein, P A; Boneburg, Margaret Oral History Interview: Tulip Time

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The Hope College Oral History Project for 1995
The Joint Archives of Holland

Interview #2
Mrs. P.A. Feuerstein, Mrs. Hattie Grigsby, & Mrs. Margaret Boneburg
The Oral History of Tulip Time

Conducted by:
Jason Valere Upchurch
2, June 1995
Note:

Mrs. Feuerstein is the daughter of Mrs. Grigsby, and was present at the interview to provide Mrs. Grigsby with some help in keeping direction. Mrs. Boneburg is the roommate of Mrs. Grigsby.

A brief portion of this interview was conducted by showing Mrs. Grigsby photographs of Tulip Times past for which she gave explanations. These photos are briefly described where appropriate. In the transcript, Mrs. Grigsby’s statements will be noted by "HG," Mrs. Feuerstein’s by "PF" and Mrs. Boneburg’s by "MB."

-J.V. Upchurch
2 June, 1995
Oral History of Tulip Time
Interview #2

- Interview with Hattie Grigsby, Pat Feuerstein, and Margaret Boneburg @ The Holland Health Care Center
- P.A. Feuerstein / 523 Butternut, Lot 130 / Holland, MI 49423
- 2 June, 1995
- Interview by Jason V. Upchurch

Begin Tape One, Side B

[Photo Number One: Girl in dutch costume from 1930 Tulip Time]
PF: Do you remember anything about that? How long ago was that?
HG: What year was the first Tulip Time?
JVU: 1930.
HG: Everybody wore blue and white, we didn’t have all those crazy colors.
PF: I’ve got a picture of that in here.
HG: We’d shoot anybody that had a colored shirt like that.
[New photo: Dutch costume with plaid and stripes]
PF: But this is different, this is not just blue and white. You’ve got some kind of vest on there. So that wasn’t the first Tulip Time. What year was that, can you tell Jason?
HG: No, I can’t tell you the years.
PF: Well, why was that costume different?
HG: Well, we wore little vests.
PF: It looks more like a German costume, than a Dutch costume. Anne has a Dutch one on there. What colors were they?
HG: Blue and white.
PF: That was blue and white too?
HG: All our dresses were colored.
PF: Yeah, that’s the first one. Here’s a picture of four ladies in the original Dutch costumes.
[New picture: Four women in traditional Dutch costumes]
HG: Waitresses.
PP: Waitresses, yes. They all had the same costume.
HG: In here a couple weeks ago, we made the hats.
PP: They made paper hats to wear here.

(Margaret offers Pat a chair, and some discussion follows.)

[New photo: man and woman at Tulip Time event]
HG: That’s you [Pat] and Jack Knoll.
PP: Yeah.
HG: That’s our old house.
[New photo: Mrs. Grigsby and her son, Don DeYoung, in Dutch costumes]
PP: Here’s you and Don. What was Don’s costume like?
HG: Blue and white.
PP: Blue and white for boys also?
HG: Yes. I made him and Maxine Crispell’s Dutch costumes, and that was the year Craig Chrispell left home.
PP: Okay, doesn’t he have a plaid jacket . . . it’s just all light blue?
HG: All light blue. Big buttons, buttons like that. (Makes circle with fingers.)
PP: Size of a fifty cent piece.
[New photo: different Dutch costume]
PP: Now there’s a different costume, that’s not blue and white.
HG: No that’s Florence.
PP: That’s Florence Poulis, and she looks like she has a Volendam costume on.

(Brief discussion about a forthcoming trip to the eye doctor)

[New photo: little girl in dutch costume]
PP: Okay, you told me one time that there was . . .
HG: Pat got second place for wearing that outfit. (refers to picture)
PP: There was a contest for . . .
HG: Little Dutch girl that looked natural.
JVU: Okay.
HG: They didn’t get money or anything, they just got honorable mention. Pat got second place. There were all kinds of post cards in Michigan with her picture on them. Grandma [Elsie DeYoung] in Muskegon said, in Dutch, ‘My, my, my, that’s our Pat!’
PF: Yeah, but now, Mary Lou VanDyke won first prize.
HG: Yes, but the only reason she did, she was a chunky little kid.
PF: She was a little fat gal. Fatter than I was.
HG: And her family was more into everything.

(Brief discussion about family.)

JVU: Have they had that contest in years since then?
PF: I’m not sure; how about it, do you know mom?
HG: No. They do have a contest, but not like that any more.
PF: Okay. This was way in the beginning then? But then the tulip became queen, they didn’t have any . . .
HG: She was the queen. (motions towards Margaret Boneburg)
PF: Yeah, she was Valentine’s Queen. But were there any more contests where they had little girls as queens?
HG: [Shakes head "no."]
JVU: And that was just the blue and white costume also?
HG: Everybody wore blue and white costumes until somebody came along with some plaid and some stripes from the Netherlands, then they started when they started Dutch Village. Then everybody started wearing every color, anything they wanted.
PF: Now, when Mary Lou VanDyke won that contest, didn’t she have a costume from the Netherlands that she wore.
HG: That’s when people started.

[Brief discussion of family photos, not of Tulip Time.]
HG: On the Rusk package--I wish I had one of them around--they had those best Dutch girl and boy you ever seen. Bert and Katie came from Muskegon, and they made up the exact picture shoot from them kids that was on the Rusk package. And those kids could go out and make more money at Tulip Time. Everybody'd give you a dime or a quarter or fifty cents or a dollar to have your picture taken. Our Pat [got into her] Dutch costume, and [her] hat and everything, and go out there and the tourists would give fifty cents or whatever.

PF: They don’t do that any more though. Can you tell Jason about your recipe for Dutch Apple Pie? The original?

HG: I got it, but it’s at home.

PF: Well, yeah.

HG: I got the first recipe that came from ... Mrs. [name?] brought it here from Pennsylvania Dutch. You make the apples and put it in the oven until it’s half baked, then you take it out and you sprinkle this cheese butter on top of it ... 

PF: And there’s brown sugar on it too?

HG: The cheese you mix with sugar.

PF: Cheddar grated cheese and brown sugar.

HG: Makes a nice crust on the top of it.

PF: Nobody makes them that way any more.

HG: One year we made almost 400 pies before Tulip Time, so they’d have it for Tulip Time. We went early in the morning, I’ll never forget that, and bake pies for Cummerford's.

JVU: For one of the churches was this?

HG: No, nope, restaurant.

JVU: Which restaurant was this?

HG: Cumerford's.

PF: Cumerford’s, it used to be across from Windmill [Restaurant]. Um, can you tell him ... 

[Nurse enters, and leaves]

PF: Do you remember when they started having pig in the blankets?
HG: The first . . . we used to serve pig in the blankets and pea soup at the Literary Club. I can’t tell you what year it is even. Maggie—Margaret was her right name—and I . . . the city put it on, and we had a booth in the army, and we had to make what they’re called "oliebollen." I bet you don’t know what that is.
JVU: I sure don’t.
HG: Fat balls!
JVU: Okay, I know what they are.
PF: Translate a little bit there for you.
HG: And chocolate milk in the armory. We had more fun that year, selling it. We had a big sign up there, and two thirds of the people couldn’t pronounce it. "Oliebollen." They’d come with "olle kocken" and everything else.
PF: That’s the same way they say "saucizebroadjes" now, they don’t know how to pronounce that either. Pigs in a blanket.
HG: Yeah, pigs in a blanket. The Literary Club sold pea soup and pigs in a blanket; always sold soups. My sister, Marie, worked there, made pea soup. Made pea soup, and they didn’t put no garlic in it, and pea soup isn’t good pea soup unless it’s got a little pinch of garlic in it.
HG: I worked in the armory with the pigs in the blanket and chocolate milk, with Maggie [name?]. She’s dead and gone too.
PF: Mother has always been in restaurant work, that’s why I’m gearing the questions to foods and stuff.
JVU: That’s a pretty important part of Tulip Time?
PF: You bet. Look at all those food wagons up and down the street.
JVU: Were you a member of the Women’s Literary Club?
HG: Never. Member of nothing, ever.
JVU: Okay, so just restaurant work, making the good food?
HG: I had to go to Mary Jane’s early in the morning before Tulip Time and cut the fish and the steaks so they would be four ounces. They’re cooked in great big pieces, and we’d cut enough off the steaks that they had already cut enough to make stew for
weeks. Of course they didn’t know what four ounces was. They couldn’t cut it. [laughs]

JVU: Did a lot of the recipes for the food that they use(d) at Tulip Time come from the Netherlands?
HG: A lot of them. Dutch apple pie was the main one, and I got that in my old cook book home.

PF: I’ve got your cookbook.
HG: I’ve got the recipe called "Old Hag’s Apple Pie." (laughs)
PF: Can you tell him anything about the first Tulip Time parade? Were there floats?
HG: Yes.
PF: Bands?
HG: Herb VanArk and Marty VanderBelt and all them screwballs that we used to kid with, all them . . . they were in it. They were all veterans of war, and they were all in it, the first Tulip Time Band.

PF: Did they just have one band?
HG: The high school and them had their band. This was the veterans band.

JVU: The American Legion Band?
PF: Did they have floats?
HG: They had floats. 7-Up had a float, and Mary Leuwendyke was on that float, but I’m not too sure about that any more. No, they had floats and everything, and the bands.

PF: And they scrubbed the streets?
HG: They scrubbed the streets and they threw water at each other, and made trouble.

JVU: Now this is the very first Tulip Time?
HG: Very first Tulip Time, they soon put a stop to that throwing water.

PF: [No] They still do it.
HG: They stopped it.
PF: [Laughs] Kids will do it now.
HG: Cindy and that other girl Sue got thrown out for throwing water. No they don’t do it like they . . . they throw water like
this [motions with hand] they don’t throw it like a pailful on you or so. For a while they drowned people with it. Well, that was terrible.

PF: Did they have--in the first parade--did they have those dogs that pulled the carts, the cheese carts?
HG: Yeah, Arnolds’.
PF: Was it one of those big keesehounds?
HG: The dog that Arnolds’ had, and called Pat.
PF: I would bring that one up wouldn’t I? Okay.
HG: It looked like [Ol’ Yeller]. Remember what he looked like?
PF: A big lab.
HG: He was a great big old dog, but he was a good old hound.
PF: Did he pull the wagon in the parade?
HG: Yes.
PF: They had some of those this year too again.
JVU: Is that a . . . is that some Dutch heritage? Is that where that comes from?
PF: They use the dogs to pull.
HG: Yes. The dogs pull the wagon and you’ll see Sometimes some milk cans that they pulled along the streets and sold milk.

[Brief discussion of a visiting acquaintance. Not applicable to Tulip Time.]

PF: Margaret, how long have you lived in Holland?
MB: Oh, since I can remember.
PF: Do you remember anything about the first Tulip Time?
MB: Tulip Time is beautiful. Well, I lived on thee corner of ninth street.
PF: Yes, you lived on ninth and mother lived on tenth so you could tell the buses where to go.
MB: Yes. [laughs]
PF: When did the churches first start serving food for the tourists?
HG: Yeah, they did then too.
PF: When?
HG: I can’t tell you what year. Hope church served dinners. Beef. Methodist church just came up on their meals, two dollars.
PF: I’m trying to think of something that happened a long time ago that only you would know, because if you don’t tell us, we’re not going to know it.

[Man enters room for visit.
Tape stopped for duration of brief conversation]

JVU: You were at the first Tulip Time, did you know Lida Rogers?
HG: Yeah.
JVU: What can you tell me about her?
HG: Nothing. She stayed at the Hotel, and what other movie stars did we have at the hotel?
PF: Oh gosh.
HG: Basil has the pictures of them by his desk.
PF: I was too young then to remember anything about movie stars then. [Rocky] Marciano was here, but that was much later.
HG: Holland Furnace entertained a lot of celebrities. We had that boxer here, fighter, what was his name? Marciano. And then he ate at Cummerford’s.
PF: When did they start wearing wooden shoes in the parade? Did they start that right away?
HG: Right away.
PF: Right away you all had to wear wooden shoes?
HG: But they stopped it once when people kicked them off and broke them. They had the square dance right on the corner by us, on tenth street.
PF: How many people did that? How many people were doing the dance?
HG: They had how many in the group?
MB: Forty in the first group.
HG: [What]?
MB: Forty in the first group.
HG: Yeah, but they had it all along by the post office there, and then down river avenue to twelfth street.
PF: That was the first Tulip Time?
HG: Right. They didn’t have no boys in it that time, but boys are in it now.
PF: Yes, boys are in it now.
JVU: Do you know why there were no boys in the beginning?
HG: No, I don’t know why really. I never heard any reason why it didn’t have any boys. They did a lot of kicking their legs you know.
PF: For a while they had Hope College girls in it too. That was much later too.
HG: Francis’ mom came, and she could do it yet, and she came from the old country.
PF: Yes.
JVU: Do you remember when they brought the windmill over from the Netherlands?
MB: Ah yes.
PF: That’s not so long ago.
HG: No, but I remember when they brought the Hitching Post over.
PF: He wouldn’t be familiar with that, that’s change too far already.
HG: No, in fact I never monkeyed around up at the windmill island. We took a bunch of senior citizens up there one time from Christ Memorial.
PF: When did they first start getting a lot of buses coming in? Was that right away?
HG: Right away. When I worked at the Dutch Village, we’d put ice cream balls on top of . . . you know, dipped up a whole bunch of ice cream balls because we had bus loads of kids coming in for ice cream cones, then all we had to do was jam the cone on top.
PF: The Dutch Village wasn’t there in the beginning.
HG: No. Started out as just a little shed.
JVU: Only one shed?
HG: [Yes], same as Russ’. Have you been out there now?
JVU: Yes, I've been out there recently.

HG: Dutch Village has grown an awful lot.

JVU: Has it always been very crowded out there during Tulip Time?

HG: You had to make reservations to get out there.

JVU: Have the tourists always been very welcome in Holland?

HG: Yes. Even on Sunday. For a while they put a stop to their Sundays. I put a stop to making omelettes on Sundays at the Dutch Village, because we might make them during the week. we made them during the week, because it takes time to make a good omelette, you can't make it and leave it set; the waitress has got to be able to pick it up right away or it drops. The priests always came in with the Nellises on Sunday, and I said, 'if we can't make it for Mr. Jones one day, I don't think we should make it for the priests on Sunday. I wasn't very welcome.

JVU: Do you remember the first Tulip Time that the flower show stayed open on Sunday? (No response) I think it was 1931 or 1932, and people were protesting because the flower show stayed open on a Sunday.

MB: I remember that time.

HG: I remember them hollering about it. Holland people have changed a lot.

PF: Do you remember, on the first menu that you had at Kiefer's for Tulip Time, do you remember any of the prices you used to charge?

HG: Kiefer's did not change their prices.

[Brief discussion on price fixing, and trout & whitefish.]

JVU: If I, back in the early days of Tulip Time, if I was a tourist and I came into the restaurant for a cheese burger, how much would I have to pay?

HG: Probably a nickel more than you did in the first place, 35 cents or so.

PF: Wouldn't you have a ball?
JVU: Sure would.
PP: Me too.
HG: A nickle more than the regular prices.
PF: And a cup of coffee was?
HG: Same as it always was. Ten cents.
HG: The girls that cleaned the coffee pot, left the dish rag in there.
JVU: What was the Tulip Time like, when Queen Juliana came to visit?
HG: Crowded.
PF: She was at City Hall.
JVU: What else do you remember about that?
HG: We lived two blocks from town, but I didn’t go near it. I had all I could do.
MB: They stayed at the Warm Friend.
HG: Basil had pictures of all the movie girls that stayed in the hotel. Holland Furnace entertained them.
MB: Oh yeah that was a big deal, the movie stars. They’d sit up high in the car and wave.
HG: They had all the twins they could get on the float.
JVU: I think they still have that now, I saw that this year.
PF: Twins and triplets.
JVU: What are some other organizations that were . . . that have been involved in Tulip Time that you can remember, like the Women’s Literary Club?
HG: They always had . . . always had to serve meals. Pea soup and pigs in a blanket. And every church would put on meals. Anything to make a nickle.
PF: That’s what he wanted to know. [laughs] You’re revealing some deep, dark secrets here now. Cut that out. Did they ever have the Shriners in the early parades? Did they ever have the Shriners?
HG: Yes they did, and you kids in your Dutch costumes and wooden shoes, and high school bands.
MB: When they did that Dutch dance, boy people went crazy.
HG: Mary Lou VanDyke had her picture taken all over, her and you.
PF: Did the Moose or the Elks ... did any of them, were they in the parade?
HG: They all had bands.
PF: The Moose had a band?
HG: All the Elks and--what was that--the Eagles, they all had something in it. They were the little band that Holland had, and they played "Tip Toe Through the Tulips."
PF: Oh boy, way back then?
HG: They played in the Silver Dollar Barroom on, almost to Grand Rapids on the highway, and Anne and I went one time shopping, and we were going to eat there and we didn't even step in the door when they started playing that "Tip Toe Through The Tulips."
PF: How come they started Tulip Time when it was just the depression time? The depression was thirty-five, thirty, in there wasn't it? Isn't that when my dad worked at the Getz farm feeding the lions?
MB: Lions?!

[Brief discussion of Getz farm menagerie.]

PF: But if it was hard times, why would they start Tulip Time? That doesn't make sense to me.
HG: To make a nickle.
PF: But nobody would have a nickle to spend.
HG: There was people, the movie stars, Getz's put on a big thing. They had money, you didn't have to have any. We didn't have to have any. Holland Furnace had their bunch out here always, and .

MB: Mayor Geerlings.
PF: He was the one when the movie stars were here? Finally thought of it didn't you? Good for you.
MB: Well, I worked for him. I cleaned the kitchen.
PF: When they first started Tulip Time, and there were a lot of tulips around, did they have a big fine for picking tulips like
they do ow?
HG: Oh yes. Twenty-five dollars.
P: Way back then? Twenty-five dollars was a lot of money in depression time.
Jv: Were there as many tulips then, as there are now?
HG: More. The Dutch Village was more tulips then too. I remember the peacocks running through the tulips. [laughs] Everybody was chasing the darn peacocks.
P: Where did they get the music for the Dutch dance? I imagine that was Margaret Van Vyven.
HG: Maragaret VanVyven. Oh, and they had that May Pole dance.
P: Did you ever do it?
HG: Nope, I had to work.
P: I worked on the dance too one year, I thought maybe you danced too.
HG: No, I worked every Tulip Time there was, except this last year, and I was laying here.
P: What do you remember most about the first Tulip Time? There was an article . . . I think; Jason, did you write about putting that Dutch Cleanser on the street and then they scrubbed it and all the fumes went up, and they couldn’t do that any more because it made such a mess?
HG: They had planks along the street, along the curb, on cement blocks, and when I helped Mary Jane, John Landis said, "By God they come in here to borrow silverware they don’t got a . . . they were laying a table cloth right across those planks.
P: Having their own picnic right out there.
HG: They had their picnic basket [coughs] of course people couldn’t come in the restaurant then; they had it blocked. He was mad about it, but he couldn’t go out there and stop them, it would look bad.

[PF offers HG a peppermint.]

Jv: What is your favorite part of Tulip Time?
HG: Staying home. [laughs]
JVU: Why's that?
HG: I got so I don't care about crowds any more.
PF: Yeah, but in the beginning . . .
HG: Oh, in the beginning it was fun.
PF: What was the funnest part?
HG: Well, sometimes when we weren't caught up in our work, we could go peek out the windows.
PF: Out the restaurant window?
HG: [Yes]
PF: And what did you see?
HG: Well, the Dutch Dancers and the college kids that worked with us. Marv and them kids, were in the parade and worked too. We'd watch for them to go through.
JVU: So the parades then? You enjoyed them?
HG: We'd get upstairs by the windows.
PF: What kind of costumes were the bands wearing? Did they have anything fancy like they have today, or just plain old . . .
MB: I can hardly remember.
PF: When Mayor Geerlings was mayor, did they have the City Council marching in the parade? Did they do that right from the first too.
HG: And I helped make the first Dutch costume for your darned old council. [laughs]
MB: That's true.
HG: In the City Hall.
PF: In the City Hall you made it?
HG: [Yes] [Tape gets jumbled here, but talk is about someone sewing on the arms of the Dutch costumes backwards, and causing Mrs. Grigsby the extra work of fixing them.] When we saw them go by in the band, we'd say, "I sewed the sleeves in that thing."
PF: Were they all blue costumes too, for the Councilmen?
HG: No, they had different . . . plaids and stripes.
PF: And did they wear wooden shoes too?
HG: Yup. Had to wear wooden shoes.
PF: How many councilmen did they have then? Do you remember?
HG: I want to say twelve.
PF: Sounds like a lot. Wasn’t that big then.
HG: No.
PF: I remember one year when I was in the Dutch dance; you know, teenage girls—lot’s of fun—and we had all of these bands from different places. And then there’s this Scotch band—bagpipes and stuff—and one of the girls in the Dutch dance groups says, ‘I wonder if they wear anything under those kilts?’ We were waiting for the wind to blow so we’d find out. We never did find out though.
HG: I’m trying to think of what Bill Allen had to do with it.
PF: That’s WHTC. When he first started WHTC, that was Bill Allen. He was the announcer there.
PF: Well I hope we gave you some ideas, or names.
JVU: Oh, absolutely. These are the kind of stories that we’re looking for. I mean, the newspaper has all of the year after, the same stories, but these stories aren’t recorded anywhere you know. So this is good.
PF: I imagine if you talk to a lot of these people around here, that you would find out a lot of stories too.
JVU: What is your one clearest memory of Tulip Time? What do you remember the most from all the years?
HG: When [name?] left home, left his family.
PF: Did that have anything to do with Tulip Time?

[Brief discussion about acquaintance who left family.]

PF: What’s your nicest memory from Tulip Time?
HG: Watching the parades when we had the chance. That wasn’t very often, we were in the kitchen and had to run upstairs.
JVU: Sounds like you worked hard during Tulip Time.
HG: I did.

[More talk about the restaurant where HG worked, but not about]
PF: When did they get all of those popcorn wagons in town for Tulip Time?
HG: After [some of the restaurants closed].
PF: It wasn't in the beginning. Now it's really like a carnival sometimes.
HG: When we worked, the armory made a Dutch Village out of the armory, and we had a little place down there; we made "oliebollen" and hot chocolate. We wrote recipes out. I had my husband write a bunch of cards with the recipe on it, and it was only lily white flour. An old man stood there, and he wanted some of the cards, and he said, 'Is that true?' and we said, 'Oh yes, naturally.' Next day we all got a big bag of lily white flour.
PF: I was going to ask, The Netherlands Museum--the one kitty corner to the park--was it a museum the first Tulip Time, or was it still a hospital?
HG: I wouldn't dare to say that. I think it was a museum, but not till afterwards.
PF: Was it? I'm sure he can look up the records, but I was just curious for myself.
JWU: Well, I think I've got quite a bit actually, to use. I wasn't expecting an extra person; that's great.
HG: The more the merrier they say.

-End of interview-