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DIGEST OF TOPICS

INTERVIEW WITH FRED OLDMAULDERS
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Interviewers: Brad Miller and Gary Foote
(Also present: Mrs. Oldemaulders)

JANUARY 20, 1977

Topics in order of discussion

1. Immigration to the United States
2. Starting the wooden shoe business in Holland
3. Type of wood used in making shoes
4. The wooden shoes and the number made
5. Demonstrating shoe-making at conventions
6. Tulip Time in Holland
7. Wooden shoe-making as a trade
8. History of the Wooden Shoe Factory in Holland
9. Dutch traditions
10. Our freedom in America
11. Learning the English language
12. Some Dutch names for our magazine
13. A story from a convention in Cleveland
14. A story from a convention in St. Petersburg
TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW--FRED OLDENULDERS

O--Mr. Oldenulders  B--Brad G--Gary Mrs. O--Mrs. Oldenulders

MILLIE FROST

CHILDIS

S I D E 2 K

G: This is January 20, 1977 and this is an interview with--how do you pronounce your name?

O: Fred Oldenulders

G: OK. Now, all we know about you really is that--aa--you started the wooden shoe factory, is that right?

O: I was the beginner, (laughs), not exactly the beginner. There was one before me that--aa--made wooden shoes in the souvenir line. (G: uh-huh)

G: In nineteen hundred and twenty-three I immigrated.

O: I'm--aa--yes. I'm--aa--I'm really from across the border of the Netherlands. I was born about--aa--about three quarter of a mile from the Dutch border. Our language today--a at home was mostly Dutch. (G: uh-huh) In the school I had a German inst--instruction and it was best that we talked Dutch on the playground (G: uh-huh) and English in school--aa--German in school. See that's (G: Oh, I see) it was a But--aa-we came from there because we were also as church connected so strongly to the Netherlands. And therefore all of our--aa--a religious activity was all in the Dutch.

G: Now, what church was this? That--

O: That was in Germany, the (German name)--a--which is in the Dutch the (Dutch name) (G: ok--laughs) So--aa--we moved more or less, more in the Dutch than we did the English--er--in the German.

G: Now, why did you come over to the United States?

O: The time that I immigrated--aa--was very bad for beginning. And another thing was that I always dreamed about the United States. There was only one thing that I had in mind--aa--before I'd be satisfied, I had to be in the United States. (G: Great) And this started already when I was thirteen years old. And I did not immigrated until twenty-five years old. I had my twenty-fifth birthday--aa--on the ocean, on May 11, and we were traveling on the Newfoundland. (G Oh, laughs) (B: It's quite interesting) (G: Yeah) Yeah.

B: Did you meet your wife in the Netherlands, then?

O: I came married here in this country, but my first wife I lost(G: I see) I lost my in '54 to cancer. So ah--ixx them in nineteen twenty-three we came in this country. In nineteen hundred and twenty-five, I was twenty-four already and--aa--I started to make souvenir shoes--small ones about four inches long. And I worked heavily on that because there was quite a demand for that end--aa--all the time that I had--in the evening especially were for us scheduled for making wooden shoes. And then in nineteen hundred and twenty-seven I quit working in the factory and--

G: What factory were you working in then?

O: I was in the furniture factory (G: OK) err--I was what they call a trimmer (G: OK, I don't know what that is, but--) we don't--you don't know what a trimmer is?

G: No, I don't.

O: A trimmer is one that has the piece of furniture last (G: OK) to trim up, hang doors and doing that (G: OK) but in--aa--in nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, I quit the sho entirely, but in between that, all the
time—the s are time and I worked in nineteen hundred and twenty-six fairly little at the factory. It was not very busy and I had enough work at home, so voluntarily, I did not go to the shop an. In nineteen hundred and thirty-one we—aa—went—aa—Mr. Vanden moved to the downtown Holland. The building we were in first is not there no more. It was on the corner of Sixth Street and River Avenue. And we were from '31 to '35. I maintained the shoe line plus the wood novelties, I made, and from '36 on we were at Fourth Street and River Avenue and I worked there, I had then my business to '43 when I when I quit the souvenir stand did nothing but make the wooden shoes. In nineteen hundred and thirty-nine, I bought a wooden shoe machine in Kewa, Wisconsin. This was a machine which was made from a wooden shoe last machine into a wooden shoe machine. And in '39 I bought that from them on the demand for shoes became greater and I made more shoes. The highest number of shoes in one year that I made with two other men helping was eighteen thousand pair. (indicates) plus the small souvenir shoes.

G: Now, you mentioned you made some other wooden souvenirs, what were these like?

C: Ahh— we made the wooden shoes from about four inches up to the full size of size thirteen... Size thirteen which is about the — length of thirteen and a half. I have a pair of souvenirs right here in the house. Those have a little history (G: Oh, yeah!) You probably remember that the— Michigan and quite a bit—quite a few other states had the elm disease? (G & B: Yeah, uh-huh) I had three beautiful elms outside my house and lost all three of them through the elm disease. But I wanted to keep a remembrance of that beautiful grained wood, elm, which I made I made one pair one pair of souvenir wooden shoes for a self. It's-aa— those that you see there. (Indicates a pair of wooden shoes)

G: What do you usually make the shoes out of? What type of wood?

C: As— the— wood that we use is commonly used—aa—called poplar. And the—lot of people say popular, which is not the right name. (G: OK) The—wood is poplar. In the American log book, you find that wood listed under aspen. And the reason why we use that wood is because it is white up to the heart all the way through. A poplar log has not a white center. It has a green center and we are much interested in the color. We must have a white shoe, which sells the best and we are interested in selling as many as we can. As—lot of them ask me, "How many shoes did you make in your life time?" I figured it out. From nineteen hundred and thirty-nine till nineteen hundred sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven—I don't know exactly what year. And I have made—not all alone—I have made over three hundred thousand pairs of wooden shoes. (G: That's a lot!) And that sounds kind of unbelievable, but if I reach the—eighteen thousand a year and you just figure it out...(aa: right)...how I do that amount and the lowest in those years was fifteen so you can figure it out. Now I am still busy at making wooden shoes. I am the only wooden shoe maker that can make a pair of wooden shoes out of a block. I can—-make the shoes the old way. I have been on many demonstrations through my years. I have been practically all over—that is not quite true, all over—buthike New York, Boston, Sarasota, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, St. Petersburg Indianapolis, Minneapolis and Chicago—I was several times in Chicago, oil, for demonstrations. Just last year we were called out for demonstrations in—aa—Red Deer, Canada. You know where that is?

G: No
FRED OLDENDORFERS

C: That's in the province of Alberta. If you go 250 miles west and find Calgary and Edmonton halfway in between those two cities, you find Red Deer. So we were there for two days for demonstrations. Then last year we were called for demonstration by the GM motor division in Centerville, Michigan, which is ten miles or eight miles east, or southeast of Three Rivers, Michigan for the sixth or the seventh time this year I have been in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. They have a festival there similar to the Tulip Festival. It's a little--a--village. Not much more than a village, but they certainly put on a good festival and they have a big crowd there, too.

G: Do you think the festival they have here is representative of the way life was back in the Netherlands?

O: Yes, as a tp some extent it is of course the flower, the tulip, that is the center of it. Then you'll find in the Tulip Time dresses of the different localities in the Netherlands. For instance, my dress is that the have is the dress of Volendam, which is an island. (C: I see) and others have the that you find in all of Holland, Michigan. That's a representation of the Netherlands as it was there before. Now there's very few places in the Netherlands, even that do stick to the old custom that there--had--they. But there is some, for instance Volendam has the same and that has it, too. So it's a true representation and I have always been representing the Dutch here under demonstration at the conventions. If I was called to a convention, I was always the Dutch--man, see? (G laughs) In uh Pittsburgh, where I was maybe five, six times, year after year, they had a Dutch week. A--one store that--the store, as that store was about just about a block--no, not quite a block square, just about--a big store, there's a--and all ya, not all but several countries were representing themselves in their different activities. And I always was there representing the Dutch and most generally, through the unusual way of what I was doing there, I most generally stole, was stealing the show, too. (B & B laugh) It is quite a, quite a thing to make a shoe, as you can cut out wood, block, just off block of wood and you come out with a--with the wooden shoe. Then the wooden shoe industry, probably you would like to know something about that. (G: Yes) The wooden shoe industry is maybe about around--could be, I'm not sure, could be around three hundred fifty, four hundred years old. Uh--the wooden shoe industry started in Germany. (B: Hmmm) Yeah. Uh--uh--it started in a very common, very ordinary way. Just one fellow had an idea. He thought he could shape a block of wood and hollow it out and he could put his foot in there. And he succeeded and done well. That uh--was quite a step in uh, good usable direction for the low countries there. And the climate there is that the ground is wet, as a whole. Much rain and walking outside, there was no uh--brick, uh streets at that time were mostly brick, the streets that were there; or as we have the blacktop wasn't there. Around the bar, the farmers, they walked in the mud. And for that reason, the shoes became quite a--a--usable product. Then it spread very rapidly to the different countries in Europe. Especially, it went into the Netherlands and Netherlands became just about the center of wooden shoe making. Uh--Germany, --West Germany, now and especially the western and northern part of Germany was also about as heavy on wooden shoes as the Netherlands were. Even we have
today the factories that make wooden shoe machines in Germany. We have them in the Netherlands and we have them in France. The best and the biggest machine that is made for making wooden shoes is a French machine and is not over--I think over four years old today. The machine was made to make not one pair, but make four pair automatically in one lick without handling!! Now--(G: Sure makes the process fast) Yeah. Of course-handling, if I say handling, the wooden shoe making is hard work, due to the fact that you handle logs. You have the log--you have to have round logs. The wooden shoes have to be made, cannot have the heart in it or the shoe, because then the shoe does not hold water, and see, will crack. So the block of wood that you cut off the log has to be that big, that you can quarter it. (G: Yeah, I see that) See? And when you quarter it, you have two pair out of each log. Now, we have logs that were as big as twenty, twenty-two, twenty-four inches in diameter. Of course, out of them you can make six, yes, eight--oh shoes out of one block, see? (B: uh-huh) Three pair, four pair even, we have them that big. But it has to come from the heart to the outside to where the shoe is. Otherwise, the shoe isn't any good.

G: Now, where do you get all the wood to supply the industry?
C: Uh--we have a good supply of wood in this vicinity. (G: I see) Uh, it is particular wood grow's about sixty--not much more than sixty miles south and then it stops growing. You don't find in here that aspen wood of this kind no more. You find the aspen wood again way back way over into the--uh--the Rockies, into the mountain area, when you find it, but not before. And that's a different aspen. Then it goes all the way north-west into Canada. And the wood that grows there is about the best for working--the very up north it is really too hard. The--growth of a log here or just two hundred and fifty miles north makes more than all the years difference. You know that in the--uh--block of wood originally there are rings in there? (B: Right) huh, and every ring is a year (G&B: uh-huh) so the rings in the wood two hundred and fifty miles north and the rings here--just about half the width difference. They are much smaller up north than they are here. (____)

G: That's what makes them harder?
C: That's what makes them harder, yeah. (G: I see)
B: Uh--where did you learn--uh before the machines came out when you had to do all of this by hand, where did you learn this? Back in Europe?
C: I learned it from my father in the old country. We were a family of uh--uh--four brothers and my dad and all four brothers were wooden shoe makers. And uh--we had in the old country a pretty good size farm. According to the measurements here, it was one hundred and fifty acres. And uh--although you cannot me sure the farms over there, as you do here because uh--some of the fields will never be plowed, so--paw the land once and for all. But uh--in the summer we had enough laborers on the farm and in the winter we were xxx heavy making wooden shoes. My father started out to be the vicinity wooden shoe maker. And uh there's one thing that I'm thinking about, now--when the wooden shoe machines came, the art of bu--of making wooden shoes and uh--good wooden shoes almost disappeared. They make good wooden shoes. But if I put the pattern on the machine, if I put one or a hundred pair, there are no change in that shoe. (B: Right) That's exactly the same, and if I bore one or bore hundred inside out they don't change. Now we have not many feet just alike (G&B: Right) We have feet with a high instep and with a low instep. We have flat feet. We have all kinds of feet. Now my dad knew every foot in the neighborhood (G&B laugh) and made
the foot—the shoe fit to those feet. That is now, for myself, I cannot buy a pair of wooden shoes off from the shelf, because I have—a very low instep. And for that reason, I cannot buy any shoe that is made by machine, because those are made for normal feet. And the normal foot, the measurement from the heel to your top of your foot and the measurement from the top of your foot to your toe is one measurement. It's exactly the same for the normal foot. And if you have a high instep, the measurement from here to there (indicates heel to top of foot) gets longer and this (indicates top of foot to toe measurement) gets shorter. If you have a low instep, the measurement from the top to the heel gets much shorter and this (indicates top of foot to toe measurement) gets longer. (C: To the toe it gets longer) Yeah. So, the, that is the, that's all in the art of knowing how to make wooden shoes. (B: Yeah, I guess so. C: Right) And that is not learned in a day, either. And I didn't learn it in a day, either.

C: I'm going to stop and turn over the tape now, because it's getting...

SIDE TWO

C: Okay. Let's see. Now, how do you make a wooden shoe, anyway?

C: It would be very interesting if you would see that and—uh— I can hardly make it clear so that—uh—a tape recording would give a fair idea of it. (C: Right) I can tell you what I do, but if you would see it and then you—as—put it on tape as you see it, then it becomes clear to those that ever listen to the tape. I can tell you what I do. I get a block of wood. As I told you, a block of wood away from the center and—uh—I have now, for instance, say, I want to make a size eight shoe. Then I have to have twelve inches in length, and I have got to have the rough block five inches in width. First, then I take the hatchet to take all the rough wood off and make the shoe look like a shoe already after I'm through with the hatchet. Of course, those are rough cuts. Then I get my block knife as we call it or with that I shape the form of the shoe according to—uh—what it's supposed to be. Now, the making to form of the shoe right is important because you cannot hollow out a shoe properly unless that you have the outside made right. (C: Okay) Because then it follows itself. If you keep a wall about that thick (indicates about 1 inch) in your shoe and take all the wood out that is inside there, you are pretty well to the size of the shoe and pretty well to a good shoe, too. But again I say, in order to (CHIMES in background) you can hardly make it understandable on tape by just telling what I'm doing. It should be seen in order to be understood. (C: Right)

C: When did the Wooden Shoe Factory move from downtown out to where it is now?

C: Uh-a— that I almost don't know what year it was. The wooden shoe machine is now on it's fourth place—the Wooden Shoe Factory. It was on the corner of Sixth and River. Then on the corner of Fourth and River. Then it was on the—aa—Chicago Drive, close to the overpass on the east side of town. And then Mr. V and (CHIMES again) uh put in a bid. That piece of land where the wooden shoe factory now is, was originally bid on for the airport. (C: uh, I see) Yeah. And more land would have been required there but it was able at that time to do that. But this piece of land was for sale and Mr. V and, uh, put on a bid on that land and got the full property, see. And the—uh Wooden Shoe Factory was on the Chicago Drive, uh—burned down. The—uh—factory on River Avenue was sold to a furniture factory later on. And—uh—now it is I think, a sort of an store house for different companies that have it, see? So.
Yeah, I don't know what you--uh--want to know more.

C: Now, how long have you lived in Holland? Yourself, then?

G: Oh-h-h--ever since nineteen-twenty-three.

C: So, were they doing--were the touristy going on back then with the Tulip Festival?

G: The sa--tourist--let me say the tulip time--sa--was not at the beginning. There was a little festivity. I don't know exactly how much, but in nineteen hundred and twenty-nine, I think we had the first wooden shoe dancers. (G: I see.) And, from then on, I made for many years all--exclusively, the shoes for the wooden shoe dancers. And today they have a--enormous lot--lot of breakage, which I didn't have. But that was my theory that it worked out good was: that I should sell the shoes to the girls and they should use and wear them before they were bone dry. (G: Okay.) Those shoes that they have are made in the winter or maybe they are ready already for a whole year and by that time they are so hard--dried out that a, the least little jar will--will get them to crack under abnormal conditions. So I made the shoes always in the months of March or April for the wooden shoe dancers. And when the time came, then the sa--wooden shoe dancers from the school would give me a ring that I had to be that and that time by the Civic Center and then the girls would be there, come there, and they would pick up their pair of wooden shoes from my truck and start to learn the wooden shoe dancing. And I've done that for many years.

C: Do you think with having all the tourists come and everything that that's helped Holland it's--it's made it--uh-huh--more interesting or--

G: Oh yes. Definitely so. Definitely so. As--Holland is known, aa--if you say "I come from the tulip city" then you don't have to tell them what city it is in many places, today, see? And they know it's Holland, Michigan. And we have one--sa--great addition to publicity is the De Zwaan windmill. I have seen that thing go up. I've been there many, many times be cause I know the windmill's from the old country. (G & B: Right) I've been going there with many--aa--bags full of grain to have it (G: Oh wow) broken there at the windmill. (G: uh-huh) In fact, I have carried some fifty, seventy-five pounds from home for a mile down to that windmill to have it ground.

B: How long does it usually take to make a pair of shoes?

C: Oh--the time of making a pair of wooden shoes was figured normally one hour, to make a pair of wooden shoes. I remember very well that my brother and me, we could easily make about eighteen pair a day, together. So--but that was teamwork. (B:uh-huh) See? And that worked a little faster than...Because you done--I done only one part of that and my brother done the other part of that, so...We could make eighteen pair. Now, today, I'd say I used to make them in five hour, but I'm not seeing that is no more. I'm a little bit too old for that and uh, but I've easily can get a pair done in an hour and a half. (G: uh-huh)

B: How do they usually last--a pair, before they dry out?

C: A pair of wooden shoes last--if you are on a farm (UNCOM) where the most use of wooden shoes were, see? (G & B: uh-huh) I wear out about two pair a year, and they will come by me and if they see me demonstrate and they say, "How those shoes is going to last forever." No, that is not so. If you walk into a stubble field, it's wearing through on the bottom--bottom very fast. But--uh--if you just use them--uh--without doing that, then they will last a long time. And then we quite often--or quite often it was uh--the usual practice, if we had a pair of new wooden shoes, we put leather under them to protect--preserving
the--the sole of the shoe. When that leather wore off, we put new leather on again, see? (G: Uh-huh) so... (G: Rather than wear the shoe)

G: Uhm-what will I go to say?

C: There you have a different style of wooden shoes in the Netherlands. Uh--we have a low shoe which is a shoe, more or less that's a shoe a strap over it, and you have that kind. (indicates the shoes he held in photo) You have places in the Netherlands and especially in Germany that you can hardly buy those shoes. They have only those with the leather over. (G: uh-huh) You have wooden shoes practically all over Europe and Scandinavian countries. They all have--uh--have learned to make wooden shoes. (G: Uh-huh) Now the Scandinavian havemostly their shoes with leather over and see that's what I meant with low shoes. (Mrs. C brings in the pair of shoes she is pictured with) See? With leather over them.

Mrs. C: And he made them for me (G&B laugh) for the demonstrations. So I wore them.

C: Now that is the easiest shoe to walk in than the other one (Mrs. C: uh-huh) because you can adjust the strap exactly according to the height of your instep, which the other ones--is not easy to do as these, see?

G: Is there--is it hard to keep, like, these (indicates shoe without strap) on your feet?

C: No. No, they are not if they are made right they are not. (G: uh-huh)

But one thing that I have been fighting about here is with the wooden shoe dancers. And I have even been going that far and demonstrated to them, with girls that believe me that you should not have more than two pair or at the very most, three pair of socks on your feet for wooden shoe dancing. The wooden shoe dancers--were you here at tulip time? (G: Uh-huh, yeah, I've been here before) And, uh, have you seen how many pair of socks... (G: uh-huh) They, they simply look awful, uh, with their big feet on the bottom. Now, what do the girls do? They have a size seven foot. They buy a nine shoe. If they have an eight foot, they buy a ten shoe. Then they had--they feet can swim in them and there they put as many socks on there as they can and push them into the shoe. But they don't realize that that is just wrong. (G: uh-huh) You have to buy your shoe not any larger than your foot. That, I would say, just have enough room to have a couple pair of socks on, then your foot stays put where it's supposed to be.

G: They're not at all uncomfortable, then, with this--

C: I have just used this expression and I--I will demonstrate at any time--aa--anybody wants me to: if you want to play a game of golf of eighteen holes, I take the pair of shoes and I walk along with you just as good as you do in other shoes. (G: Uh-huh. Great)

G: Do you think that the--um--young people in Holland are interested in preserving the Dutch traditions as it was?

C: Well, not so much--uh--it's supposed to be. Uh, you know, you are going to school, and you know that the world is getting smaller. (G: Right) And that the world is constant--and everything is getting more neutralized, oh, a, over the whole world. You (G: Uh-huh), you live one life more or less. That has an effect upon all the countries. And has affected upon the Netherlands. And now, as to the dress. Uhh--there is no different wholly in the dress of we, here, and they in the Netherlands. You don't find no difference there. (G: Uh-huh)
Mrs. C: And another thing is they generally are ahead with the style (B&B: uh-huh). They are ahead with the styles. (C: Yes, we pick the styles up later. B&B: Mrs. C: (laughs))

C: But we are not behind. We are not ahead. If you come to--a lot of things that you--in the Netherlands, would see there, you will see and too, they are in some things ahead of us. But I want to say this: I've been here now fifty-three years, just about fifty-five-three and a half years or more. I have not been sorry one day that I moved to America and I thank the Lord that He has brought me here to America. (C: Great!) Yes sir, at, uh, let us be proud of our beautiful country and freedom and whatever we enjoy here that is in no other place on the globe as we have it here. (C: That's true)

G: Do you miss the old country at all?

C: Not a (unclear), no. Of course, as long as you have relatives there, (C: Oh, yes) there is a tie (G: Right, right) you see? And I do have that. And so does my wife, see? She--

Mrs. O: I came--I came in 1939. (C: Oh, I see) Just before the last war. (G: I see) un-hum.

C: So, uh, no, the tie of the relatives of course, that stays as long as they are there. I was the only one of my family, she was the only one of her family that moved here in this country. But again, I say I have been happy every day that I was in America, and the blessings of the Lord were in abundance upon us. I certainly must testify of God's goodness that we have enjoyed here. (C: Do you feel...)

Mrs. O: And it is a great land. You--you have, uh, many opportunities which you do not have in Europe (B: uh-huh) It's impossible. First of all, it is a big land, and, uh, there's many more people living there and that way you cannot do what you want to do. (G: Right)

C: But if we don't watch out and if we don't learn to do, uh, ye, uh (unclear) of the country and strive to correct wrong, we may lose it because there's an element there today hard at work that wants to destroy, uh, our freedom and in our prosperity. He must not forget that America is not liked as it did to, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years ago. It's just because of our prosperity (G: Right). They cannot see that we have so much more than they have. Uh, let us not forget that we have a responsibility and I--I always rejoice in the fact that a young man growing up, that is worthy of his name, that takes his place properly and that is willing to help our country. I'll tell you what happened. When the social security came, and that's all, uh, the time that you don't know off to more at the beginning. Then I said this, "I am not come in this country in order that the country's supposed to support me but I have been coming here in order that I support the country!" (G: That's good) And that spirit we must never lose sight of. And that is the spirit which we find--ah--given us by Almighty God. And we must not forget that.

G: The tape's just about out, so I'll stop it.

SIDE READ (We thought we were through, but some interesting things came up in the discussion afterward)

G: You said that you didn't know any English before you came over?

C: I did not know any English when I came. We had, uh, passengers of the ship, and the ship had the name "Yolep Dain", by the name of Harry Jellams
and Mrs. Jellama. He was a professor at Calvin. And, uh, he taught me how to say the word Grand Rapids (C&B laugh) and did not, and he practiced with me, so he (unclear) me and he learned me how to say the word "the" (C&B laugh). Those were all such hard words to pronounce.

(Laughs) But, uh, I remember that I was not here very long, maybe a week or so, I started to work for the city and we laid curbs on Central Avenue right in front of Trinity Church. And a fellow asked for directions, and I gave him directions and then I said to him in my broken English. "I'm just here from Europe." "Oh, you're doing good," he says (we all laugh). But, after a couple months that we were here, my wife bought a book Buryan's Pilgrim's Progress and we had read that in the Dutch and we had read that in the German so we were quite well acquainted with that book and I was so happy that she bought that book. (G: Right, could compare) So we got to learn our English by that. Then I was working in the factory and I used one word properly and they all started to laugh. "What's now, if you keep on learning your English this way, in about another year, we won't be able to understand you no more." (we laugh) It was a word not commonly used (unclear)

Mrs. C: From the book.
G: From the book, see?
Mrs. C: No, I didn't know a word of English. Not a word. But, uh, soon, I could make out what was written in the Sontinel. I could read, you know, the, talk it.
G: So how did you pick it up? I don't understand. If I went to a foreign country, I wouldn't know how.

Mrs. C: There is no other--other alternative. (Laugh) You have to. Otherwise you cannot converse with people.

G: You know, there is quite an interesting thing that happened to me after I was here, oh, maybe, not even a year yet. I walked to an old gentleman and at that time (coo coo coo) the, uh, the Dutch settlement held on the Dutch language, especially in church life, see? (G: Right) And, uh, that had to be broken and that took a lot of effort and made lot of--created a lot of discomfort and lot of headaches, too. (G: Right) Uh, because they did not want to go from the Dutch to the English.

G: (Don't blame them) And, uh, we took immediately, when we went to the Dutch section, but we went to every English service, too, immediately, in order to get acquainted with the language and to see. What I was saying awhile ago, I talked to an older gentleman and he asked me, "Do you understand the English language?" I says, "No, I don't." But I enjoy going to the English service and he--I asked him, "Do you understand the English language?"

G: No, I don't. I'm not he had been here ever since the turn of the century just about. (G: Uh-huh) And I asked him, "Can you sell a cow in English?"

G: "Oh, yes," he said. "Do that," he said. It's about him. He learned the other language, too. (we laugh, politely)

G: We haven't come up yet with a name for our magazine. We were thinking along the lines of, um, some Dutch word, and I don't have any--Do you know, um, a, I don't know. What's a Dutch word that would be significant? Do this area--?

G: Now, what is the nature of your, uh, what is your paper?
G: We hope to put in different things, different interviews with people from the area, and, uh, maybe different old Dutch recipes, poetry and things like that. How to-- how to make wooden shoes, sort of
Like, but, um, we hope to put together a magazine and, um, that should interest the people. Have you ever heard of the 'De Spiegel' books? They--they're--they did that with the people who live in Appalachia. And--and um, it's based on something like that. But I don't know any Dutch at all. (Laughs)

B: That's the Dutch name for wooden shoe?
C: Kloopen (B: Kloopen) K-o-o-o-o-n (E: Kloopen)...
B: We thought it was something like that.
G: Yeah, right
C: Kloopen.
G: What's the Dutch word for magazine? (7 second pause)
O: That is a De Spiegel (Mrs. O: That is a dooblet) Yeah, you, if you mean uh-
Holland Evening Sentinel, that is a dooblet (G: Dooblet) And, uh--
(G: um, uh) (Unclear) you have the name of the book of the thing, for instance, the Netherlands, I'm just thinking about a magazine as we call a magazine, that has a name according to the nature in of it and it has the De Spiegel (G: De Spiegel) De mil, (O: It's mil, so there you have that that magazine is especially interested in photography see? (G: I see, I see) depends on what it's interested...) How, what it is. There's, a... (we leaf through a Dutch-English dictionary that Mrs.
O brought in)
G: Let's see... um... What would be something significant in English and we could put it in Dutch?
B: Maybe, people
G: Yeah, How would you say people?
B: Folk (G: Folk?) Neat, folk.
G: Could you spell that? (O: Huh?) Could you spell that?
C: Uh--P-O-I-K.
Mrs. O: V. It's a V.
C: Uh--V, uh, V-O-I-K, v-o-I-k. (G: Okay... uh... If you speak no... uh, folk, you can see. Uh, De Spiegel, that is men, you know (G: uh-huh) men, and uh, there are a few different words that you can use for it. For instance, now, if you see now, uh, our national anthem that you sing that. The Netherlands and same with, is it Volks Lied (?) (G: I see) (It's 7th Volume Lied) (Lied is a song, see?) (51st)

CHIME: (After looking in Dutch-English dictionary)
Mrs. O: Tijdschrift. Tijdschrift is a magazine. A magazine is tijdschrift. If you overseat, uh, you know. It is a mirth. A mirth is a time, you know. Mirth is time (B: uh-huh) And tijdschrift time (G: Okay, how do you spell that?) Tijdschrift (G: T-E-Y) T-let me see... (O: T-Y-D)
T-I-L (G: Yeah, -T-G) T-I-D. T-I-D. And then, schrift is all one word.
S-R-T-I-R-I-T-T. (Okay)
C: Better write it...
G: We've got all of here (indicates recorder) it should be, yeh, it'd probably be better to write it down. 57th (We stopped, but Mr. O: had hardware convention... (O: uh-uhh) And most generally you have... at such a hardware convention when you have plenty of booths, ...Have you ever been at a convention like that how it looked like?
G: I haven't
B: I've seen one before.
O: Uh--it's everyone--everyone has a separate booth in which he displays his wares, see? (G: Oh, yeah) And always among those, you have a clown.
(G: Laughs) And we had a go I clown with that group, too. And in the booth next to me, the fellow had clubbed feet. (G: Uh-huh)
Do you know what clubbed feet are? (G: Uh-huh, yeah) And they used to in his clowns, you just..."we never can make a pair of wooden shoes for me. I bet you-ten dollars you can't."
I listened to that, but I didn't know that I heard, uh, what he said. (G: Uh-huh) And, uh, I said to the other fellow, "May I see your foot. May take a measurement of your foot." "Yeah." So he took the shoes off and I measured his foot. And I said to him, The other fellow was standing there, too-I said, tomorrow, oh, about nine thirty, ten o'clock I will have them done (G: laughs) That yellow didn't say anything either anymore (G: laughs) and he thought, now I have opened my mouth a little too far (G: laughs) But the next day I had that pair of shoes ready for him--that man with the club-foot. And he put them on and they fitted. And I said, "Can you walk in them?" And he says, "Oh, yes." Then he wanted to take them off and I says, "Nothing doing." And I said, "You walk over the whole (We are laughing) (Unclear) before you take them shoes off!" And he done so and this fellow lost ten dollars. (He laugh) (MS. O talks) So he lost the ten dollars. (G: Oh, that's great) Of all things happen in the lifetime. And I have a little longer life behind me as you have. You are not even half way up to where I've...

G: We've got a ways to go
G: How old do you think I am?
G: I wouldn't know. Let's see...um... (G: Figured it out) Yeah, I'm trying to...let's see...seventy?
G: Eight
G: Seventy-eight? oh... (laugh)
G: And I make--still make shoes everyday and (Unclear) I do--the demonstrations work so good, I was teaching woodenshoes here in Holland. And, uh, my wife and me were panning on going to Florida. A, uh, I said to my helper, I said I ought to pull off a stunt. "What was that?"
G: I ought to write to Delaws (?) store in St. Petersburg Florida well if he would be interested in a demonstration of making wooden shoes the old fashioned way. "Yeah."
G: That happened to be my nephew, he's now teacher in Muskogee already, for seventeen years. But, uh, I wrote a letter to the advertising department of Delauxs (?) store, in St. Petersburg, and it was next day or maybe weak and a half later I got a letter back. "We are very much interested in that." And then I wrote them that I could not take material for more than three days. Long, and, uh, so I did that. I went over there and when I got there, I went to Dallas (?) store and presented myself and, uh, they had the plans and said don't even be in a hurry. Don't do it, I--that week was too late, Says, make things ready, with the paper and everything--and--took pictures and so and, uh, o the following Wednesday, I was supposed to work in the store. I did work in the store there. But the I supposed to--the following week I was supposed to be in Tampa. And the following week after that I was supposed to be in Sarasota. But I was in St. Petersburg, store and there were so many people there and the following day I was not there. The people all asked, "Where was the wooden shoe maker?" (G: laughs) So instead of going to Tampa and to, uh, Sarasota, I spent three days over there in St. Petersburg. (G: laughs) That happened that they sold with my demonstration (Unclear) in Muskogee (?) (Unclear) --around three hundred women's coats while I demonstrate. (G: laughs)

B: You really helped their business.
G: Ye h, right
G: I could have done a lot more if I wanted to, but I didn't want to be away from home. (G: Right, right) If I were to--if you wanted to pack the car with everything that I use, and go today to Dallas (?) store
I would be there again, accepted and, and demonstrating the shoe-making shoes. When I was there, that, uh, manager of the, uh, advertising, uh, his name was Mr. Körêi. He came by me and when I was sitting there, I looked at his feet and I judged about what size shoes he was wearing. So the first pair I made was a pair for him. So he came then, and I just had that pair of shoes done. I say, "Mr. Körêi, just step in these ones and see how they fit." And I had guessed pretty accurate, too. They fitted him pretty well. And, "Yeah, they fit." And he was very surprised, and he wanted to take them off again. And, said, "No, you are not. You walk through the store to your office at least, (we laugh) with the shoes on." So he done so.

And, uh, so I had a lot of fun.


(Throughout the interview, the clock was ticking in the background. Mr. and Mrs. Oldemulders both spoke with a Dutch accent. Every 'the' was a 'de', 'then' was 'den', and so forth. The Oldemulders were very helpful and hospitable during the interview. After completing the interview, we had coffee and pastries.)