Oral History Interview with
Edward Damson

Conducted August 14, 1997
by Ann Paeth

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Edward Damson
August 14, 1997
Interviewer: Ann Paeth

ED: 87 this month.

AP: You were born in Holland?

ED: Born in Holland, yes.

AP: Have you lived here all of your life?

ED: I have lived here all of my life. We had our home here. I was in the Navy a few years. And we also had a cottage up in Colorado. That’s Kittredge, where we lived in the summer.

AP: Let’s start with what Holland was like growing up, what stuff you did as a kid, where you went to school, what it was like.

ED: Going back, of course I wouldn’t remember 1910, but in the ’20s and ’30s I lived on West Ninth Street just this way of the recreation buildings there. That whole block used to be a tannery. On the other side where all the houses are, that used to be the bark sheds, where they kept their bark utilities. There was a creek that ran through there which always intrigued all of the kids. Ninth Street wasn’t paved when I lived there, I guess I must have been about 8 years old when they paved the street. Because the lake was here, the Graham Morton ships used to dock here. Then the Goodrich Line took over and they had the side wheelers, and also we had what they call the screw propeller and side wheelers. The City of Holland and some other ships. I had a job when I was about 17 or 18 on the City of Holland bellhopping and
other duties there. We always ran from here to Chicago and back to South Haven. They had excursions. We had a mate on the ship, second to the captain, who spoke German better than anyone else and he started giving orders in German. Some didn't understand him and once they backed up and the wheel went right on top of the breakwater. We thought we were going to go over. We had about 80 girls from a camp in Holland who were going back to Chicago, and the ship began to heave and slide. We thought we were going over, but we didn't. That was the end of the job. The ship went into dry dock. So they always had a couple of side-wheelers and a screw propeller, which is on the stern and the City of Grand Rapids used to run in here. This lake was greatly used in the year, until the motor boats started coming in. It often happened that a boat with a motor in it and then we'd yell, "There's a motor boat coming!" They'd get excited seeing boats of that type.

AP: Because the City of Holland was a steamboat?

ED: The City of Holland was a side wheeler. I worked on that, started in the summer until we backed up in South Haven and almost ran over the breakwater. We had to go into dry docks. Then, of course, this city was still quite small. As I said, Ninth Street was paved when I lived on Ninth Street east of Cappon's house. Cappon (Cappy) was one of the neighborhood. He was the hero of the neighborhood in Holland. There was a vacant lot that belonged to tannery next to my folks' home. All of the ballgames were played there. Cappy hit a ball one time and it went through our window, broke a window. All the other kids disappeared, but Cappy came over and said that he did it. He said that he would pay for it. We just had a
great time with the gangs. We spent most of our time on the lake. When a motor boat was coming that was a great thing. We also used to try to make long distance swims. Spent our time on the lake sailing, and playing with boats and logs and everything else out there. Then lake traffic started to grow more and more.

AP: You went to Holland High?

ED: Yes. This is the Boomerang of 1929.

AP: It has a sailboat on the cover. What was Holland High like at that time?

ED: It was quite active. There wasn’t any southside school, the fishing pool was quite small. You probably have heard of Milton Hinga and the Hinga family. He was our senior high school coach. The superintendent was E. E. Fell. His sons became doctors. This is the faculty. That is the way they do it today, the old Boomerang, making remarks there. I had to be there.

AP: Let’s see, so you played football. You were vice president of your senior class and on police force. What is that?

ED: We had the school police with our student government. I was one of the police force. We had people maybe you recognize - that’s John Donnelly, Sr. of the Donnelly Company. Young John has taken over. John and I used to chum together quite a bit. Maybe you recognize some of the names here?

AP: Yes I do. It looks like everyone was involved in a lot of things.

ED: Yes, the student government. These are all the pictures of the senior class. This one was of me as vice president of senior class. I don’t know if that is what you’re looking for, in the old Boomerang. I don’t know what they have now, student
governments and various organizations.

AP: It seems like they had more organizations.

ED: They did, yes. They had student governments, this book, the Boomerang, and the Maroon and Orange, the school paper.

AP: Yes, there are a lot more activities.

ED: This is one of the ships that had the side wheeler. There were several of them, the City of Holland was one. I had a job this one summer, like I said and then we went up to South Haven. They hit the break water and almost tipped over. And that was the end of that. I don't know if there is any of these things that would bring out any of the ideas of what you want (looking at photos). That is the Cappon House, Cappy Cappon lived on the corner. Cappy was our hero. He played at the University of Michigan and coached there. He coached the Princeton basketball team. The Cappon family is advertised quite a bit in the papers now as the first mayor of Holland and so on.

AP: Can you tell me first what you did after high school?

ED: After high school I went to Hope College for four years. I graduated in 1934. I got a job at Holland High School, teaching there and coaching. I was in Holland High School for forty some years. I went to the Navy for a couple of years and to the South Pacific in WWII, quite a bit of the Pacific, cruised down across the equator, becoming a shellback, meaning that I had crossed the equator. Then on up to Alaska and around.

AP: Tell me what Hope College was like when you went there.
ED: Well, Hope College was a lot smaller. My wife went there, too. I dropped out a year. I was going to Michigan State. The quarterback of the high school and I made a pretty good combination for passing, but we were too small for Michigan State. We just started there, we didn't stay there. We came back to Hope again. That was one change where I got behind and my wife graduated before I did at Hope. She graduated in '33 and I graduated in '34. Then right from college the superintendent of high school asked me to come to the high school to coach and teach there.

AP: What did you teach?


AP: What was that like going back and teaching?

ED: I didn’t know any of the kids, because they were in junior high while all of that was happening. It was during the depression and you couldn't buy a job. My wife was teaching too, and she got a job up in Leslie, Michigan for a year. Then she came to Spring Lake and then to Holland. Jobs were very, very scarce. You could hardly buy one and the pay was extremely low. If you could make 40 or 50 cents an hour you were lucky. She graduated before I did, because I went to Michigan State. My buddy and I, he was a quarterback, and we had a good combination in high school. We were just too small at that time for what Michigan State had so we didn’t have much of a chance there. Living was terrible. We could only get one meal a day. We worked on the campus, went out for football and had our classes. It was just impossible. We both ended up in the hospital. Then we came back and started high school here, the superintendent asked for me to come over there. It was a high
school for thirty or forty years.

AP: How did you decide to go into teaching?

ED: Well, to tell the truth, I did not know what I was going to do. You just couldn’t by a job. At that time it was the depression years. The freight cars going through Holland here were just loaded with boys looking for jobs, headed for Chicago and all over. Everyone was on the move trying to find something - there just wasn’t work. I went back into college there, and from there went to high school and stayed there for all those years, which was quite an experience too. I went in the Navy for a couple of years, down into the South Pacific and throughout the Pacific.

AP: How did that time in the Navy affect you?

ED: I was away from home and my wife was here with just two kids. It wasn’t good for her. It was one of those things of patriotism and everything else. I was just about ready to be drafted and I didn’t want to be drafted, so I enlisted in the Navy. Partly I felt I should be doing my duty as well as the others. So many of the kids I had in school were killed in the war. So I finally went into the Navy for a couple of years. Went all the way from the South Pacific to the North Pacific and the big battle of Okinawa. We went in with about 15 hundred combat marines, just half of them made it. That was something I wouldn’t want to go through again. What other areas do you want to cover?

AP: So you spent a lot of years teaching at the high school?

AD: I was at Holland High for 34 years, then I got Navy time in there too. I coached there for a number of years too. I officiated football and basketball, so I cut back.
They wanted me to take varsity and continue with varsity, but I said no. We played the games on Saturday and that’s when I would be working. So I said I would take reserves from then on and work with them. So on Fridays and Saturdays, I could go to Grand Rapids, Benton Harbor, or Muskegon Heights and work football games. Then I worked basketball too.

AP: Did the high school change at all during your teaching career? Did you see any changes in that?

ED: Well it got much larger and they put up that new high school. The junior high became the high school. Some classes were for junior high and some for high school, till they could get straightened out. It was really a crowded condition and the depression years, it takes years to get out of that. We were in the big depression, early thirties, and worked up from there, but I stayed with teaching and coaching and officiating.

AP: Do you still run into students that you had?

ED: Yes. Every once in a while, of course, they say to me, "I was in your class."

During the number of years of coaching and teaching, the number of students I had would run into the thousands. They recognize me, but I don’t recognize them. Then some will come with a big beards and long hair and say, "Don’t you recognize me?" I just tell them that they are the ones that got kicked out of kindergarten for not shaving. Yes, every once in a while I run into some of them and I don’t recognize them, they’ll say "Yeah, I was in your class." Could be, because that runs into the hundreds.
AP: How has the city changed?

ED: Not too much. They had the city council and aldermen. They had their areas. Of course, the wards have changed so many times. My brother was the alderman for one ward. I don’t know how much it has changed because you find now that the Board of Public Works want to run their show, and another one wants their show, and the council used to do the dictating, now they’ve began to dictate to the council what they are going to do. I found that out. I’m a good friend of the mayor now. I bring something up and he would say, "Well that’s for that other department. You can’t do anything about that." The departments have become too strong, and like the Board of Public Works, they practically dictate to the council a lot of times. The council does just the general chores, like represent a ward. Sometimes you wonder who’s running what there. It ends up that the Board of Public Works runs their department independently. They tell that council what they want and the council will pass something and takes the credit for it. It is rather complicated. McGeehan is doing a good job, and it is a rough job that he has running the council.

AP: Did you ever think the city would grow to this size?

ED: Oh yes. I think that with the lake, the transportation, the trains, and of course they put the airfields in. They began to cater to manufacturing to get commodities out. The ships used to run from here to Chicago with loads of cargo. The cargo ships (they still come in), one came in the other day, one of the large ships. It wasn’t like it used to be. It started with the Graham Martin Line and the Goodrich Line bought them out. Then you have other lines in here too. The city has grown. Sometimes
you wonder if it is growing for the good. The mayor keeps harping about doing
more for these people who come in. Some from Mexico and some cause trouble. It
is too bad. The city has good solid growth. You can still go and protest. Whether
they listen or not, that is another thing. My brother was an aldermen too and he got
kind of tied up.

(wife(MW) walks in)

ED: My wife came from Spring Lake.

AP: Okay, nearby.

ED: She went to that other school, Grand Haven (laughs). Where did you go to school?

AP: I am here because I went to Hope College, so I am from the other side of the state.

ED: Detroit schools?

AP: No. I am from Bay City.

ED: (to wife) Do you have friends in Bay City?

MW: No, but I wondered if she might know the Steffens girl. No, she is probably much
older than you.

AP: How long have you lived on the lake? And you said you built out here?

ED: We built here in 1941 on this property.

MW: We bought it from what was the whole estate. This was the garden part. So we had
to remove water pipes before we built.

ED: Judge Cross beat us buying the whole thing, but then he sold this to us.

MW: It was up for sale for taxes. And because he was in the city office building in Grand
Haven, he knew it was up for taxes. So he dickered with her.
ED: We needed a hundred dollars more at that time.

MW: We had four hundred and we couldn't get five.

ED: Mrs. Hurt owned it. She had moved to Milwaukee. We finally called one day and said we got the extra hundred. She says, "I'm sorry I just sold it to Judge Cross."

MW: And he charged us $500 more than we could have had the whole estate from her.

ED: We bought a little more on that side and a little more. We have over 70 feet. It's worth a fortune now.

AP: So there weren't very many houses out here?

ED: No, there were about three. We got over 70 feet here and 300-400 deep.

AP: And now just every square inch along the lake is taken.

ED: They are building another house down there. Gerry Haworth, of the Haworth company, lives right over there.

MW: Where that white covered boat dock is. That's Gerry Haworth. Do you know Gerry and Edna, his wife?

AP: No. I know who they are.

ED: He was in high school teaching woodwork and kept going on. Today he has one of the largest companies in Holland. He's a good guy. He married Edna Dyke. Gerry is a good guy, Edna is good, too.

AP: What else has changed in the city?

MW: Paved sidewalks. Horsedrawn street cars.

ED: The recreation place was all tannery. Kollen Park. Mrs Kollen was a wealthy person, very nice. She was always very nice to talk with. She gave that whole
Kollen Park area to the city. They are still working on that. At Kollen Park, they have a rolling place. Years before it was a basket factory. They wanted to get those big pieces of concrete out, so they put a charge of dynamite in there. It blew out all the windows of the houses around there. So they said that they would just fill it in. So they filled it with concrete, then soil, and that is where you get that slope; there are big vats under there. Harrington was the mayor at that time, he lived across the street. They blew the windows out of his house. It that took care of that (laughs).

MW: The Cappon House on the corner. Did he tell you about the spindles? The gate.

ED: The iron gate. As kids we would take a stick and run down through there. Boy, they would holler at us and Cappy would come out. That was all we would need - we were streaked. They did that to keep the people out, but it is really beautiful work. It was big fun with a stick, to run right through the lots.

MW: It made a lot of noise.

ED: We knew we would be chased. So we would wait when we would go by there, then we would take off.

MW: Naughty boys of the neighborhood!

ED: When Cappy was in high school and lived there, he would play ball with the kids. And right next to our house was a big vacant lot that belonged to the tannery. He’s the one that hit that ball that went right through our window. All the other kids disappeared and Cap came up and said "I’ll pay for it." He had an open car with Stu Boyd. They both went to University of Michigan with that big open car. They would leave Cappon House whistling and waving all the way down to Ann Arbor.
He made quite a record at Ann Arbor, at the university there.

MW: Did he coach out east?

ED: Yes, he coached some basketball out there, then they got him back in Michigan. I thought he coached football, but he coached the basketball team at Michigan for a number of years. In football, they could put him in any position, he could play every position. He was terrific. They couldn't stop him. Michigan had a terrific year. Cap would come over and watch us kids play ball when we were small, playing scrub football.

MW: Did you tell her about building your kayak and all your water...

ED: With the lake here, I told her that we see a launch coming in we'd yell "Here's a launch. Here comes a boat." We would be out there on logs, floating. From the sugar beet factory, we got pieces of canvas and made a boat. We covered it and painted it. Then we made almost like a kayak. All the kids would be out in the middle of the lake on logs swimming every day.

MW: Ed taught swimming and diving and life saving for the American Red Cross. That was before the war.

ED: Lessons were in Spring Lake or Grand Haven and they came up from Spring Lake and kids had classes all through the year. Some of it paid off. Who were the two kids I took through life saving?

MW: Osborne and Timmer. They saved lives the week following their passing the test.

ED: They passed senior life saving and the next week they made a rescue.

AP: That was probably really important with so many people living on the water here.
ED: Yes. There are a number of drownings every year. Did we have one this year?
That was on the big lake that they made a rescue. But that girl was killed right out
over here. Landweir’s son whose family owned the Holland Furnace had a cottage on
the other side and around the Pine Creek Bay. He had a speed boat. One evening,
he had a group of people in there, relatives, Johnny Nystrom, a nice kid, and Van
Lente and a bunch of others got in that boat. The City of Holland was going out.
The group was at Pine Lodge, and Paul Landweir decided to see how close he could
get to the paddle wheel. He drove right in to it. Four of the five drowned right out
here. The one, Van Lente, we pulled up and his neck was broken. Johnny Nystrom
was pulled up and they put him in a row boat. He was in a jumping position.
Arnold Paul had his neck broken. Four out of five were killed. Lenny was killed or
drowned. We picked him up using grappling hooks. He got hooked right behind the
ear and they pulled him up. Every year we get a drowning here someplace.

MW: That house over there on the point looks yellow, is it? That new one. It is so
yellow.

ED: Yes. They want to be seen. We were surprised on this side, it doesn’t look like it is
built up every much. We drove around there, and it is really built up.

AP: They did keep a lot of the trees.

MW: Our children where over there at Rosewood. It is the old Pine Lodge camp from
Holland.

ED: You can see the boats coming in through the channel at the lighthouse.

MW: There used to be boat houses, did you tell her?
ED: Yeah, all boat houses through here. People had the idea that the lake is for everyone, they could get through any yard they wanted to. Two elderly ladies lived next door. They had boat houses right here. When they got older, they just left them here on shore. I knocked down a couple of them and took them away. This used to be all seaweed throughout here and that is all cleared out. I guess the largest screw propeller that Goodrich had was the City of Grand Rapids. It was one of the largest. The City of Holland, the City of Saugatuck.

ED: What else is there that hasn’t been covered here?

AP: How many children did you have?

ED: We have a boy and two girls. They all live out west.

AP: What was it like raising kids here?

ED: Well of course they played. We had some trees that grew over the water a bit. Put a swing on that and swing out over the lake and come back again, till one day the line broke. Then they had a couple of row boats. There was a little island right out here and a little island over there and they would row back and forth. They would give other kids rides. We finally owned a power boat, so I could take them water skiing, and that is when water skiing came in. All the kids got pretty good at water skiing.

Then Jim Cook, his father was a doctor, lived next door. He made a jump. They would make a start, then come up and jump off of their skis right out here. They experimented with that, except that we had to keep water on it, there wasn’t enough water on it at times and the skis would stick. They would take some terrific dives. Charlie Sligh was a very good skier.
AP: When did water skiing become popular?

ED: That would have to be the late '30s maybe. You would see someone water skiing. Any boat around here that would be fast enough to pull them, would pull them. There would be the cry, "Here comes a water skier, Charlie!" I think my older brother was the one who did a lot of water skiing. He went behind his friends launch, the only one that would come down the lake. He had to show off his water skiing. There were only a couple of water skiers at that time. There were none of these docks. This was all open through here and it is just crowding right up in here all the time. Morris Gaine was another real sport, and Charlie Sligh tried to get everyone interested in water skiing. He would come through here. Sometimes the kids would get a chance to water ski. He got credit for getting more skiing really going here. He had one of the faster boats, of course, probably about a third as fast as they go now. In winter time they had big regattas on ice. We see hundreds of people on the ice here. In the 1920s & 1930s, they put on a show. They said there would be a hockey game, we had a couple teams to play. They called it hockey. We got paid five dollars apiece. I thought we were millionaires, playing hockey. Then they had horse races on the ice. They would start at Kollen Park and turn around up here. The horses had to have there big cleats on, you know, to dig into the ice. At Montello Park dock there would be the big show. They said that there was going to be a hockey game, but the hockey game was just a couple of our gangs together - each have a team and we would play hockey. They had skating demonstrations and so on. They would turn around here for the races, the horse races. They had some
very good, fast horses. Used to run it at the fair grounds and the same horses would come down here on ice. They would have three, four, or five cutters. They would race here and turn around. The horses had these big cleats on. I had one picture that showed probably a couple thousand people on the ice here, all over the ice. They used to get the artificial ice out here. The ice, 12"-14" used in ice boxes, the regular ice, then the artificial ice came in and drove that out. They used to cut ice here. Two or three houses over, that big shed, that was an ice shed. They had a big ladder coming down to the lake. They cut the ice out here and float it down into the ice house.

(end of side one)

AP: How would you describe Holland today?

ED: I would say that it is a growing community. There is only one thing that I really object to. There is too many coming in from Mexico and places like that. We have more crime now than we ever had, I think. They increase the police force all the time. But the city is growing, it takes after some of the other larger cities around here. They haven’t filled in there and they get this trouble that breaks out. Some are very nice, but you get too many of the riff raff in there too. As you read in the paper, they are always having something they have to straighten out in the street, and that shouldn’t be. It is too bad that they have to do that. Of course I’ve lived here all of my life and I can see that it is growing, but I can also see that it has a lot of improvements made already, but they even make more.

AP: What kinds of things do you think we need to improve or work on?
ED: Well I don’t know whether you’d say they need a little more increase to help the police department to corral some of these gangs that they talk about are coming. I have never run into those gangs, but they do talk about them. Once you get gangs started, you know there is going to be trouble. I think the city has to give the police department all the support they can to get those places straightened out. Some object to this curfew, but I think it is good to have a curfew. These kids having to get in at, young kids get in at ten o’clock, off the streets. You can go around here at night, early in the morning say 1, 2 o’clock and you see some gangs moving around. We have never been bothered with them, but they seem to be in certain areas. The police have to clean them out right away and let them know that this isn’t going to be a town that is going to taken over by them, like some towns have been. I couldn’t think of another town I would rather live in. In the summers we always went to west of Denver, up in the mountains there, we had a cottage up there for 18 years. They talk about the gangs, I have not noticed any particular gangs, but the newspapers keep talking about gangs in and around Holland here. I think they have them pretty well corralled. There are certain streets that you read in the paper are rougher than others, naturally, but if they don’t let them get a foot hold in there they can keep a good city going. I couldn’t think of any other place I would want to live, even in the cities around here. Keep everything a little bit under control, doing something about the skating in the downtown area. They talk about giving them a certain area, but I don’t know if that would work out or not, or whether that would form gangs in those areas. Something has to be done. They have to try it. As long as they can control
it, put it out there with the idea, see that the riff raff doesn't take over. But as I said, I can’t think of another town I would rather live in.

AP: What do you think are the best qualities of Holland?

ED: Well the neighborly feeling of the people here. They seem to be very friendly and try to do the best they can. I think that is one of the great qualities. Also the employment is better than other places, but it can be improved.

MW: Would she like to know about you helping to build that telephone building? That was the brick building on Tenth Street. Do you know which one I am talking about? Just east of the Temple building.

ED: We wheeled barrels of cement into the building, up two stories to a narrow place hoping that it wouldn’t go off. Then they had some workers, at that time they had a different method, but they were bolting steel above and down below they had red hot steel they’d have to throw it up and catch it. Maybe you’ve seen them catch it there? We would go through there on the narrow place with all that loads of cement, those men down below would see how close they could come with those red hot steel bolts going up. But I worked there one summer when they were building the telephone building on a construction job. As kids we would try to get any jobs, we would go out to Heinz, they had way out on the east end huge fields of beans. We would pick beans all day. It seemed like forever, maybe they were only half a mile. We would pick a row of beans and go almost all day, as kids, you know to pick up a little, I don’t know if we got 10 cents a basket or five cents but something like that. Do that for months and you had it. That is all built up now, where they always got them
before. We always tried to find jobs.

AP: What other kind of jobs have you had?

ED: I worked on playgrounds, ran playgrounds. One time I was in charge at the playgrounds to go around to various school areas where they had the playgrounds going. Later, of course, a group of us would get together for the summer and do painting, paint houses or something like that - anything that we could pick up. Of course the competition wasn't so great at that time as it is now. We just kept busy, but we worked all the time at something, either picking beans for Heinz or something like that. My job mostly was lifesaving, the Red Cross lifesaving, taking them up from swimmers on to senior lifesavers. I did pretty well there. I had two girls that I passed in senior lifesaving and the next day they made a rescue. I think it was around Spring Lake someplace they saved a couple from drowning. But it did help.

Then there were some who were going into the military and they had to have swimming, a test in swimming. I took them through swimming tests. One of them now, I can't think of his name, but he is a doctor in California. I took him through his swimming test. I think he went into the military in the medical section. I picked up jobs here and there, whether they be like at Hope College, Jack Schouten gave us a job there working at Hope breaking cement and getting set for where the chapel is that used to be two or three tennis courts. That thick cement had to be broken up and taken out of there. So we were given the job of breaking cement and hauling that cement, until it was going too slow and they figured another way they could get it out better. Bud Dykhuiizen worked with me. I know I worked there at the college for
one summer, hauling cement, breaking cement, doing everything.

AP: What would you say that your favorite job is? Would that be teaching, coaching…

ED: Well I don’t know. I enjoyed coaching, and I enjoyed teaching too. Of course I enjoyed teaching lifesaving and taking kids up from swimmers to senior lifesavers. I went right into teaching from college so I don’t know of any other jobs between there, except coaching and officiating. We were the "robbers" that wore stripes. We took our boos. That was fun too. At one game, I got on one of the officials so bad, he said "fifteen yards." I said it was only worth five. So he went out and marched off fifteen! (laughs) It was fun coaching, working with all these kids, teaching them the game, and then working the game too. It was a good, exciting life. Building up, just getting enough money to go to college. At that time, the Warm Friend Tavern, the tavern across from the bank, was the only fancy or good eating place. Several of us got jobs waiting tables there, especially at Tulip Time. It was a good job but it was rough work too. I waited tables there during Tulip Time and other times I got called in, on parties when we served the Exchange Club or Rotary Club. We had the senior lifesaving, ran the playgrounds in the city for a time. Any job you could pick up.

AP: What things are you most thankful for in your life here?

ED: My marriage.

AP: Where you married before or after college?

ED: After college, about two years after college. My wife taught in Leslie, Michigan. She lived in Jackson or Spring Lake and then Holland and taught at the junior high
and senior high. So she was teaching most of her life. But we would pick up jobs, a few months working on the railroad, putting in ties and stuff like that. Going to college was tough work. Toughened us up to play the game. Some got tougher in language than I did. All in all, I feel that I've had a good life, the roughest time was when the war started. There is my ship up there. It was a thing that they started taking the married people. They felt that I was about ready to go and I didn't want to be drafted. I would rather enlist. And also, my wife, says I only left her for a year, two years. That may be true, the thing is I worked with a lot of the senior kids going into the war. I said they're going to war and I sit here and tell them to go to war and I stay back, instead of getting in there. I couldn't take that any more. It was hard. I had two children there. It wasn't nice for her at all, but I keep my mouth shut and just shallow it. It was rough on both of us. She wouldn't hear from me for months because we would be down in the Pacific in one of the big battles of Okinawa. We took fourteen or fifteen hundred marines in and half of them were lost. You see these young kids all shot up and it wasn't a nice scene, but I just keep quiet. I don't know if the Boomerang would be of much help, would it?

AP: They probably have some of them at the Archives.

ED: You should probably have this one. It is way back in '29. And then this one of... (discussion of some of the pictures and stuff that he had).

AP: "To my good friends and favorite teachers." That's great.

ED: This is on the Cappon house. I don't know if you have seen...

AP: Yes.
ED: We keep these because we have kids coming up. Maybe some pictures that might bring something to your mind. "Happy Birthday Board of Public Works," "Area summer resident help people escape Nazis," "Old Church Passes into History." That is one of the old churches. Here is one of the ships that came in here.

AP: Do you remember any more about the ships that came here?

ED: Well, they had the sidewheelers, Van Morton Line. They had the City of Benton Harbor and the City of Holland, and different cities. Our runners from Chicago to South Haven and then to Holland and back into Chicago.

AP: What was that like working on it?

ED: It was alright. The biggest trouble is that those were the days that they had the big gangs in Chicago. You'd go into Chicago and the Red Bolten's, who were affiliated with the Big Red Bolten bunch, and they would come in with there with their big boats and big cars all loaded with liquor. They would take off from Chicago and they would go to the stern of the ship and they would take our pails for water for fire and they would fill it with ice and put all of their liquor in there and take the whole fan tail. And then they would have their "molls" with them, their parties. They would take over the whole lounge area, good furnishings there and get into a water fight and take the hoses down and fight each other. Get everything soaked and people would have to lock themselves into their stateroom, those that were traveling outside of that gang. That gang was part of the Bolden gang. They ran Chicago and all the west there. But they kind of spoiled it. They said that the Graham Morton Line put out a notice that they are not to be sold tickets. Well, here comes someone that says "I've
They would think that it is a nice party and it would be the same gang. On would come the cars loaded with liquor right up to the... It wasn't long until they were all drunk and fighting and wrecking the whole place. So that kind of spoiled that. I don't know, I don't think that there is a sidewheeler left any more. The City of Grand Rapids had the screw propeller and the others had the side wheelers, you know. The City of Holland was a sidewheeler. We always got that gang coming out of Chicago. They were a rough bunch. I think one time they wanted to grab me and they were going to pour liquor down my throat. I held off there and then one of the molls came and said "Leave him alone." They were a rough bunch. They just wrecked the ship. We couldn't keep them off. They were the same gang that would go up to Wisconsin and tear that place apart. It was a rough gang. It was a good experience to see them. Get the battles going. They were after the Graham Morton mate, I think. One of those drunks was coming aboard up the gangway and he pushed him off. Captain Boogie went down for good. So they were looking for him for murder. Everything happened on that ship there. They would get into brawls and they would practically wreck the place. That was when prohibition finally came in. So that gang was loosing their shirts on liquor because they were being arrested. I don't know if there is anything here that... Some of the parades and things they had downtown. I don't know if any of that stuff will help.

AP: Probably most of this stuff that has been in the paper we have access to.

ED: That is Vande Water there. Have you met him?
AP: Yes, he comes in quite a bit.

ED: He comes down every once in a while, I have something for him that he said here. These old ships here. This is his book, maybe you got one like it. He covers it pretty well. That is the hotel that burned down. This one burned down on the north side and the flames went down to Ottawa Beach. We could see the flames going through the air and it hit the hotel on the other side, on the south side. And it looked like they might lose that, but they got that one out. But the one on the north side burned down. The hotel lasted a long time and it was really quite important.

AP: As a history teacher, what things do you think it is most important for someone to know about Holland?

ED: I think the most important thing is to know how to live in this particular time and help to build up where they started in the basis. Keep these gangs and that under control. Have the student believe in what they are doing. In building up rather than tearing down. Get these gangs cleaned up. Do something more constructive. Do constructive work rather than see what they can tear down and get in trouble with, brawls that they get into. I would say that would be the most important thing is to keep a good decent city going, continue. We are getting so many of these companies, these factories coming in now and then they bring in a lot of riff raff too. And they bring in some very good people too, to say the least. The trouble is the riff raff outgrows the other. It is too bad. This is a good city and it is good one to live in too, but it has got to be kept under control. They can't let the gangs take over. They also have to control who is coming in, so that there isn't just a lot of welfare people
coming in just because they hear it is easy going or something like that. We want those who are really wanting to work and build the city too. I don't know if that is asking too much or not, but it is something to work for.

AP: Well it is certainly good advice.

ED: You don't want to see the city torn down. We never used to have a key for our doors, we never locked our doors. And we could leave our home and our yard and expect everything to be, well no one touching it. I don't think anyone would touch it. They wouldn't dare to, they would get killed, Wrecking the place. They've got away in certain areas and that is the thing they have got to clean up. I think the city is trying to do that, getting a larger police force and get a police force that has civic pride too. If there isn't civic pride, you can't do anything. I don't know if I helped you with anything here or not.

AP: Yes.

ED: And you have gone through his book and seen different things that we watch grow. We watched so many houses and companies growing up. And some of these like Cappy Cappon is in the neighborhood and come and watch us, a bunch of kids playing ball. That is one of the old teams. There is a "Happy Birthday for the Board of Public Works." Drink some of their own water.

AP: Well, I think we covered a lot about how Holland has changed.

ED: It has changed and it's growing. They have some of the evils of large cities that would like to come in. But I think we keep pretty well under control. There are certain areas in town that have to be cleaned up. I think that if we build up our
police force and they do their job and really clean it up and rake up these gangs, we can save this city the way it should be. We’ve got some pretty good dignitaries that are coming in here and some good leadership.

AP: Oh, you did. yes. We could probably wrap up now. We covered a lot. Thank you very much.

ED: You’re welcome. I hope it helps you.