Vander Linde, Henry Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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The Hope College Oral History Project for 1996
The Joint Archives of Holland

Interview #19
Henry VanderLinde
Holland's Past Fifty Years

Conducted by:
Tracy Bednarick
August 20, 1996
TLB: Could you state your name, your date of birth, and where you were born?

HVL: Henry VanderLinde, born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on July 13, 1924.

TLB: When did you come to Holland for the first time?

HVL: I came in 1950.

TLB: What brought you to Holland?

HVL: My work at Christian High School and the Christian schools here in town.

TLB: Could you tell me a little bit about your family? Are you married? Do you have children?

HVL: I am married. My wife is Mary. We have three children: two daughters and a son. They are all college graduates. The oldest daughter graduated from Northern Michigan University with a Bachelors in Science and Nursing. Our second daughter graduated from Olivet College and did her Masters Degree at Michigan State. She is a voice teacher and musician. At the present time she is a professional singer and teacher. Our son graduated from Holland Christian, Calvin College, and got his Doctorate from Notre Dame. He is a tenured professor of economics at Calvin College at the present. Our oldest daughter is married to Larry McKay, a General Motors management employee. Our second daughter is married to Tom Hart, who is the director of choral services at Graceland College in Iowa. Our son is married Maria Wester, formerly, who is from this town.
She has a medical doctor’s degree. Our son-in-law is a DMA. So education is in the family, and medicine is a part. We have six grandchildren. We are an active, happy and flourishing family.

TLB: Did you move to Holland from Grand Rapids? Or did you live somewhere else before?

HVL: This is a little hard to explain. I came here to teach instrument and music in the Holland Christian Schools. At that stage they were just growing. It was not, at that time, feasible for them to give me a full contract. They bought time that first year. I taught here. I taught in Grand Rapids. I taught in Allendale. And I taught in what was the beginnings of the West Ottawa district, which was at that time Beechwood. People bought my time and my services. I was like an itinerate that first year—running all over the place.

TLB: I bet that was fun [laughter].

HVL: You had to know where you had to be next, or you would be late and couldn’t make your appointments. I would finish here on Friday. I was here Monday, Wednesday, Friday. As a typical day, if I finished on Friday, I would head to Grand Rapids and teach at the Grandville Avenue Christian School, which was on the farthest western edge of Grand Rapids, right near the Galewood district. So I could make it on time. There were no roads like we have now. There was just M-21 and it was not complete four lane traffic. It was divided in places.

TLB: When did you finally have a permanent position?

HVL: I kind of worked into it. The next year they wanted me to sign a contract here in the
city of Holland. So, I did. I signed a contract here. Of course, the program was just a little bit small. At that time West Ottawa was not a school district, but Beechwood was. Some of the students from that school would come to us over at Christian. At that time, they were drawing people from Coopersville and Allendale. I went to teach at the Allendale Christian school, because Coopersville kids went to Allendale. Eventually they came over here. That was prior to the building of Unity Christian in Hudsonville. It is kind of a complex network.

TLB: What were some of your first impressions of Holland when you came here?

HVL: Great place to want to live. I had heard of the traditions in Holland, naturally, and the Tulip Festival. I had a good friend who proceeded me in the schools and brought me out here with him to see what it was like to teach, never thinking that I would be here and follow whoever was at the post at that time. It was during the summer, the summer of 1948. Just prior to that, I was along with music in Grand Rapids. I grew up there, played in high school, played in the Calvin band, played in (what they called) the Knickerbocker band. It was originally "Sons of the Christian Veterans" in Grand Rapids. It got to be quite a prestigious group and name. We played many concerts, not only in the parks. We got involved in the Centennial of Holland. They dressed us all up in Dutch costumes and we met the big airplane, the Constellation, that came in at that time in Grand Rapids. The theme was "Twenty-six hours versus twenty-six days." The immigrants who first came here would expect to take twenty-six days. Here in the Constellation they came over in twenty-six hours. They flew around Grand Rapids wondering how to put that big plane down on the not so large
Grand Rapids airport. But they did. There we were seated on the stage. We had tunes sent to us from the Netherlands that we could play as well. Then we came out here to Holland, to Kollen Park, and also played a big concert down in the park. All these things kind of interwove. When the opportunity came and this friend asked me to come out, he knew what he was doing, but I didn’t. The opportunity presented itself for me to become a teacher here. Which I did.

In 1952, I signed a contract here. But as it would have it, it wasn’t full-time yet. We didn’t have enough students or classes. So I took everything from what they called "music" for fourth through twelfth grade.

HVL: They farmed me out again to Beechwood on Friday and Allendale on Tuesday and Thursday. I ran a circuit here. Then it was school year ’55, that I signed a contract for full time employment for the city of Holland.

TLB: At the Christian schools?

HVL: At the Christian schools.

TLB: What was it like raising your children in Holland?

HVL: It was a very excellent experience, because I feel that in the era in which we raised our children we found great strength in the community. It was an emerging community, whereas today we would call it a burgeoning community. It represented all the good values: home, church, school. They were all in good relation to each other. There were good, solid, wholesome activities. There were rivalries in the best of intentions. Christian and Holland Public, in basketball contests was always a thing. Christian and Zeeland in basketball, or any contest was a natural in. The
stage was set. May the victor be the superior! [laughs]

TLB: Like with Hope and Calvin.

HVL: Oh yeah, it follows that track and train. Very good. There were great values here. They were unashamed and expressed. As I said, it was emerging. They saw in the early stages, what it was like to get along in a diverse community where the majority of the people were not necessarily going to think alike. They had to deal with various problems. They were emerging. We saw many Spanish people coming in, the establishment of the Spanish church, services. We saw the Vietnamese and the actions of Cuba. We saw people coming from all of these places, and the church was embracing them and helping them. This is great to see and great to witness, because our children were part of that. They grew up in the 60’s and they graduated in the 70’s from both high school and college. The last one graduating in 1980. So it’s a track and train as you look back in the historical significance of it, that our children had the best of the expression of values, the greatest experience to know what it was like to be someone who came in versus someone who was born here. They grew up here during a simpler, yet uncluttered age, emerging steadily forward to what was experience today, which is a vast difference.

Where I notice it more or less, is where I live. I have lived in the same location for around thirty-four years. All the area and land around us was farm land, although we lived in Holland Heights, not too far from the country club. Everything else was farm land. It’s all homes now. Now the children say, "Hey dad, remember when we used to walk across that field to get to old Eastview school?" They didn’t
transport you everywhere at first; buses came later. It was a different time.

TLB: And now there are houses all over there now?

HVL: Oh, yes.

TLB: It is no longer a field.

HVL: You have to look for a field, now it is residences of various sizes. You have your apartments in that whole strip off of Sixteenth Street back toward Eighth under various names: Oxford, Radcliff, the various manors. They are all in there. They're are multiple dwellings and apartments. Those were all farms. You knew the people who lived there. You knew the farm. You could talk about Brook’s farm and the City Farm, the Vander Kolk’s on the corner of Sixteenth and Country Club. If you go back to the area by Camelback, that was all corn fields and wheat fields. If you got a little bit across the highway, you were in the country. The Plaggemars, the Vandenburg’s, the Wagenvelts, all had farms.

TLB: And now it is just lots and lots of people.

HVL: Holland Heights school was a much smaller school than it is now. The facility is much enlarged in comparison to what it was at that time. The old Eastview school which has gone through a transition over a period of time and renamed, was used varyingly for school and now for several business enterprises.

TLB: It’s amazing how much Holland has changed. Not being from the community, I’m surprised that the town can change so quickly.

HVL: I teach each summer and have for the past twenty-four years at Blue Lake Music Camp. A good friend of mine, I knew through high school, a very prestigious high
school in Winetka, Illinois, maybe expresses it better that we who live here. We see the change. But he says, "Henry, do you ever once in a day realize the tremendous, tremendous changes going around about you? We drive in from Winetka headed for Blue Lake. I have been coming for the last fourteen years, continuously. I cannot for the life of me believe the visible changes to the immediate highway, mostly commercially. All of the mall types and whatever. He says, "They weren't even a thought." The Dutch Village was there, of course, but everything that has surrounded it now. The motels, and that is only part of the picture. Go a mile to the west or a mile to the east of the highway and you see residences that were just built on farmland. Big housing projects, multiple as well as many, many single dwellings.

TLB: What are some organizations you have been involved in and what did you do in them?

HVL: In the city?

TLB: In the city, with the church or your work.

HVL: In the city, I have been director of the American Legion Band for thirty-one years.

TLB: What is your instrument specialty?

HVL: Euphonium. You look surprised. That is just a fancy name for baritone horn. The euphonium is a big bore instrument which has a larger more euphymious sound. As the word says euphonium--good sounding. I think that is the best definition you can give it. I directed the Legion Band for thirty-one years. I've been a member of Kiwanis since 1959. I have been past president of The Evening Club. In 1987, we began the senior division. They are known in Grand Rapids as the Golden K, but we call ourselves the Holland Evergreen. We meet at Evergreen Commons, and we are
You have to be a member of one of the active clubs.

Of course, I have always been very active in the church. Seeing that my post was music, it is not very incidental that I ended up teaching Sunday school and that sort of thing. I was choir master of Central Avenue Reformed Church for thirty-four years. They now call me Director Emeritus. You stay one place long enough, you are going to get emeritated somewhere.

TLB: That is a good title to have.

HVL: I have also been involved with Tulip Time. I have been chairman of bands since 1964.

TLB: I bet that is a lot of work.

HVL: Well, yes, because of all the applications from the people who want to participate in our parades. We screen them, look at them, correspond with them, send them material, form our parade list, and keep in touch with them so that they know that you know they are coming. And you are always on the lookout for talent. You hear about groups, you want them to come. You make sure that you contact them in hopes that they will accept, we don’t pay anybody. If you want to come here, wonderful. But we can’t hire you to come. We give you the opportunity to parade our streets and be exposed to about 200,000/250,000 people on a Saturday, which is no mean accomplishment for a town this size.

TLB: It was my first Tulip Time last May and it was amazing how many people were there, let alone how many bands were in the parade. I’ve never seen a parade with that
many bands. It was a lot of fun.

HVL: Close to fifty.

TLB: What are some qualities that seem to stand out concerning the city of Holland?

HVL: It has always had a quality government with quality people in the city government. Those who run for office, and those who are in office and the manner in which they conduct themselves according to the ideals of the community. The handling of various problems that arise often stems from a better viewpoint than just capricious conduct and action. Assets, it’s been in churches, it’s concern for young people. It’s love which is demonstrated in so many different ways. Sometimes it doesn’t look that way, but real basically down in true, this town knows how to help when any cause or condition arises. It speaks well of what I would call business conduct. It is a quality and integrity. There’s a basic honesty here. There was always a phrase that has been used, "Let the buyer beware." We’ve heard that for a long time. I don’t feel that way from the basic business community here in town. I think there’s always been a basic reliable conduct that a person could expect from those who serve them. And also, people respect each other.

TLB: Are there any negative aspects to Holland or any drawbacks to living in Holland?

HVL: I wouldn’t want to paint the picture that it really is gilded in gold and that there are no faults. There are prejudices here. But there are prejudices everywhere. It’s what you do, to eliminate the prejudice? Do you recognize it and work to eliminate it? Or do you quietly sneak away and hold your own opinion? Until at some inopportune time, your real feelings will crop out because you can’t hide or escape the condition.
I think the town has gone a long way in overcoming some of these. There are some deep seated opinions that people have and possess. There are times when certain nationalities have an inquisitive attitude. Of course, that has to be worked on individually. If it becomes collective, then it has to be pointed out for what it is. But I think our newspapers, by and large, speak well in editorials to conditions. There are standards that are expected to be met. And there are some folk ways and some morays that a lot of people don’t like to accept. In other words, come back to your neighbors. Are they like me? Well, they might not be like you. Then what are you going to do about it? In other words, this may sound silly. I don’t know whether it’s historical or not, but people don’t like to see other people. There are some people, I have to be careful of the logic now. Some people don’t like to see other people doing their laundry and hanging it out on Sunday. And they don’t like to hear a power mower going up and down the lawn. Yet, no one would deny a neighbor starting his snow blower in the bitter of winter.

See, because the conditions are one and not the same. People take a different view of that. That is a certain generation of people. I would find myself pretty well inclined in that certain generation. If you would ask me, "Do you like that?" I would say, "No, I don’t." There are many days given that you can do that in, regardless of your working schedule, perhaps, where I’d be willing to lend some latitude. But by and large, no. Dismiss yourself from that activity on that occasion.

TLB: On Sundays?

HVL: Yes, yes. Well, of course, for sometime there was talk about what we would call the
Sunday Blue Laws and so forth? Again, it was time to express an idea of why the original settlers came here to begin with. What they kind of expected of each other and of those that surrounded them. As tradition has gone on, I think there’s been a wide variance in the amount of acceptance that people give to each other.

TLB: Have the Blue Laws changed at all?

HVL: I think in some respects, excepting for the matter of spirits and drink and those which are controlled by a different element, in which each town came to control within itself. Whether they argued for or against it, is personal opinion. But if they’re there, they should be observed.

TLB: What are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen in Holland in the last fifty years or since you moved here?

HVL: Growth and that’s a wide scope. Industrial, housing, population, spread into its full limits and extensions somewhere beyond. Schools, where there were fewer schools there are many more. You have the full West Ottawa system at the north. Holland school district, Holland Christian. Great big complex. They used to have the smaller schools, south and west and east, and as we used to call it cross river Rose Park. That growth right there, just the word growth. They used to have a sign when you came into Holland around by Russ’, that announced "Welcome to Holland." And then there was a sign that told you the population. Now, you’re quite new here, so they just don’t have a sign like that.

TLB: They’d have to change it a lot.

HVL: Yes.
TLB: Have you been involved with any of the changes that Holland has seen?

HVL: I wouldn’t say particularly, no. I personally did not do anything. I was not on
HEDCOR committee or any of these areas other than just effective as a citizen.

TLB: How did either you, as a citizen, or the community react to some of the changes?
How do you see the community or people reacting to the growth in Holland?

HVL: I think it’s sort of a division. Some people are very concerned about it and others
pay little attention, just live day by day in their own sphere of reference. For
instance, they would be accustomed to doing their own routine and their own thing.
Other people are sort of visionaries. They say, "Our downtown is going to
disintegrate unless we do something about it." And you get a generous philanthropist
like Ed Prince, who saves the downtown community which is second to none for a
town this size. It’s well brought and well thought. You have those who are very
active. There’s been a certain neatness in this town where people expect you to keep
up your property, keep up your vehicles, and in general give the town a good, neat
look. Of course, they have certain laws which they expect people to adhere to on
parking and vehicle placement. Now, looking forward to the big Area Center. I was
here when they built the Civic Center. That was going to be the establishment.

Well, the area outgrew what it could be used for size. The size of the Civic Center
for a mass gathering is diminutive compared to some of the churches that we have.
The mega churches, two very pronounced ones, a third one which is now on 16th
Street and a fourth in prospect. From what you would call the neighborhood
churches to the more mega church attitude, that’s a big change.
TLB: Is that the Third Reformed Church, or the Fourth Reformed Church?

HVL: Those are smaller evidences of the past. The big ones are Christ Memorial, Wesleyan and Assembly, and then the new Victory Point which will be coming. Those would be called your mega churches of the area. And you go just north of here and you see some other larger structures where people drive distances. It’s not like you step out of your house, walk fifteen minutes, ten minutes, five minutes to church because you lived near Central Ave. You lived on 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, or 18th. Came this way or you went to 14th Street Church across from the park or to Trinity or Sixth and Fourth, Third and Hope.

TLB: What do you think that’s doing to the smaller churches now that more people are going to the larger churches?

HVL: It’s shrinking some. Very definitely.

TLB: Since we’re on churches, how do you think the churches influence the city of Holland? Do they have a pretty large influence or is it the same as any other city?

HVL: I would like to think that they have a little more major influence than just passing glances. That would be found in definite expressions on things which had to be decided. I would say over Judeo-Christian ethics.

TLB: What do you think some of the causes of the changes in Holland have been? What caused the growth in Holland?

HVL: Primarily, we have a strong work ethic here. You can count on a person coming to work and being at his post at his job, or his store as an employee or as an employer. There were strong work ethics within companies. People did entribe to do an
excellent job. As a result, it started to draw because as the business area began to increase, the labor force had to match it. Some came in from the outside, others growing up here in this community, with certain skills and abilities were able to supply the demand. Medical, we have excellent doctors. And we have a fine hospital. We have excellent medical services. Laboratories, you name it, what not. You have very reliable specialists. That in itself is a basic security in any community, I don’t care what anybody says. You can be assured that they will be fair and they are competent. Competence in the workplace, competence in the professional services, all lend itself to saying this is a good area in which to be. We have excellent schools. We have excellent facilities. Both the private and the public facilities in school buildings alone are outstanding.

TLB: Right, I would agree with that.

HVL: I judge high school and junior high school music bands all over the state, so I get into buildings of every shape, size and description. When I come home, I don’t find any that are what you would call, well, I don’t want to say better, but we compare very, very well. Some of the newer institutions that are being built at the present time do have, with technology and so forth, some outstanding compensations that older systems are now just renovating and coming into. Zeeland, with its new school just going up. Rockford has a tremendous facility. Middleville, a little community out of Grand Rapids, huge facilities. It boggles your mind. But, it’s for the new era and going to the next century. It’s kind of scary when you think about it, we’re getting that close.
TLB: Has there ever been any controversy in Holland?

HVL: Like what?

TLB: Any disagreements between the community and the government of Holland or anything that Holland tried to brush aside that you recall?

HVL: I imagine there probably was. I'm not, right now, prepared to give any evidence.

TLB: I always ask that because sometimes somebody will remember something that happened in the city that is unusual that nobody knows of or something like that, but that's not something that somebody always has to pull right off the top of their head, either. But you never know! How has Hope College changed in the fifty years that you've been here, if you've noticed?

HVL: Again, in the size of the building growth. Many homes that used to surround it have now become residence dorms besides the big collective dorms. What do you call resident homes?

TLB: Cottages.

HVL: Cottages, resident cottages. I applaud the college for not destroying them, but for looking for their practical use and for moving them to their advantage. I think it's excellent. Just the physical room. I mean, when I came here, Hope College was in this square with few surrounding buildings on either side of the street. The big, beautiful chapel, Graves Hall, Voorhees, Van Raalte. There was a fraternity house. I think it was the Knickerbocker, I'm not sure. It looked like a little fortress over there on Columbia. Van Vleck, and the quaint president's home. Early Tulip Times, we used to start at Columbia and come back to Columbia. Down to River, up 12th,
and back to Columbia. That’s where all our equipment was, we put it away and go home. Of course, you know that’s changed, too, entirely. Well, just in two elements. One is the physical building growth, with your Dow Center and your De Witt Center, Maas Center, and now the Haworth Center. All of these things, to the alum it is one of these mind boggling again to think of it. People who’ve been gone, let’s say in my generation, well, I remember when they built the Lubber’s science lab. I was in the Reformed Church at that time as a student, you know, a young child, and the church had pictures of this Lubber’s building. Although, it wasn’t called that at that time. It was the new science building at Hope College. They asked us to contribute our nickels and dimes and quarters and pennies, whatever. We did that in our churches and young people societies and all that. Well, it was all in a square. Now look at it. It stretches to the east as far as it can go. It stretches to the west. You have all your athletic fields and the city stadium.

That was another big change, the big city stadium from Riverview Park. We used to go down to the football game at Riverview Park. Wonderful, sit there underneath the grandstand, let it snow, let it rain! Get wet, guys, out on the field! Yeah, let’s go Hope, we’re dry!

TLB: You can’t do that at the new one!

HVL: No. These things, Hope has changed tremendously and in the student body wise.

Not only the services it offers, its excellent education is achieved here, but it’s a great, great college town. You have your concerts, you have your athletic activities, it’s all here. It’s a college town.
TLB: Did you say that you graduated from Calvin College?

HVL: Yes. I served in the army from 1943 to '46.

TLB: Where were you stationed?

HVL: I was with the 339th Service Force Band.

TLB: OK, do you want to repeat where you were stationed?

HVL: I was stationed in Monroe, North Carolina. Then we moved to Jackson, Mississippi, and I stayed there at a military hospital as entertainment troops through the rest of the war. The hospital where I was stationed has since become a big VA center. At that time, it was a big rheumatic fever center. Many of our troops that were in Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France contacted rheumatic fever. From that, they had heart damage. So, they were sent to the hospital where I was stationed. Many of them looked very healthy, very healthy. But they all had heart damage because of rheumatic fever. So, we were known as Foster General Hospital, rheumatic fever center. We played for all the military functions in a ninety mile radius, put on a radio program every week, and split up into three different groups and played down in the wards. We didn't have walkmen and we didn't have tape recorders and we didn't have these CD's and neat little compact devices. We brought the music live.

TLB: You were the music!

HVL: We were the music. If you wanted to hear trombone, there was a real trombone.

TLB: What was it like when you returned from the war? What was it like when all the
veterans were coming back? You would have been returning to Grand Rapids?

HVL: I returned to Grand Rapids.

TLB: Was there a change in Grand Rapids when all of the veterans came home?

HVL: Oh, sure. It was trying to become reestablished, looking for jobs. Were there jobs available? Wartime interests, of course, dropped off. Defense jobs were not going to be plentiful, naturally. Some of that picked up again in the fifties when we went into Korea. Up until that point, you were out. What are you going to do? I went to back to where I worked before I went into the army. And they were duty bound to, if they could, return you to your job. So, the first question asked me, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Well, what do you mean what am I going to do?" They said, "Are you going to work here or are you going to get advanced education?" I said, "Oh, I'm going to college on the GI Bill. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to take advantage of it." "Oh, good, then you don't get your old job back. We'll put you at this job. When are you going?" "In June." "Oh, this is March, you'll be leaving us in June. Well, come to work next week." That sort of thing. And I did it, I went there and worked. In June, I enrolled in a summer school and went to college right off from summer school as well as the regular terms during the year. You could do that.

TLB: I know that Hope had a lot of people come at that time and had to figure out where to put them all. Did Calvin have similar problems?

HVL: Identical. Right near Calvin was a place called Alexander School. It was unused. Calvin took it over as a dorm. We came out of the military, we weren't fussy.
Living standards and codes as long as it wasn't a fire trap. They got by on minimal standards with the understanding, of course, that this would not be permanent. Think of a school that had three hundred and six months later after the war was sitting there with six hundred more people making a total population of nine hundred, nearly a thousand.

TLB: Yes, a big change for the school.

HVL: Well, tremendous change for the school, but Hope experienced the same thing. They had to get professors, they had to get building space, room space, the cozy college community that kind of shut down around noon and that sort of thing. So, you had your classes in the morning, study sessions, or a small part time job. You were going to school and they were teaching six days a week. I went to Calvin Monday through Saturday. You had classes on maybe every one of those days somewhere.

TLB: Were there any shortages that you noticed after the war?

HVL: Sure, there were shortages in clothing, cars. I worked in a grocery store. All of a sudden, Proctor and Gamble wasn't able to have enough shortening ready. The shortening that you would give to people, you'd save for your best customers. For all points and pretenses, it wasn't available, but your best customers . . .

TLB: Got a little bit.

HVL: Yes, they were getting it. Your steadies. Because what people were doing is going from place to place and getting what they wanted that they couldn't get anywhere else. When the shortages, of course, ended, there was this common trafficking. No one worried about it. Then, at first again, then they were a little bit close.
TLB: What do you make of the increased amount of different populations in Holland, the different ethnic groups that now come to Holland? What has brought them here and how is it working in the city?

HVL: I think what brought them here is most naturally employment. We have a lot of opportunities for people to work, certain people who have many skills and we can employ them here. Churches that help refugees. It's strengthening when you have diverse populations to the degree that it's wider and broader in its scope. You don't think singularly. You see, in the churches, we have sung for years, "In Christ, there is no east or west. In Him, no south or north. But one great fellowship with love throughout the whole wide earth." But when this is happening, it's right here.

We've sent missionaries all over the globe. Now, the people are here from all over the globe. So, there is a strengthening when there is purposeful living.

TLB: How does the Dutch heritage still play in the community?

HVL: Oh, in a varying sort. Maybe a person my age representing the generation that I do, brought up by a more (I hate to say the word prejudiced because it's such a bad word).

TLB: More conservative, maybe?

HVL: Well, it has a bad ring to it. Very conservative, that is true, but we were brought up in a strict, Christian context. There's a great lessening of it. Then the expression was, "Even when I was a boy," and as a young parent and now as I see our children and their conduct and what our grandchildren will then be used to. How do you express it? Well, at one time, eating out on a Sunday was not too popular a thing,
you didn’t do it. Restaurants closed on Sunday. It was especially then, when some of them stayed open during Tulip Time so that people could find a place to eat. Now, wide open. Stores didn’t open on Sunday. In fact, I can remember when Lokker-Rutger’s pulled shades down on their store windows. You wouldn’t go window shopping, either. So, what looks like the shade of the past is gone from those evident actions. Everything is wide open. Much more so than it was at one time. There was a feeling about Sunday observance, it was a quiet day, very few activities. Now, it’s a wider scope. The beach is out there and lots of people go there. It’s a wide open during the season, you can face it. This being a resort community, there is always an influx of population from all over. But it’s a good place and I don’t feel that I stand in judgment on it. I’m just saying there are changes. I don’t have to be a part of it if I don’t want to and I’m not going to take a stump and rail against it. You ask about changes, this is one of the changes. It’s just the way the old story goes. For instance, concerts on Sunday aren’t allowed. See, Sunday was a set aside day and Sunday observance is still, for our community, basically quiet in comparison to other communities perhaps our size or larger. But, there’s been a great latitude from one generation to the next.

TLB: We already talked about industry, I think. Is there anything about Holland that helps the industry here? To keep it here?

HVL: Oh, they’re very judicious in tax abatement. You promise them so many jobs and put the ledger that will give evidence that this is true, tax abatements has been proffered to a lot of industry to settle here, develop here and produce here.
TLB: Have the youth of Holland changed at all?

HVL: You’re trying to see night and day, aren’t you? You’re asking me about night and day. Yes, they’ve changed tremendously. The influences of the country are very well seen within the young people today. In dress, in music, in thought and in expression. It’s all here. It takes a little longer, but hairstyles will change eventually, if they have been somewhere else. Music, art, activities, theater, movies and so forth. There used to be a couple little movies downtown, now you’ve got big theaters in a couple different ports. Three, four, five, six, or seven movies, all running in various centers in that one building. Oh, yes. That sure is big change.

TLB: Now, I’m not sure if they have this right or not. Were you involved with the school board?

HVL: Yes, secretary of the school board.

TLB: And this was for the public school?

HVL: The Holland Public Schools.

TLB: When did you become involved with that?


TLB: Are there any decisions that have been made on the school board that stand out or any changes that have gone through the school board since your time there?

HVL: Changes like in what reference?

TLB: Like that have affected the school teachers?

HVL: Well, that’s a little hard to say because it’s such a diverse process. Changes, right now, of course, we’re facing the way school’s that are financed. I would say that
was, in my tenure, the major change. In how schools are financed. Because they went from taxation to taxation. Taxation plus a voucher that was not actually a voucher. It's a student grant. Every student is worth so much. So, you count the number of students and your foundation grant comes over here and then you weigh that against the budget. So, I'd say the manner in which schools are financed.

TLB: It's a big thing?
HVL: It's a huge change.

TLB: What do you make of the new charter schools that are coming into Holland and how do you think that might affect the public schools?
HVL: Well, of course, the news just came out yesterday, about how many people will be going to the two charter schools that are being established. Over a hundred and some, I believe. One hundred and sixty. Charter schools have not proven themselves. In some cases, where they have a year or so, on areas that have not established any, there's been mixed review depending on which way you look at it. Right now, we can't say what charter schools are going to produce because they haven't produced anything yet. My personal deep and historical feeling is, let's make our public schools so good that this other is unnecessary.

TLB: Is there one job or task that had to do with work that you particularly enjoyed since you've come to Holland? Something that stands out?
HVL: For me personally?
TLB: Yes.
HVL: Well, there's always involvement in music. Band director, instrumental music
teacher, thirty-eight years in the school, taught everything from fifth grade through high school all by myself. I was the only person they knew if they started with me in the fifth grade. And they graduated, we still had them, they had me. So, I would say professionally, an excellent place to teach. Why? Because Tulip Time and its parades allowed the instrumental music movement to flourish. And it still flourishes, whether it's band, orchestra or choir. There's fine music within the town. You have it here at the college. We have it in the town. We have it in our schools. Tulip Time is a great evidence of how many are really involved. You being new to the area probably weren't aware of the huge number of participants and all these levels from elementary through high school.

TLB: Was there ever one job that was difficult or that you didn't like?

HVL: No, because I never ventured in areas I didn't like.

TLB: That's a good idea! Can you tell me what you have heard other people say of Holland, such as people that live out of town or friends or family from out of town?

HVL: Clean town, great place to live. Wow, have you ever seen the malls? Neat downtown area. Great college town. Active, busy. A town with a future, a town with a great present, a town that respects its past.

TLB: Concentrating on Holland, how do you think the role of women has changed in the past fifty years?

HVL: How do you say it best? We're just a reflection of what's going on elsewhere, with certain variations. The variations being the fact that the ready acceptance of these changes are not always commendary. For various locations. Let's take a simple
thing. Postal employees were all men. Go to the post office, it was all men. Not so anymore. Teaching used to be the majority ladies. Now your grade schools will have men teachers as well, as they call role models. Administration, top administration, generally speaking were men. We have a wonderful superintendent who’s a woman. Medicine, oh, those who wing their way in white were nurses. All girls. Oh, once in a while you’d have a male nurse. But, not majority wise. Who heard of a woman doctor? A woman dentist. Podiatrist. Optometrist. Every field is open. We’re no different. We’re a reflection of what is in the country and the movements that have gone forward. If you have the ability and the desire and you make preparations for it, you have the opportunity to function in this capacity. Very much. So, it’s changed a lot.

TLB: Yes. That’s it with my questions. Do you have anything that you’d like to add about your personal history, what it was like to teach in Holland?

HVL: I had a great career here. I actually did. I started very small and ended with a great number of students. I had great parent support, I had great community support, and still do. Our summer concerts have just concluded. We had ten concerts. We’ve carried on the tradition of the American Legion Band, who’ve just celebrated their seventy-fifth year. This year was seventy-six. People who come to the park and listen are plenty in number. I worked for some excellent school officials. I think very highly of the college here and as a result, I always felt that I had access to the best. There was a great acceptance here for instrumental music. And parents supported it well. We had an excellent, what we called a Band-Orchestra Parents’
Association who purchased things for us that school budgets would not be able to allow. Or afford. And there wasn't anything that I felt I couldn't do here, so there was no need to go elsewhere to try to do it. I had opportunities to leave here many times, but I always thought of my family first. This is home. I thought of a community that gave me a lot and I'm unashamed in wanting to return anything I can give to it. And to its generations. The young people. That's why I serve on the school board, to make sure that we can pass on to another generation the quality, standard of the best, so that they will be thoroughly furnished to have a good board.

TLB: Thank you very much, and I think you survived that quite well! Is there anything that you want to add about Holland's history or any changes that have occurred?

HVL: Not particularly.

TLB: I think we've covered a pretty good deal. What I'm going to do is type it up and send you a copy so you can look through and make any changes that might need to be made. I'll include an envelope and you can send it back in that. Then I'll send you a final copy to keep and show your family.

HVL: It's been pleasant.

TLB: Thank you very much.