Stroh, Roger Oral History Interview: Tulip Time

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

Interview #22
Mr. Roger Stroh
The Oral History of Tulip Time

Conducted by:
Jason Valere Upchurch
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- Interview w/ Roger Stroh @ Holland City Hall
- 966 Bluebell Dr. / Holland, MI 49423
- July 19, 1995
- Interviewer: Jason Valere Upchurch

Begin Tape 15 : Side A
RS: Roger Stroh. I was born in the city of Grand Rapids, fifty-seven years ago.
JVU: What is the nature of your association with the Tulip Time festival?
RS: I arrived in the city of Holland, to seek employment with the city of Holland, on July first of 1959. That month, I joined the Holland Jaycees. The Holland Jaycees, a very active service club in the city of Holland, and it was training ground for young people--young men at that time. In joining the Jaycees, one of the projects that the Jaycees, at that time--in the way Tulip Time was organized--the Jaycees were responsible for the organization and the running of the Wednesday parade; the Volks Parade, the opening parade of Tulip Time. So, as a Jaycee, I was asked to work on that, and as it turned out, the work on that turned out to be, to co-chair the parade at the time that Jim Vande Poel--who also was in Jaycees, and a local business person. So Jim and I were co-chairs of the Wednesday Parade for Tulip Time; 1960 is when I started. I've been involved every year since.
JVU: In the same capacity?
RS: No, that was how I started out. I started out in that capacity; running the parade with Jim as co-chair, I believe it was the first five or six years, and at that time then, Jim went on to a different position--I'm not sure exactly what--and I became chairman of the Wednesday parade. That task, I ran for Tulip Time up... through 1973. So, a total of about thirteen or fourteen years that I was involved as the organizer and manager--more or
less--of the Wednesday Parade. With Jim for part of the time, and myself the rest of the time.

At that point in time, I---you may use the term--graduated to . . . the Saturday parade; management of the Saturday parade. I managed the Saturday parade in 1974, '75, '76, and '77. At that time, I believe--the record has long since been smashed--but at the time, I think it was the first time an individual ran the Saturday parade for four consecutive years. After that, Carl Dephouse took over, and he ran it for more years than that, and after Carl stepped down, Craig Van Dyke took over, and he'd run it more years than either of us. I can't tell you how many, but I've worked with Craig all those years. I've been involved with either the Wednesday parade mostly, the Saturday parade--the Wednesday or Saturday parade--from time to time helped out with the Thursday parade. Over the past thirty-six years, I've been pretty much a parade person for Tulip Time.

However, when you're involved in Tulip Time to that extent, you're also involved in many other projects as you go along. I, concurrently with the service on the parades, I've been on the Board of Directors, which operates the total Tulip Time for a number of years. In fact, I tried to count recently--knowing I was going to talk to you--over the past thirty-six years, on and off different times, I have served on the Board of Directors for about nineteen years. Those of course, most of the director's positions are either one year positions or three year positions, and there, you're required to . . . you cannot serve more than six consecutive years on any board or commission, so for that reason, I would be on for a couple and off for a couple, and on for six and off for a couple, and on for six, and so on. But over that span of years, I have been. I am currently serving the fifth year of a six-year stint on the Board of Directors.

Being involved in the Board of Directors, you get involved--over that many years--in almost every facet of Tulip Time. If you look at almost any project, program that Tulip Time has carried out in the past, or is trying out now, I've been
involved in helping with it, either directing it, or assisting directing it, or volunteering for it, or working the door, organizing volunteers, working with the Dutch dancers, working with Civic Center events. One of my present portfolio assignments is what we call Tulip Patrol. I'm in charge of seeing to it that we have tulips on the floats every year, and it's my responsibility however--there are many other people involved--we contract with the city of Holland, and Eldora Brower pots the tulips for us, and they're stored . . . in the city's cold frame, and then the spring, they're kept either in the cold frame or out of doors where they're cooler. So, they bring them along. There's a lot of work there by Bernie Hibma, and by Steve Zwiep, and Eldora Brower; those people that actually do the doing of the tulips, but then I also have the responsibility of then taking tulips, getting them to the parade, getting them on the floats, taking them off the floats, getting them back into a refrigerated truck, getting them back to the warehouse, cooler, and then doing that on Wednesday and then repeating the process on Saturday. So there's a lot of logistics for talking about--over the years--varying numbers, between eight thousand and twelve thousand tulips, and when you're talking about potted plants--live, growing, potted tulips with approximately sixteen, eighteen, twenty tulips in a pot--you're talking about six, seven, eight hundred--depending upon the total number--pots of tulips that you then put . . . on and off the floats. It's a big job. It's one of those things that's true of most people that work for Tulip Time on a Board of Directors, or other volunteers on projects or programs, that things just kind of look so nice, and go along so smoothly. We all know, however, what kind of work, and blood, sweat and tears it took to get to that point.

JVU: How have you noticed the festival changing?
RS: Interestingly, I don't perceive a real significant or noticeable change. I think that's kind of the glory of it all. We try to--have always tried to--strive to make improvements. The biggest change, probably, was . . . we've gone from volunteers, strictly volunteers, to part time paid management, clerical staff
and some management, now, to full-time, fairly significant full-time manager, full-time clerical persons, working with corporate sponsors. Those kinds of financial, organizational, and operational inner-workings of the structure, have changed significantly. However, the perceived Tulip Time, one of the comments, interestingly, that we get from time to time and we discuss, is someone saying, "Tulip Time never changes. It's always the same. Wednesday they're scrubbing streets and Thursday you got ten thousand kids walking around down there, and Saturday all they got is bands," and so for that perception. The other side of the coin is my side of the coin--I'm very much a traditionalist. I'm also not a Hollander, I'm a Kraut from Grand Rapids, but Holland's my adopted home, and I'm much more proud of the city of Holland, than I am of the city of Grand Rapids, as far as a place to be, and a place to live, and a place to be from.

But, I like it when people say that it stays the same, because the festival is to celebrate the Dutch heritage and this was founded as a Dutch community, and to celebrate the blooming of the tulip, and I'm sure if you've talked to others--I don't know what's on your list there--but from time to time, the question comes up, "Well, why doesn't Tulip Time have a Tulip Time Queen, like every other festival in the world?" If you haven't heard it before, the tulip is queen in the city of Holland. That might sound a little corny, or a little bit . . . but that's the fact, that it's really been that way.

**JVU:** I know that was a conscious decision . . . do you know what year that was decided?

**RS:** No, I don't know. No, I don't know about the archives over in Tulip Time Office. Have you been able to go back and reading minutes, and how far back?

**JVU:** Yes, we have all the Tulip Time archives at our place.

**RS:** Okay, that's good, because that's one of the things that as you get into this--I'm not sure exactly what the scope of this project is--but one of the things that I think I can be more helpful on, is if you . . . say, "Something happened in 1960, 1965, or 1970, or
1975, what was my part in that, or what did I think of that, or how did that all come about," I can give you that information. It's all in my head, it has to be tweaked to come out. I can't sit here and tell you this is how it was in '60 and '62, and '65, but there are definitely dates and times that stick out in my mind on projects that I've been involved in. So, for example, the grand-daddy of all from my parade experiences, was I was chairman of the Saturday parade in 1976, when President--sitting President--Gerry Ford decided to come to town.

Now you've probably talked to other people about that, but I was on the hot seat. I was organizing, and responsible for running the parade, and so we had the White House staff and the secret service, and everybody else swarming here, and I had a shadow for about forty-eight hours. I had someone at my side or outside my house at all times from when they moved into town at seven o'clock on the Friday before the parade. They had to know everything that I knew about the parade. I had to teach them every single element, everything about the parade, and where it was. Those dates I can remember.

Those kinds of things stick with you forever, but as you're going through, we made a lot of changes, obviously. One of the things that I do notice, is--being around as long as I have--is things kind of come around and go around, and you kind of recycle. As I say, there's nothing new in this world. People come up with this great idea, and you say, "Yeah we tried that in '65, and that worked pretty good, and for some reason or another it dropped out. Yeah, it'd be a good idea to try it again." So there's a lot of things. There's just so many things you can do. You have a festival, you have events, we have different kinds of events. Some are bigger, some are smaller, some are more diverse. I think we do more things, more programs, more events. Tulip Time has expanded. That's a significant change, that it's gone from a four-day festival to a ten-day festival. However, keep in mind that that's kind of an official thing. When you look at people say, "Oh boy, you've stretched out Tulip Time," no you don't. You stretch out
the activities, you stretch out the formalness of Tulip Time, but the tulips dictate when Tulip Time is, and how long Tulip Time is. Because people come here to see the tulips. Above anything else, they come here to see the tulips. If we had parades and all that sort of thing, but we said we're not going to plant the tulips, but we're still going to have all those wonderful events, you can guess what would happen. So, point being, that people have always come to Holland before and after the old four-day festival, and now we've just stretched out the dates, and then filled in those dates with more things for them to do while they're here. We've always had thousands and thousands of people coming a week before the festival if the tulips are ready. If the tulips were late, there'd be thousands and thousands that would come after the festival was over. so, they're coming to see the tulips, and however long the tulips bloom, that's how long the real Tulip Time is, regardless of what dates are set.

JVU: Can you comment on . . . [the introduction of headline entertainment in the seventies]?

RS: We made a conscious decision to do it, and we had dribs and drabs of things before the Lawrence Welk, but when we hit upon Lawrence Welk, then that was it, we'd found our answer to our entertainment dreams. It's amazing, we have said for years and years, after every year successful, we started with however many shows--two shows or three shows, and then went to four, to five, to six--and every year we would say, "You know, we ought to think about replacing them, because everybody's going to be dead who played for Lawrence Welk or ever watched him on television, and we have to think about bringing in something new, which we have done the last couple of years. But the fact of the matter is that we're talking about that for ten years, and every time we talked about it, we'd say, "Okay, now let's look at the books. Let's see what they're doing. Let's see how many people are here. Let's see how many people showed up," and we're selling them out; sell-outs or very, very high attendance. Very popular for our particular type of crowd that we have, which is, as you know, generally speaking,
a little bit older generation, coming by bus tours, and Lawrence Welk—the stars of Lawrence Welk—remain pretty strong. We are starting to diversify, and we did this year. We started last year with some other headliners we call them, and it's an interesting thing, because we're starting to [have] we call them headliners, which they are, but they're kind of like semi or former headliners; used to be greats, which is what the Welk people are. You don't see them on live television and making new records and things. Last year with The Lettermen, and this year we had Tammy Wynette and the Smothers Brothers, and we kind some kind of mixed revues last year, but this year I think it was better. Great revues form the Smothers Brothers, but they were only here for one day, for two shows I think. We're learning, and we have to look at the dollars.

I think it's good, but I'll tell you, still a solid part of Tulip Time, is our kids, our local talent, and our youth. We've got the various Tulip Time shows that have participation form the various High Schools, and I hear from people--I make it a point both because of my job, and that is very active, very involved during Tulip Time, is a busy time for us in Environmental Health with all the food vendors and all that sort of thing, and also, being involved with Tulip Time on the Board of Directors--I make it a point of talking to a lot of people during that couple of weeks of Tulip Time, and sometimes telling them who I am, and sometimes not, sometimes just asking some leading questions, and I think a lot of our staff people do that. A lot of our board members do that. I have done that for thirty-five years. I'll hop on a tour bus, and say, "Where are you all from and are you coming or going?" and "Have you been to the parade?"

It's interesting, because the psychology is, sometimes if you don't introduce yourself, it's "who's this nut person that's on here," and other times you'll jump on there, introduce yourself . . . and, "Oh!" cheers and all that sort of thing. But, I digress maybe a little bit, the people have always been amazed at the talents of our young people, our High School people that put on a lot of musicals; Festival Musicale, and some of the others, but
always, for ever, people have said, "What amazing talent you have in this town."

I don’t know, I’m going to guess that we’re probably no more talented than any other similar type of a town, but we’ve got the community spirit, we’ve got the organization, we’ve got the schools’ music directors, and it’s Tulip Time that kind of makes that. You can go to another similar, make-up of a community, and have the same talent, but they don’t know it because nobody’s asking them to display it, or to do it, or to highlight it as we do here for our school systems. So, I think that’s really amazing. Even our bands, all the schools. Wednesday parade is typically local bands, or local area bands, which means that we’ve got like the elementary school bands, we’ve got seventh grade, eighth grade, middle school, high school, all different kinds of bands, and it’s just amazing to see an elementary school band going down the street. I know I’ve three of my four daughters in the band, and I look at them kids going down the street and I know for a fact that six months prior to that, those kids didn’t know anything, how to blow a horn or anything, but here they are going down the street, and each year they progress right on up until they get into High School, and we have nationally well respected bands in this community. That stuff doesn’t happen to other communities that don’t have something like a Tulip Time. Same way with the Dutch dancers. We have alumni Dutch dancers. I wouldn’t be surprised if we have an alumni marching band some day. Maybe I should suggest that to somebody.

We have good bands because all the kids have been dragged to the parades to watch their brothers and sisters, and everybody else, they’ve got role models, and they say, "If I learn how to play this horn or this drum, then I can be in this parade, and I can wear this uniform, and I can march down the street," and that sounds like a fun thing to do. We’re probably no more talented than any other similar type of group, except that they’re doing it, and there again, schools are so big. The kids make up Tulip Time. The bands and the dancers and stuff. The schools that
are behind them, the Dutch dance instructors, and all the teachers. The teachers, the administration and the schools have to be supportive of the music department and all those chorals and vocals, and then that goes to the kids, and then it shows in the community. There are so many people that are involved in it.

**JVU:** How do you think the festival has, over the years, reflected the sense of community that Holland, Michigan has?

**RS:** Well, I think it on the whole, has done an excellent job of that. Probably, in more recent years, there might be some questions or flare-ups or discussions about what is Tulip Time, why is Tulip Time. But if you look at the historical perspective, I think that it does, for what it's intended to do, I think it does a very good job. As I said earlier, I'm not a Hollander, and I'm not born and raised in Holland, but I'm closer to Holland, and to Tulip Time, and to the feeling of Holland and the Dutch heritage in this community I think, than the vast majority of the people that have been born and raised here, because I've been active, and because I believe that this is my community. I think that still holds true.

You probably get both sides of the coin now, more than you used to. It was always kind of assumed that this was always a great reflective thing of the community, and it still is in the majority. But, I think you'll find more people will come from outside the community, of different backgrounds--including executive people from other businesses; typically I think we get a lot of people coming from Chicago area--those people will move to the community and they will be amazed. They see their first Tulip Time, and they'll see all that's happening, and all that sort of semi-organized chaos that goes on, and then the beauty of the community. The beauty can't be denied. You have people--and you hear them--that say, "I wish we didn't have Tulip Time, because I can't park in my driveway, and I have to wait to get on the street, and Thrifty Acres is so crowded, you can't go downtown, the streets are closed," and you get all that sort of thing. And you say, "But isn't it beautiful? Isn't this really nice?"
"What are all these people doing here?" What these people are doing here, is to look at your town, that you are taking for granted or for some reason, you don’t appreciate. I’ll bet you a nickel, that same person will go on vacation, hop in his car, and go down to Kalamazoo, and fight a hundred thousand people to see balloons go up in the air, or will go someplace; go to the Grand Canyon, and look at a whole in the ground. It’s a beautiful hole in the ground. I kind of look at it as a challenge. When people say something like that, I usually don’t take it in passing, I usually will challenge them in a friendly way, and a constructive way, and say, "Well, what about this, or what about that?" I usually won’t quit until I get one grudging point on my side. I’ve been around long enough to bring up enough points that sooner or later, you’re going to say, "Well, yeah, maybe . . ." but I don’t have to like it. Maybe it is okay for the community.

There’s no question, if you sit down and talk to some economist, which you’ll probably be doing, about the social, or the economic impact--I can’t tell you, I’m not an economist--but I know that the taxes would be higher in this community. Sure, we spend money on tulips and things, but when you look at the amount of money that comes into the community and the things that we do for the community--that the city does for the community--because of Tulip Time, you get all these kinds of benefits. There’s so much pride in how the town looks during Tulip Time, and that spreads over to the whole year. The town does look beautiful the whole year, not just during Tulip Time. Tulip Time doesn’t make that all happen, but it’s an important part of it.

JVU: Who are some people that you associate with Tulip Time from the past, and why?

RS: Well, going back--as far back as I can--big names in Tulip Time when I first started. And coincidentally, my first job working for the city, kind of tied in, and they dove-tailed, because I’m involved with Tulip Time, and in the spirit of the community from my job, and some of the names that are also synonymous, are Nels Bosman. [He] was the Mayor of the city of Holland back in the
early mid-sixties, for many years, and being the Mayor, I worked for the city manager, the City Council, my bosses, so Nels Bosman is a big name in Tulip Time and the city.

Bill Wichers. You know who Bill Wichers is, I don’t have to tell you about Bill Wichers. Well, Bill Wichers had an office in City Hall, and my office is in City Hall, and a coffee shop is in City Hall, and I’ve had--privileged to have--thousands of conversations with Bill Wichers. Bill was one of my very favorite persons. His obvious role in Tulip Time is there; Hope College, The Netherlands, the Netherlands Information Service, the trust in all that. Bill was just a fine a gentleman and Dutchy of a Dutchman, and he had the whole package. Of course, I’m sure you know the story of the windmill. There was a lot of media hype—if you had media hype back in those days, I’m sure you did--about going back and forth across the pond trying to shake a windmill loose, and headlines in the Netherlands papers, said, "Windmill for Bill." After a while, it wasn’t a windmill for the city of Holland, it was Bill did whatever Bill had to do to get the job done. Of course, he knew all of the ambassadors, and he had--one sidelight is, I can’t tell you exactly what year it was, but with my involvement with parades, this probably cam after we got the windmill, but about that time. It was in the sixties sometime. Anyway, Bill came to me one time, and he said, "Princess whoever is visiting." I can’t think of her name. She was from the royal family, from the Netherlands, is visiting, and this was in like June or July, and he said, "Will you put on a parade for her? We got to have a parade. If she’s coming to Holland, we’re going to have a parade," and I said, "You got it!" Can’t think of her name. **JVU:** Queen Julianna?

**RS:** I haven’t been here when a queen was here.

**JVU:** Marguerite?

**RS:** Could’ve been. Could’ve been. Yes, I think it was. So, it was very easy for me to put on a parade. I do it all the time, so we had a parade at Kollen Park. We went down the street, and through the park, and went in a big circle, and had us a parade for
Princess Marguerite. I guess that’s who it probably was. So, Bill Wichers is obvious.

Jake DeGraaf. Jake DeGraaf is not coincidentally that Jake was a park superintendent, and tulips and flowers and parks, and the beauty of the city of Holland, and how ironic that his son Jim has been on the Tulip Time board, and has been president for two years. Just add the DeGraaf name. Jim doesn’t go way back, but he goes back to his father. His father started it, and Jim has just carried on the DeGraaf name, which is hard to do; it’s hard to beat Jake, and I won’t say that Jim’s beating him, but he’s carrying on. So that’s the DeGraaf name.

Betty Dick. You know that name, that’s the Dutch dance coordinator. Betty was an amazing person. She really didn’t, as an individual personally, she didn’t act at all fearsome. She was a happy-go-lucky person, but when she’s talking to the Dutch dancers, and they’re in their costumes and all that sort of stuff, she was like a drill sergeant. If you talk to any of the Dutch dancers, they respected her, but they certainly saw a different side of her, and I guess that’s just the way it is with teachers and students, and things like that. Betty Dick was a very important name.

Henry Vander Linde. Henry is the band director for Holland Christian School. He had been for many years before I got here, and was many years after. Henry was just a top notch professional. His bands are absolutely perfection, and Henry again was a gruff, growly old guy to make the bands perform the way they’re supposed to, but he’s a push over; he’s a teddy bear, sweetheart really. You get him on the side, and he always had a little joke to tell or something like that. Henry is, and he’s still around—he’s in his golf cart, he’s a ranger out on the golf course—but he still is out there. I think he’s still up and down the streets with his little cart. I’m not sure exactly what his position is, but I think he must be honorary something. Anyway, Henry Vander Linde.

Can’t forget some office staff going back. Pauline
Vander Kooi. Pauline, when we had just part time managers that would come in and kind of help run things for a three month period out of the year, kept things going all the rest of the time, and served as a staff person. Pauline Vander Kooi was the secretary and the assistant for many years, and she had some other people working with her. Helen worked for her. See, at that time there was much more responsibility put on the directors, as working directors, and committee chairs, a lot, right now, much more of them work as deferred to the staff. The staff does a lot of the leg work, and calling, and writing, and all that sort of thing. Back then, much more of it was done by board members, and Pauline was kind of it; Pauline and Helen were kind of the staff. There were a couple others also that worked in there for quite a while.

I think Pat Johnson worked there for quite a while, she did the housing. Helen did the housing, and then Pat took that over, but Pauline was really the mainstay in that office.

I'm just trying to think here, I pulled one thing out of here from 1974 and 1975, but as far as the names that were . . . a lot of people have been involved for a long time. But names that I've mentioned, have been the ones that started with Tulip Time, and they stayed with Tulip Time, and they're still with Tulip Time. They either died, or became infirmed, or whatever, but those are significant names. Just trying to think of some of the programs.

Jim Vande Poel did a lot for Tulip Time. Jim Vander Poel is a local business person, and Jim and I started out on that Wednesday parade. I can't recall if Jim and I, if Jim had it before I was there, and I joined him, or if he and I started at the same time. I think probably that he had it before I got there in 1960--not very long, because he wouldn't have been in Jaycees that long. But Jim and I spent six or seven years together running that parade, and then Jim was also--was a past president of Tulip Time--and he had real good fell for the business end of it, and just like Jim DeGraaf has now--he's a very sharp business person, successful business person--and Jim had, back then--and of course Jim knew everybody in the community, and had a lot of friends in the
community; I came from the outside, so I met an awful lot of people through Jim. So Jim had a very significant role, not for as many years' lengths of service-wise as a lot of people, but still he probably was very active for ten or fifteen years, something like that, and added a lot to the evolution. He was in that evolutionary chain.

Lou Hallacy is another big name, and Lou kind of with a dual role as Mayor and Tulip Time, and then as Chamber exec, and so Lou and Lou and I go right back together. Lou was president of the Jaycees, the year before I was president of Jaycees, so Lou and I have known each other for as long as I've been in town. There's many, many people, but those are kind of the big names from my era. I know there are other names, but Nels went back earlier and so did Bill Wichers, and so did Betty. They reach back farther than my time span. Just start feeling old when I look at it, and see thirty-six years; I've been here for more than half of Tulip Time. Oh, goll, that's pretty big.

JVU: What do you think Tulip Time has meant to Holland year after year?

-End Side A-
Interview w/ Roger Stroh (cont'd)

Begin Tape 15 : Side B

RS: There’s a number that’s used of seven thousand volunteers that it takes to put on Tulip Time. That’s kind of a current number. Well, if you look at that number, and say that that’s pretty accurate—maybe it is, it’s a lot of people—but that’s only people that you can count. A lot of these seven thousand volunteers have a mother and a father or a sister, or a brother, or and uncle or an aunt, or a grandma, or a grandpa, that are in town, or around town, or out of town, and Tulip Time is kind of a year round thing. It takes you a while to get over it, and then about the time you get over it, you have to start thinking about it again. If you’re in the school system—we talked about that—you have to prepare, and everybody says that we got to do all this now, because we have to do this for next year’s Tulip Time. So the thing about Tulip Time is, is it’s really kind of a common thread. You can talk to anybody, any time, and you can—I don’t know that people make a point of doing that, but if you want to—you can walk up to someone and say, "You’re from Holland?"

"Yeah."
"You got any kids?"
"Yeah."
"They in the Tulip Time parade?"
"Oh yeah, well, my kid is in that band."
"My kid walks down the street, he’s only seven years old, so he has to hang on to the stick so he doesn’t get lost as he goes down the street." And then the memories? "You were in a Dutch dance?"

"Yeah, I was in Dutch dance!" All this, this whole common thing. I think that’s what Tulip Time means to the community. It’s sort of, in a way, a homecoming. People look at a lot of small towns, you have homecomings, when everybody comes home at a certain time. Tulip Time is kind of that, or a lot of people. If you’re going to come home some time, what better time
to come home than when the tulips are there, an because you went through all the Tulip Time experiences. I have a couple of kids, children that are out of town now, and they want to come back for Tulip Time, because that's part of them.

So I think that's what it means to the community, and what it means to me, is something in the same vein, only a little bit different because as I mentioned, I have this feeling of big city. I am from inner city, big city, and when I moved to Holland and looked around and saw this town, got used to it, and raised a family--this is where I wanted to raise a family; all of the activities, all of the things that are important. It's a community that I am proud of. I have a feeling that there's probably never going to be a thing that I'll be remembered for, but I know that both on my job and spending thirty-six years trying to make Tulip Time as good a Tulip Time as I could do, that I've done some things that are lasting in this community, and that's probably true of ninety-nine percent of the people that are involved. Then, you've got the one percenters that will have their name on something, like Nels Bosman, and Bill Wichers, and people like that. Then, of course, from a personal standpoint, what it means to me, is those very individuals that talk to you, that are my friends, everyone of those people that I mentioned, we didn't all go to the same church, not the same economic or social status, but through Tulip Time--working towards the same goal on Tulip Time--they're my friends, and have been lifelong friends.

JVU: I think what I hear you saying, is that Tulip Time really is the core of the community.

RS: Yes, I really believe that, and I feel that people that don't believe that, they haven't thought about it, or they haven't talked to somebody that can kind of lay things out and show them the inner relationships. Some of the things like I mentioned, the Holland High and Holland Christian bands have been invited to like the Rose Bowl, and the Orange Bowl, and to Washington inauguration. Over the years, they've had those honors, and I just firmly convinced my own mind, that the only reason that they were able to go, those
kids were able to go, was because of sixty-five years of Tulip Time, and the tradition, and the excellence in the school systems, and the professionals that translate it through to the kids, and the Tulip Time exposure, and all that sort of thing. That’s the reason that that happened. It wouldn’t have happened without it, and there are a number of other things that spin off in that way. People don’t inter-relate that, they don’t put two and two together, but it really is kind of the core, or the heart and beauty.

JVU: What is your favorite part of Tulip Time?
RS: Two things: one is obvious, and that is the tulips are beautiful. I just love the tulips. I love planting them. I love thinking about them. I love watching them come out, and seeing how they’re going to do. The other is working, being involved actively in approximately seventy or seventy-five parades. When everything is in place, and everything is getting organized for the Wednesday parade and the Saturday parade, and the Thursday parade for that matter, on parade days, when everything is all set, and the whistle blows, it’s two o’clock or it’s three o’clock, or it’s time to go, the whistle blows, and that first band starts out, and it marches down the street, and subsequently, the excitement, the band music, the charge of all that--I love a parade. I love the band music in the parade. I’m not a musician, and never have been a musician, maybe that’s why. Those two things. Those two things. There are others. I like being part of the hospitality to hundreds of thousands of people. But, tulips, band music, they’re my favorite things.

-End of Interview-