

Kentwood Historic Preservation Commission Oral History Transcript Cover Sheet



Name of individual (s): Dale Heyboer (044-2003)

Name of Interviewer: Joyce Thompson

Date: March 3, 2003

Brief summary of individual's importance to Paris
Township/Kentwood history:

The Heyboer family has owned and operated a farm on 52nd Street for more than 100 years. They have served the community in a variety of ways—political, educational, and religious. Dale was one of the founders of the Kentwood Historical Society and serves on the Kentwood Historic Preservation Commission. He has held several offices within local government.

Kentwood Historical Preservation Commission (KHPC) Oral History

Subject: Dale Heyboer
Interviewer: Joyce Thompson
Date of Interview: March 4, 2003
Place: Dale Heyboer's home: 2580 52nd Street, S.E. Kentwood Michigan,
in the kitchen area.

Transcribed by Lori Vander Stel, At Your Service, March 2003.

Dale Heyboer (DH)
Joyce Thompson (JT)

JT: All right. Today is March 4, 2003, and this is the taped oral history of Dale Heyboer. Correct spelling? Pronunciation? We are at his home; 2580 52nd S.E., in the kitchen area. My name is Joyce Thompson, and I will be recording this oral history for the Kentwood Historical Preservation Commission. This tape will be transcribed; a copy given to Dale so he can revise or make any corrections or deletions that he wishes. When Dale Heyboer is satisfied and the oral history is completed, he will be asked to sign a release so it can become part of Kentwood's archives. Is this arrangement satisfactory to you Dale?

DH: Yes, that's fine.

JT: Okay well, what is your name, age and date of birth?

DH: Well my name is Dale Heyboer, my age is 73, my date of birth is April 30, 1929.

JT: Okay. Where were you born?

DH: I was born in the farmhouse down the road, about an 8th of a mile.

JT: So this was a home birth.

DH: It's a home birth.

JT: Okay, who was present at that birth?

DH: The doctor didn't make it on time, so my aunt Lucille Broersma delivered me.

JT: [laugh]

DH: She was a nurse, and she was there at the time.

JT: Were all the children born at home?

DH: That's a good question. I think so, but I'm not sure about that.

JT: Your parent's names and their date of birth?

DH: Well, my father was Abe Heyboer, and his date of birth was July 1895. That'd be July 2, 1895. And my mother Mina Broersma, was born September 13, 1899.

JT: Okay, your siblings and their names?

DH: My sister is the oldest, and her name is Margaret Nortier, and she lives in Grand Haven. And my brother, who's next in line, and his name is Paul Heyboer, and he lives in Normal, Illinois.

JT: So you were the youngest in the family, correct?

DH: Yup, I was the baby.

JT: And how did this birth order effect you and, as you were growing up?

DH: I really don't think it affected me at all, to be honest with you.

JT: You weren't the, you weren't the family, you know the baby is the –

DH: The spoiled brat?

JT: Yeah [laugh].

DH: [laugh] I don't think so. I'll tell you, we lived on a farm and we all had to do our thing, so one didn't get much preference over the other.

JT: Okay, no hand me downs?

DH: Oh yeah, well, you got hand me downs, but a lot of it, a lot of our clothes got worn out, and you didn't really get hand me downs. My mother made a lot of the clothes.

JT: Oh she did? Can you –

DH: Yup.

JT: When you think about this, did you recall a favorite outfit?

DH: I don't recall a favorite outfit; I recall an outfit that was not the favorite.

JT: Oh, not the favorite. Okay, tell us about that.

DH: Well that, that was clothes that you wore to church.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And at that time you had to wear knickers.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And I hated those knickers. When I got long pants that was a, a milestone. I got out of the knickers

JT: Do you remember the age when you got out of the knickers?

DH: Oh, probably 8 years old maybe. Something like that. Maybe 10 at the most, but more likely 8.

JT: Okay, when you wore these knickers, did you wear like a vest or a long coat, a sweater, tie? What with the knickers?

DH: I think just a shirt and tie. Yeah.

JT: Most of the young boys your age wore those knickers?

DH: They, they wore knickers, yeah, that was kind of common at that time.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: That's what kids wore then.

JT: Do you remember why you hated those knickers?

DH: [laugh] I don't know.

JT: Too long ago to think about.

DH: [laugh] I just didn't like them that's all.

JT: Okay, you said your family home was at 2474 52nd, correct?

DH: Right.

JT: And that house is still standing, correct?

DH: That house is still there.

JT: Was this the first building on the property?

DH: I think so. The original house was built about 1860 and my dad, when he got married, tore the old kitchen off, and put a new kitchen, and an indoor bathroom on the house –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Up until about 1923 there was no indoor plumbing.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: It was outdoor plumbing.

JT: That was pretty typical back then, correct?

DH: That was routine, pretty standard.

JT: Right.

DH: Yeah.

JT: So what were the original buildings at that site?

DH: Well, the best that I can tell, there's a grainery there, and the way it's made, the construction says it was probably there about the time the house was built.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Now, there was another shed over by the road, but they tore that down when they built the barn. The barn was built about 1905. And all the other buildings are later than that.

JT: 1905, that barn, there's a story there isn't there? A barn story here? [Laugh]

DH: Oh there's barn stories all right.

JT: [laugh] Who, do you remember who built that barn?

DH: Yeah, there was a fellow; my dad called him Old Keis. His name was Keiser.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And he lived at that time, oh, I wish I had my material in front of me. Now you're asking me a question and I got to remember something. But he lived downtown, about on Hall Street. And he would walk out and get here Monday morning, and work during the week, and stay at the house, and Saturday night he would walk back to town and spend the Sunday there, and then come back out again the next day. So that was his workweek. And he did that for a cousin of mine too, that lived on East Paris. And he would walk out to East Paris and go back again.

JT: To build the barn.

DH: Build the barn.

JT: Built it by himself?

DH: Well, he was the, we'd call it the 'carpenter' today.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: He would lay out the beams. He made the pins, the wooden pins that'd hold the beams together. And the beams had to be chopped out of wood, trees, and the trees came from, for our barn anyway, came from, oh it was a place called 'Art Bajamas'. That's well, maybe you can help me. Princeton Estates is on the north side, and the south side is, what is it?

JT: Old Farm? Is that Old Farm?

DH: Old Farm Estates is it? I, I can't think of it, but it's on 60th Street.

JT: Oh, it's not Old Farm Estate, it's something else, I'm sorry.

DH: I can't think of the name of it right now –

JT: Yeah, right, yes.

DH: But where those beams came for the barn.

JT: Okay.

DH: Out of his woods. And they'd work there during the winter. They'd cut them during the winter, and they chopped them –

JT: How'd they get them here?

DH: Team of horses.

JT: Team of horses, yes.

DH: They'd pull them over here with horses. Get that all organized, and then in the spring they had a barn raising. They'd get about 20-some people there and put those sections up. Now, to go into detail, I can't do it. I don't know how they did it.

JT: Right. And that barn is still standing.

DH: Oh yeah, yeah, the barn's still there.

JT: Yes, it's a big barn right there.

DH: That barn is there, that's the same barn.

JT: That's the same one. So the barn, what went into this barn? What type of animals?

DH: Well, there were, as long as I can remember, or it was, when I could first remember, there were 2 rows of stanchions for cows.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: There were about 10 at a time, 10 in each row, so there were about 20 cows there, and then you had one row of horse stables, so there were 2 teams of working horses. So there would be 4 horses for the working horses. And then there was a team for just pulling the buggy to church, go to town or wherever, for transportation.

JT: So when you said you wore those knickers to church, you went to church by horse.

DH: No, no no.

JT: No, no, no, no, no?

DH: No, no. That was –

JT: That was –

DH: That was past later than that. When I went to church that was a Model A Ford.

JT: Model A, okay. I wondered. I wanted to clear, clear this up.

DH: [laugh]

JT: Okay, no, no, no problem. So other than the horses and the cows, what did your father have, what kind, what other animals did they have on the farm?

DH: Well, we didn't have too many other animals. It's my memory serves me strictly, you know, the cows, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And a bull, and the horses. But at one time there were pigs. But my dad got rid of the pigs. He said that he didn't trust pigs because if one of us kids would wander into the pig coop, pigs will eat kids. So he didn't want to take that chance. So he didn't raise pigs when we were little kids. But I said there's not too many other animals, but that's in the barn. But we also had chickens. We raised a lot of chickens over the years.

JT: So your, occupation of your parents were -?

DH: Farming. Yeah, that's what we did.

JT: Your father was a farmer.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: Your mother?

DH: Well my mother was born on Eastern Avenue, almost to Alger Street. But they had greenhouses, and they raised tomatoes, asparagus, different hothouse things for food.

JT: She had her garden here on the farm?

DH: Yeah, we had a garden. But that was strictly our own personal food.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: We didn't, well, I take that back. At one time I can remember we had strawberries and my dad would take several crates of strawberries downtown to a store on Eastern Avenue, and it used to be called Orrie's Better Foods.

JT: I see. No Farmer's Market back then?

DH: I don't know, maybe they did, but he just had a working arrangement with this fellow. We got our groceries there, and we would bring strawberries in and stuff like that, and eggs. That went on until they passed a law that you couldn't just bring in eggs, they had to be candled and boxed and so forth. Otherwise we just would bring in a crate of eggs and he'd sell them out of the crate. No candling, no nothing, just eggs.

JT: [laugh] Right. , So you had your own milk here on the farm?

DH: Yeah, that's basically how we made most of our living, was milk.

JT: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: 'Course that's when you, when you asked that question, you see, I don't know what happened before 1930.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Since 1930 to 1955, then we sold what we called Grade A Milk, which is the milk that is, pasteurized and sold as milk for drinking. Now, a lot of people didn't sell Grade A Milk, they sold milk to a condensery so they'd make powdered milk and that type of thing. So, all the time I remember we always sold Grade A Milk.

JT: Who were the neighbors that you remember as, as a young child? Who were your nearest neighbors?

DH: Well, the Heyboers and the Smiths had a monopoly on the road.

JT: This road?

DH: This road, 52nd Street.

JT: Okay.

DH: It started out with my Uncle Mike Heyboer.

JT: Yeah.

DH: And then there was John Smith, and then Wright Smith, and then Abe Heyboer, and then Pete Heyboer, and then Marilyn Smith.

JT: Where did they live on this road?

DH: Well, that starts about ½ mile down that way, towards the west. That's where, kind of across the road from what is, we call it Roodvoets Duck Pond.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Maybe people don't where Roodvoets Foods Duck Pond is. [Laugh] That's the pond there by the Lutheran Church. That Lutheran Church was built on my Uncle Mike's place.

JT: Hmm.

DH: So, if you go across the road there's a pond there.

JT: What was yours?

DH: And that was part of Uncle Mike's place. So it started on the west on that end, and Princeton Estates is part of that farm. And Wright Smith's place was the next farm, now Princeton Estates. And then John Smith's farm is now part of Old Farm Estates. That's on the north side. And then Challenger School is across the road, and that was my Uncle Pete's place. And then Marion Smith's place is the next one down the road, and that is basically where city hall is. City hall is built on Marion Smith's place. 'Cause I can remember when before the city hall was there, we worked those fields for quite a few years. Combining corn, wheat, oats, whole business there.

JT: So, you must, then you had lots of opportunities to see family quite often.

DH: Oh yeah, well, when we were kids then you would work back and forth, and the thrashing part of it, that was about a 3 week job. And when I was 14 years old or, you know, a little younger than that, that was during the war. World War II, we started thrashing at what they call Town and Country. That was north of 44th Street. You started thrashing there, and then you went down Kalamazoo Avenue to 52nd Street. And Len and Hiram Troost, they had the 2 farms on the corner of 52nd Street and Kalamazoo Avenue. And Len had the tractor, Hiram had the thrashing machine. So the 2 of them worked together. And then they came down 52nd Street. So that took 2 – 3 weeks to get from one end to the other before we got all done thrashing.

JT: What, what time of the year do you, did you do this?

DH: That was done in July.

JT: July.

DH: You'd start cutting wheat with a binder quite often on the 4th of July.

JT: Oh yeah.

DH: Quite often 4th of July was spent in the wheat fields.

JT: So you'd spent your summers...

DH: Spent in the wheat fields.

JT: [laugh] In the hot July.

DH: Yeah.

JT: Right. So your favorite place on the farm? Where would that be?

DH: Oh my favorite place?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Well that's an interesting question. I don't know, I can't say there was a favorite place. You just walked. It was just nice to walk down the lane to the fields and so on and so forth. You asked about a favorite place, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: This is kind of an interesting one. Most people would kind of take a dim view of what I'm going to say, but my un-favorite place was the railroad track, which is now the Paul Henry Trail.

JT: That was your un-favorite place?

DH: That's my un-favorite place.

JT: Why was that?

DH: Well, we used to pasture cows on both sides of the railroad track. So if you had to chase and herd the 20 – 25 cows over the railroad track. So there was gates on both sides, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Fences on both sides, and then gates, so you opened the gate, and then open the gate on the other side, and then try and get them ornery cows to go across the railroad track instead of going down the railroad track. So –

JT: Who, who the cows? [Laugh]

DH: [laugh] Sometimes you ended up chasing cows down the railroad track.

JT: Oh.

DH: So that was a real nuisance. And whenever you'd take a load of hay or you know, you were, take, get a load of manure or something, you'd have to open the gate, go through it, shut the gate, back and forth. So that was a real pain in the neck.

JT: I can imagine. So that was the un-favorite place, okay. [Laugh]

DH: Yeah. And then for a little story, there were the, the section men, worked on the railroad track.

JT: Okay.

DH: So they had a little car, they would travel up and down the railroad track and hoe it to keep the weeds down, and mow the sides. There wasn't a tree on the track, on the whole thing. When you look at it now, it's all trees. But then, there was no trees. They kept them all cut down. And section men said to my dad, 'now you tell them kids of

yours to be careful', he says 'I've got 2 reasons for that. One, I don't want to see them get hurt, and 2, I don't want to clean up a load of cow manure'. [Laugh]

JT: So, no problems really.

DH: No, I've backed off from the tracks already with a tractor. When you got up to it you could see the train coming and you didn't have time enough to get across it, so you'd back up and let the train go by. So it got tight. And the train killed a couple of my dogs. So [laugh].

JT: That's what happens on a farm –

DH: That's what happened.

JT: That's what happens. Let's think about favorite holidays when you were young, on the farm. What was your favorite one?

DH: Favorite holidays? I tell you, we didn't do too much on holidays to be honest with you. It was a busy life. You didn't get off the place very often. In fact, when we were, until we learned how to drive, and could drive a car and get on our own, we didn't really do much on holidays. Fourth of July was probably the, the main day.

JT: Not Christmas?

DH: Well Christmas was kind of family, yeah, but it was not a big holiday.

JT: Christmas?

DH: Yeah, it was not a big holiday. It was a Christian holiday. It was a church going day, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And so forth, we didn't have a big Christmas celebration or anything.

JT: You said a bigger one was on the 4th of July. What happened then?

DH: Well, once we learned to drive -

JT: You mean you, yourself?

DH: And we got a hold of a car, -

JT: Okay.

DH: And we could go on our own, then we would go either to Dutton Park or Ramona Park for fireworks and stuff like that. Try and duck out, you know, a little while in the afternoon, 'cause it was busy in the morning. You had chores in the morning and you had chores at night. So, -

JT: You got away in the afternoon.

DH: So you could try to get away once in a while, you know. Or later at night. Chores were done by 7:30, so then you could take off after that.

JT: Lot of responsibility on a farm.

DH: Oh yeah.

JT: You couldn't just leave it.

DH: Yeah, that milking cows was a 7-day a week, morning and night. There's no -

JT: Getting away from it [laugh].

DH: No getting away from it. Nowadays the farms are so big they hire people so they can rotate them.

JT: Yeah.

DH: You know, they can work 5 days a week 'cause there's somebody else there to do it the other time. But a family farm didn't work that way.

JT: So, where did you go to school, grade school as a child?

DH: Well that was one of my favorite places. Smith School.

JT: Smith.

DH: It's on Wing Avenue, about a third of the way from 52nd to 60th on the west side.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: There's a house standing right where the school used to be.

JT: Okay, what was special about Smith School? It was a one-room school?

DH: It was a one-room school, yeah, and one teacher and we had as many as 40 kids in that school with one teacher.

JT: And you went there from what age?

DH: From kindergarten to 8th grade.

JT: K through 8th.

DH: Through 8th grade.

JT: Okay. You said it was your favorite place. Why is that?

DH: Well, in the summer it was 3 months, you, you worked on the farm.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And you really didn't see other kids except, like I say, if you were working with the neighbor or so, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: But you didn't do much of anything else with the other kids. So when school started, you saw all of those other kids. And then you could play ball, you could play tag, you could play around-the-corner, you could do all those games. And that was fun.

JT: How did you get to school?

DH: Walk. [Laugh] Just plain walk.

JT: Down the road?

DH: You walked 52nd Street to Wing Avenue, and then Wing to the school.

JT: Through rain, shine, whatever.

DH: Whatever.

JT: Okay. Did the other kids walk too?

DH: Oh yeah. There was no school busses. Everybody walked. That's the only way you could get there.

JT: Okay, so that was the school. Did you have favorite subjects at Smith?

DH: Oh, yeah, favorite subjects. Goodness, I don't know at that time, they were general subjects so I can't say there were favorites or non-favorites. -

JT: You had a non-favorite?

DH: No, not really.

JT: You liked school.

DH: I liked school.

JT: Did well?

DH: Yeah, my spelling never was too great, but I still anyway, -

JT: Well, describe that school. What do you remember about Smith? How can you describe that? Tell me more about it.

DH: Oh I can tell you a lot of stories about Smith School [laugh]. Yeah, there's a lot of stories about Smith School. But the school itself is what made the schoolwork to provide a good education for the older students taught the younger students. Because the 7th and 8th graders, they would hold the spelling classes for the 2nd and 3rd graders. And the teacher didn't do that, so the teacher could teach the older classes. So you had a complete mix all the way from kindergarten to 8th grade in one room. And I think they miss a little of that in today's schools. In fact, some of the schools are going back a little bit to that. How that's going to work I don't know, but it worked fine there.

JT: So then when you got to be an older student you tutored younger students.

DH: You took care of the younger students, sure.

JT: So you became their teacher.

DH: Yeah.

JT: Wow, okay.

DH: That'll work.

JT: And it worked. What kind of desks did you sit at?

DH: It was just a, it was a, oh how do you, I can't give you a good description. It's just an open desk, I mean the top didn't open, you, it's top was solid, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And it had a little, a little compartment underneath the desk, you put your books in there.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And Smith School was made a little different because the desks were all anchored to boards and you could slide those desks around. You could move them around. -

JT: Did it have wooden floor?

DH: Wooden floors, yeah.

JT: Hmm.

DH: They put a basement under it, W.P.A put a basement under it about 1934, something like that, put a furnace in it.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Put indoor plumbing in it so there was a bathroom in it. Otherwise it was all outdoors. Although they never had running water that I know of, at least in all the time I was there there was a pump outdoors and you pumped your pail of water and that's how you flushed the toilets too, you pumped a pail of water and hauled it into the school. -

JT: You all did a chore to do there huh?

DH: Yeah, well, another fellow and I, Bob Weaver, we were janitors. So we swept the floors, pumped the water and so on and so forth, and we each got 50 cents a week. So, -

JT: That was good money back then now.

DH: Yeah, we thought we did real well [laugh]. We missed our last recess because the last recess, why, that's when we had to clean the school up. But they had one in the morning, one at noon, and one in the afternoon. But we had to do our chores on –

JT: You were asked to do this, right?

DH: Yup.

JT: You, and you accepted, and you did that, and it was fun because you had another person for you to do it?

DH: Yeah, two of us.

JT: So, do you see these people, just your old classmates, former classmates?

DH: Oh, a lot of them I do see.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: We get together at the 68th Street Grill Monday morning, about 9:30.

JT: Weekly?

DH: Weekly. I don't in the summer because I'm too busy, and then there's, a lot of the fellows, they go south, you know, so they're not here during the winter. But we keep a crew there, sometimes as many as 10 or 11 of us and sometimes 4 or 5.

JT: They're all in the area.

DH: They're all Smith School graduates.

JT: Smith School graduates.

DH: Yeah.

JT: That's pretty, that's pretty neat.

DH: But they're thinning out, a lot of the fellows aren't alive anymore.

JT: Right. So, these are, were the same ages as you or around your age?

DH: Oh, there was, I would say we're all within probably 6 – 7 – 8 years of each other.

JT: Kind of same, okay. Childhood toys, do you remember any?

DH: Childhood toys? Oh my. Now you're going back a ways. I remember that I had a train, it was a little wind up train, it had a spring in the engine, you know, a little track of 3 feet long, would go around a circle and 3 cars on it, and that was my train. But that was, that was fun.

JT: Do you remember your, the age and when you got that?

DH: Oh, probably 5 – 6 years old, something like that.

JT: Hmm.

DH: Yeah. But the thing for childhood, I think I remember more is the playing ball and ice-skating and that type of thing.

JT: As a teenager?

DH: Right.

JT: Right, okay.

DH: I can remember complaining to my mother what to do, I didn't have anything to do, you know? So everybody was working but I would carry a pail of water to the field to them, because you know, you're 5 years old, 6 years old, you're not old enough to, to shock wheat or do those kind of things yet [laugh].

JT: Right.

DH: Of course when you go back to school, well that was the fun part too. Because then you could play softball.

JT: A little activity, right. Where did you play ball or ice skate?

DH: Well, the school had a diamond.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: A little crude compared to today's standards. I mean there was stones for bases and in the fall of the year there was sand burrs. Now if you've ever caught a ball with your bare hands with a sand burr on it, you had an experience. And we finally would

wear the sand burrs out and then we could play ball. But [laugh] it was a little painful once in a while. Then, -

JT: Did you have a mitt?

DH: Ha! Well, we didn't really have mitts in those days. We finally got them toward the end, but at first nobody could afford them during the depression so you didn't have them.

JT: So where did you ice skate?

DH: Well, how can I describe the location? It was my Uncle Mike's place, the pond. The Lutheran Church is on the hill. And if you go down the hill there's an area that's kind of little wetlands, and that's where there was a pond. Now that's all grown up and brush and junk now. But it used to be cattle in there, so there was a pond maybe 100 feet long, maybe 40 feet wide. And when that froze up in the winter, you could go down there with a shovel, shovel off the snow, put a pair of boots on one end, a pair of boots on the other end, and you had a hockey rink. Cut a branch out of a tree that had the right kink in it and you had a hockey stick, and that's the way we played hockey.

JT: What was the puck?

DH: We bought a puck.

JT: Oh, you bought it.

DH: Yup, well for quite a while we used a heel of a shoe, but we advanced and we got a puck.

JT: You got a puck. Oh, and what kind of skates? Clamp on skates or what?

DH: Oh there were clamp on skates. In fact I still have the skates in the basement, but my first pair of skates that were a little better -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: They were big enough so I could put my shoes inside of the shoes of the skates and then that's the way I had my skates. And the skate was a clamp on, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: But it was, instead of clamped to the shoe, it was screwed on. Some, they used screws and screwed it right to the bottom of the shoe. So I still have that pair of skates.

JT: You have those too.

DH: Yup.

JT: Oooh, wow. Okay, all right. Where'd you go to middle school?

DH: Went to Godwin. There was no Kentwood School at that time.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So, we could go to Caledonia, Godwin, or East Grand Rapids. But the people here, one of the fellows down the road worked at Kelvinator on Clyde Park.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: But he drove in everyday, so we would hitch rides with whoever we could get, whoever was going that way. The neighbors would take turns. My mother would drive us to school, or my dad or one of the neighbors. If they were busy then occasionally we would take the railroad track home, which was about a 5-mile hike, but you got home.

JT: You got home.

DH: [laugh]

JT: And school was from September to –

DH: June.

JT: To June, -

DH: Yeah, it –

JT: So it was right like it is now.

DH: Yeah, yeah it would start after Labor Day, and I remember graduating I think it was June 17th on graduation day.

JT: Okay. Now, you went to high school at Godwin too?

DH: High school, yeah. At 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th.

JT: Okay, that was 9th, 10th, that's right, 'cause you went to Smith through 8th grade.

DH: Through 8th grade at Smith.

JT: High School, I'm sorry. Okay, so this was a much bigger school than Smith.

DH: Oh my yes

JT: You had classes and –

DH: You had classes and individual classes, individual teachers.

JT: And more teachers.

DH: Oh sure.

JT: All right. How'd that make you feel at first?

DH: [laugh] Well that's interesting. I can tell you how I started.

JT: Okay, tell us.

DH: My mother took me there, let me out, 'okay, here's the school, go register'. So I went in there and I went to talk to some kids. I said 'well I'm here, I'm supposed to register'. So I went to one place but they said 'well, that's the senior high, you don't belong here, you go to the other place'. So I went to the junior at the, you know, the 9th grade. So that's how I got started in school. -

JT: Okay.

DH: There was no orientation in those days, you [laugh], you went to the school, walked in and registered and started school.

JT: No forms to fill out?

DH: I don't remember forms [laugh].

JT: Something you did differently with your own children correct?

DH: Oh my, that's a whole different ballgame. [Laugh] It's amazing what a generation does.

JT: You didn't drop them off at the curb did you [laugh]?

DH: No, no, the school bus picked them up in front of the house and they had to ride the school bus for an hour and all that good stuff. So –

JT: It was different.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: Your favorite subjects in high school?

DH: Well, high school, that was different. I can't say that I, you know, you talk about favorite subjects, yeah, I always liked the math, we had physics courses and chemistry courses and so forth. I always enjoyed them, and the social studies, the history, and that type of thing. I even took typing. Now the one course that lowered my academic grade level was Spanish.

JT: Language.

DH: Spanish, oh boy. That did not take with me at all. I still remember my teacher and I always thank her for giving me a C. I got through the course.

JT: [laugh] So language was not –

DH: That was not my [laugh] –

JT: Cup of tea.

DH: No, that was not my strong point.

JT: Well everyone has something, so that's okay.

DH: But I'll tell you another little story.

JT: Okay.

DH: You know when, going to Smith School –

JT: Right.

DH: Yeah, you played softball.

JT: Right.

DH: But other than that you didn't know any sports at all. So when I got to Godwin –

JT: You had to have gym.

DH: You had to have gym course. Gym, well what's that? You know? And I could still remember the first time I was out at gym. Well, okay, we had to play basketball. So they threw me a basketball, you have to dribble it down the court. Well I dribbled it with both hands, bouncing it with both hands. Man, the place erupted with laughter [laugh]. You don't dribble with both hands, you dribble with one hand. Oh well, okay [laugh], we can do that.

JT: So your teacher never demonstrated the proper way of holding the ball.

DH: Oh well no, no, 'course not [laugh]. But I, you know, those are little things that you remember because you didn't –

JT: You didn't.

DH: You just didn't know. Nobody ever taught you that never saw a basketball game.

JT: Right. Well, the teacher you had at Smith School, who was she or he?

DH: Her name was Mrs. Auble. She taught, let's see, I had Mrs. Strauss for kindergarten, Mrs. Moran for 1st grade, and then Mrs. Auble for the rest of the years.

JT: So, -

DH: Very good teacher.

JT: They were very probably strong and they taught the basics and academics but didn't have -

DH: Of –

JT: Knowledge of the, of, you know, sports or –

DH: Sports or any of that at all.

JT: Right. So, you were at a disadvantage when you went to high school. Do you think a lot of people were like that? They didn't, you know, have experience with gym?

DH: Oh sure, they didn't, all those country schools, they didn't have any of that kind of stuff.

JT: All right, you weren't the only one.

DH: Oh no, oh no.

[Side B]

JT: Okay, we're on Side B. All right. Think back when you were, [phone ringing] when you were in grade school, or high school, did you have radio, comic books, things like that? Can you remember?

DH: Yeah, yeah. See, we got electricity here in 1936. So it wasn't too long after that that we got a radio and yeah, then we could listen to the radio.

JT: Mostly in the evening?

DH: In the evenings, yeah. 'Cause yeah, there was Jack Armstrong, and Tom Mix, and the Lone Ranger and the Green Hornet and we, our family had quite a lot of music; I mean there was quite a lot of background in music. I mean there was quite a lot of background in music, so there was the Northwest 400 Hour in the morning. And that went on from 8 till 9 o'clock in the morning, and that was all classical. And I used to listen to that. I still do, I still listen to classical music.

JT: Hmm, got a love of music from that show.

DH: Yeah, yeah.

JT: Or that program rather. Okay. Where did you, where was this radio located?

DH: Well, it was in the, I guess today it would be called the dining room, because that's where we spent our time. I mean, the dining room table was there, we ate there at the dining room table, and the radio was in that room.

JT: Is this a floor model, table model, what?

DH: It was a floor model.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: I mean, it sat on the floor.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: I still have it. It's in the farmhouse yet. I don't know if it works, but it's there

JT: So you had to use your imagination and, and your listening skills.

DH: Oh yeah. But that was quite something to have a radio, and telephone, and electricity.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Well that was wonderful.

JT: It changed your life on the farm didn't it?

DH: Oh my.

JT: What are some things that, that happened with electricity, that made it easier?

DH: Well, lighting was the one thing that really was wonderful. I mean you didn't have to carry a lantern around anymore. And we had lights in the barn; you had lights in the house.

JT: Flick of the switch.

DH: Flick of a switch and instant light. And then the refrigerator came right at the same time; as soon as we got electricity then you could buy a refrigerator.

JT: Hmm.

DH: Well, this was wonderful because you take the milk and let it stand a little while and then skim the cream off the top and then beat that with a beater, electric mix master or so, and that was ice cream. Put that in the freezer and you had ice cream. And that was what we called rich ice cream. When you got done there was butter on the spoon.

JT: Hmm. So that was a favorite food of yours.

DH: That was a favorite, well, it still is.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative]. Ice cream.

DH: Ice cream [laugh]. And the electric stove, you know otherwise in the summer if you canned, well the only way you could can was with a wood stove. Can you imagine canning goods on a wood stove on a 90 degree day and here is that stove just pumping out the heat [laugh]?

JT: Hot was it?

DH: That makes a hot kitchen.

JT: I can imagine [laugh]. So, life got a little easier and better with the electric.

DH: Oh, much much better.

JT: Much better. You could get a fan then.

DH: Oh sure.

JT: Oh.

DH: Do all kinds of things.

JT: You're living then.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: [laugh] Good. So if, all right, let's, let's think, the comic book. Did you have comic books as a youngster? Or books?

DH: Yeah, I don't recall of any comic books –

JT: No comic books.

DH: But then we, oh, probably 'cause we just didn't buy them.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: They were there.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative]. But not for you personally.

DH: No. We got the Grand Rapids Press and there were the comics in there.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And -

JT: Was it just on Sunday you got the press or everyday?

DH: No, just during the week.

JT: Okay.

DH: And then the Sunday press, we didn't get that but there, there was a fellow, my, it would be my dad's cousin, he would come out and get eggs and then he'd bring the funnies out, and then we had that paper, you know, the, the regular Sunday comics?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: The Sunday comics?

JT: Hmm.

DH: So we would get them.

JT: Was it in color then?

DH: Yeah, it was in color.

JT: In color? Okay.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative]. Katzen Jammer Kids.

JT: That's your favorite, that was your favorite back then?

DH: Oh, that was one of the favorites, yeah.

JT: Well, tell me about that.

DH: Katzen Jammer?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: You never heard of 'em?

JT: No, no.

DH: No kidding?

JT: No.

DH: Oh, that was a German comic, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: 'Cause there was the Captain and the Hanzie and Fritzie, well of course Hans and Fritz are German, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And the Inspector, and he was Der Inspector.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And they always were getting into trouble. Every comic strip they got into trouble, and they always got a wallop from the Captain, which was the father you know.

JT: Hmm.

DH: And, [laugh], it happened every time, they, there were always doing something wrong [laugh].

JT: That was your favorite comic.

DH: [laugh] And Allie Oop.

JT: Allie Oop? What's that?

DH: You remember Allie Oop?

JT: Nope.

DH: You don't remember Allie Oop either?

JT: Nope, no, no.

DH: Oh my, you missed a lot of good ones [laugh].

JT: Tell me about Allie Oop.

DH: Well he was a prehistoric person, and he rode a dinosaur, and he had his own Denny, was his dinosaur, and they had their cast of characters. King Guzzle was the king of the area. She was Allie Oop's girlfriend, and Queen Ola Umpatettle, she was the queen.

JT: Do you remember how old you were when you were, were reading them?

DH: Oh well probably, they probably ran them until I was 15 – 16 years old or something.

JT: Oh, wow.

DH: Yeah.

JT: [laugh] Okay.

DH: Yeah, you, you start thinking backwards of a lot of them, there's some interesting ones comes back [laugh].

JT: Absolutely. So, which parent do you take after most in looks?

DH: Oh, I was known as little Abe.

JT: Little Abe. You look like your dad?

DH: Oh yeah.

JT: Still do?

DH: Still do.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative]. Temperament too?

DH: Oh I guess so, I would say so. I think so.

JT: Okay, well which, which of your children do you think resembles you?

DH: Well, we had 2 daughters.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So, that's a little harder to say.

JT: Okay, so –

DH: But -

JT: In temperament.

DH: Oh man, I would hate to make a judgment on that one.

JT: They're good kids.

DH: They're good kids.

JT: Good kids, okay, no problem.

DH: [laugh]

JT: Okay, when, when did you meet your wife and marry?

DH: I met my wife at church. We, like I said, my grandmother and my mother came from Eastern Avenue near Alger Street, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So they went to Burton Heights Christian Reformed Church.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So, until we switched churches we went, we always went to Burton Heights, so, my wife went there, and that's how we met.

JT: And your wife's name, maiden name was?

DH: Was Elenbaas.

JT: Barbara Elenbaas.

DH: And her father ran a feed store on Division Avenue, and he had another one on Burton Street by the expressway.

JT: Hmm.

DH: In fact they bought him out to put the expressway through, 131 expressway.

JT: When were you married?

DH: When?

JT: When.

DH: 1957.

JT: Okay.

DH: We married a little late. I was through college and worked for a little while and then went in the army for 21 months and then we got married after that.

JT: To which college did you go to?

DH: I went to Calvin College for 3 years, that was a, what they called a pre-engineering course.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And then finished up at the University of Michigan, B.S. Engineering.

JT: Graduated from Michigan and what time? What date?

DH: What date?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: I was a half-year student so I graduated in February of '53.

JT: When you think back of your college years, what comes to mind? How do you think of those years? Good, good times? What –

DH: College was a lot of work.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Grade school was fun, high school was fun, college was work.

JT: Explain that.

DH: Well, a lot of students were, a lot of the kids that I knew were pretty smart, put it that way. But I always had to work real hard to get my grades, in order to get through. So college was not what you call a fun time. I mean it wasn't all fun and games. It was –

JT: You worked hard for your grades.

DH: Mainly work.

JT: Okay. Boy you were in a tough course weren't you?

DH: Yeah, they were, they were harder courses. 'Cause I can remember at Calvin, they wanted you to have a little more general course –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Rather than, you know, just specifically engineering courses.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So I still remember taking history from Doctor Spoelhof. He became the president, and he's still alive, ninety some years old. And kids would complain bitterly. He was so tough, you know, so much work. Gosh, we thought it was recreation. I just enjoyed that course [laugh]. It was so much fun hearing him talk about Europe, 1815, you know, and through the Napoleonic Area and so forth. It was –

JT: You had a good love of history too.

DH: Well, I guess I still do because we still travel, and we still like to travel to places where there's history and go through all that stuff.

JT: Right.

DH: So I guess just plain kind of liked it [laugh].

JT: So you more than got through this professor's course. You did very well in it.

DH: Oh yeah, but that was a fun course.

JT: [laugh]

DH: I mean [laugh] that was the only way it would, being kids in the engineering, we always kind of chuckled about the rest of them. They're complaining about how hard it was, and I thought man, you do a shot of Calculus and few other things [laugh] and see what you think.

JT: Well, college, the campus has changed since you were there. Were they small, smaller than they are now?

DH: Yeah, yeah. They were, one thing that was a lot different when I was there, because I started at Calvin in 1947.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Well, there were a lot of veterans at Calvin in 1947. They came out of the army, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: You know they went in, maybe 1945, for 2 years, got out summer of '47, started Calvin in '47.

JT: So the older students –

DH: So you had an older group there, and along with the kids out of high school, which was me [laugh].

JT: Aah, and so they were, they had a, they were probably determined and very focused.

DH: Oh yes, they had, they knew where they were going [laugh].

JT: Using their G.I. money.

DH: So that was different. And like the U of M, there was only 23,000 kids there. Now there's 43,000, you know, just about double.

JT: Right, yeah right. Why did you choose U of M?

DH: That was kind of a set-up; I mean an agreement between Calvin College and the University of Michigan.

JT: Oh, so you, you didn't personally, couldn't personally choose them.

DH: So, you could transfer your credits directly from Calvin to U of M.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: With no lost or anything, they, that was a –

JT: That was a flow.

DH: Worked very well.

JT: Worked very well. Okay, you mentioned growing up in the depression. What do you remember about that?

DH: Well, -

JT: What comes to mind?

DH: Oh, I can tell you a couple stories. I can remember my dad telling me about 1932, '33, I'm not quite sure what year it was, but he was sweating it out whether he would lose the farm, 'cause he couldn't pay the taxes. And at that time Roosevelt put through a veteran's, they gave veterans a bonus, 'cause my dad was in World War II, World War I, I'm sorry, and they paid all the veteran's a 200-dollar bonus.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And my dad used that to pay his taxes.

JT: Hmm.

DH: Otherwise, he was going to lose the farm.

JT: Well then that's not a whole lot of income was around then either.

DH: No, no. And of course the other thing I remember as a kid, I don't know whether we were fortunate or not, but we always had a roof over our head, we always had

something to eat, we had enough clothes, my mother made a lot of it, but at least we had clothes, and we could get to church and back. We could have, that was our one big trip of the day, or the week, go to church and back. And other than that, you didn't have much. But on the other hand, neither did anybody else, and we didn't know the difference.

JT: [laugh]

DH: It was perfectly normal; this is the way you live, 'cause we didn't have anything, well, okay fine, we didn't have anything.

JT: Hmm.

DH: I can remember, we talked about Smith School, when we were, we had ball teams. 'Course this was the big thing, the ball team. And we won the, the, what do you call it? The championship you might say between 3 or 4 small schools, you know, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So the teacher, Mrs. Auble took us to Caledonia, I was in the 6th grade, and she brought us to the drug store and we got an ice cream sundae. Now that was the first ice cream sundae I ever had, and that was something.

JT: Do you remember the, the flavor?

DH: It was vanilla with caramel.

JT: And ice cream's your favorite.

DH: Yeah.

JT: [laugh]

DH: And it had caramel on it.

JT: [laugh] Of course.

DH: [laugh] But you know, you just didn't have anything. And now, if you talk to people, or you listen to the federal government, what is a poor family? Well, I don't know, I haven't paid enough attention to it, but today's poor families got everything that we never had, and we didn't even know we were poor [laugh].

JT: I know that it is hard for you to remember the depression 'cause you were so young at that time, you probably can relate better to World War II. What can you remember about World War II, on the farm?

DH: World War II was a very busy time.

JT: Hmm.

DH: My brother was drafted in the army.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And then some of the neighbor boys were drafted in the army, the two Smith boys were both in the army. Well, one in the army, one in the air force, but, you know, armed force, services. Cousins were in the armed services. So all the work was still there. Now who's going to do all that work? Yeah, the teenage kids, before they went in the army. So you know, we worked.

JT: Are you talking worked all year? Or –

DH: All year.

JT: All year, while you were in high school.

DH: When you were in high school. You milk cows in the morning, you milk cows at night, in the summer you did the thrashing and you did all of those things. So I can remember in high school there were, there was sports, but I, I didn't go out for sports. I didn't have time to go out for sports.

JT: You couldn't, they, your family depended on you to get –

DH: You were working.

JT: You had to get the job done.

DH: So, what I did do, I talked to the track coach. I asked him, I says 'can I come out and just run at the meets? I can't come out for practice 'cause I haven't got time, but if I can find just find enough time just to run at the meets, in the actual competition, can I do that?' He says 'yeah, you can do that, okay'. So, I ran the mile, 'cause a lot of the other things you, I wasn't quite fast enough for the dashes, so I ran the mile. So that's how I got my letter in sports at Godwin.

JT: Was this your junior or senior year?

DH: Junior and senior year. They were after the war, see that was '46 and '47, the war was over. But you know, they still were trying to readjust and so forth. So that's how my sporting career at Godwin.

JT: Well, you at least got a letter.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: Well, let's, let's go back to the thought of that question, prior question, how did the war affect the farm, other than your work, work involvement? Were there shortages?

DH: Well, there were shortages, but really we weren't hurt too much by shortages. There was gas rationing, but we had enough gas to run tractors. I think the thing that bothered the household the most was sugar rationing.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: My mother did a lot of canning and so forth. So it was tricky to get sugar, so I can remember we, a few times we would trade gas-rationing stamps for sugar stamps.

JT: Amongst the farmers or neighbors?

DH: Amongst the neighbors and so forth and maybe you know, people in town didn't, well they only had an 'a' card, and we had 'b' card, so we had a little more gas than they did, and they had a little more sugar than we did.

JT: Aah.

DH: So we would trade –

JT: You bartered.

DH: A gas stamp for a sugar stamp.

JT: Bartering.

DH: Yup.

JT: How did you make these contacts? Through church.

DH: Church.

JT: Okay.

DH: People you knew and so forth.

JT: Right, okay, interesting.

DH: But –

JT: Go ahead.

DH: But cars, that was a, that was a tricky thing, ‘cause there were 3 of us in the family, you know after, well, you’re, you’re talking during the war and I shouldn’t bring that up now because this was after the war.

JT: Okay, go ahead, after the war.

DH: After the war you couldn’t buy a car.

JT: Hmm.

DH: You couldn’t buy a car unless you paid under the table, black market, or what ever you want to call it, until 1949, that’s 4 years after the war [phone ringing]. You couldn’t buy a new car. You always had to pay 500 dollars extra, or 200 dollars extra, or something like that. So the first car we got after the war that was a new car was a 1949 Nash. That was the first car you could get your hands on. My sister bought a 1949 Ford, so we finally had wheels, and the family didn’t have to have 1 car and drive each other around all over the place.

JT: Hmm, I can imagine [laugh].

DH: [laugh]

JT: Well, even, you said you, you lived here on 52nd, was that just a 2 lane street wasn’t it?

DH: That was a 2-lane road, yeah.

JT: Dirt?

DH: Dirt.

JT: Gravel.

DH: Gravel. In fact if you look out here, that kind of a low spot?

JT: Hmm.

DH: You can't quite see it here, -

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Just a lit bit this way. But if you look that way there's a catch basin in the street –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Okay, that was the low spot. That's where you got stuck in the spring.

JT: You can see that groove.

DH: What?

JT: You can see that groove.

DH: [laugh] You, we pulled quite a few people out of the mud there at one time or another.

JT: [laugh] So you've, you've seen this go from the 2-lane gravel to a 5-lane street –

DH: A 5 lane highway.

JT: Highway. And all the fields into a sub-development, sub-division.

DH: Yeah, that was all fields. Yeah, I tell people when I was a kid a I had a cart, you know, a little cart, well, if, if you go past the farmhouse, there's a little hill that goes down towards Stauffer, where the light is?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Well they didn't have much gravel on the road, and there was a little clay there, so sometimes that clay would pack nice and smooth, you know.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Cars drive over it. So then I'd take my cart out on 52nd Street, and ride downhill in my cart.

JT: Aah, soap box derby huh? [Laugh]

DH: Yeah. Now can you imagine –?

JT: Doing, do that now?

DH: Trying that today?

JT: No [laugh]

DH: [laugh] 'Cause there was only a half a dozen cars went by all day. We knew who they were and what time they went by and so forth.

JT: Right [laugh].

DH: So that's, that's all the traffic there was?

JT: Right, so you and your little cart. Tell me; were there more trees then that you see right now? Or is this –

DH: Yeah, there used to be some trees along the edge there.

JT: They had to cut down the trees.

DH: They, they took them all down. But –

JT: So this is more of what, a little bit more wooded?

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: Especially you, at right down to the trail here too?

DH: Yeah. Well the trail, there were no trees on the trail.

JT: No trees on the trail, oh, the railroad.

DH: The railroad, they kept that clean. But there was 3 nice cherry trees across the road, they were wild cherry trees.

JT: Hmm.

DH: But about the time for haying, for cutting wheat, sneak across the road –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Climb up in the tree and get a belly full of cherries.

JT: Sweet cherries.

DH: Sweet cherries, they were good [laugh].

JT: Before the birds.

DH: Oh yeah, you had to fight the birds [laugh].

JT: [Laugh] Okay. All right, you graduated you said in 1953 from college, correct?

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: Where did you go? Where was your first job?

DH: Well, my first job was my only job.

JT: First and only? Okay.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: All right.

DH: My, for the girl that I married –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Worked at Blackmer Pump Company, and she was working there while I was going to college, and she told me, she says ‘they’re looking for an engineer, they need a mechanical engineer. And the chief engineer, we called him Soop, is going to be down to the University of Michigan and he’s going to be interviewing down there. Why don’t you interview him, with him’. So, I went to the interview. And he says ‘well, you have to take a test, you know, an aptitude test and so all that good stuff’. So I went through all that and I was hired, so, and I stayed at Blackmer ever since.

JT: How many years was that?

DH: 42 years.

JT: And retired when?

DH: '96.

JT: Okay, 1996. All right, think about Blackmer, Pump Company. What did you do there? Tell us about your job, describe that.

DH: Well, I worked in what they called the government section all of the time. We, the government section, we made pumps for all the ships in the navy, and most of the tankers for the army and that, or you know, the other groups of the services, but the, the army pumps were smaller, they would go on the gasoline tankers or water tankers 'cause they'd take, take water out in the field in tankers for the troops and so forth. And then the navy, well, when I first started then they had propeller driven planes and they used aviation gasoline.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Aviation gasoline for that, and we would pump that jet fuel for those planes, and then but, I said that wrong. I called it jet fuel, they didn't have jets, it was aviation gas.

JT: Right, like we used, I wondered about that.

DH: Yeah, that's wrong. Well then as the jets came in and we would handle the jet fuel. They fueled every plane and de-fueled every plane. When the plane came back in on a carrier –

JT: With your pump.

DH: They'd pump the fuel out. So our pumps would fuel and de-fuel. So we had the, that fueling and, you know, the oil transfer and all that type of thing. And then you know, the timing is interesting. You gotta be in the right place at the right time. Well, I was in Washington D.C., we would call on the navy department. I was in engineering but we also did sales, it was just a small group, so you did everything. And this fellow said to me 'I'm desperate! I got to have a pump. We gotta have a pump to pump what they called the A Triple F, Aquias Film Forming Foam.' They mix it with water to put out fires.' And he said 'I've got to have a pump, they're going to take the systems that are on there now out, and put these, they're working on a new system'. And he says 'I can't

find a pump, it's got to be made out of bronze'. I says 'well, how many gallons do you want, what pressure?' He gave me those figures and so forth. 'When do you need the pump?' 'I need it in 3 weeks'. 'Okay, I'll get you a pump in 3 weeks'. So I went back and went to the drawing board, and we had some pieces of bronze that were from bigger pumps, -

JT: And what year was this?

DH: Oh, this was oh golly; I don't know, probably, probably 30 years ago.

JT: Okay, but you got the pump.

DH: Yeah, so we whittled one out. We just went to the shop and gave them some drawings and said 'now make this thing'. Put it together and sent him the pump. They were happy. We sold over the next 10 - 15 years 30 million dollars worth of pumps.

JT: You became their supplier. They liked you.

DH: They liked us.

JT: [laugh]

DH: So, when we're done with the interview I'll take you down to the end of the hall and show you a picture of the pump [laugh].

JT: Okay, okay.

DH: But that's what happened during those 42 years, calling on the navy for all that time. Air force, army, -

JT: Still today.

DH: And here's, I want to put in a little pitch.

JT: Okay.

DH: We talk about the war with Iraq. We talk about the Cold War. I tell people, I fought the Cold War for 42 years. We won the Cold War. We out-produced them, we out-engineered them, we out-worked them, we won. Now, we got Iraq and they aren't near the enemy Russia was at that time. And I don't see why we can't have a Cold War instead of a Hot War, and win that one too.

JT: Huh.

DH: My little pitch [laugh].

JT: That's an interesting thought, Dale. You don't know.

DH: [laugh].

JT: Interesting thought here. So you liked working at Blackmer, correct?

DH: Yeah, I always enjoyed working there.

JT: Challenging.

DH: Challenging, we had a, a variety of things. We could do some research. I liked to do research –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Like I say, when somebody come along and said 'we need this, can you make this for us?' You better believe it we can make that for you [laugh]. In fact, when we, first, when I first started, that was before I went to Washington.

JT: Right.

DH: The boss would go down there, and this other kid and I, we'd sit there and we'd say 'I wonder what he's going to bring back that he wants that we don't know how to build'. [Laugh]. So we got used to it, and we would learn how to build it 'cause he came back with and so, 'all right you guys, go make it'. 'All right, we'll do that' [laugh].

JT: Well you must have had a smart group of people.

DH: Oh, we had, we had a nice group.

JT: You had a great staff though.

DH: We had a nice staff; they were great to work with.

JT: Did they work as long as you?

DH: Oh, there was some, quite a few that spent quite a few years, not all of them.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: A lot of them switched, but some of them stayed there for a good many years. I mean like the fellow that interviewed me at Michigan?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: He was there basically all his life. My boss was there basically all his life; he retired, you know, from Blackmer.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So yeah, there was a lot of longevity there.

JT: Well that, that makes it stable.

DH: Oh yeah.

JT: You're not turning over a lot.

DH: Yeah, there was good stability there. That worked great with the navy 'cause they like that stability.

JT: Right, well, they could count on you too. All right, you've been retired since 1996, correct? Tell me about retirement. What's fun?

DH: Well my wife says I didn't retire. She says 'all you did was quit working at Blackmer, and now you're farming'. So now I farm full time instead of part time.

JT: Okay, you are a retired farmer. Tell me what a typical day is like for you.

DH: For farming?

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: Well in the summer, you know, we don't get up as early as we used to, we get up about 7. And then when it's good working conditions you work until dark.

JT: What do you do?

DH: Well, you start out in the spring planting corn, and then when that's planted then you're, you're in the hay business for awhile, and when that's done then you combine

wheat, and then when that's done you bail the straw and then when that's done you go on vacation until the corns ready in September [laugh].

JT: You're doing this by yourself?

DH: My daughter helps me and my brother comes up from Illinois.

JT: Aah. So you have a small crew.

DH: Small crew, yeah. And now the grandkids are getting old enough, the baling went wonderful last summer. Man, they pitched in and we handled a lot of bales in a couple of days. It used to take 2 weeks.

JT: Is this all your own equipment that you use?

DH: Yes we have our own equipment.

JT: Okay, you are retired. What do you do in the winter months? Sounds like the warmer months are busy. What happens in the winter months for a retired farmer?

DH: Well –

JT: Retired man rather.

DH: There's a lot of things that need to be done around the farm, and the house, and so on and so forth. So you keep busy doing those things.

JT: The little things.

DH: A lot of maintenance work, a lot of clean up work.

JT: On your machines?

DH: Machines. I thought I could clean up why, well, for years I never cleaned up anything around the farm. I never had time. So I've been trying to clean up different things now for the last 6 years, and I'm still haven't got it done yet.

JT: Okay what do you mean by clean up?

DH: Oh, you never took care of a lot of stuff, and if you didn't use it or so, well, you threw it in the corner, you know, forget it, 'cause you didn't have time to mess with it. And so now you're just trying to get that stuff straightened out and organized and get rid

of the junk and the stuff that's kind of might be useful or interesting as an antique. You hang on to that. But the crud, you clean that up.

JT: Oil, machinery, that type of thing.

DH: And you've got buildings. You got all kinds of buildings, they need new roofs, they need this and you do all those kind of things.

JT: I see.

DH: So there's lots of maintenance to do. And that happens more in the winter than –

JT: You talked about traveling. So this is, this is something you like to do now.

DH: Well, that goes way back to when we were dating. One of my wife's major concerns was when we were dating is 'this guy never travels, I want to travel, and he'd never been from here to Chicago hardly'. [Laugh] My high school trip we got to Chicago, that was quite something. So there was a little concern on her part. Well, when I got in the army you traveled. And no matter where you were you didn't mind going some other place, 'cause you'd just as soon move. So you learned to travel. So after I got out of the army, why, traveling became kind of second nature. And –

JT: You found it wasn't so fearful.

DH: Oh no, so we did we started traveling when the kids were small.

JT: Took your vacation.

DH: And then we had contract at Blackmer to supply pumps for the Spanish navy, for Spain. So I went over to Spain to work that contract out and so on and so forth. So Barb says 'well you're not going to Spain by yourself, I'm going along'. So, that was our first taste of traveling outside of the continental United States. And it was fun. We enjoyed it.

JT: And how long ago was that?

DH: Oh my, that's, well let's see, my dad passed away in 1981, It was after that when I went over there. Uh huh [affirmative]. 'Cause I was sweating 'cause there was nobody home to take care of doing some of that farm work, and that was about, about the time I went. But that was an interesting experience.

JT: Different food?

DH: Different food. But we just rented a car.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And we could drive around wherever we wanted to. Worked out fine.

JT: And you just, you recently came back from Turkey wasn't it? Greece?

DH: We, we just came back from a, a tour in Turkey and Greece, yeah.

JT: Yeah.

DH: It was a church type of tour following the footsteps of the Apostle Paul.

JT: Hmm.

DH: So many of those early churches were in Turkey.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: I never really kind of got that through my head, but that's where most of those early churches were. And then the Island of Patmos, where John was in prison. And then of course Corinth and Athens were churches where the Apostle Paul was too. So those were that part of the tour. That part of his journey.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: There was a lot of other places he went but we weren't there. That was fun.

JT: That was fun. Different from the ones in Spain? That trip into Spain?

DH: Yeah. Spain we felt very comfortable driving around with our own car for a rental car.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: I don't know as we'd have felt as comfortable in Turkey.

[End of Tape One]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

JT: Sorry about that, we're on the second tape now. You traveled Greece.

DH: We traveled in Greece and we drove when we were in Greece. But this last trip was a tour, so we did not drive.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative]. So it was different, do 2 different experiences.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: Each a good trip.

DH: Each were very good trips. We had nice, you know, nice people to be with, we had a good guide, you could understand him.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And took us to interesting places and it was a good trip.

JT: Two different ways of seeing –

DH: Yeah.

JT: Seeing a place.

DH: Uh huh [affirmative].

JT: By yourself or with a tour.

DH: Yeah.

JT: So which do you prefer?

DH: If you can do it, go on your own. But there's places where you can't do that.

JT: Right. And you, you were in that place and time.

DH: Yeah, yeah.

JT: Exactly.

DH: 'Cause I always want to go to Russia, and I've talked to two different people that have been to Russia –

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: And they said 'don't try it, don't drive a car, don't do it, you just don't do that in Russia'.

JT: So, well, that's something to look forward to. Your next, your 3rd trip.

DH: So we're looking forward doing a tour somehow.

JT: You do some research on that.

DH: Got work to do.

JT: You didn't get there, correct. So what's special about this farm this year Dale?

DH: Well, that's an interesting question [laugh]. Yeah, the farm is now 100 years old. And I applied for a centennial sign, and we now have a centennial sign. It came in about a month ago, and I'm working trying to get a design for some folks to put it up, but there's 18 inches of frost in the ground. So the sign is going to not be put up until that frost comes out of the ground [laugh].

JT: That's a proud moment isn't it?

DH: Yeah, that was kind of fun. I just wish my dad could have been around for that.

JT: Yeah, not very many farms around is there?

DH: Not, not in Kentwood, no. You get further out and there's farms that are, you know, that are 100 years old or 150 years old, but not in Kentwood, we're the last one in Kentwood.

JT: You're very unique and special.

DH: So –

JT: So how does the family feel, other than you, about this? You're brother and sister?

DH: Oh, they well they don't live here, you know, but they're not complaining. They said 'go for it, try and get the sign, put it up and hang on to it'. So they're in favor of it.

JT: Big question, how do you see the future of your farm? What would you like for it to happen?

DH: That's, that's a question that I've asked myself many a times. What happens? What is going to happen? You know, they have programs of a keeping farms into farmland, there's a farmland trust program, but that program only works where you're far enough out so you can put maybe 5000 acres into it rather than just an isolated one farm.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative].

DH: So how do you, what do you do with a farm like this? Well, as long as I can do it, I will continue to farm it. Now my dad kept farming until he was 86. So that gives me 13 more years.

JT: [laugh]

DH: Now, after that [laugh] you know, how long are you going to be healthy? People say 'well how long are you going to farm'. Well, how long am I going to be healthy? I don't now.

JT: And it's also something you enjoy.

DH: It's just something and people say 'well why don't you move out, why don't you sell the place?' Uh, well, it's home. I mean, I've been here all my life. I don't want to, I don't want to move [laugh].

JT: Well you know, when I look out the window I you see where you are surrounded by houses.

DH: But if you look out the back window –

JT: You're surrounded by land [laugh].

DH: It doesn't look any different now than it did 60 years ago [laugh].

JT: No it doesn't, does it?

DH: It's exactly the same.

JT: Same. Well, okay, so we hope that the future is still good for, for the farm. Couple more questions. One is: how would you describe Dale Heyboer.

DH: How would I describe me?

JT: Exactly.

DH: Oh my. Nobody's ever asked that question before. Now you got to, I got to stop and think. How would I describe myself? If I go back to my school days I would say that I was not one to run with the crowd. I mean there was situations when you got older, you know, in high school, of drinking, smoking, some of those things. And I lost some friends because I didn't do that. As far as I was concerned I had no intentions of smoking or drinking or any of those things. And peer group was okay, it's their problem, not mine, so I went my own way. So that kind of set me maybe a little bit one-way or the other, I don't know. And I think when I worked at Blackmer there was a lot of different people I met and people that would do those same types of things. There was, you know, alcohol and type, that type. And I didn't get involved with it and I often thought 'now I wonder if that's going to hurt me'. And it never did. And in fact, people told me, you know, after they got to know me and so forth, and after a few years they said 'we appreciate that, that you didn't do those things'. So I've never been put down for it and I've never had people really complain about it. So, what would, what would you say, or what about myself? I don't know. I guess I can be alone or I can do research, I can go out on the farm and farm a whole day and there's nobody out there but me and I'm comfortable with that. But on the other hand I'm very comfortable traveling with people and meeting people and working with people. So I'm not sure what to say. But I'm not an extravert, I'm sure of that, where I got to have people around me. I've got to go someplace every night; I've got to be with people. No I don't, [laugh] I don't have to. So maybe that's my best thin; we've been married 45 years and we intend to stay married the rest of our life, maybe that's a consistency factor, I don't know what you want to call it [laugh]. But it's different than some people.

JT: Uh huh [affirmative]. All right, last question. What would your advice be to family, your grandkids?

DH: Oh my, what would be my advice to my grandkids? Well, -

JT: []

DH: I guess, and this probably we're talking from a tape recording that's in public knowledge and so forth, and when I think about that, this is not politically correct, but I would tell them you're brought up in a Christian Church, you know what's right, go ahead and do it. You don't have to be an engineer, you don't have to be a doctor, you can be anything from a ditch digger to a President of the United States, but do it in a Christian way. I guess that would be my advice to them.

JT: That's good advice Dale. Well we are done.

DH: Good.

JT: Good.

DH: [laugh]

[Tape ends]