Postma, Leona Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

Jean Postma
Oral History Interview with
Leona Postma

(unedited)

Conducted November 7, 1996
by Jean Postma

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
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LP: ...We were with the four of us and we skipped Sunday School more times than we wanted... (laughs)

JP: Sounds good to me!

LP: I never went to catechism if I could get out of it... (laughs)

JP: I need to ask about where you lived. I'm sorry that I didn't do this earlier but when you were born, were you born at 47 West 17th? Don didn't know whether you might have been born up at the other house.

LP: Oh no. Andy was the only one that was born in that house. The rest of us were all born at 47 West 17th, and I was so little they carried me around on a pillow. But I grew! (laughs)

JP: Did anybody ever weigh you?

LP: Yes. I went below four pounds.

JP: Were you early?

LP: No. Mother said she really expected me in August but I showed up in June. But she said I had all my fingernails, my hair and everything. I was complete. You know, in those days they didn't know how to figure.

JP: Yes, that's right. So you were born at 47 West 17th, and then when did you move?

LP: I never moved definitely until I got this house in 1971, I think it was. I had an apartment but my...
JP: That was a rental. That rental, when did you move in there?
LP: It was during the second world war. I think it was in 1942.
JP: You lived there until you and Marian moved?
LP: No, uh, uh. The Presbyterian Church wanted the house.
JP: Right. So you moved from there...
LP: Well, I moved twice, you know.
JP: Do you remember the address of that old house where the dining room was?
LP: 114, I think it was.
JP: What street is that?
LP: It was on 5th Street.
JP: Then do you remember where you moved?
LP: Well I moved... I wouldn't even know the number of the house... into a place on, let me see, what street was that? I think it was Franklin.
JP: Yes. That sounds right. I kind of remember that. It was on the second floor?
LP: That was the second floor and I didn’t stay there long, because then Marian came to live with me and then we moved to above the insurance company on Franklin Street, right across from the County Building.
JP: Then where did you move?
LP: Well, then Marian and I left and we went to Carol Stream. Don’t ask me what that address is any more.
JP: No, that’s all right. And how long did you live in Carol Stream?
LP: About a year and a half.
JP: Then you went back to 47?

LP: I went back to 47 and stayed there about a year, I think. No, not quite a year. Yes, I did because I kept that residence. I rented an apartment that first winter when I came back to the county. That apartment's gone too. Then I bought this house.

JP: Okay. Thank you very much. And the next one is occupations. Your first job, as far as you can remember?

LP: My first job was a year after I graduated from high school, because there weren't any jobs when I graduated.

JP: When did you graduate?

LP: In 1933. I went back and took some subjects just to keep your mind going and like that. It was good. I learned things.

JP: Were they right at the high school?

LP: Yeah, right at the high school.

JP: Was it part of what we would call community education now?

LP: No, if you graduated you could come back and just join the regular classes.

JP: Great. Then your first job?

MP: Was in a sewing factory.

JP: 1934 would that have been?

MP: I would say 1934. Jake said, "Ha! She isn't going to last a week there."

(laughs)

JP: Where was the sewing factory, do you remember?

LP: On the corner of 13th and Van Raalte. That wasn't the name of it. They made
jackets and all like that.

JP: I can look that up. How long did you stay there?

LP: A couple years, I think. Then Dad was doing work at Dutch Novelty, and he said to Chet, "You know, I think my daughter would like to have a job here." So I went over to Dutch Novelty. I was laid off, so then I went to Dutch Novelty and from there I came up to the courthouse in October of 1939.

JP: Did you always work in the surveyor's office?

LP: I started in the county treasurer's office.

JP: How long did you work there?

LP: Oh, let's see. I think till 1954, something like that. Then I went into the addressograph, which was still part of the county treasurer's office at that time.

JP: That was sending our tax bills, was it?

LP: Putting them through the machines.

JP: What did the machine do?

LP: That was an addressograph. That is working with supervisors and descriptions and like that, making up the tax rolls and the assessment rolls. You know, that is all out now since we have computers.

JP: How long did you work there, do you recall?

LP: Let's see. Marian had her surgery in 1963, I think '64 or '65, somewhere in there. I was gone for four years.

JP: That's when you left the county?

LP: That's when I left the county. Then we worked in Carol Stream, both of us.
JP: Yes. I can’t remember that company but I remember you did mapping and land survey.

LP: Why didn’t you tell me you wanted all this, because..

JP: I’m sorry. If you can remember just enough to get the general gist of it.

LP: Working on maps and parceling parcels.

JP: You worked there until you came back here, perhaps.

LP: Yes. I came back, let’s see, when did Marian die?

JP: In ’69, I believe.

LP: In ’69, yeah. She died in 1969.

JP: But your mother was ill before then.

LP: My mother died in 1963.

JP: Okay. I thought they died closer together. So when did you come back here?

LP: She died in April and I came back in September.

JP: Did you go back to work for the county right then?

LP: No, I worked for Marsilje Travel.

JP: Right. I forgot all about that.

LP: I think about a year. Just long enough to get my trip to Hawaii! (laughs) Bob said he’d wait for me. (laughs) Then I came back to the county into the Register of Deeds office.

JP: When did you retire from there?

LP: June, 1982.

JP: Boy that’s a wonderful work history. Really it is. You worked very few places and
Look how long you worked.

LP: Look at the years I had for a pension, too. You see, I got back to the county before five years and I could add my ten next years at a higher salary right on to the rest of it. So I had 38 1/2 years with the county.

JP: Good for you.

LP: Now, dates may be off a little bit.

JP: Well, it doesn't matter much. The important thing is your length of service with the county, as far as I'm concerned, and the fact that you did work other places. You have a lot of skills. The other thing they wanted to know is about club memberships. Did you ever belong to something like the Professional Women's Group?

LP: I belonged to the Triangle Business and Professional Club.

JP: You still belong?

LP: Yes. How long, I don't know, because the club is going downhill like all those clubs do.

JP: Do you know when you joined?

LP: I had to join before I retired. I think I joined a year or so before I retired.

JP: So it might have been about 1980.

LP: We'll make it 1979, something like that.

JP: Any other clubs?

LP: No. Just volunteer work.

JP: I know you did volunteer work in the library. Anyplace else?

LP: Red Cross.
JP: Did you ever do any work at the church?

LP: No. (laughs)

JP: Sounds good to me. I told you before the main thing I would like to hear about is how it was to grow up in Holland. What your first memories were and how it was in...

LP: Well, Holland, the kids, you could run any place and feel secure. We never had locks on our doors (we had locks but they were all skeleton keys) until we got the cottage and were gone and somebody wasn’t there all the time.

JP: Do you remember when that cottage became yours?

LP: I think I was eleven or twelve years old.

JP: That must have been fun to go out there.

LP: Yes. Of course we had about forty acres out there. Maybe not that. I think there was five acres out of it, about thirty-five acres. Of course, it was an old house, and that’s where I learned how to clean chimneys and lamps and like that. We didn’t have any electricity. Luckily, we had a radio that dad had bought that was all on batteries. We could take that out there. What we had was an old grand piano out there. Oh, how I wish we had sold that or something before it burned. We had a lot of sheet music out there too. You know, it was really something to see. My mother took one of these old lamps, all decked out... Oh, it was a beautiful lamp. They got that at the time they were married. With a foot on it and everything else. That was one thing that was in the living room. Otherwise we used older lamps, you know, not as fancy. That was one fancy lamp we had out there! It was fun. Of course, we
had a walk down to the lake and generally we had Ruth and Andy's collie dog out there, too. That is another thing. I felt out there I could go swimming and everything without worrying, because if you took that dog along he was right there beside you. The only thing, he was a scrapper with other dogs. (laughs) He watched people. You couldn't touch my mother, even members of the family, you couldn't just give her a pat or any thing like that. Unh, unh. One of our neighbors, we'd would see each other in the summer time, and one of our neighbors came over and, naturally, shook hands. That dog stuck his nose right in between them. (laughs) Oh, it was funny. I had a good time with that dog. I was glad that they bought it. Sorry that Ruth Ann got asthma from it. She was more allergic to the long hair and like that. I'm not allergic to dogs, but cats? (laughs) Forget it. What else you want to know?

JP: Well I was thinking still about being born in Holland in that period of time when you probably weren't aware at all of the first world war. Did you remember the celebration at the end?

LP: I was only four years old. Andy graduated from high school before I entered kindergarten. He graduated in 1919. I was figuring back, I must have started kindergarten in 1920, in order that I would graduate in 1933.

JP: Where did you go to school in Holland?

LP: Froebel School.

JP: Tell me about that school.

LP: Well, it was just a nice school. It was at Graves Place. You know where that is.
We had our kindergarten and up to the sixth grade, and the seventh and eighth grade was at junior high, and the ninth, tenth, and eleventh and twelfth were at senior high.

JP: What do you remember about going to school? Do you remember anything about...?

LP: I remember going to school and always cutting through the park. I also remember I got a lot of rides, because Marian went to Horace Mann for quite a few years, and if my dad was going that way we went. From that distance, we always walked home for lunch, too. There was no lunch service or anything like that and we didn't carry our lunch. Also, when I was in the third grade, Ruth was teaching first grade there. Andy was going with her, so I got quite a few rides from Andy too. I had some very nice teachers. My first grade teacher, I've forgotten her last name, but she was an excellent teacher. Let's see, Minnie Buhler was teaching third grade at the time and Marcia Burrs, I think her name was, was teaching fourth grade. I don't remember my fifth grade teacher. My sixth grade teacher was Everett Hilgner. He didn't stay there very long. I took piano lessons from George Dock, not for very long, because that wasn't my thing to do. (laughs) You see, Andy and Marian were the musicians in the family. Jake and I, (laughs) we both admitted as we got older it was a good thing to do because you did get a better appreciation of music.

JP: That's exactly what I've decided too. I'm not musical, either, but was helpful because I learned about music.

LP: Then going to junior high I was just right... lots of times I didn't even button up my coat because I had from 17th Street to 16th Street. My home room was up on the third floor, I could figure, when the bell started ringing down here I could make it up
those steps to the third floor. (laughs)

JP: Cutting it a little close.

LP: Well, the closer you live the more times you are late, (laughs) because you cut it too close. That was the same thing in high school. Boy, I'm telling you. I had to run more times going to high school than I ever ran. (laughs) Now, I don't know what else you want to know. It was good. We kids, we made our own fun.

JP: I was wondering about games, if you remembered what you played.

LP: Yes. We always had a hopscotch on the sidewalk between the house and the garage, and to this day I still like to go tiptoeing over that. See hopscotch, I still gotta go. I played baseball with the boys out in the alley. I loved to climb trees. I don't know. You had games like Enie, Inie Over and roller skating. That was fun. I always had roller skates. Not ice skates. I had a pair, but my ankles wouldn't hold me, and my mother was scared stiff to let me go ice skating. I might fall through, you know? She wasn't one that liked water.

JP: Do you know why?

LP: I don't know. Well, she wasn't brought up with it and if she was just afraid of it or... But she did have a terror of it. Because, when we went to Wisconsin to see the Dells she wasn't even keen about taking the boat ride. But she looked at the other three of us and says, "Well, if they're going to drown I'm going to drown with them." And she enjoyed it.

JP: A new experience. I always thought your mother was a very intelligent woman.

LP: She was. She loved her garden too. I still laugh at myself sometimes when I plant
things and think, "Hm-m-m! You thought you weren't going to do such and such a thing, but here you are." Because, as kids, we had to pull all the weeds and we had to do work out there. I tell you. I planted more darned tulips. (laughs) Don's with me. Madonna Lilies, too. She always saved all the little bitty ones, you know, because they grew. Another thing I remember is, in the fall of the year, we always went to Fennville for apples. We always got Northern Spies, because they made good applesauce and pies, and I still get them. They used to have the Kings, and they were about that big around, and, oh, they were good. That was one thing, in the evening, one of us would go down in the fruit cellar and get a bowl full of apples and we'd have that in the evening to eat. Would you like some coffee or anything, Jean?

JP: Thanks, not right now. I'll take a rain check if I may. You mentioned having hopscotch on the drive, so I assume the drive was paved. Was the street paved in front of your house?

LP: I remember seeing the street paved.

JP: Okay, and do you have any idea when that...?

LP: I have no idea when it was, but I do remember seeing 17th Street paved and that was quite an event. Because they had these great big tar things, and they’d give you little pieces of tar you could chew. It really was something.

JP: Do you have any idea how long it took to pave?

LP: No. But as long as it took, we were there to watch. (laughs) Because, you see, that was, at one time, the U.S. 31. They turned on the corner of 17th and River. I remember a lot of times the trucks, in bad weather, would line up on 17th Street and
go through in a group. U. S. 31 used to go down Lakeshore, you know, Southshore Drive, and turn where the restaurant is there, and curve around where the windmill is, and then go on to Saugatuck. People say, "I don’t know how you can sleep," but hey I could sleep through anything. Except one thing, when one of the trees blew down in front of the house.

JP: That’s very interesting. You’re doing fine. This is great. I don’t want to wear you out, but this is just exactly the kind of thing that...

LP: You’re not wearing me out. Let’s see, what else do I remember. Oh, I remember sneaking rides from my dad.

JP: (laughs) From where to where?

LP: From Saturday morning. You know, he’d come home and make a telephone call or something like that and he’d stop in the house, and I always figure out maybe where he was going and he never looked in the back seat because we had a touring car you know? So I’d sneak in the back seat, and when I knew we were far enough away that I couldn’t be taken home immediately, I’d tap him on the shoulder.

JP: Was this just you or was Marion in on it?

LP: Oh no! I was the one that was always doing it. She stayed home, did the dishes and like that.

JP: I love the picture. (laughs) That’s cute.

LP: In fact, I got to several nice places. I got to Holland Chair Company. Dad would call... I don’t know, one of the furniture stores.

JP: Yes, it was called Holland Chair Company for a brief period of time.
LP: I don't remember his being... (laughs) such a kick out of it. My mother was just furious. Dad called from there to say, "Hey, she's with me." My mother was just furious. She'd say, "She's got her old clothes on and she..." (laughs) I went a lot of places with my dad.

JP: Can you remember any of the rest of them?

LP: I went to ball games with him and to the Flying Dutchmen. That was a good ball team.

JP: Yes it was. Can you remember any place else?

LP: I don't know. I remember one Saturday morning, the fire whistle blew. Dad knew most of the numbers. They blew a certain number for each box, and he was doing gardening which wasn't his pasttime, and he looked at me and he said, "I think that's the sugar beet factory. I'll go see." So, sure enough this was about eleven, eleven thirty in the morning, so we both jumped in the car and we went to the fire. He had done a lot of work at the sugar beet factory, so he wanted to see what was going on there. It wasn't a big fire, it didn't burn down or anything. It was a fire, and the manager or head of that place was there and he just said to dad, "Well, when can it be fixed?" He looked at me and said, "Have you ever seen the sugar beet factory?" I said, "No!" So I had a private tour of the sugar been factory. I used to get into a lot of stinks like that, just having fun with him.

JP: Yes, that must of been very interesting. Do you remember seeing the machinery or...?

LP: I didn't know really. Dad was going to go through it. This all took me into parts
that he wasn’t even interested in. I don’ remember because I was just a kid. I wasn’t really interested in the machinery. But I do remember he gave me a tour of the sugar beet factory. Then I remember the fires out at Macatawa Park, too. I don’t remember what year it was, but I know the fire trucks were still out there because we had to meet Morry Kuite out there. He lived right across the street from us. Quite a few of the cottages went at that time. I remember going to see where the Ottawa Beach Hotel after the Ottawa Beach Hotel fire… Andy, of course, wanted to go see that, so the whole family jumped in the car and went to see that. I used to go along with my dad on Saturday mornings a lot of times to different jobs and things. My neighbors here all worry about me climbing ladders. Hey, I was brought up on ladders! (laughs) I would say, I had a good childhood. We were well taken care of. When I listen to some of my friends, I think, I really had it. They all look at me and say, "You mean to tell me that you went to Chicago in 1933 to the World’s Fair?" I said, "Yes, we did!" Dad and Andy had some business to take care of and we took in part of World’s Fair in 1933. You see, it made a difference that dad was in business.

JP: This morning I’m more interested in your own recollections.

LP: I remember the Maas store, which was on Tenth Street, just off from River. He built that from the bottom. He did a lot of store fronts and he did a lot of work for Walter Walsh.

JP: Was he a contractor?

LP: Who?

LP: No, he was the man that had the money to build all these things.

JP: This is the Walsh Loan Company?

LP: No. He didn’t have any title or anything. He just had a lot of money. No, you’re thinking of the Beech Milling Company.

JP: Oh yeah. I am. Forget that. (laughs)

LP: I had a lot of friends in the neighborhood. One thing I do remember, you see, my mother was never too well, and I never had a birthday party. I went to a lot of birthday parties, and I was always grumbling that I never had a birthday party. Now I don’t know whether mom paid her to do it, but Mrs. Vande Linde gave me a birthday party one time.

JP: Did she invite all your friends?

LP: Oh yes! We had the whole group. (laughs) At any rate...

JP: You know I was noticing again, and I think you told me this before, that your mother had a child that died between...

LP: Between Jake and Marion someplace... I wasn’t supposed to know all that when I was a child.

JP: So you don’t know whether it was a boy or a girl.

LP: No, I don’t know. I don’t know where it was buried or anything else, because when Dad died, Miriam and I bought six lots in the new part of the cemetery at that time. Then when Jake died, Helen asked if Jake could be buried there, and she said she would like to have, you know... Well, we asked Andy. "Oh sure. I don’t care! I
don’t even care where they bury me," he said.

JP: Bless his heart.

LP: You see that’s how Jake got buried in one of them. You see Jake was young when he died. He was in his early fifties and then of course Mariam was only fifty-six when she died. I figured that my dad died when he was seventy-two, my Grandpa and Grandma Essenburg died when they were both seventy-two, and I thought, if I lived through seventy-two I don’t know...

JP: See, you’re good for years!

LP: Gosh, next year it will be ten years past seventy-two.

JP: Hah! That’s great! Who knows? People are living longer and I just think that’s why...

LP: I don’t mind living longer if I have got my mind and I can get around.

JP: I think you work hard at doing that and that’s what it takes. If you don’t use it you lose it.

LP: Yeah, that’s right. If you don’t use it you lose it. I just won’t give up.

JP: I would like now to ask you, this may be a little bit hard, just do the best you can. But I’m wondering what you think of Holland today.

LP: I wouldn’t want to live there any more. Not in the district, especially, where I was brought up. Do you realize that one of the gang fights would have been in my back yard? In that short time that I was back there I had sort of a Mexican flophouse right next door in what had been Teluve’s house. Back across the alley was the Voss’s house, and they had a whole bunch of boys and one or the other of them was in jail
the biggest part of the time. I had two dogs. Of course, Queen, Kay's dog, because she didn't want to live with me. I was too strict. She thought she was going to have a baby sitter when I came home, and I wouldn't stand for it. She also wanted my car, and I said no. So I don't know where she went from there, but she was mad. I was madder. (laughs) At any rate, I can understand her point of it today. At the time... But, I didn't sleep nights there. I'd stay awake until one, two o'clock until everything was quieted down around there. One night, Booty stood by the dining room window and barked and barked. I couldn't make her shut up. The next day, I found out somebody broke into the Kentucky Fried Chicken right there, that's right practically in the back yard. That dog knew things were wrong. If it had happened again later on, I would have called the police and said, "Hey, this dog's just raising hob here, and something's going on back there." So, no, not in that territory. I might, now like where you live or someplace further out around other places. But you still have to come downtown, and you still don't feel as secure as when I was growing up. The only thing I was scared of is gypsies.

JP: Were there gypsies around?

LP: Yes, and they used to stay sort of outside of town, and they'd come down Sixteenth Street. Well, that scared the daylights out of me, and that's when I stayed home.

JP: When was this?

LP: Oh, I must haves been probably five or six, maybe seven, somewhere in there. Maybe younger, I don't know. But anybody mention that there were gypsies going through town, I stayed home. If somebody wasn't around, I even locked the screen
JP: I was wondering what you remember about the Depression. I'm sorry I forgot to ask you that.

LP: Oh my. We didn't do a lot of running around. We didn't go to movies or anything. We just didn't have the money! Mother was a very good manager--money. She instilled that in all her kids too. You just couldn't live above your income. I remember, she thought I should go to a lot of meetings at the church. I went to a few. I remember the day that Marion found out she couldn't continue in college, because there wasn't the money.

JP: Where was she going?

LP: Hope. That was a very sad day. It just wasn't a very pleasant time.

JP: Did your mother raise things in her garden that you ate?

LP: Oh yes! We always had a vegetable garden. I can still see on a Sunday noon we generally had lettuce, leaf lettuce, with vinegar and salt and sugar for vegetable. I can still see her trotting down the steps to haul them up and cut them up with some onion. We had a lot of vegetables. This side was flowers, this side was vegetables. And we always had tomatoes. She loved tomatoes! Today I would tell her that tomatoes is one of the things that bring on a lot of arthritis. I can tell it in me. When the tomatoes are ripe, I always pick up some. My arms, my aches start. But we always had tomatoes and we always ate... (tape ends)... downstairs there. I figured they probably weren't any good any more. It's just one of those things. I know Holland has to grow. With all the different transportation and the way of
getting around, it's bound to have a lot of other nationalities. It isn't a real Dutch town anymore. I don't know whether I'd want to go back or not. They have a lot of things I hear about. Well, like the retirement home is one thing. Freedom Village is very, very beautiful. And where all the activity is, I can't think.

JP: The senior citizens building, Evergreen Commons?

LP: Evergreen Commons. I did join that one year, thinking I would go down in the summer. But somehow or other there was so much doing up here I never did get to. (laughs) But that is a great place. Your Hope College things, you could take some of that in, where I don't have that up here. That would be one of the drawbacks, and, of course, I still go to Hope Church because I haven't found a church up here that I can say I really want to join or that my friends think I should join. My preference up here would be the Presbyterian Church. But I've got a lot of friends going to the First Reformed. They think I should join First Reformed. So I just conveniently say, "Well, I'm going to stay with Hope Church which is home to me."

It's going to be that way. I get there and I have a chance to talk to this one and that one and you know. I don't know the ministers. I don't get to that type of thing but that's all right, too. (laughs) That was the strangest thing, but that's the way he wanted it. If that's the way he wanted it that's...

JP: That's the important thing, that he feels that his wishes were going to be carried out. I feel the same way about the fact that Reverend De Velder did such a nice job for Mildred you know. She really wanted a more conventional kind of service.

LP: Now I would like a conventional service. Don says, "Ah, you should just be
cremated and be done with it."

JP: Well, you know, I think the important thing is nobody’s beliefs get trampled over. That’s the thing that I’m trying to keep in mind. Hope Church is beautiful. Dr. De Velder has been so good to do a number of services.

LP: I tell you that I have never known a minister like Dr. De Velder. See, we joined church when he was there the first time, and we practically got kicked out... I don’t want that on there. (laughs)

JP: Do you think she would have switched to Hope Church?

LP: Oh yeah. Because they were very good to her. They were better to her than the Christian Reformed.

JP: I was wondering if you could remember any particular turning point in your life. That’s why I was asking about the Depression. If you had different plans and then the Depression changed them.

LP: Well, I’ll tell you, my dad had a lot of different plans. Because he had planned that when we graduated from high school both of would have gotten a new car. Also, that we would have gone on to school. That was the plan.

JP: Would you have enjoyed going to Hope?

LP: I don’t know. Being the person that I was, I liked to snoop around other places, I probably would have liked to go someplace else.

JP: Did you ever allow yourself to dream where you might have gone if you had been able to?

LP: No. I just...
JP: How about business college? Did you ever think about that?

LP: No, because I really didn’t care too much for that. Like a lot of kids that graduated at that time, they were just at loose ends. You know? Most of them, they just didn’t have the money... There were the kids that did have, and they went on to school. A lot of the fellows that played football in my class, they got on... but there just weren’t the... well there were a few things that you could get a sort of scholarship or something but... and besides I had fun going to school. It didn’t worry me too much about my marks, not realizing that, hey, you needed the marks if you wanted to go on a scholarship or anything like that. So, that part of it was just my own fault. But I did have fun. Well, I don’t know anything else that you would like to know.

JP: I’ll just look down here. Oh. Can you tell me which job you enjoyed the most?

LP: County Treasurer’s.

JP: Tell me why.

LP: It was always figures and the addressograph. Because in the addressograph, I worked with a lot of different people, a lot of the supervisors of the townships.

JP: Did you know any of these people through your dad before you got that job or...?

LP: No. I didn’t. Dad was on the Board of Supervisors, and he got the letter that they needed help there. I wanted to apply. My mother said no. No, my dad said no. My mother said, "Why not let her?" Fred came down, and he hired me part-time in 1939. So I stayed there. (laughs)

JP: During the war I suppose they would be very glad to get help. Is that when you were...?
LP: That's when Charlotte and I started the apartment, because she was coming from Coopersville, and I was coming from Holland, and the transportation was nil. We got that apartment for $25 a month. (laughs) Charlotte looked me and she said, "Do you think we can afford that?" Fred says, "For heaven's sakes!" (laughs) That apartment was a fun apartment! Everybody like, well, the bowling team, for instance. They're going to have a party. "Oh, we'll have it at Leona's. There's nobody else around there to bother us." The members of the bowling team that are left will still talk about the parties we had there.

JP: Was yours the only apartment in that building?

LP: Oh no.

JP: I didn't think so.

LP: There were ten upstairs and there were seventeen up on the third floor. See, this and all these chairs came from that apartment. It was really fun. Now half of it's in the museum here.

JP: Yes, I remember that. That beautiful dining room buffet.

LP: But it was just like Grand Central Station. Anybody that didn't know what to do with themselves, they came to by... So it was really fun.

JP: That is my memory of first meeting you. It was in that apartment, and you had some friends in. Because everybody looked so much at home, I wasn't quite sure right away who you were. I mean I didn't know that you were the person that was related. (laughs)

LP: But we did have a lot of fun there.
JP: A nice group of people.

LP: The county, the courthouse itself, when we had the big courthouse, was a lot friendlier. We didn’t close our doors, like they do now because of the air conditioning. The county treasurer’s was in there and across this spot and Forwick was over here. You knew all these people! You knew all the people at the clerk’s office, you knew all the people at the register of deeds. You knew the people at the health unit downstairs. The schools had an office in there. Also the agricultural department. That’s where that book case came from.

JP: Oh, for heaven’s sake!

LP: I was working on the addressograph and I was late, you know. My hours… I had to get the stuff done, and I came down the stairs and I was turning that thing around, and the supervisor from Park Township came down the steps and I knew he was on the building and grounds committee, so he had control selling all this stuff when they were going to build a new one. I’d throw that around again and, “Say! How much do you want for this?” “Oh,” he said, “give me fifty cents.” I said, “That’s good,” so I gave him fifty cents and I walked across the street to Marian’s apartment and I said, “You may be mad at me.” She said, “What?” She just looked at me, and I said I bought something over at the county building. I says, its sort of a book stand or something. I had a key, so we walked over there to look at it. So we put it in the car, and we drove it across and we took it upstairs. You should have seen that thing. It was black from all the wear and years. I looked at the bottom of it, and I thought they’ll never get that good. I think it cost us $35 to have it refinished. I’ve kept it
ever since.


LP: I remember when I first started working up there, I rode from Holland with one of the fellows who worked there. It was funny. Of course, we had Charlotte Travis, Maurine Walling, and Ann Rosema, at that time, and I. We ran around together. We had a lot of fun.

JP: Were you on the bowling team?

LP: Oh yes, we had a bowling team! We didn’t worry whether we won or not, but we had fun. I’m trying to think of her first name. Pyle was her last name. She was an excellent bowler. She used to play softball for Stilling. Of course, she know a lot. And Kaat, he was a professional and was pitching for one of the other teams. But she wanted to go to the baseball game in Detroit. She said, "I’ll drive!" So we took off on a Saturday morning, and we went to Detroit to the ball game, and had a great time. She knew all the places where it was good to eat at. We got home about 4 o’clock in the morning. But we had fun.

JP: Was it just the one time you remember going, or did you go other times?

LP: With that group. But Clarice, at the drop of a hat. Joan Pyle, that was her first name. She was a new member on our team. Alice Ruster, she has passed away since, and we said, "Well, what do you think we ought to have to eat?" She pops up, "Oh duck!" Joan Pyle says, "All right. My mother’s got some in the freezer. I’ll bring a duck!" So she says, "When are you going to be home Sunday?" I’m back at the apartment. I don’t know. "Oh," she says, "I’ll put it in between the storm door
and the other door." So Sunday night, when I get off the bus and got home, there was that package. I thought, I never fixed a duck before. Man alive! How the heck do you do this? (laughs) I thought, well it’s got to be on the same principle as a chicken. So I got some stuffing, I made some stuffing for it, got it all fixed, put it in a slow oven, because the oven was so old, I didn’t have any true controls on it. I figured by the time we were going to eat it would be done. It was delicious. (laughs) That was a party that our bowling team never forgot, because in the first place, we always exchanged gifts and I got two gifts in a row and I thought, now this is crazy and Joan sat up and clapped. That was her first Christmas party with us and she thought, "Oh, my word!" How’s this going to work out now, because I didn’t bring a gift if that’s a hostess gift, you know. Well, two people ran into the kitchen, and they got goofed up on the names. So at any rate, Jerry brought the pie and she worked and worked and worked to cut it into five pieces for the bowling team. All of the sudden someone said, "Hey, there’s six of us!" (laughs) All that happened in one party and we just sat there and chuckled. We had a team that was just fun. If we lost, well we lost. If somebody hit a gutter ball, so what? But I still have a couple trophies. Marian was a good bowler.

JP: Better than you?

LP: Yes!

JP: Oh my gosh! I never knew that.

LP: Much better. I wasn’t a good bowler I think because Marian...

JP: The trophies impressed me, I’m sure.
LP: Marian insisted on buying a 16 pound ball for me. That's what she had. She was an excellent bowler, but not me. She was always trying to change me, you know?

JP: Well, she was your big sister.

LP: That's one of the reasons I never... I had my driver's license, but I never drove until after Marian was gone.

JP: Yeah. She always wanted to drive.

LP: She was a good driver, and she liked to drive. She didn't think about me later on.

JP: Well, you've done just fine. I think we've been talking a long time. Is there anything else in particular that you think of that I haven't asked you about that you thought you would like to talk about?

LP: Nope. I don't think so. Tonight I'll probably think of something.

JP: If you do, make a little note of it. I think I would reserve the opportunity maybe some time to come back and just ask you about the buildings you remember your fathers and brothers...

LP: Well, as I probably told you, Andy was so much older than I was. He was thirteen years older. He was my big brother just like I would be a big sister to Don, because Don is fourteen years younger than I am.

JP: Right. Don has always said that, that he regarded you as an older sister.

LP: Yeah. Of course, Marian took care of him a lot more than I did. I didn’t bother.

(laughs)

JP: Well, thank you very much. Is there anything else?

LP: Do you have to go home for lunch?
Added by Mrs. Postma after the interview:

In a magazine my Mother took was a page of paper dolls—a doll and clothes for her. I always cut them out and put the clothes on the doll. I spent time tracing the clothes for size then designing my own and coloring them. Had quite a box full.

Something I didn’t mention was the neighborhood groceries and meat market. Harry Prins had a store on 16th between Pine & Maple. I liked to go along with my Dad on Saturday night to pay the week’s bill. I always got some candy. Wolfters was on Central between 15th & 16th. Downtown DeKosters and De Kraker meat market on River between 7th & 8th Streets. Also Sonny Kuites on south side of 8th Street between River & Central. I remember Dad did a lot of work for the last two. Also Smith’s Drug Store on corner of 16th & Central where Antiques Etc. is now located. I can’t forget Van Putten’s grocery and dry goods store on River between 8th & 9th. Half was the dry goods store run by the Van Putten sisters and the other half was the grocery run by John Oler — and they delivered. Also DeJonge’s grocery store across the street from Froebel School — had the best selection of penny candy in town.

Another event was the Decoration Day parade. Dad always decorated the car with flags and drove in the parade. It was a lot longer then — at least it seemed that way. We always got a box of CrackerJack.

I almost forgot the Fabianos - one of River & Patsys on 8th St. They made their own candy until the state made too many regulations. It was very good. At Christmas they made candy canes. That’s how come candy canes became a tradition in our family. I’ve never tasted a candy cane as good as Fabiano’s homemade ones.
Something else I remember--the Sunday afternoon walks with my Dad. We walked all over town and he would give me the history like who lived there now, who built the place and for whom, and other information at the time. At the time I wondered about this but it came in very handy when I worked in the Co. Treasurer’s office.
Addendum to Oral History Interview of Leona Postma

The address of my apartment on 5th Street was 114 S. 5th Street—not what I gave you.

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