Van Vyven, Margaret Oral History Interview: Tulip Time

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

Interview #7
Ms. Margaret Van Vyven
The Oral History of Tulip Time

Conducted by:
Jason Valere Upchurch
21, June 1995
The Oral History of Tulip Time
Interview #7

- Interview with Margaret VanVyven @ her home
- 22 East 29th Street / Holland, MI 49423
- June 21, 1995
- Interviewer : Jason V. Upchurch

Begin Tape 4 : Side B
JVU: Could you please repeat your name, and date and place of birth?
MV: My name is Margaret Van Vyven, and I was born on June the fourth, nineteen eighty. I was born here in Holland ... and what else did you wish to know?
JVU: That was it.
MV: That was it. Alright.
JVU: My first set of questions deals with just how you've been involved with Tulip Time over the years, and the first question is, what is the nature of your association with Tulip Time? How have you been involved over the years?
MV: Well, as a school teacher in the Holland Public schools, way back in the early thirties, we arranged to have children march in the Tulip Time parade. That's in the very beginning of Tulip Time. We had ... I had little youngsters at that time, so we tried to figure out a way where by we could keep them in sort of a line, so that they wouldn't just be wandering all over the street. So they used ropes, and about six little children would be [in] back of the ropes, and abreast you know. But, joy, that didn't work. Those children were just here there and everywhere, and the rope went all directions. So I got a notion that if we had sticks made, that we could arrange these children [in] back of the sticks, and that they'd stay in some sort of good order for the parade.

So we had the sticks made, and on the sticks, the older children would make little tulips or windmills, or dress these
sticks up. Each child was [in] back of one of those little artistic effects that the older children made. And you know that worked out just great. So after that, I've noticed over these many, many years, that all the schools use that "sticks" idea to have the children march so that they stay in a kind of a uniform arrangement.

Well then another thing that was quite nice--and this was thought about by Bonnie Treglawn, who was a good teacher in Jefferson school; now she has since left this world, and she was young at that time. She was the one who started the idea of the little may poles. So after that now, you see that in many of the schools, with children operating in the Tulip Time parade.  

**JVVU:** Were there any other aspects of the festival that you were involved with directly?  

**MV:** Well, as the years went by, I served on the--I guess they called it the Tulip Time committee--to represent the schools. So I would meet, when the committee was supposed to get together, and I would, of course, have to do with what the schools had to present in connection with the parades, and Tulip Time. I was, by that time, not a regular class room teacher. Then I became what they called, the music supervisor. I had an office at Washington school, but I did go to all of the schools once a week, and each room, so I had about a thousand kids a week for music--vocal music--and I just loved it.

At Tulip Time, because Washington school was so nicely situated, we would take children, little groups of children, to Kollen Park, and they would sing many of the songs that I taught and that the teachers taught about Tulip Time. I had a collection of just . . . oh, a great amount of songs that I collected about the Dutch, but that has not been used at all. A lot of those songs came from books that are not published any more, but I have copies, but I don't think anybody's interested in going into it the way we did at that time. We taught Tulip Time in all the elementary schools.

Well, then at a later date--I don't know what this
necessarily had to do with Tulip Time, I guess it didn’t--the Queen of the Netherlands came to visit Holland, and I taught . . . well, Bill Wichers called me and said that he wished that I could teach the National Anthem of the Netherlands, in Dutch, for Queen Julianna when she arrived here. And I said I thought I could do that, and I did, and then he also wished that we would teach the favorite song of the Queen, and so he also contacted--or otherwise I did, I don’t remember--Ms. Braght at Christian School. She did the same kind of thing that I did in public schools. So she and I got together and we taught those songs, and we had nine hundred children singing at the City Hall.

They placed a stage, they made a stage where the steps are that you’d go up to the City Hall, and so we had all these dear children arranged going all the way into Centennial Park. Of course the street was cut off for traffic. Then I was on the stage to direct that music, and I thought that was quite something with the Queen there. I am not sure, but I think it was somewhere near Tulip Time. It’s probably there in the records, in the archives. That was just one of the things that’s quite a highlight with me, and I’m sure it is with Ms. Braght too, and many of the children who now remember having sung in that group.

And then, as you noticed, I had that Tulip Time song. The way that came about: The committee of the Tulip Time--that was before I was a part of the committee--had an idea that they’d like to have everybody that could, make up a song about Tulip Time. So, there were a lot of people that submitted songs that they made, and mine was among the last seven that they chose. And it was the only woman; the rest of them were men, and one of them was Willis Diekema who was well known in the music field and so on. He did a lot of things, his father was G.J. Diekema, the ambassador to the Netherlands. So he had a fine song.

Well, the time came that we needed to go to the Knickerbocker Theater, and those songs were to be presented, and one of the seven was supposed to be chosen as the Tulip Time
song. Well, it was very disappointing, I don’t know how they got away with this, but they never did choose a song. They never did. So, now, since I have it . . . you know, and I used all these Tulip Time things in my program when I was the Storyland lady on WHTC, and so then I used that song that I had made. The boys up there in the WHTC station made a record of it while I was singing it for the audience. Now since then, that good Juke, you know, has made tapes for me, and I think I have had about a hundred tapes because so many of the children who I had--who are now drawing social security [laughs]--why even they have asked me if I could give them a copy of that song.

So I have the copy of the song on tape, and I also have the piano score that I made purposely. And so I’ve given that out just like you pass out cards when you play a card game. And I’ve had fun doing that. And I have enjoyed the fact that people appreciated using that song. And they use it at Tulip Time. Juke always uses it at Tulip Time on WHTC. I don’t hear it sometimes--I didn’t hear it this year--but a lot of people tell me they did. And then they also used it on cable. I didn’t hear it this year, I don’t even know if they used it, but they had, in the past, used it--I’ve heard it--after the children’s parade; at the close of the children’s parade, then I hear my song. It’s fun to sit here and listen to myself. So, let’s see now . . . is there anything you want to ask me?

JYQ: I’ve got a whole list of questions.
MV: Okay, you just go ahead.
JYQ: I think you may have just answered this, but if there’s anything else you want to add, my next question is, what areas of the festival have you attended or been involved with directly. You just gave me a whole list, but I have a feeling there might be more.

MV: Yes, I think there are other things. There’s a program that we always gave on the stage about costumes, the costume program, and then I had a group of dear little kids that were in that and they sang songs and did little dances and so on, in that parade.
That was presented in the old Holland High School, on the stage there. Then, long before that, there was a beautiful production, in what was the football and baseball field near where the Freedom Village is now. There was a great big field there, and big bleachers, and people paid to get in, and they had a beautiful program. Mrs. Snow, who was a very fine musician, played the organ and oh my, that was a beautiful program. Jack Leenhouts was a very important person in it, and then at that, some nights it was so terribly cold, and I had little kids that were supposed to be little fairies I think, and so they were daintily dressed. [And] We kept them in a big bus until it was there time to go out on the stage. And then they’d go tripping out there with their beautiful little costumes and they were adorable. But, they were cold as a dickens some of those nights. But that was a very special program, and that was one of the first programs of Tulip Time; I think that was in the thirties. JYU: Do you remember what that was called? The costume show? MV: No, that was not the costume show. JYU: This was a different [show]?

MV: This was very different. It was an outdoor production, and I think in that copy that I have written, I might have the name of it. I can’t remember it.

JYU: Okay, I’ll go back over that [essay].

MV: That might be a good thing. But this other program that I tell about, was given right on the stage. Oh that was very dear too, if I do say so. A doctor’s wife was quite well in charge of that, and it had to do with the literary club. I think it was John and Bill [Winters’] uncle whose wife had a great deal to do with this costume show.

JYU: John and Bill . . .

MV: Winter. They were both doctors, and their father was a doctor, and it was the doctor’s, I guess brother-in-law in town right then, whose wife had to do with the program that I’m speaking about.

JYU: The next question . . . Could you describe for me any
changes that you’ve noticed in the festival? Were you at the original Tulip Time festival?

**MV:** Why I surely must have been. My father died in 1929, and that was the year that Ms. Rogers supposedly got a start of an idea on Tulip Time. I started to do... started [being involved with Tulip Time] in Holland in about 1931. So I began immediately in sharing whatever happened. It was a small affair then, you know. We had the children march to... they marched only on eighth street till they broke up at Centennial Park. And then the parents were supposed to meet the little kids—the small ones, you know—and take care of them from then on. Well, some of us teachers stood there forever it seemed, because the parents were watching the rest of the parade while we were taking care of the children whose part was finished marching. And so we had them at Centennial Park, and some of them thought their parents were never going to come, and we teachers wondered too.

Then there was still another program that was wonderful, that Gertrude Douwstra had charge of. We presented that at Kollen Park, on the hillside. Parents would be below the hill, and the children would be above the hill, and come in as if it were a stage. And Crystal Van Anroy and I had charge of children that made the shape of a windmill and then when that part of the program finished, why the windmill—they had it fixed so that the children would walk in a circle, and then that windmill would go around as if they were the parts of the windmill. And there are also pictures of that. In fact, I’ve got a picture of that right here at my house; I’ll show it to you if you want me to.

[Tape stops as Mrs. Van Vyven goes to find picture.]

**JVU:** I started to ask this one before, and I sort of changed the subject on you. Could you describe any changes that you’ve noticed in the festival over the years?

**MV:** Well, the main thing is how it has grown, and how marvelously the people at the head of Tulip Time, and this wonderful
community of ours, all the leaders of our community and the people, are so wonderfully cooperative and so . . . as the years go on, it has become bigger and bigger, just because the people are so wonderful. And I notice that just even recently in our sentinel, people who have written letters about Tulip Time and Holland, and their experiences here, and how much they appreciate the Tulip Time, and how much bigger it is now than at the beginning. Because now you see . . . when I was explaining that the children were picked up by their parents at Centennial Park, well, my goodness, now the children are transported--and they were then--by school bus, to the beginning of the parade, which was at Columbia and Eighth there, along there on Columbia Avenue was practically where w got things squared around for the children. And then they marched, as I said, that short distance. Well it seemed short, but it wasn’t for them. But now, my goodness, as we both know, they travel all the way tour Holland High School before the parade is finished.

Another thing that I thought was great, and it’s never been done since--and I wish somebody would do it. I had a little kindergarten band--oh those kids were adorable--and I had real, little uniforms. They had real band uniforms that I borrowed from one of the other kindergarten teachers that I knew happened to be in the school. So I dressed these little kids up--or their parents did--in their uniforms, and they went down the street with those little triangles and tambourines, and little instruments that children use in kindergarten when they think they’re in the band. And our drum major was a first grader--and I had the kindergarten kids all dolled up in those uniforms--and the drum major was Overbeek. You’ve probably heard of . . .

JVU: I have an interview with him tomorrow morning.
MV: Oh heavens. Oh he’s a wonderful fellow. Oh yes, I like him very much. And he always reminds me that he was the drum major. And his mother made a tall hat for him, and he looked just adorable, and so there was my drum major. And that kindergarten band was just a dream I thought, and people seemed to like it.
JVU: Were there any pictures of that?
MV: I don't think there's any, unless [Larry] has one. His mother was always so interested in him too you know, and made that hat for him. But I don't have any pictures of that . . . how I wish I did, because oh those children were so adorable. They've never done it since, and I don't agree with this, but the reason that they discouraged us from having a kindergarten band in the parade was that they thought it was too much for the children. Kids just loved it. I didn't feel one bit that that hurt them any, in any way. So I think it was something that should be done, even today if somebody would take it up, and take a shot at it you know. But the reasoning that I use is that these little children who are in the twirling area in the parade, why my goodness, some of them look so small, you wonder how they learned to walk, because they're so young and so cute. If they could do it, I certainly don't see why five-year-old kindergarten children couldn't. But that was the only time that was used.

Another thing; I have choruses in each elementary school, and among other things we learned the song--in Dutch, just for the fun of it--called "DeBezen," and that means "The Broom." So I took all of these elementary school choruses together, so that I had probably a hundred and fifty children, and we marched down the street with our brooms, and we sang songs--the Dutch songs. But unfortunately, it was a very windy day, so it was hard to sing and hard to have the audience hear us. But I know that if Nelson Bosman--who was always such a help--would have known it at that time, he would have had speakers in each corner, for instance, of where this group was and we'd have been able to stay together and sing well. But it was, as I said, very windy. But the children, this chorus group, each child had a broom, and as they marched, 'DeBezem, DeBezem,' they would sweep back and forth. So that made kind of a cute little feature.

Well now as far as changes, I would say the main change is the fact that now we have many, many wonderful Klompen Dancers. There were a few in the beginning, next to what there are now.
So I think that’s one of the important features of Tulip Time. And the tulips, oh my goodness. We didn’t begin to have the tulips growing all over like we do now. So the whole thing, the main thing to say is that it’s a larger, a much larger festival.

JVU: Do you think that’s a good or a bad thing?

MV: I think it’s great. Of course I’m all for Holland. I think Holland’s a great place, and I think we have wonderful leadership here. And of course now, our new Mayor is such a great fellow, and he’s so up and coming, and doesn’t miss a trick. So I think, really, we’ve got everything going for us in Holland. We are an unusual town. I’m glad to think too, that we’re trying to include people who are not Dutch you know, because we’re getting to be the minority now; the Dutch people are. Which is perfectly alright. We ought to grow, and include all these outside--as we thought of [them]--people. Because they aren’t outsiders, they’re a part of us.

I had these darling little Mexican kids dressed up in Dutch costumes in those years, and why they were just darling you know. I had a little [American] Indian boys that I thought were so special. So I’m all for having us get mixed up greatly.

JVU: That’s my next question. Holland has become more and more ethnically diverse . . .

MV: Oh yes.

JVU: How do you think that’s affected the festival?

MV: Well, I think we’ve got to grow with it, and I think we’ve got to continue to have the people in the ethnic groups here, know that we want them with us. We mustn’t give anybody the impression that we think we are above or outside of the rest of the people in our community. We must accept them all, and get a place for them.

JVU: Do you think that that is . . . that should be reflected in the community spirit of the festival?

MV: Oh, definitely. I surely do. And I think with the great mayor that we now have--and we’ve had good mayors--I just think that that’s going to grow continuously.
JVU: Besides the ethnic diversity, there's still a great deal of Dutch pride in Holland. Do you think it was the Dutch pride that originally started Tulip Time, or do you think that Tulip Time has created a rise in Dutch pride here in Holland?
MV: Oh I think that Willard Wichers has had a lot to do with the wonderful feelings that people have about the Dutch. I was fortunate enough to have gone to the Netherlands on a trip with others, and Nell Wichers and Bill were our sponsors. We visited places in the Netherlands I'm sure we wouldn't have been able to visit without the influential man that Bill Wichers was.
JVU: What else can you say about Bill Wichers? He's such an important figure in Tulip Time history. What other dealings did you have with him?
MV: He was always interested in anything that the schools did in connection with the Dutch. I can't just put my mind straight on exactly what to say he did, except that I always admired him greatly, and I have explained the part of our lives that he played a very important part in--when the Queen came to visit Holland. And that he had worked that through the Dutch Consulate from the Netherlands, and so forth.
JVU: Were you still active officially with Tulip Time, at the time that the windmill came over?
MV: No, that I was not.
JVU: Do you remember that at all?
MV: Oh yes, I remember it not so well as I wish that I did, but I remember that it was one of the important times in the history of Holland.
JVU: My next set of questions deals with more specific personal memories--as these all are. Besides talking about the official business you had with Tulip Time, maybe just some more special memories that you've had, ad the first question is; What specific memories do you have of past Tulip Times that stand out as particularly special. You've mentioned so many already.
MV: You mean as far as my personal stuff?
JVU: Yes.
MV: I was really most delighted to sit on that Cadillac, and nod to people when I was given the chance to be the honorary marshal of the children's parade.

JVU: What year was that?

MV: Was that '79? I don't know for sure.

JVU: Well, we can check the article.

MV: Yes. I remember one thing, and that is that I was a teacher in Coopersville in my early days, in 1928, '29. I sat there waving and nodding as one does when they are a marshal, and at a later time, I received letters and telephone calls especially, from one of the children that I had in Coopersville, in the kindergarten. Now those poor kids that saw me, why they were aghast, because they thought--see I was their kindergarten teacher, and this was so many years later--I guess they thought I'd either be dead or in a nursing home [laughs]. Instead, here I was sitting there waving to the people. So, one of them--was Mary Jane Lily in Coopersville--her parents owned a department store there, and she invited me over for lunch. She had a lot of these young girls that I had in kindergarten, at that lunch. So that was very interesting, and it would not have come about, had I not been an honorary marshal in that parade. So that's quite a highlight for me, and that dear Larry Overbeek drove the Cadillac. You see, he's always been quite special in my life.

JVU: Are there any specific people that you associate with Tulip Time, and why?

MV: Well, as I said before, of course, Bill Wichers. He's associated with everything I think, that is important in Holland. Oh, and the principals of the schools, all schools, not just Holland Public. My, how they worked to have the children do the best they could in the parades and so on. I don't think that people in general realize how important the principals and teachers of the schools are, in connection with that Children's Parade. There's a tremendous lot of preparation. And, of course, the High School band--oh my, my.

Another thing that I thought was kind of fun--it's kind of
personal--when I made that song, the director of the junior high
. . . the band leader had made my song . . . he wrote the song
for all the parts of the band, and then they played my song.
There’s a picture in that book that I’ve spoken about, [that] my
grandmother made--scrapbook. So they had that band play my song,
and I thought that was quite fun. Now who else would I say?

Well, as I said, the superintendents of the schools, and the
school people were all very cooperative.

JVU: Did you have any contact with Lida Rogers ever?
MV: Oh, she was my teacher. I had her in Biology. She had
bright, shiny brown eyes. Boy, she didn’t miss a thing. You had
to study your lessons with her, you had to know what you were
doing, you couldn’t fake a thing. She knew whether you knew or
not, and [she was] a very good teacher. Very fine with her
subject, she knew a lot about it.

JVU: Did she ever share any of her ideas for Tulip Time with you
in her classes?
MV: No, because we didn’t have Tulip Time then. I graduated from
High School when I was the right age, but that was way back in
1926. So you see, we didn’t even dream about Tulip Time then.

JVU: She didn’t start working on it until I guess 1927, ‘28.
MV: There you have it. That’s right.

JVU: What do you remember of her? I guess she had always been
involved with Civic Beautification Programs, and planting
programs.
MV: I don’t remember that so much. I really do not remember that
so much, but I do remember that she had a very vivid interest in
beautiful floral arrangements, and flowers that grew in people’s
homes and so on.

JVU: What has Tulip Time meant to you year after year? What do
you see Tulip Time as standing for?
MV: Oh, standing for making Holland, Michigan one of the most
well known communities in the whole United States. Why we’re
just known for this Tulip Time. If you take a trip and you say
you’re from Holland, Michigan, people seem to know something
about the fact that this is the place where Holland's Tulip Time takes place. So I think that it has put Holland, Michigan on the map.

JUV: You think that's been a positive thing?

MV: I surely do. I think it's nice to be well known for something fine like that. The beauty of the tulips you know, oh my, my. I think that that's an inspiration.

JUV: Besides the tulips and the actual events of the festival, what do you think it is about Holland, that has allowed the festival to grow so quickly over the years. We have almost half a million people come every year to visit the festival. What do you think it is about Holland that has created [such a phenomenon]?

MV: Well, I think that Kristi [Van Howe] and all those who are, [or have been], in charge of the Tulip ... what do we call that?

JUV: Tulip Time, Inc.?

MV: Yes. Oh my goodness, those people work, and even when we're sleeping I think. Why they work and ... to encourage people all over this nation to know about Holland. Not only for Tulip Time. I think they do a wonderful job to put Holland on the map, and I think that's why so many people from all over the nation come to see Tulip Time.

JUV: About the tourists that come here during Tulip Time; how do you feel about them? I know some people in the community complain about the traffic, and other people think it's great. How do you feel personally about all the tourists that come to Tulip Time?

MV: I just love it! Other years, I have stayed away from the programs and so forth, because I think the people who come here should have those tickets. But this year, I went to more programs than I have for years and years, because Kristi ... I mean, what's her name?

JUV: Duistermars.

MV: Duistermars made a special announcement in the paper, and
also on the radio, that we who live here in Holland, should support these programs. So, boy, my girlfriend, Joan Brieve, and I attended everything that was put on practically. And we just thought it was great.

JVU: The tourists that come here now—how does that prepare to the way it was in the past? I know you mentioned the festival was always smaller, but have different crowds been coming? Different types of people?

MV: Well, I’m not so sure. I think people in the immediate vicinity of here in Michigan for instance, surely come. I think we all know that we get bus loads of people who are old, you know, because now they’re retired and they can get on the bus and come to a place like this, and arrangements are made for them. And so we do get a lot of senior citizens, and I don’t think that’s bad either. I guess that of course, with the growth of the whole Tulip Time, we get more people of all walks of life, and I think that most of them have very wonderful things to say about Holland, and I hope that the people of Holland, that live here, are as friendly as can bee—and I think they are to help people. I took the bus tour, rather I mean the . . . what is that nice street car . . .

JVU: The Tulip Trolley.

MV: Oh yes. Just because I wanted to know what it was like, and the people are all friendly to each other, and it’s a wonderful thing. There’s some very fine people who are guides on that tour.

JVU: Anybody that you know in particular?

MV: Oh sure. Mr. Van Ark is the one that was on when I took the trip. Joan and I took it, and we thought he was good.

JVU: Anybody else?

MV: I didn’t personally take the trip with anybody else, but I know that they’re well versed on it, pointing out the interesting parts—places in Holland.

JVU: What kind of experience do you think the tourists have that come here? By that I mean do you think they have an authentic
Dutch experience for one thing, and how do you think their experience is with our town?

MV: Well, if they want a Dutch experience as far as food and so forth is concerned, the Lady’s Literary Club puts on a very fine luncheon for them, and that seems to be quite popular. They get food that is well known to the Dutch people, like the pigs in the blanket, and I think it’s Dutch pea soup, and food like that. And I think that helps it. I don’t know that there’s a lot of other . . . other than the wonderful Dutch dancers of course, that’s close to what the Dutch people are . . . would interest people that have to do with the Dutch.

JVU: What about the other attractions around town? Windmill Island . . .

MV: Oh, that Windmill Island is wonderful. I surely hope that that thing can be revived because I think it’s a great place. I love to go there. I think we people who live in Holland, should get there more often than we do, and I think maybe that’s going to grow too. That [Jaap] deBlecourt has been wonderful. And you know, I think that the park department . . . oh my, my. I think, for example, Bernard Hibma, he does wonders around here for these tulips. The early Tulip Time didn’t have all these miles and miles of beautiful tulip lanes that we now have. So that’s another side of the growth of this beautiful festival.

JVU: Still talking about the tourists that come here--Have any of the visitors that we have, ever expressed any sentiments about the city or the festival to you? Have you ever had a chance to hear what some of the tourists have said about Holland, and about the Tulip Time festival?

MV: Well, I think that when we took that trip on the trolley, that people would talk about it to us, about what a wonderful town this is. Some even said they wished they could live here. They said, ‘Boy this must be a great town.’ They don’t think there’s a place . . . of course we know better than to take them into the places that are a little bit less attractive. They think that they’re all rich people live here, some do. They
think, boy this town is really well fixed. I think because we have such excellent leadership, we are in good shape.

**JVU:** Do you see any major problems with Tulip Time? Or minor problems?

**MV:** I probably am not close enough to it.

**JVU:** Or in the past, what have been any problems in the past, that the festival has had to overcome?

**MV:** By golly, I can't think of any. I don't know, maybe I've been blind to what I should have seen, but I don't remember.

**JVU:** Or maybe it's just running really smoothly.

**MV:** I kind of feel that way myself.

**JVU:** Do you think the festival faces any challenges for the future?

**MV:** Well, I think almost anything does, and I think a festival like this does because they've got to keep thinking about what they can come up with that might be new to the people who come every year. I think, usually the people who come every year want to see the same thing. For instance, I don't think the girls and boys--I hope there will be more boys--that do the dancing, I don't think that anybody gets tired of that. I think they come, and want to see that over and over, because a year elapses, and then they've got a whole year to forget it, and come back and see it again.

-End Tape 4, Side B-

**Begin Tape 5, Side A**

-Brief discussion of Essay by Ms. Van Vyven on Tulip Time: available for research at The Joint Archives-

**JVU:** Really, I don't have any more questions on the paper here, but I've thought of a lot of things I'd like to ask you. You're so involved with the schools, being a public school teacher, did you ever have any involvement with the Klompen dancers? That's a
MV: No, the only thing I ever did, was teach kids in--when I was a music teacher--I’d teach the kids some steps and we’d dance around in the school rooms you know. I’d take them to the gym, because we had a lot of space in the gym, and I’d play some songs, and say, ‘Now pretend your in the Tulip Time, that you’re the . . . ’ Oh I was one to imagine great things. And then I’d say to the kids, ‘Pretend you are one of the Dutch dancers,’ and oh boy they’d have fun, and so would I, watching them. We played a lot like that.

JVU: Did you have any contact with, or did you ever interact with any of the Dutch dance teachers? I know one lady in particular whose name keeps coming up is Betty Dick.

MV: No I never had much to do with Betty, because that was you see, she came into the picture after I was retired. I was in the business of school for 45 years.

JVU: So who was the instructor before Mrs. Dick? Do you remember?

MV: I think I’ve got that in that write-up too. Then there was one, oh boy she was good too. Well, I should know, I’ve got her name down in that [essay].

JVU: Since you’ve been an educator, and [you’ve dealt] with children most of your life, do you think that the children are a very major part of Tulip Time?

MV: I think a lot of people in the write-ups that you see, and the letters that folks write to the Sentinel, they often mention about the fact that the Children’s Parade is so much fun to see. Of course, little kids are darling, and you like to see them dressed up. They’re so proud of themselves when their mothers get them all fixed up. Their mothers are so proud of them, and work so hard, make nice costumes, or have them made so that they will look adorable.

JVU: Are there any other specific memories that you have of the things you’ve done for the festival, with children? You’ve said so many of them already, but I know there must be more.
MV: After you leave I’ll think of some more [laughs]. Anyway, I always enjoyed the whole business of school teaching. I loved it, that’s all there is to it. Loved the kids. You know, it’s a strange thing . . . when I taught music for example, it would be noon--me to go home--and I’d think, ‘Time to go home? Time to go home and eat?’ I could hardly believe that the whole morning was spent, because I was having such a good time. I loved to teach the children.

But then they took me out of that music supervision job, and put me in the position that Ms. Haas had, who was a very, very fine general supervisor. So, that’s what they made me, and I was happy doing that. Then I had arrange for principal’s meetings, and I had to place student teachers in the schools from Hope and Western, and Michigan State and so on, and I enjoyed doing that, and evaluating teachers. I had a happy time doing whatever I had to do.

JVU: Are there any stories that you like to share that maybe you haven’t already talked about today?

MV: Do you know, I can’t think of anything special right now.

JVU: How many parades were you involved in with the Kindergarten band, and with the . . .

MV: Well, I started let’s say in 1932--I don’t know exactly--in the beginnings of Tulip Time, and it went on until about 1955, because that’s when they made me supervisor to take Ms. Haas’ place, and then I didn’t have the music any more. So, all those years, every year. Then I was supposed to, because I represented the schools on the committee, then I would be working with the elementary principals and so forth, in the preparation of the Tulip Time parade. I loved that too.

JVU: Do you have any memories of when the Holland Furnace Company was bringing celebrities here to Tulip Time?

MV: Yes, I do have. I remember when they had [LaMoore] . . . what was her name?

JVU: LaMoore.

MV: Dorothy LaMoore, and oh sure, that was supposed to be the big
stuff here. Celebrities here. I can't tell you much about it, because I just stood like everybody else did, with my mouth hanging open looking at these special people.

JVU: Was there a noticeable increase in the number of people that came to the parades during those years, to see the celebrities.

MV: I don't remember.

JVU: Were you in Holland before [1932].

MV: Oh, I was born and raised here. I just went away to go to school all the time.

JVU: Did you attend the first Tulip Time festival in 1930? The first official festival?

MV: I would think so. I can't just say. I didn't miss anything much in Tulip Time from the beginning.

JVU: You don't have any specific memories of that festival though? What it was like? The first Volks parade?

MV: No but I remember [name?] was the town crier, and then I remember taking part in the street scrubbing myself. We went out there with brooms, and carried on, and dressed up accordingly, and always took our part in the street scrubbing. It was fun really.

JVU: That was the first festival then?

MV: I think so. It was in the early times.

JVU: Well, I just have two other questions. At Tulip Time, do you plant tulips in your yard?

MV: Oh yes!! But I don't try to be a great person to you know, to try and be in the special gardening or anything like that. Like Dr. Landis Zylman who is a dear friend. He and Judy are my friends. Their garden is always glorious, but I don't do anything like that. I like tulips around. Of course, I love flowers; I'm always digging around out here.

-Brief discussion of Ms. Van Vyven's garden-

MV: But I am very much interested in having some tulips around, and so on. And I visited the Veldheer farm, and in the days
past, we always went to Nelis. That was out on Lakewood Boulevard.

JVU: What do you remember about that? What can you tell me about the Nelis tulip farm?

MV: It was great. We always went and we walked up and down in the lanes, just like they do a Veldheer, and it was a beautiful sight. You could walk up on a flight of stairs too, and look down and see the beauty of the whole thing. I guess that’s about it. We didn’t want to miss that [back then]; every year we’d go see that.

JVU: Do you know if [Willard Wichers] ever dealt with the Tulip farms here in town, in working with [the bulb importing program]?

MV: I don’t know.

JVU: My last question, is what is your favorite part of Tulip Time?

MV: Well, I suppose I should say the tulips, but along with that, it’s . . . well, of course everyone wants to see the Dutch dancers, and the band parades. Those bands are very good, and we’re so proud of our high school band. Well, I guess that I’d say what I just said.

JVU: What would you say, in the years you were involved with Tulip Time, and in the years since you’ve stopped being involved with Tulip Time, what would you say is one of the things that has changed the festival the most? What do you think has been one of the biggest steps forward, that the festival has made?

MV: Well, the publicity, to tell the whole country about this little town of Holland, Michigan, and I don’t think that it’s just tulips and Tulip Time that has caused people to come here. Having the understanding about Holland, now, that they’ve got since we’ve been up on the top row with Tulip Time, I think we’re not known only for Tulip Time now. Take Jerry Haiworth, and the Haiworth Company, and all these wonderful companies, and Edgar Prince, and of course another person that I’ve always admired so much is Mr. Conrad. You take three people like that, it’s amazing. Then of course, I think we’re really fortunate in
having a great man who has all the military honors.

JVU: Matt Urban, is that the name?

MV: Yes, that’s it.

-Brief period off tape, looking at newspaper clippings regarding the above men.-

JVU: One last thing to end on a historical note; if you could describe . . . the difference between Tulip Time 1934 and Tulip Time 1995, what would it be?

MV: Well, of course the size and the fact that it is considered so much greater, because it was such a little nucleus you know at the beginning. Now it has broadened out to be something almost nationally known. We are one of the big festivals of the country, which I think is so amazing, because we don’t have the size of the community that Los Angeles and some of these other places do. If we can attain what we have now, in comparison with how this thing started, why the progress that has been made, is almost unimaginable.

Note: Please, also use this transcript in following along with Tape #5a, which is a re-reading of this interview along with some added detailing information by Ms. Van Vyven. The second reading of Ms. Van Vyven’s interview is labeled "Interview #17," and appears as a supplement on Tape #5a. Also on that cassette, please find a recording of Ms. Van Vyven’s song, "Tulip Time," located on side B.

The essay that Ms. Van Vyven makes reference to throughout her interview is available at The Joint Archives of Holland, for research purposes.

Contributor’s Note: Much that is important has not been included
in this [Oral History Interview]. I’m sure the names of important people who made great contributions to the success of this great festival over the years have not been mentioned. Many events have been overlooked too. I regret that my memory failed to alert me to include what is left out here. Believe me, none of these omissions were made intentionally.

-Ms. Margaret Van Vyven

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