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Heffron, Evelyn Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Evelyn Heffron

(unedited)

Conducted June 24, 1997
by June Reimink

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Evelyn Heffron
June 24, 1997
Interviewer: June Reimink

JR: I'm June Reimink and we are talking to Ms. Evelyn Heffron, and I am going to ask her first of all, where you were born, a little bit about your early years.

EH: I was born in Holland down in the Pine Creek area, right near the old, old school. I lived in a house just for a couple of years that my father had built. It was a great big house, and it was torn down just a few years ago when that complex was there. A restaurant and a bank and a few more of that. It was a turkey farm for quite a while. My father built that house. I was only about 2 1/2 when we left it though. So, I don’t have a....

JR: Where did you go from there?

EH: Well, we went to several rental places. The farm out there at Pine Creek hadn’t been any good, and then for just a couple of years we lived in Wayland and my father died there. We came right back to Holland and then after two rental places, one on Tenth street and one on Ninth, we moved to Seventeenth street. That was our permanent home.

JR: Do you have brothers and sisters?

EH: I don’t have any more. I had two sisters and I had one brother. My brother was the oldest. He was 20 years older than I was. And, two sisters. When I was born, the one sister was eleven and the other was three years older than that. My mother said I had too many bosses. Because my father had died, and.... My father had been
orphaned in New York, the state, so we had no Heffron relatives at all. I had no grandparents, so I felt very deprived to have lost my father and to have known no grandparents.

JR: That helped you, I would imagine, understand kids a little better in school then.

EH: I guess so.

JR: Yes. I would think so. Tell me a little bit about the schools you went to. I assume those were Holland schools.

EH: Yes.

JR: Where did you attend as a child?

EH: I went to Washington School. When I started there it was called Maple Avenue. The schools were named during that time that I was down there. That became Washington. Longfellow had been Maple Grove. And of course, Van Raalte was on Van Raalte Avenue so that could stay that way. Columbia Avenue became Lincoln School. And then, the old Central School later became Froebel.

JR: Was there a contest? How did they decide to name these schools?

EH: I don’t really know. I just remember that it was named Washington while I was there.

JR: I am assuming that is after famous people?

EH: Yes.

JR: But, I don’t know who Mr. Froebel would be.

EH: He was an educator too. Later on, that one school, which I guess had been high school, became Horace Mann for a little while. He was another educator.
JR: Sure, that name is familiar. Of course they named E. E. Fell after Mr. Fell. So, you went to Holland High School?

EH: I went to Holland High, yes. But, I was at the old junior high, which is now part of the Hope campus. Because two schools were next to each other the... It had been the high school and then became junior high. And, I missed going to new E. E. Fell because it wasn't ready when I was... When I left later to go to Western Michigan, then Dimnent Chapel was just being opened that fall. So, I missed all the new buildings.

JR: So you graduated from Holland High School....

EH: In 1927.

JR: And you went to Western for how long?

EH: I went to Hope for two years and then I went to Western for my degrees. At that time, early elementary education wasn't... There wasn't too much offered at Hope, so I went to Western. Today you can get anything at Hope. Then, it was a little more difficult.

JR: Were there scholarships available?

EH: No scholarships.

JR: How did you handle that?

EH: I worked at Heinz for three summers, and those were summers when I could lose weight because I couldn't keep my breakfast down. My hands were wet and my feet were wet, but I needed that money. I worked at Waukazoo Inn as a waitress for quite a few seasons and saved every nickel. I didn't have any support from family, not
monetary support anyway. They were behind me as far as wanting me to....

JR: Did the rest of your family go to college also?

EH: No.

JR: Nobody did, but you wanted to go....

EH: I was a second grader at Washington and some teacher inspired me. I wanted to be a teacher and I just stuck to that. I didn’t change at all. Of course, there weren’t that many opportunities for women either at that time. Now, the sky is the limit as far as what you can do.

JR: Do you remember what tuition was at Western in those days?

EH: No, I don’t. I remember they had terms there and I was used to semesters. It always took me awhile for a teacher or professor to get to really know me. When I got to Western I thought, I am going to have to speak up more or I won’t be able to get any grades. Because the terms don’t last that long. It was considerably less than Hope, I know that. Of course at Hope I was staying at home and walking to classes. Everybody walked.

JR: In those days nobody had a car on campus.

EH: I never had a bicycle. I had some roller skates, but I never had a bicycle because I didn’t have money enough to buy one.

JR: Where did you get your first job?

EH: Well, that was a rough time.

JR: That would have been like nineteen....

EH: Nineteen thirty-one. That spring, superintendents started coming down interviewing
people at Western and they didn’t realize the seriousness of the situation. When they found out, then they found they were hiring people with the least education. So, people with degrees were left kind of stranded. I had been advised by Holland teachers to stick with it. Stick with it until you get a degree because then you don’t have to go summers and you don’t have to do all of this. It would have been good advice, but not for that time.

JR: Was it because of the financial situation? They wanted the cheapest teachers.

EH: Yes. So then, that first term I was not teaching, I was at Waukazoo Inn during the summer, and in the fall I got a position in Grand Rapids as sort of a maid, working in a family. They were educated people interested in getting help from me. So, in the end, I would have had a chance to substitute up there. Then I got a chance to go to Kalamazoo and I taught there for a year and a half, then the depression was still bad. So, in late May, they cut about 50 teachers from their force. I was one of the last hired and one of the first to go. Then, I spent (pause)..... Whether you knew him I don’t know, Rev. M. Eugene Flipse. Before I started Hope, I had spent about a month taking care of their four little children. So, then when I didn’t have a position after this Kalamazoo situation, but then I visited different people and I had friends. I had one person that was teaching for thirty-five dollars a month. I applied for something for fifty and they hired somebody for forty, and they needed transportation. That was in the Kalamazoo area. So, then I saw the Flipses during that summer, and they said "We need a maid. Would you like to go back to New York with us?" I did. A friend went with me and we were there for the school year,
from September until June. Then, during that time I received word from my sisters. They said that my good friend, Doris Dranyons, was the principal at Longfellow School and she said there were going to be some openings. I applied, and they were so sure they were going to get anybody that they.... So, I read in the Sentinel that I had been hired before I even knew about it. That fall I started teaching in Longfellow and stayed there for twelve years. Then I went to Van Raalte School for the rest of the school.

JR: How big was Longfellow School then?

EH: Longfellow School was two stories, actually three stories, I guess you could call it. There were about two rooms in the basement, otherwise four on each level. The one room in the basement was a square room, I don’t know the exact size, two poles holding up the ceiling, and it was an all-purpose room. They had some gym classes down there, some music classes. I got out a little bit earlier. They used to have kindergartners get out a little bit earlier, 11:15 I think it was. And, then I would go downstairs and put on a tea kettle. There was a three burner glass plate in the one corner of that room attached with a chord for the gas. I could put on some hot water or a little soup, or something like that. Quite a few of the teachers stayed at that time because only about two teachers would have a car. The rest of us would stay. So we would go down there. Gene Heater was the band instructor. I had his little son and that little guy said, "Miss Heffron, how can you have a good dinner without any oven?" That really impressed him, just that poor little glass plate in the corner.

JR: Do you remember what your beginning salary was?
EH: Yes, very much. I got checks of 58 dollars a month. We were only paid once a month. We were paid for twelve months, during the summer. At the end of that year, there was a little extra money. That is what they had said, if there was any extra money they would divide it. So, we got three checks of a little bit more. But, my actual contract had been for $700, some were $600. The fact that I had a year and a half experience, they gave me $100 dollars more.

JR: What was teaching kindergarten like in those days? Did you have a lot of state regulations and a lot of things that you were required to teach?

EH: No, I don’t think so. I waited two years, I think, to get to kindergarten because there were about a half a dozen women that wanted it. So I had a first grade for two years. One person that was in my class during that time has returned to Holland. He has been a teacher and he is a minister, and his name is Lynn Post. I think today he is having knee surgery. He was in my class.

JR: I must have been in one of your earlier classes too.

EH: I think so.

JR: I remember Longfellow School the way you described it, with the basement rooms.

EH: And, then you see, Longfellow and Van Raalte were the identical plans, building-wise, except that Van Raalte was turned around and they were built a year apart.

JR: I see. So, what would you say were the biggest changes in the school system that you saw during that forty years, when you think about those beginning days you were describing.

EH: Well, one was the very limited equipment. We might get a half a dozen ten cent
books during the course of a year. So, that was very limited. There was no library, other than that. The poor janitor had some different chores to do. He had to sharpen all the pencils with a pen knife everyday. All of them, everyday. Of course, he had to shovel snow and he had to fire the furnace and mow the lawn. But sharpening all those pencils, I think that was a big change. Classes were large, so discipline was quite strict, but the teachers were kind. I remember one at Washington School that had some strange discipline methods, but other than that, they were all very kind. But because the classes were, maybe, up to fifty in a class they really were strict. For instance, you might remember that you had to march up stairs. Recess time, if you were upstairs, there was a old record player with a teacher watching it. To Sousa marches mostly. You would march up stairs and you would march downstairs at recess, before school and after school without making a sound. That was the way they managed those big classes.

JR: That would be a big change that you saw over the years.

EH: Yes, because now it's...they need a little more I think. (Laughs)

JR: They might need to go back to that sometime. What kind of changes have you seen in the City of Holland when you think about it? You told me you lived in your house since 1951?

EH: Yes.

JR: So that's forty-six years. What kind of changes are you seeing in your neighborhood and in your city?

EH: Well, I thought for one thing about the parks. For instance, Centennial Park. Early
band concerts were held in Centennial Park. American Legion Band concerts. The thing that I find kind of laughable is that in the middle of the park near the drinking fountain and the fountains, was a chicken wire cage and it had squirrels in it! We have squirrels all over outside now. You don’t have to have a cage to protect them! Those were two things about the park down there, and of course that was the only park because it was long before Kollen Park was established. Children in general were more disciplined. We remember curfews, eight o’clock or nine o’clock at night. And when that whistle blew, the kids would just run home. I don’t think they would do that today.

JR: No. How has your neighborhood changed?

EH: Oh, the neighborhood has changed tremendously. When I first came there and for years, they were mainly people of my own age. And then for many years just one house after another with one person in it, maybe two people, but mainly one. Now it has changed tremendously in the last two years. I have neighbors to the east of me and to the west of me and on the corner across the street and others mid-block. Most of these people when they came they didn’t have children. And now they have at least two. They also have cats and dogs. More cats than you would like to have really. So it has changed that way. But they’re very nice people. I like it.

JR: Are you afraid in your neighborhood now at all?

EH: No. I haven’t been.

JR: What organizations have you belonged to in Holland?

EH: Well, of course, I belong to church organizations. And for over twenty years, I was
very active in a group called Friendship Club. If you know Marjorie Hoeksema, Marjorie started this when she came to Holland. She was a native Australian and she didn’t have a lot to do, and she was always looking out for the needs of others. So she started this group for mainly women, men too, and I was very active in that. A year ago we closed that because of a lack of members. We had very a large membership to start with.

JR: Have some other organizations taken over? Like maybe Evergreen Commons or something?

EH: Well, we met at Evergreen Commons after Evergreen was built. We had met at Fourteenth Street Church. But then the membership...for instance, some people would be in nursing homes and we lost some to death and others... There wasn’t a group of people that...For instance, people that came from the Day Care, they can’t stay awake or they can’t concentrate. And so there just wasn’t...we figured the need had been met. But I was very active in that. I had every office except treasurer and I don’t like treasurer’s jobs. The other thing I was active in and still am in it but it’s not that...and that’s the Tulip Town Tourist Kitchen Band. I’ve been a part of that from the beginning. Now that’s much smaller too because of losses. In fact, our very good director can’t be active anymore. She’s Albertha Bratt and she’s been at Holland Health Care. She’s had a couple of strokes. She’s been there more than six months now. She was there once and then was released. I’m going to see her in July.

JR: What do you think causes all those changes to happen? You know, all these things
that once were so important in the life of Holland, like a Friendship Club and that type of thing, and then it sort of dies out?

EH: Well, of course, age has a lot to with it, and also there is so much more competition. It used to be the family and the home and the church were the basis for everything. Now that's all changed, especially with TV and radio and sports and all that. And financial situation - money has a lot to do with it. Now people spend money on other things. They have boats and they have second homes and they take trips. People used to have family get togethers. They'd have family entertainment at night for instance. They didn't have money but they could play games. They did more together. I don't think we can say it's all bad, but it's something you just have to deal with.

JR: Something different.

EH: The city has grown too fast, many of us think, and that's a hard thing to get used to.

JR: What are some of the good qualities that you think the City of Holland has? If somebody would say to you, "Why do you like living in Holland? Why have you liked living here?" What would you say the good qualities of the city are?

EH: I think there are still many people that try to have a good family life and try to teach morals. I have always been very supportive of our Holland Public Schools and the other schools in the area, and I think in spite of their difficulties (and I would certainly not be too happy about teaching at the present time because I think the young people have so many ways of getting into trouble). Most of the families... There are so many children that don't have a father at home and that makes a lot of
difference. That’s why I’m pleased about the men that are going into the early el
field too. It used to be when I was teaching there was a misfit someplace. That
fellow might go into the grade school. But there are good strong men who are going
into the grade school. Unfortunately, on the other end, most of the principals are
becoming women! Where they used to be all men. So then the children don’t have a
father figure at all, and that has a lot to do with it. I think there’s still some strong
people. Community Ed has done a lot, and unfortunately it’s been cut way back. But
Community Ed has done a lot for the community.

JR: Are there negative things about Holland? Do you think it’s growing too fast?
EH: I do! I think it’s growing too fast. It’s hard for the average person to deal with it.
JR: Maybe it’s growing so fast because it’s a good place to live.
EH: Well, there’s something there. And lots and lots of people come back to Holland to
retire.
JR: Yes, they do.
EH: Educated people. Ministers and professors and business people. They like to come
back to Holland.
JR: That says something about the good qualities of it.
EH: Right. The older people love the band concerts. I can’t get there now, but I used to
go all the time. Hope College has a lot to offer the community. If you live in a
college town, you don’t have to worry about things to do if you can get there. I’ve
always felt that Hope has much to offer.

JR: When you look back over the church, how do you think the church has changed over
the years?

EH: For one thing, churches, no matter what the size used to be, they had one minister. But the minister's wife did as much as he did. And now most the ministers wives I know are teachers, or one that I know has just become an attorney, and there nurses. They're not into the church any more. That's one change. The churches have to cope with other denominations and they have to change too with the times. Most too much! For instance, I look around now and when I grew up people were so strict. I used to think, especially with little boys on Sunday, and they had to sit in that horribly uncomfortable clothing all day long, and I thought they must have wicked thoughts (laughs) if they can't express themselves. Now it's changed so much that way, even maybe a little bit too much. But now, for instance, Sunday I noticed a man across the street and he's a staunch Lutheran, very active and a good neighbor, but he's out mowing his lawn and they'll do things like that. The one on the corner was putting up some new blinds. They do those chores and their active in their churches. I have quite an ecumenical neighborhood. There are Lutherans and Episcopalians and Reformed and Central Wesleyan and Catholic and...there's quite a variety! And they're all nice people. Some of them are marvelous parents! I think that's difficult today.

JR: Yes, it is. How do you feel about women's leadership in the church? That certainly has changed in the last fifty years.

EH: Well, I'm for it myself. I think if they're interested and they have the ability, that I think it's too bad when some of them go to seminary and they get out...nothing to do.
It's just like a slap in the face! I figure that there are several ways of interpreting scripture, and you can do it the way you want to I guess. That's the way some people do it now. It's wrong, or it's not wrong. If there are sufficient men to do it, in consistories for instance, but lots of times there aren't. For a couple of years in the one church, I never voted because I knew that if I voted for a woman they would probably throw that name out anyway. So that's changing, I think, for the good. But a lot of people I know would say, "No way! It's wrong!" Because churches are losing members. Some are gaining and some are losing.

JR: Over that issue.

EH: But I remember one minister we had at Third Reformed Church in respect to chores on Sunday. He came from New York and he'd say, "Well, some of these folks, they don't have any other time to put up their screens. They don't have any other time to do this." He was very tolerant of the situation. But now it just seems...for instance, sprinkling. You wouldn't think of having your sprinklers out on Sunday. But you know, the rain comes any time of the week. God sends the rain anytime.

JR: Do you remember ever any big controversies in Holland? Issues that really divided the town at all during your adult years that you remember?

EH: I think we have more going on right now! (Laughs) For instance like the new civic center which they can't decide, and it took so long for Herrick Library to even...I don't know. Speaking of library though, I recall when you could take out two books at a time for two weeks. And certainly the library is...it's so crowded. I wish they could have started that addition sooner. Of course, now they're doing the pool. I
used to go to the pool. I used to go to the Dow pool for exercise. I went for seven years until I had this knee replacement and I don’t know whether I can get back to it. I don’t know whether I can get in and out. I think I could manage okay. Maybe I’ll still try it. I thought of trying it as a substitute, and if I sign a substitute list, then you pay a dollar when somebody calls you and says they can’t make it. I might be able to find out whether I could do it or not.

JR: Evergreen is going to have a pool.

EH: That’s amazing. Evergreen is...I used to get there more than I do. I was a Friday afternoon librarian, but now I haven’t been there that much. Last June was my birthday and the license had to be renewed and I couldn’t use my knee anyway, so I figured this was the time to give up. But it’s very hard to give up, even if you don’t drive much it’s very difficult to give up. Just for instance, you could go different places. Now if you can depend on Dial-a-Ride you go north or south but you go one thing or two at the most in a day. That’s the limit because you have waiting periods. They’re doing better, I think, especially with dispatch. They’re perfect. The trips come a little sooner.

JR: So that’s been a good addition to Holland?

EH: That’s been a good addition, yes. And whether there are more improvements, but all people have trouble with transportation. My brother, whom I said was twenty years older, he was a bus driver. First he was on street cars in Grand Rapids. Then he went to bus driving. I know Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, all these communities, have trouble with their transportation. They’re always in debt and trying new things.
People in Holland, some of them are very thankful for what we have, and others do a lot of complaining. But some people complain all the time anyway.

JR: Yes, that’s right. It’s their personality, I think. (Laughs)

EH: Something that didn’t come up here... Entertainment was early radio and TV. Oh, I used to enjoy early radio. In fact, the first one I had, I paid fifteen dollars for. It was a Crosby radio and it was repossessed, and I think it cost me fifteen dollars. I still have it in my house and I think it would work if it had tubes. I still like radio better than TV. Because you can do other things while you listen to the radio. TV’s got you captive, you know. You can’t do too much while you watch.

JR: It’s much more passive, isn’t it?

EH: Yes. And I think it’s less good in many ways than it used to be. The really good family programs aren’t on any more.

JR: It’s hard to watch that happen. How do you feel the Dutch heritage plays a part in our city? Are we interacting with the other cultures that are coming in, do you think?

EH: I think we have a right to be proud of the Dutch heritage. I’m not Dutch, but I’ve lived here all my life. Actually my background would be German. That would be both sides of the family. But the Dutch have lots of good qualities. They’re thrifty and they have good morals on the whole. I think that there is more interplay with the other peoples now than there used to be, but I think it probably should be faster than it is now because there are so many Asians in particular. Those people, many of them are brilliant as scientists, doctors, and in many other areas. From that standpoint too, I don’t think that the Dutch people can be...they have to be more
tolerant of other religions. For instance, many of these other people, they don’t
observe Sundays like we do. So I think it’s being a learning period for all of us if we
just take responsibility.

JR: That’s a good point.

EH: You don’t want to compromise in the wrong way. But there has to be a compromise
and a little more understanding and tolerance.

JR: It can’t always be like it used to be.

EH: No! And some of what used to be, is ready to be thrown out and some of it is ready
to be held on to.

JR: You were saying you were part of Bethel Church. How long were you a part of that
church?

EH: I left Third Reformed in the seventies, and then of course, Bethel just closed last
December.

JR: So how did you see that whole process being worked out? The closing of the church,
how did you see that all? As a necessity?

EH: I saw it as a necessity because the congregation had grown so much smaller. Of
course, I appreciate children and many other people do too. But the fact that we had
practically no children. We had a person in charge of children and we had…and it
was just so dead! And to have a very small congregation. The choir went down to
about eight people once. It was just sad. So it wasn’t very inspiring to be part of
such a small group. Now, we had some good help during that period. We had
Bob…(what was his name). He had been at Second Reformed Church, Zeeland, and
he lost his wife and he became...

JR: Dahl?

EH: Dahl. Oh, I was very favorably impressed. He was our interim pastor for quite a while. He called on me when I was having knee surgery. He was there before I had the surgery. He made a couple of calls then. I thought he was a great man. He's now working for Hospice Grand Rapids. Anyway, the last thing I knew. Then we had Sharon Arendshorst who had been recently ordained and she is great! There were a few people that weren't favor of her at Bethel and some were. Bob Nykamp helped us a little bit. He's a retired minister. He sat next to me one day when we were having a meeting - we had these town meetings every now and then to talk things over, what were we going to do, were we going to get another minister, and then in the end after talking it over they figured there just wasn't any chance it was going to be revived. So one Sunday I was sitting at one of those meetings next to Bob Nykamp. Sharon was conducting the meeting and I said, "Gee, I could better give a sermon than to be able to conduct the business meeting like that with all the laws of order and things like that." Then he said, "Well, Sharon is a natural!" I mentioned that to a few people who really think a lot of him. I said, "If he thinks Sharon is a natural, people better believe it!" She did it so easily! What she's doing now, I don't know because Third didn't need any other minister. They've got Kathy Davelaar. It was interesting to read how her husband went all over to celebrate their anniversary.

JR: It was. This is another symptom of what you said about some of us who have always
lived here. We have to adapt, don't we, to things like this that change. And that's not always easy. I'm sure that wasn't easy for some of the people that had to leave that church.

EH: But Trinity and Bethel seem to be quite compatible, although some of our people have gone a few other places. A few to Christ Memorial. A little bigger group to Central Park. One couple was at Bethel, but her son is the minister at Third Reformed, Stam. So naturally they went there! I considered it, and I thought well I've been away from there just long enough. Maybe I would feel better off with the group that's the majority. Trinity is doing a good job. Some things there again like...they've got lots of children there!

JR: Which you would enjoy.

EH: I like them, and I like some of the music and I don't care much for some of the rest of it. But they have a lot of music. A lot of singing. And the two ministers get along real well together. They're a contrast. Just what you should have. One is a little more formal and the other one is so friendly!

JR: It's nice that they're both not the same. They compliment each other, don't they?

EH: And it's growing. It's just the difference that you can't walk over there like I'd walk from Bethel to home. I still like Holland. I think it has a lot to offer. It goes to show that when so many of these people come to retire here in Holland, that it's...You wonder about all the condos that are built all the time and the apartments. Is there a need for all of them? I guess there is!

JR: They don't stay empty very long.
EH: No, they don't. But when they advertise about going into one, no more lawn mowing and no more shoveling and all that, I think, "Well, that's good for some people. But it's not good for a lot of the others because they say that some people are getting out of shape and everything mainly one thing. They have a remote control! They don't have to get out of their chair!" You have to have something to replace...

JR: That's right. (Laughs). You have to keep moving, right?

EH: I'm at that stage where I don't know just exactly how to get...I haven't gained. I lost a little before I had knee surgery and I haven't gained that back. But on the other hand, I'm not having exercises either. Just a little walking. Walk around the block and like that. But Evergreen has a lot of good programs and now...of course they've grown so much! It's even hard to find a place there to meet because it's so crowded. One regret I have is that the governor has cut back so on community ed. There used to be many good classes at Evergreen. And they were at different places. At Warm Friend and they met at different churches. They met at some of the senior centers. They're now down to practically nothing.

JR: Is there any way that Holland could replace that, do you think? With any other kind of funds maybe? I think our governor seems to feel that it should be decentralized and maybe not all come from the state? I think we're going to miss so much!

EH: I don't know what the solution is. You haven't asked this specifically, but in regard to old equipment and people I met with recently, it used to be milk was delivered every day, even if you only bought a pint! Mail was delivered twice a day for about one or two cents postage. Twice a day. There were snow plows and there was
ice... All of this was by horsepower though. Horse drawn milk carriages, and you could even get buttermilk, skim milk if you just took a pan out to the door and they'd fill your pan for two cents. Daily! You wonder about that, how they could manage that doing all that daily. Then there were peddlers and some of them sang their tunes like even in the song books there were little songs that the peddlers sang. Or about the milk - "Early, early in the day, long before it's time to play - milk!" (Laughs) Stores were so small, no supermarkets. The thing that’s impressive to me today is every time you go in the store the area is longer for pet food and for cereals especially. No animals had pet food when we were growing up. They at the scraps. Now the animals are so fussy!

JR: You can have low-fat dog food! (Laughs)

EH: And that’s necessary though because they can get fat so quickly. I had a little dog and I had a little cat. The cat was almost sixteen (Side A ends)... on Sundays and so on. We had church picnics. There was a place called Jenison Park which was an amusement park and it has become residential to the west of town. We went there for a couple of church picnics and they had a carousel there but they couldn’t play the music because they thought that music was "worldly."

JR: That was open during the week then so folk could go out there?

EH: Yes. I don’t know how long it was in existence. And then a couple of other things in regard to the schools, the strictness and all. I could sing before I could talk. I was asked to sing "The Three Little Kittens" for a Mother’s thing at school. Every now and then, the teacher would say (not too often) to take a cup to school and a
nickel and then you could get ice cream in your cup. They’d get a big, you know, freezer full and scoop it out. So I took my nickel to school and most people, the kids, would take a cup without a handle maybe, when you get your ice cream. So I did that and then I had to go a sing "Three Little Kittens" for the mothers. The one in charge said I could have some ice cream. I said, "I already had one." But I could have a second time because I had sung. Teachers used to often use a chalk board about that size, something like that, and use colored chalk and make some kind of a picture. We had one teacher that drew a picture of a little green pumpkin, and the pumpkin kept getting bigger and bigger and yellower and yellower and then real orange. When it got to that stage and it was late fall like near Halloween or Thanksgiving, I don’t know which, and she came to school (I guess she had to walk) and she had a great big basket with pumpkin pie for everybody!

JR: Oh, how nice.

EH: Then it was a little sad, although it didn’t strike us as being sad. A little girl died. This was about a second-grader. Her name was Helen Pelgrom. Pelgrom was a prominent family, you know. They lived on West Twelfth Street. That little girl died and the parents invited us over there, and the whole class walked down Twelfth Street to where she lived to see that little girl. Now I don’t remember any bad effects of that or anything, but today there would be all kinds of people complaining, "My child can’t do that!" You know how it is. They just took that in stride and thought she was a pretty little girl and she had pneumonia or what the occasion was.

JR: She was in your class?
EH: She was in my class. One time I was reprimanded. I took a doll to school. It was on a Friday afternoon. It was getting near the closing time, and I thought I have to get my doll back. So I went over to where that little girl was sitting, you know, and the teacher thought...She said, "YOU GO STAND IN THAT CORNER!" (Laughs) We had sewing. For girls, I think is fifth grade and sixth grade, they'd walk over to this campus to school, and we made an apron, we sewed an apron by hand and a little head band and a towel. Then the next year I think we had little cooking classes. Little individual gas plates. But when we sewed that all, my hands always perspired a lot. Now they're not dripping but they can get to the point of dripping. But I sewed that apron all by hand. Such little stitches. It went to the Holland Fair, which at that time was across from the old Pilgrim Home Cemetery which would be the site of the new area. I won first prize for that apron and fifty cents as the prize for that. My, I must have struggled on it because I hated sewing.

JR: (Laughs) That was your home ec course?

EH: Yeah, that was before high school. Mr. Fell was very interested in home economics and getting started in things like that. He was quite progressive.

JR: Now in your day, the teachers taught music and art and everything, which would be different than they do now?

EH: Well, we still had some specialists. We had an art teacher, we had a music teacher, we had a gym teacher for once a week, anyway.

JR: Did Holland always have that in their program?

EH: I don't know when it started, but they had it when I was in school, I know that. So,
I think we’ve had a good school system and I think it’s still good. Whether people are secretaries or whether they work in factories or whether they are business people or nurses or what, there are always going to be superior people and inferior people. People who work to capacity and people who don’t. You can’t just...

JR: You cannot blame the school for not making them all superior, can you?

EH: No. Right. But it takes a lot of cooperation...The teacher can’t do it alone. The parents can’t do it alone. The church can’t do it alone. They better learn that cooperation accomplishes more than...And also, just showing appreciation like some of those neighbors and people next to me. Such wonderful parents! And they’re going to have their third child and they should have...He wants a family, and I figure they’re the ones that should have it because I never...the houses are fairly close. I never hear any arguments. I never hear any bad language and the little kids, they take them to the parks and they go here and it’s always "Honey, do this." And they’re reprimanded if they do some little thing wrong. The parents are right there. The mother gave up teaching (she taught in West Ottawa). This year she’s had a few children like a day care. Now she’s having the third child this fall so then she’ll have just only one child now. But they’re the type of people that should have children because they know how to discipline them and they know how to encourage them. They went recently to John Ball Park. Last week they went to another park someplace with them. But think of all the children that don’t have that!

JR: That’s right!

EH: Some of them, the fathers are in prison! Or the parents are on drugs or something
and the kids don’t have a chance.

JR: They don’t. That’s the saddest part.

EH: We grew up in a wonderful time. We didn’t have much money but... My sisters had a millinery store down where the Old Kent Bank is, thirty-six East Eighth. An old wooden building. I didn’t have money for a lot of things but I had beautiful hair ribbons because we sold the ribbons at the store. (laughs). And the dentist was up above and the dentist was oh! Dentists today are wonderful but he wasn’t (Laughs).

JR: I know what you mean.

EH: I’d go there a lot. Oh, the think I didn’t mention though, was going to school past the drug store on Thirteenth Street and a man by the name of Lage owned it. Mr. Lage and his nephew was Milton Hinga from Kalamazoo. Mr. Lage had a big supply of penny candy and licorice was my favorite. Whenever I had a penny I’d buy licorice (laughs) at the store there. But the Catholic children and the Christian School children and the other general ones it seemed they all thought the other was an enemy! The other group. It’s not that great but there’s been a lot of good feeling now between the groups.

JR: There is. That is I think a big improvement in Holland, the feeling between the Christian School and the public school.

EH: And the church group that’s been in existence for quite a while now. The Third Church group, what do they call it, the Inner City Parish or something like that. It’s Third, United Methodist, and St. Francis, and now I think they even included Pillar recently.
JR:  I think so.

EH:  And that’s a tremendous improvement!

JR:  Isn’t it? That’s wonderful! It’s wonderful to see that and read about that and think about that. It wasn’t always that way. Well, anything else you can think about any subject?

EH:  Well…oh, clothing! Clothing as far as school goes, we had (maybe you did too)... We had black bloomers for gym and middie blouses and long black stockings. Some shoes were high and some were laced and some had a button hook to fasten with. That was mainly for school and in the winter all the women wore middie blouses, either navy or red wool, with a skirt and you wore those probably from October until May or something like that. The same thing every day. I had navy because my mother didn’t like red that well so mine was navy. As far as other people, I remember the great big hats the women wore and the gloves which were bad for my sweaty fingers. Big hats on the women and I’d sit behind a woman who was big besides and there’s this great big hat and I could hardly see anything. You had to wear that stuff. And the women didn’t carry purses. They carried maybe a nickel or a dime in a corner of a handkerchief.

JR:  Tie it in a knot.

EH:  That’s right. So that was a difference there. And church - church services were long, and of course some of the people had three a day. Especially some who had a Dutch service in the afternoon. But they were long services anyway. Now with television, the service...I guess there isn’t anybody that’s longer than an hour around
here because of the broadcasting. So they have to keep it to that amount. But I think sometimes you get better results because it’s… If I write an article for the Sentinel, it’s harder to get it into a certain frame of words so you have to cut. So that’s the way with them too. You had to get it into an hour, now everything, with the music. But with the schools I don’t see how they can get it all in because we had all the important… we had music. Plus of course the three R’s. But nowadays how can they squeeze in golf and soccer and all that sports stuff and the school day is shorter and the school year is shorter! Nobody has a ten month school anymore which we had when we started out. And the school days are shortened quite a bit because they added five minutes last year I think, five minutes a day. But at Van Raalte, they cut out afternoon recess at one time because they figured that the traffic that went by there, they’d eliminate some of the traffic by letting the kids out a little earlier. But how do they squeeze it all in?

JR: And then they want boat safety and gun safety…

EH: Yeah, right!

JR: So many things they want the schools to teach nowadays.

EH: And they get criticized too much. Entertainment… People had a lot more family entertainment in the evening, puzzles and jigsaw puzzles and games. Card games of certain kinds if they were allowed. Then, of course, there were people that did quilting and sewing and knitting and all that. That was all part of how to spend the evenings. And the senior plays that our schools used to have! Four nights! The senior play would go on at Holland High which is now the Community Ed building,
four evenings. They’d fill the auditorium two people to a desk with every other aisle having chairs. Four evenings! And the kids went out selling tickets and if you sold ten you could get one for free. And we did that for so many things, selling tickets like that. But now anything you go to you just go to the door and buy a ticket. Nobody’s going to come to your door and sell you anything like that. They couldn’t do that. We had an ice man too and we’d pick up little pieces of ice and ice man, milk man, milk, produce, snowplows, all pulled by horses. Clothing was mainly made by the mother of a small amount of material, or like me, I didn’t have a coat bought for me until I was in high school. They were made over from my sisters or somebody else’s. I’m basically left handed. I visited a school one time before I even went to school and the teacher wanted me to write with my right hand and I didn’t want to go to school for quite a while. That bugged me because she...I wasn’t even a part of the school. But they did change me someplace in Washington School and I never cared about writing that much. Two reasons - I didn’t like to write. If I could print or if I could draw, they’d let me do it with my left hand! Writing I had to do with my right hand! You better believe it! That has to be done with your right hand. (Laughs). Oh! News and health. On news. Without TV and radio, we just had a newspaper. We had the Grand Rapids Press usually. Then any special news, there’d be special editions and the boys would be out on the corner selling these special editions.

JR: You think we’re more isolated today than we used to be because of all the media and the self-contained...We don’t depend on a lot of other people today.
EH: Well, that’s true!

JR: You know, I think we used to depend on...

EH: We depended on neighbors.

JR: Neighbors and the greater family more probably than today.

EH: So, anyway, that’s where you got your extra news. And then health matters. That became quite important. Doctors made house calls. I know of one who makes limited house calls. In fact, he’s mine although he’s never done it for me but he apparently did. He did for Marian Shackson. But anyway, doctors made a house call for two dollars and an office call for a dollar. And he had a brown or a black bag. They didn’t give you prescriptions that was going to cost you a lot of money. They’d give you a few little pills. I don’t know what they were necessarily but they gave you those little pills and that took care of it. But if anything serious, then your house was quarantined. Maybe you had that happen. I never did in my house but people did and it was scarlet fever or small pox or measles and then a big sign was put on your house and nobody could go in or out. A few of the men would try to sneak in and out. Then, I remember I wanted to go to the senior play, and I got childhood diseases from my niece and nephew when they were in kindergarten. If I hadn’t had mumps or german measles or stuff like that, chicken pox, I got them from them! So then I had to back to school. I had to go to the doctor’s office to get a permit because I wanted to go to the senior play. But I had to get that permit first. But, see, there were not sufficient medications to take care of those things then. So they had to be very, very strict about it. So that was quite different. But it seemed that if
you needed a doctor you could find one. Now the town is full of doctors and
dentists, but when do you get an appointment?

JR: Everything is so specialized now.

EH: Yeah, right. They’re so busy. You have to wait and wait and wait.

JR: And yet you’re happy to have had your knee done. Which your mother probably
would never have had done.

EH: Oh no! My mother had a lot of arthritis. She always had it. And a cute little story
about my only nice who went blind with a stroke. You might know her. She’s had
so many names. But she had a stroke a few years ago and she went blind. Her name
was Hope Heimenga to start with. Then it was Burroughs and her husband died of
cancer. And then it was Chuck Vanden Berg and he died of cancer, and now her
name is (I can’t keep track of them all) Pathuis. And they had to give up their home
on the north side because he had to do so much for her. Now they have an apartment
at Fountain View, and it’s a nice apartment but...Then they have one meal, but the
food there is poor. Warm Friend has good food. The other Resthavens have good
food, and no matter what happens, it seems Fountain View they don’t do a good job.
I don’t know why. But anyway that’s Hope. Hope is blind. But my mother always
said (what I was starting to say)...I never knew her without having a lot of
rheumatism. She just put up with it. People didn’t take anything for it. They might
try something like vinegar. Anyway, she just had to put up with it. But when my
little niece lived with us, we lived together a lot just because of health reasons and
money reason. So anyway, my little niece Hope would say her prayers at night. One
night she said, "And dear God, please don't send any robbers to my house because my mother's sick and my grandma's got the rheumatism and she can't run!" So cute! (Laughs) My sister had TB, Hope's mother. And she stayed in Holland. They put a little porch in the back and she had to stay in there in that cold, cold winter air. That's what they thought was good for you unless you went to Arizona. Then my nephew, Hope's brother, he had the next thing to TB so he was in a special long room at Washington School.

JR: Oh, I remember that. Sure! Fresh air room.

EH: Fresh air room! He went to that room because he had been exposed to TB. I can't have a skin test for TB. When I was at Western Michigan having exams one week and I had such a bad arm. It was infected and they had to put ice on it. They said, "Don't you ever have..." (I'd forgotten I had been exposed). They said, "You have to have an xray." Even though there are so many ways...for instance, cancer and some other things, and talking about Betty on the way over here, they've made much progress.

JR: Haven't they though?

EH: But there's such a long ways to go! Of course, we didn't know anything about AIDS. Some people have kind of associated AIDS with leprosy of the Bible. The seriousness of it. But otherwise...

JR: But it's been a good life, though, hasn't it, when you look back?

EH: Oh, it has been! I think it's better even though we were ...like my next door neighbor isn't there anymore. A new family. But anyway, he used to say we were
under the proverb __________ but we didn’t know it. And isn’t that true because...But my mother was...I didn’t have a father but my mother was such a marvelous mother and she was so understanding and sweet about everything. I have friends who had mothers who were quite disagreeable. I never had anything to complain about at all! She was really an __________. There was a park. I don’t know whether it be in there or whether you heard about it...Oh, someplace in there it talked about Getz Farm, and all your company had to go out to Getz Farm and see the animals. And we had one session about what makes you laugh and so on - I remember those funny mirrors that they used to have out there. And then there was a place north of there, someplace - Buchanan’s Beach. Now where would that be exactly? We used to have picnics there.

JR: Okay. I think that’s within a mile north of there.

EH: I know one time we had a picnic and my mother picked up a little piece of driftwood and I think it may still be at home someplace. She’d written down the date of that and who went to it. One thing of interest I hadn’t thought about until now, and that was that Hope’s dad built a trailer, a travel trailer. He designed it and built it for himself. It was one of the very first ones. He had some very good ideas in it and they used to be out at Ottawa Beach and I used to go out there sometimes for a weekend if they were there later on. The other family took it over. He had a table up against the wall and he had bunk beds. He had some good ideas in it. But that was a big transformation when people first had travel trailers and tents and things like that. My first trip up north we stayed at those little cabins of some kind and the
one... It was in a farmer’s field and he’d been working on it. The thing was finished, but he had been doing some work and had the doors all open. Anyway, it was full of grasshoppers! So we went around with our shoes trying to get rid of them - hitting the grasshoppers. And of course one place the toilet was in the back yard. That was in the thirties. We went up to the Sault and we had another place to stay there and all the time we were out watching the locks, the boats going through the locks, we had two dish pans heating and that was supposed to be bathing water for four people! Our first trip us there was...Helen Miles was one of my friends. There was a judge who was her brother. Her brother was a judge and her other brother was a lawyer and another brother was a teacher. Those were some of the early trips. Now when people camp they’ve got everything, like the people around me too - the father doesn’t hang a swing on a tree anymore. They buy all this plastic stuff, plastic table and chairs and playhouses and scooters and all that stuff. Nothing from scratch any more!

JR: You’re right. That’s a big change!

EH: That didn’t enter here either as far as food. People didn’t have anything. When I went that year to New York that woman had some instant chocolate pudding. Things were just beginning. But otherwise you add some cornstarch and you made everything from scratch.

JR: We’ve seen a lot of changes, haven’t we?

EH: I think you can still make the good exceed what you don’t like about it.

JR: You said earlier it’s your attitude and that’s very important. We need to be tolerant
to realize that we're not all Dutch or we're not all German in this city. (Laughs).

That's true! That's very true!

EH: And there are some qualities that those people have that counteract the other good qualities (Laughs).

JR: Well, good. I think that it's been very interesting, and I thank you very much.