

**KENTWOOD HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
[KPHC]**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

011-1974

**JOHN R VANDERLAAN**

**INTERVIEWER: MRS. JACK  
ANDERSON  
April 19, 1974**

Transcribed by Lori Vander Stel  
At Your Service  
Edited Version: February 2003

Kentwood Historic Preservation Commission  
Oral History Transcript Cover Sheet



Name of individual (s): John VanderLaan

Name of Interviewer: Mrs. Jack Anderson

Date: April 19, 1974

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

Descendent of early settlers in Paris Township; attended Shaffer School. Well-known as barn builder and constructed a number of barns in Paris and Gaines Township, including one located at East Paris and 52<sup>nd</sup> Street on the farm of his uncle Fred VanderLaan. Provides information regarding "barn raising" activities and other farm-related events.

Lived in the Wing Road/52<sup>nd</sup> Street area.

Kentwood Historical Preservation Commission (KHPC) Oral History

Subject: John R. VanderLaan

Interviewer: Mrs. Jack Anderson

Date of Interview: April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1974

Place: Holland Home

Transcribed by Lori Vander Stel, At Your Service, October 2002.

Edited Version: February 2003

John R. VanderLaan (JV)

Mrs. Jack Anderson (MA)

Gladys Friday (GF)

[ ]: refers to words/passages that transcriptionist cannot understand

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JV: There was the old Talsma [?] Furniture Company, right on the corner, possibly you are acquainted.

MA: [ ] she probably was Mrs. Friday –

JV: Probably Mrs. Friday, oh, no? Oh, less probably you're not interested in that, but I take that trip often and uh, then I look at that you know, I think that's where I came into the world [laugh].

MA: Right, well, that's quite a –

JV: And then Eastern, the old Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, it still is there, but it has been remodeled several times.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: That's where I attended the first service; I was baptized in that church.

MA: Is that right?

JV: Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: And uh, then, is that where you lived up until the time that you were 2 ½ then? You said that –

JV: Yes, approximately 2 ½, then my father traded that property for a farm on 44<sup>th</sup> Street. Which is approximately 3/8ths of a mile east of Shaffer Avenue. Shaffer intersects and 44<sup>th</sup> Street in fact it ends there.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: In the first place east was uh my uncle Fred, and then Mimi.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: They was, my father was very close with him. They farmed together. They were the old Dutch type, but lived very economically in those days. They each had a horse, and that made the team. One man used the team one day, and the other used the team the next day [laugh].

MA: And there was [tape silence]

JV: Ho, ho ho ho.

MA: Oh wow.

MA: 2 ½ years old, and then you, how long did you live? Live there on that place then, for quite awhile? You went to school there?

JV: Yes.

MA: Okay.

JV: I uh, at Shaffer School, I, but at the end of Shaffer Avenue.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh, there's a building there now, uh, but that's not the original one.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: In fact the one that I attended was not the original one.

MA: Oh.

JV: This is um, uh, Shaffer, Oscar. Mrs. Oscar Shaffer lived across the road and was a widow uh, as long as I can remember. Uh my father and mother remember that uh her husband was living. And she taught school in the old log house.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: School house, on that site. And then the nice schoolhouse was built. A nice tower. Elegant bell. One room school but a large school and better than the majority of district schools. That's what I attended from the, time I was 5 years old until I graduated in uh, 1905, from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

MA: And that was the old Shaffer School huh?

JV: Yea, and later that school burned, and this one is now uh, oh, I think there's some hippies in there.

MA: Yea.

JV: They just call it the the Bethesda House.

MA: You, were you attending the school then at the time of the fire or not?

JV: No.

MA: No.

JV: No. We'd already moved then, we moved east one mile.

MA: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: On a place uh, which uh, first, after that belonged to a Walter Puntsma [?]. We don't know them.

MA: You don't know anybody that knowed them?

JV: No.

MA: See, I'm not born here and you know, and so some of these names aren't familiar to me but uh, after you uh, that was after you graduated from that school you moved then?

JV: Oh yes.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And yes. That's where I lived. Right near the school you know. In those days, why um, uh, people who had children had to walk to school.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Yes.

JV: And Weaver [?] lived on East Paris Avenue, a ½ a mile north of 44<sup>th</sup> Street, he was the farthest from the school. And finally, his father build an a little addition onto the woodshed, a little uh shed, and he drove uh, a horse and buggy to school.

MA: Is that right? Then that was quite a luxury.

JV: Although it was necessary, he was a very strong and well-built young man, but he'd rather ride than walk.

JA: He was [ ].

MA: Did you, were your parents far – your, your dad farmed then?

JV: Yes, Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: In the area, so, was he always a farmer?

JV: And we worked –

MA: Your dad?

JV: Together, uh, that of the 40 acres. And Uncle Fred had 40 acres, and then they began renting additional land on uh East Paris Avenue, south of 44<sup>th</sup> Street, from Will Shaffer. Welmarth T. Shaffer. Who for several years was supervisor of Paris Township.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Well, that was good ground. Sowed the new land, and they raised potatoes and uh corn, and such crops as that.

MA: Well, were your parents born here in the United States then?

JV: No.

MA: No, they were –

JV: My father, as near as I can remember, was 19 years of age when they came across and Uncle Fred was 17.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But my mother was a little baby. So she doesn't remember anything about the trip.

MA: And then they, they settled here in Michigan. Was this their first settlement? They came right –

JV: Yes.

MA: From –

JV: My, my father uh, I don't know so much about where my uh mother's parents landed, but uh, my, my father and Uncle Fred and 2 sisters, they uh, spent the first night in the old big brick house on the southeast corner of um, Franklin Street and Eastern Avenue. And it is still there yet.

MA: Is that right?

JV: Course that's colored neighborhood now.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But that's where they spent the first night.

MA: That was the more prominent part of town then in those days isn't it?

JV: Yea, well, it was then –

MA: Yea.

JV: A Holland section –

MA: Yea. Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: All through there. Course they couldn't speak a word of English you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And uh [laugh] –

MA: Then they bought this land out farther, then, I suppose that quite a big purchase in those days. Was that a, quite a step to make to purchase this?

JV: Yes. I've often asked them, you know they uh, I came from a very poor class of people. Uh, poor, in the Netherlands.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Had to work hard, and waited until they could save enough money to make the trip.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But Bob, and Bob and the 2 sisters. And left the mother and the other brother in the Netherlands, with the promise as soon as they had enough money, they send for her transportation.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And uh, approximately 2 years after that they did that and she came across with the other brother.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And they settled on Henry Street. All in that community, that Dutch community of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church.

MA: Then did you, was the home already built when you uh, bought this, when your parent's bought the property on 44<sup>th</sup> Street? Did your father have to build the home or was there a home there?

JV: There was a home there.

MA: There was a home there.

JV: Uh huh [affirmative]. A fairly good house. However they didn't like it so well, some parts of it, but it was substantial. And a good grainery and uh corn crib and a fairly good barn. So they could have 4 or 5 cows and uh a horse.

MA: But now that original house is not there now is it?

JV: No, that burned down.

MA: That burned down. Is there another one it's place?

JV: Well, Uncle Fred's, see, original was there, but it has been added on to.

MA: Added on, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And along to the east was the Dr. Shaffer.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: It was the, at one time, called Mrs. Shaffer [ ] not the Dr.'s wife, but relation, it was called Shaffer's Valley in there. And Dr. Shaffer came from, was coming from the Civil War, discharged from the Civil War built that property just east of my folks, that's right at the bridge, cross the uh Plaster Creek.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Long driveway goes south. Maybe you're acquainted.

MA: Vaguely, I, I'm, would have to, I'm now wanna ride by again, now you, you've cited me interested in, but, uh, what about the churches then? Did you have to travel far to go to church [ ]?

JV: Yes. First they uh, the two of them, Dad and Uncle Fred and uh my mother and aunt and I, the little fellow, they'd go to Eastern Avenue Church, with horse and buggy.

MA: That was a long ways.

JV: And uh, she had a sister. My father had a sister married to a man that had a grocery store, and a delivery wagon on a horse. And that's where they kept the horse over noon, and stay for the afternoon service.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And then go back home. And then they'd have an evening services, they had 3 services in those days you know. They go find it hard now, but it, and 2 services, but then they attended 3. And they were considerable longer than they are now. They were at least a hour and 30 minutes from the time the service began until the church dismissed. And occasionally a long-winded preacher took another 15 minutes. And then the audience became a little uh irritated.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: They were restless.

MA: Then, when, would, when did you finally change churches then? Was East Paris Church built, or, or uh, which one of the denominations came into the community then when you, when you uh, which was one of the earlier churches that sprung up out in the countryside there then, at that time?

JV: Well, what church we went to after Eastern? Is that uh –

MA: Yea, who, or who –

JV: Yea. Well um, my father thought the trip was a little too long, and that was Kelloggsville Church.

MA: Oh, that's uh –

JV: Which is on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street a little west of Eastern Avenue.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And he decided to uh, affiliated with that church. But Uncle Fred and Aunt Mimi, they can, they wanted to continue uh, Eastern Avenue Church. Her father and mother were still living, and that's where they would spend the noon hour. But then we had done that Kelloggsville Church, and that's where my brother Al was baptized, in that church.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And we attended that for a while and then uh, a move was started to organize the church at East Paris. But that again was a couple miles closer.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: So then uh, father, and then Uncle Fred, a member of Eastern Avenue, took part in that. Active part, in organization and building of that church. But later was sold to the Baptist people. They had moved away, but you remember probably um, where the school is? The Christian School? Well, that was the site of the first church.

MA: Uh, where the school is now?

JV: That was built, built there. Uh huh [affirmative]. And what, just what year that was I uh, I don't imagine the number.

MA: Well, is that; is that the church perhaps where you were married? Or not?

JV: What?

MA: Is that the church where perhaps you were married?

JV: No.

MA: No?

JV: No, uh, later Dad uh, moved again from that place on uh, Potsma place on 44<sup>th</sup>. He moved to a place on the corner of uh 60<sup>th</sup> and uh Kraft. And uh, Patterson.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But that was of course the south side of that road, 60<sup>th</sup> Street, is Gaines Township. Then I lived there and uh, I was carpenter then, I chose the carpenter trade for my vocation.

MA: How did you happen to make that decision?

JV: Yea, well, I wanted that all my life.

MA: Did you?

JV: Every since that I saved, from as long as I can remember, I would save then, religiously, and if I had a get quarter or fifty cents I'd by a carpenter tool. And the first hammer was a Mago Hammer. They were supposed to be the best for fifty cents. But I had the fifty cents, I bought that Mago Hammer, and the first week I had it under my pillow in the bedroom, I snuck it in right when I had the chance. Except when I was at Harold's place or in my toolbox.

MA: Is that right?

JV: Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: That's really something. And then, from there you went on, what, what was your main line of construction then? You, when did you begin building barns, or –

JV: Yes, I began building barns that, maybe I have something here with um, take a little time. Course I might treat you to uh –

MA: Oh, well, thank you, very much. Hmm.

JV: [ ] Maybe, maybe I'm wrong then. There was a –

[Rustling papers]

MA: Oh yes.

JV: There's a barn frame, after raising.

MA: Oh, there.

JV: And here's some pictures that were taken of the tools and the mowing machine and uh –

MA: Oh, oh. Uh huh [affirmative]. Now this I, boy, that is really something. And –

JV: And a little article in the uh, in the Grand Rapids Press.

MA: Oh yes, I heard about that one, Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: Did they have some pictures in the Grand Rapids Press then?

JV: What?

MA: Did they have some pictures, in the Press, of your structures? Your barns?

JV: No.

MA: They had some pictures of your [ ] I thought.

JV: No, just in my home uh, the one that I showed you.

MA: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: You want one of them?

MA: Well, I no, uh, if you, if you, have you got extra ones?

JV: You can have that one if you want it.

MA: Well I, if I can borrow it I would sure appreciate that. Now when was that one taken?

JV: That was down on 76<sup>th</sup> Street, a half a mile east of Hanna Lake Avenue, on the south side of the street.

*[Note: A check of the 1919 plat map shows B. Ward at 100<sup>th</sup> and Hanna Lake Road]*

MA: At the [ ].

JV: And that barn was owned by Byron Ward.

MA: You by any chance didn't build the Bowen barn on 44<sup>th</sup> Street? Or anything like that? Some of that lumber is really huge lumber in that barn too. What type of lumber did you use?

JV: Well, the uh frame –

MA: The frame.

JV: The framework, the farmer's tried to get that in the community or uh, up from patches of forest that they have saved. But the exterior was pine mostly, or hemlock. And that I would be purchased at a lumberyard. And the shingles were wood shingles in those.

MA: Now, were these, uh, 2, 2 stories of course, with the hayloft, there was haylofts there?

JV: What?

MA: It was a 2 story wasn't it? You had the top for a hayloft.

JV: Yea, well there's, there's a basement.

MA: Yes, I was gonna ask, they had –

JV: And that's the dried floor.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And the two sides were the mouth, and then they've had a gambrel roof, which be that much higher again, and then the [ ] where the track, hay track ran, and uh, that was my old Jay Ditwiler from Caledonia. Well-known residence. And Bill Cuddly, and myself.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh, Byron Ward wanted to take a picture of it after it was raised. And so we sat up there on the frame and then, why, Ditwiler took the [ ].

MA: Now, these round, these were all purchased then too? These round posts here that are all um, these uh, that was that, fortified the floor there?

JV: Yea, these –

MA: Were they, uh, were they gleaned from the land?

JV: Yea, most of it, Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: They were, they were gleaned from the land?

JV: By the way, a lot of this timber, Mr. Ward, Byron's father, Eugene, uh, he owned property, had a house uh and a barn up north in the sand country. And had quite a bit of

pine and spruce on it. And he had a lot of much of this sawed up there and uh shipped to that place.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Now most of these you could drive right in with the tractor then. You, you had a, you built a sort of a, is that –

JV: That's double doors that slide over.

MA: Yes, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Take a whole load of hay.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Yup. Oh, we thought things were just handy in those days. Uh, first they had those low roofs like that.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And you couldn't get much above the plate. Then they got into what they called the gambrel roof you see? That was so much higher. You could almost hold as much above the place as they used to store below the plate.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And then of course they had the basement at the same time for cattle and horses.

MA: Yes, Uh huh [affirmative]. Well, how in the world did you have, how did you? Uh, reach these heights then? Did you have scaffolds then in those days too? Or what, how'd you –

JV: Well, this was all done on the ground.

MA: Oh.

JV: I learned that trade. It was all scaffolded out. It laid about that high on the ground. And I uh laid it out. I learned that. And had a couple of men with a boring machine and chisels and saws making it to the right length. Everything. Braces and all. Pins, all made by hand, and then when that was ready, they had what they called the raising day. And then, so, 75 to 100 neighbors were invited to come and help raise. And then they served a lunch in some place that they had a keg of beer. And that's, that's where I, this was taken right after the raising after the men went home.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Yup. That one was raised without a mistake. Every piece that I had laid out went to place, that, at that day.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Isn't that uh – what year was this taken?

JV: Don't think I'm boasting.

MA: No, no, that is an accomplishment.

JV: But that is the, that is the, and I built several, and I think I built uh, 27 or 28 big barns then in my day before I quit that and went to house building. Uh, farmers were nice to work for but they were a little extra economical. They had to be.

MA: Yea, that's right.

JV: So there was a little bit more to be made at the house, in the house building trade.

MA: Do you, do you remember approximately what you erected this particular barn?

JV: I uh, I think I can probably remember that. I would think about uh, 1913.

MA: 1913?

JV: Well, I couldn't swear to that, but uh, I think that's it. My uncle's on the corner of East Paris Avenue and 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, northwest corner. I built in um, 1915.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And uh, several have burned down too.

MA: Well, 1913, then you started at quite an early age?

JV: Oh, I did, yea. Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: Great.

JV: Yea, I, I was, that was just something that I wanted to do. I decided that was going to be my life's work. And I think I've put in the best that I had into it.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And to make fine work. Sometimes they found a little fault, where they were taking too much time, but few years afterwards, then they appreciated it because they saw that they had quality.

MA: Quality. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: I think I'm telling the truth when I'm telling you that way.

MA: Yea, I'm sure. Then evidentially you have, else you wouldn't reached so, had so much uh, uh, notability from the structures that you built. The barns and the Press and things like that.

JV: Yea.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Then uh, uh, you lived on Kraft and 60<sup>th</sup> for how long then? Most of the –

JV: That was Patterson and 60<sup>th</sup>, southwest corner.

MA: Oh, Patterson.

JV: Well, my father bought that in 1908, in the fall, to take possession the first of April then 1909. And uh, I stayed with him until I was married. Now I forget what year I was married. In 1925. In uh, December, the week before Christmas. So then I left my folks and I built a nice home uh, on Whitney Street. 'Cause me and Bill Cannon, on Eastern, and had that ready, uh, before we were married. And it was almost paid for. And my wife had enough saved up for the furniture. So uh – we had a dandy start I think.

MA: Well, that was wonderful. Especially in those, in those times.

JV: Yea.

MA: Then you, if you were married in 1925, then you were not married too long before the depression hit?

JV: No. When the depression came, I couldn't hire a job. And so um, and Jay Wing, the Wing property across from [ ].

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh, he was so in a hurry to get rid of that. His wife was felt kind of miserable, and they wanted a new home, uh, that one was much too big, and heard about that I wanted a farm, and by January we traded even up.

MA: Is that right?

JV: That's how we –

MA: This is how you came to live on Wing Avenue.

JV: Yea.

MA: And you lived there a good many years.

JV: Uh, lived there from 19 uh 30, to 1966. My wife died then that place of uh where Carlson lives now, in 1966.

MA: Then you were well acquainted with the little schoolhouse on Wing Avenue too?

JV: Oh yes, that's where Robert and Harold uh, got their primary education.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: You know Harold very well of course.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. I do.

JV: And you know Robert I suppose, uh –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. For certain, yea, he's, -

JV: Yup.

MA: He's quite, that's right. Then, and then children all, all raised in Wing Avenue. And then when was Dutton Church built then? Did you, again move, or were still going to East Paris Church or did you move to Dutton Church then?

JV: Oh yea, when I, when I, I left Grand Rapids for the farm, then I had my membership to, in the, in the meantime, it was at Burton Heights Christian Reformed Church.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: After we were married. And then from there it was transferred to Dutton.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Now, you moved there on Wing Avenue in 1930 you said now. Had Mr. Wing been living there quite awhile?

JV: Wing?

MA: Wing. Jay Wing.

JV: Oh, yes, it was, it what called the old Highway of Haines Farm now.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And Mrs. Wing uh was a Daughter of Hyran Haines. And that schoolhouse where Robert and Harold uh attended, that was called the Wing uh, school house.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. The Smith's [ ], -

JV: Oh, the Smiths were –

MA: The Smith's lived, lived there too, or uh, at the end of the street didn't they?

JV: Oh yea, they lived on uh 52<sup>nd</sup>, uh, in fact the Baptist Church property is out on the Smith farm.

MA: On the Smith farm, yea. Did uh, did Mr., Mr. Wing built that home then that you lived in?

JV: No, uh, Hyran Haines built it.

MA: Oh, Hyran Haines built that.

JV: Uh huh [affirmative]. Yea.

MA: And also the barn, did you? You didn't build the barn there? Or was the barn there when you –

JV: That was old barn was remodeled. I didn't uh get that job. It was done by a carpenter from Byron Center by the name of uh Weaver.

MA: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: He did the re-, remodeled that barn.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: House was kind of run down. That back part there was the old part, and then they built that big enormous front part on it you know with that big stair, open stairway, and uh, it was a beautiful uh house but, too much building for a small family.

MA: Oh yes.

JV: One time doing chores, my wife called and said uh 'Is Robert with you?', I said, "No, I haven't seen him". Well she said he isn't, he isn't at home. I think he was 4 years old then. Well, I quit the, the work I was doing and I came home and went to the neighbors that he wasn't there and uh, I said he wouldn't have walked to the school

would he? Say's I don't think so. So uh, after I got back to the other, couple other places I thought I'd walk to the school. And Mrs. Moran was the teacher. And I knocked on the door, school was in session, and she said uh I know who you're looking for, come in. So and he was sitting on the back seat listening to the classes [laugh].

MA: At 4 years old!

JV: 4 years old.

MA: Isn't that something. He must have watched the kids go down that road.

JV: He always liked school.

MA: That was –

JV: And then the one morning he had to study in the bedroom, when he was attending college, and uh, I uh, worked in Grand Rapids there for Barkwell Builders, and I still a little chores. And I'd get up quite early, I had to. I passed his room, and I could see out of the door that was light. 'Cause I think it was 5 o'clock or quarter to 5. I thought 'what, well, Harold is up already'. So I opened the door, where he was sitting at his desk, and I said 'Are you up already?' He said 'is it morning?' [laugh].

MA: Is that right?

JV: Yes.

MA: He, he didn't realize that –

JV: That's the way it happened. He was a great student.

MA: Well that's good.

JV: Maybe I'm talking too much about the –

MA: No, that's –

JV: Is there something else you'd like to know further on?

MA: No, we just want to know what, about, about the community, and everything that you've been telling us, I, I just remember one thing that you uh wanted to bring your uh to recall about the bridge on 44<sup>th</sup> Street when the separator went through it.

JV: Yes.

MA: What kind of a structure was that at that time? Uh –

JV: Well it, I can remember that. The people were very proud of it. The old wooden bridge was rotted, and they got a what they a steel structure. Steel girders.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh, 'course, nothing like the steel they use now. But they did have nice trusses, and the new floor plank hadn't been used long, and uh, a steam uh, engine and separator, the man had been pressing in the neighborhood, and on the way east why when they got across, one of the garters went out. Right down to a 45. But they didn't break. And the uh, 2 men on the engine, one jumped in the water to the south, and the other to the uh north, otherwise he would have been crushed –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Between the engine and separator coming together. And my father one morning, I, I begged him so hard he took me over, took me by the hand, to show me that while it was in that condition. There was nobody working but it was there.

MA: And the bridge was not usable of course.

JV: No, the bridge was almost a total loss.

MA: Yea, then –

JV: And uh, they uh, tried, there was some talk of the township board contacted the bridge company that they used too light of girders, but whatever came of that I don't know. I can remember that they uh built it up and it was a lot of sledge hammering and banging, but I had strict orders not to get there. Get in the way you know. So I don't, I can hear it, I could hear it but uh, but it was always a little bit school [ ] the uh trusses, afterwards, and went traffic went across them they wiggled a little.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: The automobiles going to so fast you know.

MA: How did they get that, that heavy off? With horses and, and –

JV: Yea, I don't know how they did that. I guess they must have got a mover, house mover.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Or a wench, and got the engine out, and the separator that way too. It wasn't damaged to speak I remember.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: They were heavy you know um, -

MA: Right. And then you traveled with that was the horse and buggy days too, then of course that was –

JV: Oh, oh yes, that was horse and buggy days.

MA: That was – and um –

JV: Yea those, that little creek just uh was going through part of my father's farm, and a little wooden bridge. And then the Plaster River Bridge. People coming home with their horse and buggies. You would hear something like thunder. Wrrrrrrrdt! Over the little bridge.

MA: Yes.

JV: And the few minutes after that over the long bridge you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And we'd all go 'what, my, is that thunder?' 'No,' she says 'I saw someone drive across the bridge' [laugh].

MA: Isn't that something? Yea, and those things you recall, they stay with you in the memory -

JV: Yea.

MA: For a long long time. I, I know, like you said you're, you're meeting in the dark with the other buggy driver –

JV: Oh yes [laugh].

MA: That was –

JV: Well that happened on East Paris Avenue.

MA: Was that on East Paris?

JV: Yup. Easinga, lived, it was [ ] Easinga and Wolfort. Those names familiar to ya?

MA: Yea, Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: That's where that happened.

MA: Yea, 'course, those, those were just little country paths then at that time weren't they? Those roads? Were just a –

JV: Oh, they were so bad at that time of the year.

MA: Yea.

JV: In the summer they got to be good you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: They would have a big scraper, the uh, the uh, highway, path master. He was below the highway commission. He'd take of our section.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And when it so rough and dry he'd scrape that and the clay became very nice.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Ground.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But then first when we got an automobiles it would come up a storm, a thunderstorm, rain, they'd have the dickens of a time to get back home to keep on the center of that road [laugh].

MA: Sure that's right.

JV: Wanna slide off.

MA: I don't remember, did you, had, had there been much damage to your buggies?

JV: No.

MA: When the –

JV: It, it sprung the uh, the fields a little bit. I had to have the blacksmith straighten that out. Never found out who the man was, I met him twice.

MA: Yes, you were saying that.

JV: On the way, pert near the same place. Not quite, but –

MA: You were traveling to church at that time? How was that again? You were –

JV: Well it was a young people's uh society, -

MA: Oh.

JV: That met, why I think, on Wednesday evening. Or singing school, something like that.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And we our girls there too you know. You couldn't keep a boy home you know, of, uh any kind of weather. They had a girl somewhere that he could meet –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And that's the same way yet [laugh].

MA: Yea, same way then as is now.

JV: And that's the way it should be of course.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Yes. But you were traveling in the dark. You had no lanterns –

JV: No, no light.

MA: On the buggy then?

JV: No.

MA: No lanterns or anything.

JV: No. [ ]

MA: And you met, and, and then, and how did that go? You met in the dark and the wheels just interlocked?

JV: Well, the 2 horses evidently uh, a horse can see better they claim –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: At night, better vision than a person.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And they were far enough apart to pass each other. But you see the wheels extended farther.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And that's how the wheels came, front wheels came together. One inside of the other one. Well they say woa, one of these stop right there. And they backed up and screwed around a little bit and got out of there and went on. Then on the way home near that place, no identical, but near it, I had it again. Then the fellow spoke uh he said 'I met you before'.

MA: [laugh]

JV: But I think he would [laugh], he was just as much to blame as I was I think. I don't know whether he was uh to the side half of the road or not.

MA: Hmm.

JV: And I can remember maybe you're interested it's a terrific hailstorm. Oh, oh, you know, I was a boy. My father was out on the field cultivating corn. Corn was up. And uh, I saw him unhitch. And uh, with a, had a white horse. And unhitched from the cultivator and came home just as tight as he could and I didn't know what was wrong. And uh, I was playing near the grainery. And he had the horse in the barn and he ran to the house with both hands on top of his head. He said 'run for the house'. He said 'Hail, uh, hail's as big as eggs'. And uh, see, once in a while one came down and break, and then another place break like that. And I said I thought somebody was uh fooling and throwing stones or something like that. And we got into the house and then it was blown solid mass came down like that. And they were, I, I'm not exaggerating, the majority of them were as big as my fist. And shaped, shaped very pretty, like the farmer's sugar candy. And all the ground covered with them. Then my aunt that I was speaking about was feeding the chickens at that time. And they were all in a fluster. They're picking corn, lost pert near the whole crop.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. From [ ] or, or were they outside. Were the chicken's outside?

JV: Yea, they were outside. 'Cause her chicken feeding time so, we lost a couple chickens, not many, 3 or 4. And Grandpa and Grandma were coming home from town. And they saw that terrific cloud coming up, they drove in uh, what was later the Lambert

Munshaw place. Uh, about a quarter of a mile north of uh 44<sup>th</sup>, on Kalamazoo Avenue. You remember big uh 3 gabled house in nice condition yet.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Mixed with that big Ed Carl place with the filters you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But the barn door, the horse barn door was open, and the man standing in the barn waved in and they drove by, they had a horse and buggy and all. Otherwise I don't know what would have happened you know –

MA: [ ]

JV: It was out with a horse in the rainstorm like that. Probably hard to control the uh, the horse.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Mrs. Barkley had the store, I told you, on the corner you know. Grocery store and post office. And a very nice woman.

MA: That was on the corner of what? Uh, Mr. Barkley [ ]

JV: That was the northwest corner of uh Kalamazoo and 44<sup>th</sup>. Oil station now.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: That's where Mrs. Barkley uh ran the store, with a Daughter Carrie. And an elegant woman. And she uh, had a fairly committed, fairly good living there selling groceries. And uh, people come, had a hay, had a big scale. Was so much hay was gone uh, lose, you know to Grand Rapids. And they'd weigh there. And that brought her 15 cents every time she weighed uh a load of hay. And then a nice big picture uh above the counter. A nice man, and they said that was her husband, Mr. Barkley. They were going, they had been in the Paris Baptist Church at that time. Was a very good man. But he was uh; he passed away uh there. But then the picture hung uh, and then Blake's Blacksmith's Shop right across. But that was a regular stopping place for farmers. A wonderful mechanic, that fixed almost anything. And uh, I used to like to take things there. Had the horses shod there, such things as that. That, that's about all that uh, Bowen; it was called Bowen station, except the Mesnards. The 3 houses are still there. Three brothers's had a big sawmill, where Burns Rent and Animal Hospital is now.

MA: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: In that low place. And there's a lot of pine you know around uh, that's, on that sandy ground. And they sawed a lot of lumber. The big house where Oosterhouse lived, uh, [ ] Oosterhouse is, south of the railroad, the first big house. And then west on 44<sup>th</sup>, the first uh older type, a kind of a #3 gable long, it was long. And the other is right near the corner of Curwood, on the south side.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Curwood and uh 44<sup>th</sup>. That was the other Mesnard's home.

MA: Uh, I, I know those, there's still in nice shape too.

JV: And I remember those Mesnards, where I almost worshipped them, they were carpenters [laugh].

MA: You had something in common.

JV: And I think I have a couple of tools yet that I bought as sale when the oldest one died.

MA: Isn't that something.

JV: I have the saw at least uh, in my toolbox, but I haven't sold the tools. But I sold all the personal. But I kept mine, the tools; I couldn't part with them yet. I'll have to eventually.

MA: Oh yea. But getting back to the depression again, you, you said uh, you couldn't hire a job then.

JV: No.

MA: How? Then building was, was down then too? You're –

JV: Oh, terrific. And uh –

MA: Then how did you manage? To –

JV: Oh, had a ter-, we had a terrific time. We had enough to eat. And had a wonderful garden that I uh, put in terrific lot of time and fertilizer, because Wing was a poor farmer. He didn't keep his barnyard clean either. And we had water works. Had an engine in the basement, and a pump. So we had a garden. Oh, I had wonderful vegetables. But couldn't get any money. I tried it, and uh, the W.P.A. came on you know. Uh, made some jobs for people. And no, they said I was too well off for that, other people are uh more worse off. They got the job for little money. So uh, in fact, we didn't hardly know what to do for money, but we never went hungry [laugh]. And then



JV: Never did need him, no, no.

MA: So, when you moved out on that farm on Patterson and 60<sup>th</sup>, were there quite a few homes on Patterson? Or was that, that was pretty much a rural area then wasn't it?

JV: Oh, that's when, you mean before I was married?

MA: Yea, I –

JV: On, on uh 60<sup>th</sup> Street and uh, and Patterson?

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Or do you mean on Wing Avenue and –

MA: On 60<sup>th</sup> and Patterson. That was quite far out in the country then wasn't it?

JV: Well, I was single.

MA: Yea.

JV: Yea.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Well uh, well that was the only home uh, on that mile between um East Paris and um Patterson, except on the corner was where former uh under Sheriff Collins, Tom [?] Collins place. In between there were no houses.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But across, into [ ], this was Caledonia you know. That was the town line between Gaines and Paris and Caledonia and Cascade. There was a poor family lived there by the name of Leftwig. A big family, and they were very poor. Although they didn't mind it a bit. And then McKnight lived across the corner, and then that big farm of uh, of the George Smith farm, where that big barn and big house is you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Do you know? Are you friends with them?

MA: [ ] George Smith? I don't know what right off hand –

JV: It was a half of section of land that was the most beautiful uh –

MA: On which street was that?

JV: That's on uh Patterson Avenue –

MA: Oh yes.

JV: And the farm comes to uh 60<sup>th</sup> Street.

MA: Oh, 60<sup>th</sup> Street.

JV: It was a half a mile square.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And congressmen Diekema [?] our lawyer, Laurie Diekema from Holland was running for congress, when Smith had the sale. He sold it to Bill Helden. From Bowen Station, from Kentwood. And uh, congressmen Diekema came there 'till he wasn't congressmen then, but a candidate, to uh, to some campaigning, you know, and he had quite a few farmers there. I remember he said the wonderful country he was living in. He said he read that if all the cows that are born, all the calves, in a year, were one cow, she'd be eating from the North Pole, or she'd be eating from the Equator and brushing the snow off the North Pole with her tail [laugh].

MA: [laugh]

JV: And he said if all the pigs that were born in one year were one hog, she'd uh dig to Panama Canal with 3 roots.

MA: [laugh]

JV: [laugh]

MA: Then you outta campaign for the farmers in those days didn't they?

JV: But he lost.

MA: Yea.

JV: He didn't win.

MA: Is that right?

JV: Man by the name of Osborne.

MA: Osborne.

JV: Got the job, Uh huh [affirmative]. It's too bad, he was a very nice man, was religious man from Holland, good speaker, and hard worker, a hard campaigner, well educated, but, but couldn't make it.

MA: No, doesn't always work out that way.

JV: It's, uh you can't predict, uh voters are very unpredictable aren't they?

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. They sure are.

JV: Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: They sure are.

JV: Yea.

MA: So.

JV: And then I could tell you about the, the winter traffic was past that place on 44<sup>th</sup> Street, the first one. Where I was uh, young and uh, going to school. The winter traffic, you'd be surprised at went by there on sleighs. Farmers bringing in their grain, and their hay.

[Side 2]

JV: - Sleighs, that what we called sleigh bars on the side, the loggers, and you could ride on there so nice. And one boy, uh Willie Belthouse, he road on there the uh farmer told him, give him a ride, and by getting on that sleigh bar he slid under, and got under the runner. And the sleigh kept moving, and before we moved he said 'Why, Willie is under the sleigh'. Oh man, the farmer was going down hill though, he stopped quick you know, and tried to back it up, but he couldn't. And the boy was turning blue, and the Marty Graham, the original teacher was sick, but her brother Will was taking her place, and he heard about it from right near the school, and he ran there, and wiggled it loose, and got him out. But he was completely passed out when they got him out. But uh, they got him home and uh, he was terrifically pressed in here, no bones broken. And he uh got over it in a couple weeks.

MA: Isn't that something?. Then when, when the severe snowstorms hit and so forth, then the sleigh was your main mode of travel then too?

JV: What?

MA: You used the sleighs to travel in the hard snowstorms?

JV: Oh yea, oh, that was wonderful for the farmers. The sleighs, and I had beautiful cutter you know too, and with that robe over ya take a girl to uh society on uh Wednesday evening you know, and uh, had a beautiful buffalo robe in your cutter, and have a lantern, a kerosene lantern.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Was comfortable as it got [ ] [laugh].

MA: And we felt sorry for the pioneers in those days.

JV: Yea, well, you mustn't feel sorry because they had a lot of fun.

MA: I could use –

JV: It was different from now.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But it was nice.

MA: Yea, you're right. Yea. Uh, I'd like to ask you one more thing about your diploma there that you have. I, if you could um, it, it was signed in, in um, 1905 you said. I was going to ask you that was 1905? Was right?

JV: Yea, I think it's right it'd be 1905. That it's dated in May, and then, this is uh, [ ]

GF: About 1905, May –

JV: Yea.

GF: May 19 –

JV: That's the evening that we had the uh, oh, what do you call that uh?

MA: Graduation?

JV: [ ] No, uh, graduation exercises. And that's where the little country school was a big event you know. And uh, 8<sup>th</sup> grade is not a very high education, but there were very few in those days that got the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. And of this big school, there

were only 4 this time that managed it. The rest of the didn't pass. And told you about the awful rainstorm that graduation night.

MA: Yea.

JV: And Judge Perkins was the main speaker, and Arthur R. Zimmer, school commission, he uh, passed out that he got [ ]. And during that time, why, we had that terrific thunderstorm. And several came with the horse and buggies, and they were tied on a, there was a fence around the school for a pen, and uh, Zimmer said that we was out [ ] [laugh]. Such a nice evening when he came.

MA: Great, the Michigan weather was unpredictable even then.

GF: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And there was one thing that Judge Perkins said, you know there are some things that make the impressions on people, and in their youth especially, but even now. And uh, he said 'Young people, what I wanna tell you is, everyone who is working, regardless of what the job is that he's chosen, and he puts in the best that he has, is on duty.' He says 'the man on the railroad bending the, driving the heavy spikes in the hot sun, and the farmer working his field is just as much on duty as the president of the United States.' And he said 'one thing I wanna leave with you young people is when you get to work by and by and face the world, always do this one thing. Do a little more than your duty.' And he says 'It'll pay big returns'. And I tried it, and I think it does. But I don't think it's practiced much nowadays.

MA: No.

JV: They hardly let you do much do.

MA: I see, you were, this is fine, this, these are all things that, that we are addresses. This Judge Perkins, was he the community Judge from the –

JV: Circuit court Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: I think the Circuit court already had 2 Judges, Alfred Walka, and uh, a Willis B. Perkins. And Margaret Graham from my Catholic community there on the corner of uh 52<sup>nd</sup> and uh Kraft. She taught 3 terms. I mean, elegant teacher. And she arranged this whole uh graduation exercise, see? It was quite a job you know.

MA: Yes, it was.

JV: And they wrote out our own uh invitations, and passed them in our district to the people, and they had a big crowd. And uh, I think I have mine at, I was the validict – I delivered the validict-tory. I think I have it yet, but not here.

MA: Well, that was quite an accomplishment.

JV: I think it's in my trunk.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh, in Arlene's [ ] garage.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And Harold Munshaw delivered the Oration for the flag.

MA: Harold Munshaw.

JV: Yea. Harold was a wonderful student too, for his day, a wonderful speaker. He uh had good gestures and handled it. Of course, it made these young people, all 4 of us, sitting on the stage and facing that big audience for the first time, uh, you didn't know where to look first you know. And Judge Perkins and uh Arthur R. Zimmer said he did it right in chairs, and we, and uh a minister. They had a Baptist minister. And that was a really strange for Miss Graham was a Catholic. Margaret Graham.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Had him to deliver the uh invocation and the closing prayer.

MA: But it was mostly a Baptist community.

JV: Yea.

MA: That immediate community had quite a few Baptists.

JV: Yes, Lands had a large family.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And uh, they were very sincere Baptist people. They're always would meet them according to that Paris Baptist on 52<sup>nd</sup> you know and Walma Avenue?

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: The old building, you remember the old -?

MA: No, I don't remember the old building.

JV: No?

MA: I know where the new building is now.

JV: Well, quite, well the old building stood up for years, and for as long as I can remember it was not like so many of the American churches that closed up for good. It always has a service, every Sunday.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And we'd uh go to Kelloggsville Church, would meet these people you know. And the Lands had a buggy with 3 seats; they had a very large family. And our beginning later, about 10 o'clock, 10:30, we'd meet them when we'd come from Kelloggsville Church you know. The Lands were a very good family.

MA: Where did they live then?

JV: Uh, well, Shaffer Avenue, you know where the school stood at the end by Shaffer Avenue.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And then you go north, to the way I'm pointing to is north, and you come to 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Begins there.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And that, that corner would go east. And that corner was their farm.

MA: Oh. Is their home, is that home, is that strawberries –

JV: Uh, no. The home is burned down and there's another there, and I think it's just been sold now for a recreation center.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: The rest of the farm. Christian Reformed had part of already you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh huh [affirmative]. Well, that's where he raised his family. And raised them nice too. With a very small income, and she kept them uh dressed very nice. People can do a lot with a little money in those days.

MA: It went along ways. The dollar was bigger then.

JV: Oh my, a dollar looked at big as a wagon wheel you know. Now a dollar wouldn't hardly make a tip [laugh].

MA: Uh, I was going to ask you how large was your farm there on Wing Avenue? Did that support you then for quite a while?

JV: Yea.

MA: Just the farmland along with your carpenter?

JV: Yup, father, father lived there 19 years, and uh, 'course I left when I married. I think I lived there about 15. Well you asked how large it was?

MA: On Wing Avenue.

JV: Yea. No. I thought you was talking about the one –

MA: No, yea.

JV: Where my father lived on 52<sup>nd</sup> and uh –

MA: Then, no, I'm talking about the one now where you and your wife lived.

JV: Oh uh –

MA: On Wing.

JV: Wing, that was 41 acres.

MA: 41 acres?

JV: Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Yup, and it was traded on even for that new house, figured the deal even. Figured the house worth 7,000, and the farm worth 7,000, or 'cause you had to set a value in order to get the legal papers made out.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Later when I uh sold it, I sold it for 137,000 [laugh].

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: So I didn't lose on that [laugh].

MA: That was a wise buy. Now that -

JV: Told you that man divided it in two. Uh, Kleger, Roy Kleger, the real estate, he divided it in two and sold half. The other half off, and he'd made big on the other sides [laugh].

MA: That land really took the jump in, in value.

JV: [                    ].

MA: Was that -

JV: It's nothing to get 1,000 dollars an acre now you know.

MA: But then that's inflation though too, a lot of in - inflation, you know -

JV: Oh yes.

MA: The money and so forth, but uh -

JV: Oh yes.

MA: What was the reason for this tremendous jump in price in the, in land prices? Was the city moving out that way? Or -

JV: I, I think the desire uh, probably one of reasons was people were getting disgusted with city living, and want to get out.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And where they have more elbowroom. And I still, that's still the goal yet isn't it? Somewhat?

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And sometimes they build in so far that you can't even see the house from the street.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Well, that's, that's right.

JV: Yup.

MA: That's the thing, privacy.

JV: And another reason is the uncertainty of the American current – United States currency.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: A good investor will consider the land will always remain, and I'll have something they can't take away. But the other is just on paper you know.

MA: Well, what year did you uh, when, when did you retire then? Or, or cease from your carpentry work or had, did you continue on in this quite a lengthy time or, continue to uh, work some in the carpentry business?

JV: Yea, I did. I did some small odd jobs, and kept fairly busy on Wing Avenue and also when we moved uh, well that's Wing Avenue too, the other place where Carlsy lives.

MA: Yea.

JV: There I did, I had a nice little shop. And I did considerable filing. I am one I think, or was, an expert filer. I found that out when I started the trade. If I didn't learn to be a filer, I could have never continued carpenter work, because it became too terrifically hard work. But at first, you know, after I filed them, they were worse than before I started [laugh]. But I got over that.

MA: Well, -

JV: And I did a terrific lot of filing on Wing Avenue, even after my wife passed away.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Uh, they was sometimes come as from as far as Middleville, and leave 35 or 40 saws at one time.

MA: I didn't realize that.

JV: That was my little housework, which I did after fashion. That would keep me busy for a few days you know.

MA: But now that's quite an art too that you don't hear too much of anymore.

JV: Yea.

MA: This sharpening, or, or, -

JV: Sure.

MA: That you -

JV: And it kept me real busy because then uh, which will happen to all of us regardless, you're going to lose your partner sometime. And very very seldom they both go at the same time. That is the exception.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And uh, that is a terrific terrific yolt to get through. And of the two, I think it's worse yet on the man, the husband, than it is on the wife. Not that I want to minimize it, but she still has her housework. Which is the same as it was before. But I never took a fancy to housework, and she, I found her dead on the floor, lying dead. And uh, I guess I just had simply had to go on, I didn't want to go to children, I don't think there's a whole big enough for 3 generations.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: So uh, I stayed right there, and made the best of it. And I made my own breakfast, and a good breakfast, a good dinner, and T.V. for supper or a restaurant. And I lived there that way 6 years.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Oh, and I never even left the house one night in those 6 years. But of course, I saw that I couldn't continue. And I had enough to put my name in here. And when that came up, then I had to either take it, or lose my turn. So I took it, and moved in here, and kept the house another 6 months. Locked up.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And went there once or twice a week from here, thinking if I couldn't adjust to this, then I could still go back again.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Because they would allow you well, a certain percentage of your entry fee back, see, after 2 years. After 2 years, you don't get anymore.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: It's all [ ].

MA: But now, as, as, well as you, well the years that lived around Wing Avenue and so forth, you saw this community build up quite a bit. Was Dutton always small like that? Or had that, had it begun to add a few more houses in there then too? At the edge of Kentwood there.

JV: No.

MA: Was –

JV: Yea, uh that, uh that stayed pretty much the same uh as it is now, only the [ ] are doing –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Something west now, west of Hanna Lake Avenue.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But that uh, it was just a little burg with uh 3 stores, and the blacksmith's shop when we first moved there. Then the Bursley had a store where the fire barn is, and there was a wagon shop that Marian Strawbone, that's burned down. I guess there's a body shop there now. And uh, Heizingas had the store on the Post Office, and Wierengas for a longest time and by John VandenBurg from Hudsonville, and then Wierengas took over from him. But they say now that's uh, is Hanley's living in that store.

MA: I'll be darned. I don't, uh, recall just how that is now.

JV: Well right beside the United Brethen Church?

MA: Yea.

JV: All right, don't you drive over much in Dutton?

MA: Well, I do, but I don't know just, I don't, I'm not familiar with the, the residence there so much.

JV: Oh.

MA: I know Mr. Heizengas there but uh, -

JV: Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: Kentwood became, or, East Paris became, you know, Kentwood, or Bowen's and all the little uh shopping centers expanded in Kentwood. But Dutton always stayed pretty much the same. It never uh –

JV: No, no. It, some places –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Don't expand now. My brother Al says he's a supervisor 19 years out in Caledonia Township. And he thought any amount of business would like to move in there. But those old fogies commissioners, the town board, didn't want them in. Look what Middleville has, they have that big white manufacturing company of a water heaters you know.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Why they employ terrific many men and put the city, uh, the town right on the map. But you couldn't do it in Caledonia.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And the same thing evolved in, in uh in Dutton.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Now East Paris grew, you know, right along, and Paris Township stayed pretty much the –

JV: Yea, although there's no business there, but uh –

MA: No.

JV: No, it uh, it, it was a good building site.

MA: How about the old Division Avenue there on, on uh, East Paris side. Some of those old buildings. Do you remember um, some of the old uh, shops and things that uh were, were uh, uh, popular in those days? Did they have any time of uh, uh, stores or, uh, barns or homes or anything then? It, was Division Avenue pretty well traveled, uh, as a main route?

JV: South of the city?

MA: Yea. Where, where Kentwood is now. East Paris.

JV: Uh, -



JV: And uh, other businesses on uh, there isn't much business in, what's Kentwood, you know, is Town and Country. When that was laid out, on the old Langdon farm, that's a great business center now. Traffic is heavy there at certain later times would be –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Big in the afternoon isn't it?

MA: It is. It's 44<sup>th</sup> and Kalamazoo is one of the heart of the traffic –

JV: And all those uh, uh, new condominiums going up, you know uh –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Between uh, Breton Road and uh Walma Avenue. That new drive through there. They're building it right along aren't they?

MA: And now Kentwood has the uh, the, the plaza's there, also too. And that, that's another heavily uh traffic place.

JV: Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: There were Eastbrook Mall and Woodland Mall.

JV: Of course in my very younger day, uh, that was Mrs. Barkley store. And the Langdon big house, and then [ ] across the street. That was all there was to it there, at that, and the blacksmith's shop.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: What a terrific difference.

MA: Yea.

JV: Yea.

MA: And that's where you went to trade. That was your, your, your, where you bought your, your um, staple things. And –

JV: No, uh, my mother and my aunt, and most of the farmers, they uh, owned the flock. That was the arrangement with their husband's I guess, the flock of hens, and uh, they made the butter outside of what the family used. And that was uh, went towards the groceries. And my mother had some special customers, and my aunt did too, for her butter. They uh, said it tastes so much better than uh, than the creamery butter.

MA: Hmm.

JV: But that was the way that went. But otherwise, as far as, why the, the changes are so terrific now that uh, if my old Grandmother VanderLaan, on the VanderLaan side, would be allowed to look over the old territory yet, I would bet she wouldn't recognize it.

MA: No, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: No.

MA: This is a change.

JV: Yes.

MA: You've seen the fast change.

JV: Yes, yes, yes.

MA: And you've grown, and then with it.

JV: And that's how would talk about going out to farms and uh, out of the rural areas, for population has a lot to do with that you know. The population of the United States is growing, so it's uh, it's 200 million now isn't it?

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Or better?

MA: I don't what the, the last census was do you?

JV: Yea, in, in my latter school years we used to have that in history. I think it was below 100 million. But you put another 100 million with it –

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And what uh, see all those people are one crowd. They need well houses don't they [laugh]?

MA: That's right. That's right.

JV: I think that has something to do with it.

MA: Yea, right.

JV: Has something to do with crime too.

MA: That's right. But appealing to the, to, to the territory, you know how Grand Rapids has grown, and now all the little suburbs, and so forth, sprout up too. It's an, it's an appealing area. It has to be enticing for people to want to move and live there, you know.

JV: Yup, Uh huh [affirmative].

MA: Like Kentwood too, is mostly, is a lot of residential homes.

JV: Oh yes.

MA: People like to –

JV: Yea, they tried to hold Grand Rapids together, but you know that, the exodus is out.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: People want to get out, and get out in the suburbs.

MA: But now that, for being mostly a farm and rural area, they have enticed quite a few business in the city of Kentwood.

JV: Yea.

MA: Theres –

JV: Of course if you get way out to Clarksville, and Freeport, and uh, in through there, uh, southeast of Caledonia, they're the people of the farmers are a regular farmers yes.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: They're main income is the farm. I can see that when I drive there.

MA: Yea, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But around, where we're talking about, uh, a good nice big garden would be about the extent of the uh farming they do. And of course, that's very good therapy too.

MA: Hmm, yea. That's right.

JV: To have a nice garden. That's where you folks have a beautiful one there don't ya?

MA: I'm afraid to say we don't.

JV: Huh?

MA: No, I'm not much of gardener. I should be, was raised on a farm.

JV: Well, then, when we moved them, there was a Martin who died there I think, where you live. And uh, later a Boersma.

MA: That's possible.

JV: They had one Son, they didn't have a Daughter, but she died young. They later build on uh, on 60<sup>th</sup> Street, a brick, a brick home.

MA: Who built that home?

JV: What?

MA: Who built home?

JV: Uh Boersma did.

MA: Oh, yea, but on Wing. Who built that home?

JV: [ ]

MA: Where Bosny, where Bosny's live, on Wing. Who built that home?

JV: Where you live?

MA: Yes.

JV: Oh, that's been there as long as I can remember.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: I can remember a Martin living there.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And after that uh, a, a Boersma, and uh, I don't know who followed [ ], but you both followed, did you buy from Boersma?

MA: No, no, there was some other families in between there.

JV: Oh.

MA: I think.

JV: Uh, yea, I was that auctioneer.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative]. Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: And what's his name? Uh –

MA: Mr. Klausin.

JV: What?

MA: Mr. Klausin bought it from Mr. Stretton, I think. Mr. Stretton owned it at one time too.

JV: Mr. Who?

MA: Stretton. John Stretton.

JV: Well, -

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: I don't remember that. But there's auctioneer, oh, what, what is his name now, uh?

MA: Sid Klaussin.

JV: Klaussin. Yea sure.

MA: Yea.

JV: I remember that well.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: Yea, when he came in there.

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: He wasn't an auctioneer then.

MA: No, not at that time. No.

JV: No, no. He was convalescing from a severe accident at that time, I think.

MA: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: But who was this other one in between? Was it-

MA: Stretton. John Stretton. John & Doris Stretton.

JV: How do you spell that?

MA: S-t-r-a-t-t-o-n, think it was how it was spelled.

JV: I would have it, that's something I've got out of my cranium, I can't -

MA: Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: I can't go that back [laugh].

MA: Is there anything that you would like uh, add to today Gladys?

GF: Why, [ ] no.

JV: And Dick Lee was across the road, uh, I think he's, of course he's gone now. He lived there uh, all his married life.

GF: Oh, Uh huh [affirmative].

JV: I think.

GF: A lot, as, many many years.