

Interview with William Bronsema

Taped June 30th, 1975

B-William Bronsema; K-Ron Kuiper

K: You were...you were raised in Grand Haven? Lived here all your life, Mr. Bronsema?

B: Yes. Yup. Born and raised right in Grand Haven.

K: Where...where did you live when you were young?

B: 119 Elliott Street.

K: So you were near the river, weren't you?

B: Ya, about a half a block from the dump. Right down near...do you know where the old Peerless Novelty is down there?

K: Peerless Novelty? Yes.

B: Well, we lived across the street, back in there...the middle of the block. In fact, we just sold the old place to Peerless Novelty the last four, five years ago.

K: I see.

B: The house is torn down now.

K: Now you...you're a little bit too young to remember the lumbering period, aren't you?

B: Well, yes, some of it. I remember when they had the old plank roads, you know. They had all plank going up the plank road. That's the only way you could get up the Second Street hill. They had all plank. Couldn't get up there with a team. Dirt was all over everything. And it was called Plank Road.

K: Didn't they call that hill Piety Hill?

B: Piety Hill, later. Sure. Old Plank Road, they called it. Ya.

K: Ya. That's one of the old lumber mills. That's before your day, I'm sure. That's in the 1880's, but...

B: Ya.

K: That's right on the island there where the coal piles are now by the power plant.

B: Ya. Ya. That was afterward the dump, the city dump.

K: Oh, was it?

B: Ya.

K: Okay. And this is...now this is during your day. That was taken in the basement of the Cutler House in 1905.

B: Oh, ya.

K: All the important people in the city attended that.

B: Ya. I remember the Cutler House. I had a sister who worked there.

K: Oh, did you?

B: Mm-hmm.

K: What did she do there?

B: A chambermaid-made beds.

K: Did she like her job?

B: I guess so. She stuck there anyway.

K: I have some pictures of the inside of the Cutler House here somewhere. I'll see what I can find.

B: Back across the road was the Cutler Annex.

K: Here they all are. Let me see once if I can get where I can...There. This is the Cutler House.

B: A big porch was along the side of it. A big, long porch on the Cutler House. There was a big, long porch that run alongside the whole building.

K: That, of course, is the new Cutler House.

B: Ya.

K: The old one burned down in 1889 which you probably don't remember.

B: No.

K: A few of the older people in the community remember that. But you...you...this is...have you ever been in there? Do you remember those...

B: Oh, ya. Oh, ya, I been in the Cutler House plenty of times.

K: ...The dining room, etc., there?

B: Well, I didn't fool with...Eddie Ekens used to be bellhop there.

K: Oh, and he lived right on...he lived on Mercury Drive, didn't he, for awhile?

B: Yes. He died a couple of years ago at Eastmanville at the country farm.

K: Ya.

B: Yup.

K: Ya.

B: Yup.

K: Did you ever go to the Pomona House, or the Fruitport pavilion, as they called it?

B: Yes, I've been there lots of times. Yup, lots of times.

K: Have you ever been in the Highland Park Hotel? That's the desk in the main entrance, where you checked in.

B: Yes. Yup.

K: Those are Highland Park pictures. What...what did you do for a living?

B: I...I went to school at the Columbus Street School. And I never got much schooling. My birthday was on the fourth day of March and I was 15 years old. And I didn't have to go to school after I was 15 and I never went after that. And I worked...I worked for old Sprick. That was Johnny Van Schelven's...you know Johnny?

K: Yes.

B: Johnny Van Schelven's grandfather. I went to work for him in the livery barn shoveling the horse shit. Yes. Seven days a week. And I slept in the barn at night. And I got \$3.50 a week when I quit school. And then I quit...I stayed there until I was 20 years old. Then I went to work for George Vanden Berg and drove a soft drink wagon for a year. And then I got out of that and I went to work for this American Express Company here. I drove a wagon for six months and I was bill clerk for six months. And that was two years, and then I went in and I bought old Sprick's livery barn. I had horses and buggies and hacks and stuff. That was in 1915.

K: And you were how old then?

B: 22.

K: 22.

B: I was 22 when I bought old Sprick out. I bought the horses and buggies and so on, and I know I and my partner each had a hundred dollars to put down. We bought 13 horses and hacks and buggies. Oh, I don't know. It was kind of a funny deal. We had five years to pay for it, no six. We made payments for five years. We got it paid for in five years. We paid \$2,975 for the horses and buggies and hacks, etc. In five years we had it paid for. But by the time we had it paid for, old man Sprick was dead, see. So we paid the heirs. John Van Schelven...that was his grandfather.

K: Mm-hmm.

B: And then, of course, we went with teams digging basements and hauling gravel. After we shortly got in it, the automobiles started coming. We got in it in 1913 and I bought my first Model T in 1915 from the Thielman Auto Company. And we done what we call now taxi work. But we called it then horse and auto livery; we didn't call it taxi.

K: You did both. You had horses and an automobile.

B: A Model T. And was in that six years. Each year we got a new Model T. In them days we had a lot of business, you know, like the telephone company. Their line was broke down between here and Bass River. There wasn't no...these lights...couldn't figure where it was. We had to start from Grand Haven and watch the line all the way to Bass River to find out where the break was. So we'd be gone all day, you know, in the wintertime-that break was clean to Bass River where the gravel pit was. Put the team in the barn-we done it with teams-put the team in the barn and feed them oats. And we'd go in the store and eat some crackers and cheese and then go back home again.

K: And now your partner and you were hired to do that as part of your job with the livery-taxi service.

B: Well, we were deliverers...we owned the livery but the telephone company hired us and the County hired us to take the country nurse around to all the schools. And the sheriff at that time didn't have a car to use for business. If the sheriff wanted to go on an arrest, we had to drive him out there.

K: How long did you have that job?

B: I started in 1913 and I put in 45 years. I was in it for 45 years.

K: Oh. So you were in that transportation type thing for 45 years.

B: Bronsema Transfer. It goes by Bronsema Transfer. (noise on tape) That was the original of my business.

K: So you...so you really witnessed the change from the horse and buggy to modern transportation, didn't you? You were a part of it.

B: Yup. Ya.

K: That's interesting.

B: Ya. All these people that live out here they didn't work. They didn't live out here, only just a few resorters because there was no way for them to get to work.

K: Mm-hmm.

B: They couldn't drive horses to get to work and back, you know. They had to have barns to put them in. So everybody that lived out here, they'd come from Chicago and resort here. This place and a lot of others. They'd resort here two, three weeks and then go back to Chicago.

K: Was this a cottage?

B: This was originally built by Butlers. Butler had a foundry at one time right where the Story and Clark is. Butler Foundry. There was old man Butler and then there was three or four boys. Then there was Emma _____. I bought the place from her. I bought it when she was 73 and she lived to be 83. But I bought it 17 years ago.

K: Mm-hmm.

B: I had it for 17 years.

K: Now when you started that livery service, you had a competitor, didn't you? Vyn? Or didn't he do the same kind of thing that you did?

B: Ya. The same kind of thing. The same thing only Vyn was a little more hooked up with the railroads to deliver freight from the railroads than I was. I had to get into that later, you know. But I...Vyn..I was in business after Vyn went out.

K: I see.

B: Vyn went out and I went in. I was in longer...I wasn't in longer than Vyn but I stayed in longer after Vyn was out. Of course, Vyn was sold to Michigan Express. But I stayed in it until I quit.

K: That's interesting. And you recall it so good. You got these dates nailed down and your memory is so good. That's marvelous. That's really something to appreciate. I have talked to a lot of people your age and many of them...many of their minds are faltering.

B: Oh, yes.

K: And you're fortunate. Uh...you said you went to the Columbus Street School.

B: Ya.

K: Do you have any memories of what school was like? Do you have any memories or anecdotes?

B: Well, there were three rooms in the school. They went in from both ways. The girls played on one side of the school and the boys played on the other. That was the way that it worked. The one room in front...you come out and there was a hall through it, and the girls come in on one side and the boys come in on the other. There were two rooms in back. And we piled wood, we'd get a load of wood and dump it in the yard and then the kids would pile it in the hall...in the hall. And each room had a stove in it, a wood stove. And we usually...of course, we'd call 'em teacher's pets or something, they'd get there early and build a fire so the room would be a little warm. But each school room...there was three rooms there, and each room had a stove, an old-time stove.

K: Well, who was in the three rooms? Was it broken down by grades?

B: Ya, it was in a way. I don't know. There was...I know Miss Gray was one of the teachers and...and...oh, I don't know. Miss O'Beck, I think was one of them.

K: Marie O'Beck?

B: I think it was her sister.

K: Oh.

B: I think she was one of the teachers.

K: Did students raise a little cain now and then? Can you recall any of that?

B: There was a little cain raised in them days but not vandalism like there is now. But usually on Halloween night, we usually took a wagon and put it up on a fence or put it up on a building or something, but we didn't ruin anything like they do nowadays. Everybody in them days had a fence in front of their house and steps. Halloween night we'd have to be careful stepping off the steps because the steps usually would be moved. They'd be gone, see.

K: Hmm. Uh...you were here...you remember the days before prohibition. Prohibition started in 1919. And some people have told me that in the local taverns, you could go in there and they'd give you all you wanted to eat provided you bought a beer. Is that true? Do you remember anything of that?

B: Oh, yes. Ya. Ya. People lived by getting a big _____ of beer for a nickel and then eating a dollar's worth. (laugh) Ya, they vied...the saloons vied for the beset lunch for Saturday night. One would have fried oysters and another would have liver and onions and another would specialize in different things to get the gang on Saturday night, you know. And then usually there was a little sign on the back mirror there that said, "Saturday. Don't forget your Sunday bottle." They didn't sell booze on Sunday, you know, so they had a little sign stuck on...Don't forget your Sunday bottle. But it was very uncommon them days to see women go in a tavern.

K: Mm-hmm.

B: The only ones that went in the tavern, the majority of them, were people from out here in the country that come in with a load of wood or a load of straw or something, and they had a shed where they put their teams in and, of course, naturally the women would go in the saloon to keep warm. But there wasn't any women hanging around taverns like nowadays. Never. If we, when we were young kids, if we'd see a woman, you know, that was a farmer's wife, and we'd see a woman in the tavern, the first thing we'd think of was she must be a whore.

K: Ya. (B laughs) Weren't there some places right around here...some taverns or saloons or some places where...

B: Ya. Right here. May's place, the Holiday Inn.

K: Ya. Now what went on there?

B: Well, that was a resort and they sold booze there without a license.

K: You're talking about during prohibition or before?

B: No, during when the liquor was legal. But they sold it without a license. You had to have a saloon license, you see.

K: Yes.

B: And they didn't have it so Smittigan, he run it.

K: Is May still alive?

B: May's still alive, ya.

K: I should talk to her, shouldn't I?

B: Ya. That was a...and then right across from there was a big place. That was Huisterkamp's place. That was another big...

K: Huisterkamp. Is the building still there?

B: Ya. It's all remodeled now.

K: And what went on there?

B: The same thing. Huisterkamp and Smittigan, they had their wives doing the cooking and they'd have people come from Chicago Friday night and they'd fish Saturday and Sunday and then take the boat back to Chicago on Sunday night. Some of 'em would stay, of course, for a vacation. They would stay a week. There were three roadhouses here. There was Smittigan's, Huisterkamp's and one up past Stearns' there. There was three of them.

K: You don't mean Felix's?

B: No.

K: Jac Jungle?

B: No. Just past Clarks Corners. He was a furrier here. He run a...he run a...well, they sold booze, you know. They sold booze but they didn't have a license. Smittigan did. He did get pinched for selling without a license and he did six months in Ionia but the rest of them didn't get caught. And then during prohibition, everybody out in Robinson made moonshine and sold it. They called it "Little Kentucky" for awhile.

K: Little Kentucky?

B: Ya. Pretty near every house made it at one time.

K: It's hard to get Robinson people to talk about that.

B: Ya.

K: They're still kind of closed mouth about it. It's understandable, I guess. It wasn't legal. Do you know Bill Hierholzer?

B: Yes. Yes.

K: I think he was recently hospitalized. But he told us that when he was young, he knew of some old people who told him about a place across from the race track here. It might have been the old Ekkens house. He said it was called the Club House. Now I don't know if that's true or not. Nobody else has told me about it. But he said that...that the best prostitutes from all of Chicago came to the Club House. That was probably during the lumbering period. Did you ever hear stories about that?

B: Well, Ekkens lived there and there was a race track there alright. Across the road.

K: Ya, on this side of the road, the east side.

B: Ya. I can...I remember the old man Ekkens living there.

K: But you don't know what went on in his house?

B: No. It was a close deal. Kind of a lumber boarding house where they boarded people, I guess. He was Justice of the Peace and he was on the School Board, and I don't know what all. And then Eddie Ekkens, he was kind of a...a good-time Charlie. He...

(?): Good morning.

B: Good morning. Good morning. Ya. I'm having a very, very bad time now. A week ago, the first day of May, I was retired 17 years and we had a little...it was not a party; we had just two couples here. But we was going to have a little party-I was retired 17 years. I'm 84 years old. And we had a little glass of wine. We sat on the porch, and I don't...I haven't drank in 25 years. I haven't tasted beer or whiskey in 25 or 30 years. I drink a glass of wine once in awhile. We had a little glass of wine, a small glass. 17 years retired. My wife stepped back of me and she slipped and she broke her hip. And the hip was coming alright. She's younger than I am. The hip was coming alright and all of a sudden, _____ and she lost her mind.

K: And her mind was good until then?

B: Ya. Ya, her mind was alright.

K: Aw, that's too bad.

B: It's two months...it was two months the first of July. She's in a convalescent home and she hardly knows who she is.

K: All of a sudden that happened, huh?

B: All of a sudden.

K: You had a companion and all of a sudden...

B: I don't have any.

K: You don't have any.

B: I go to see her two or three times every day and I don't know if it's ever going to be...if it's ever going to come back or not. She only weighs about 80, 85 pounds. She weighed about a hundred when she got hurt. But she talks...it's just terrible. Just terrible.

K: Yes.

B: There's all kinds of things they get in their minds, you know. I lost 10 pounds since that happened.

K: I can believe that.

B: Terrible. Whether she's going to make it or not, I don't know. My theory is if she's going to be that way that don't know nothing, that's going to break me, the convalescent homes. I hope she dies then, if she's never going to know nothing. You know, it's \$800 a month. That don't take too long to put you a pauper.

K: Ya, life isn't worth living if your mind isn't good, I guess.

B: That's right. Her mind is all off. She knows me; she knows everybody, but her mind is all off. She talks about putting her in jail and she was never in jail in her life. And she has to fight with lawyers and she never had anything to do with lawyers all her life. It just broke me all up.

K: Yes, I can believe that.

B: It just broke me all up. I can't live alone. Part of the time my wife's sister is here. She's older than she is, but she's trying to help along a little bit.

(Noise on tape) But it never interfered with his work. He worked all the time.

K: Yes, he did.

B: He always worked. As far as I know, George always worked.

K: George Kehoe is proud of that. He knows he used to raise a little Cain but it didn't keep him from working. Can you tell me a little bit about what went on here on the high banks when you were young? Didn't they used to have farmers' picnics, etc., right around here?

B: Yes. Yes.

K: Ball games?

B: Well, they had...right over here, across from Holiday Inn, that was...the German Arbiters had a place there, you know, and they had picnics and farmers' picnics and all that. They had picnics. In fact, the first day that I was in business, I run a team and a bus out there carrying passengers from 25 cents.

K: By a bus do you mean a big wagon pulled by horses?

B: Pulled by horses, right, seats on each side, you know. I made three trips that day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon and one in the evening. It pret'near killed the poor team, you know. There was gravel roads. When I totaled up that night, I think I took in \$12.00 that day with the team until midnight.

K: Hmm.

B: Twenty-five cents apiece to take them out and 25 cents to take them back, but didn't have any business.

K: You said that was the first farmers' picnic?

B: No, they had farmers' picnics before that.

K: Well, that was your first day of...

B: Ya, the first day that I was in business, in the livery business.

K: And what year was that again?

B: 1913.

K: 1913.

B: 1913 was the day I went in business and that was the day the farmers' picnic was, and that was the day I run a bus out there. I made three trips a day with the team, you know. I made it from, well, the east end there by...well, I guess it used to be Strahsburg's Market, in through there, run from there out here and then back in the morning, and in the afternoon and back, and then in the evening. I made three trips in one day. And that was a lot of mileage for a team.

K: I suppose.

B: Ya.

K: I couldn't say, but I would think so.

B: Ya, a lot of mileage for a team.

K: What went on at a farmers' picnic?

B: Oh, dancing and big lunches, square dancing and that sort of stuff, you know.

K: Now...

B: A little...quite a lot of drinking. They'd take a keg of beer out there, you know, and...

K: Did they take it along or did somebody provide it?

B: Well, they provided it, I guess. They bought a ticket and then you could drink all the beer you wanted, I guess. I don't know just how it worked out. For 25 or 50 cents, I guess you could drink all the beer you wanted.

K: Mm-hmm.

B: And then they had church picnics there too, you know. Sunday School picnics and church picnics.

K: Do you recall anything going on on the high bank where I live? That is, on the other side of Pottawatomie Bayou?

B: Well, further down from you, they had some picnics there. We used to take them out when I was a kid. We had a Sunday School picnic and they had a hayrack, you know, a hayrack...about that much hay on it and all the kids would get on the hayrack and go out there. Buses and hayracks. They had regular Sunday School picnics beyond you, right along the river there.

K: How about the Depression? Are you in a hurry?

B: No.

K: Okay. How about the Depression in the 1930's? How did that affect you? Did it slow your business down? Did you eat less well? How did the Depression affect you?

B: Well, the Depression didn't affect me much. They started that WPA, you know, work and I had some trucks. They couldn't move dirt unless they had trucks. I had some trucks and we moved some dirt. I kept agoing a little. There were days when eight or ten trucks didn't take in \$2.00 but we made it. We made it through the Depression.

K: Actually, you were kind of fortunate, weren't you, because...

B: Oh, ya.

K: ...The WPA needed you.

B: That's right. Ya.

K: There were some people, you know, some people who didn't have that kind of resources and they didn't get any work either.

B: Well, and then I and Hank Nietering we got a job right during the Depression. You know where Cope's Hardware is? In Spring Lake?

K: Yes.

B: You know where that road straightens out that used to be around by that boat place there, you know. Well, I and Hank Nietering straightened that out and we hauled dirt in there. We worked there pretty near a year. We put 80,000 yards of dirt in that marsh.

K: Where did you get the dirt?

B: Well, we got it from _____ back of Krueger's and places around there. And where the interurban went over the Grand Trunk, there was a big, high place and we hauled the dirt from over there. We didn't make a cent but we took the job for 15 cents a yard, and...

K: The interurban wasn't running any more so you took part of their dirt?

B: That went over the...

K: Ya.

B: And then Krueger over there, he wanted a fish pond there so we had a crane there and dug a big hole and left a fish pond, and got some dirt out of there, etc. But we worked for almost a year. And then Kline and Boelens—we didn't do any paving, just filling—Kline and Boelens did the paving. They paved that road.

K: I read a lot about this Depression nationally but all the Grand Haven people I've talked to, most of them have said that it really didn't affect them as severely as it did a lot of people.

B: No.

K: I don't know why, because there was a lot of different kind of industry here.

B: Ya, well, I don't...a lot of industries, they kept their men as long as they possibly could cutting weeds along the walls and washing windows and everything else. They kept them on just as long as this was humanly possible. They didn't lay them off like they do nowadays and put a sign on the bulletin board: Ten Off Tonight, or 110 or something like that. There was a lot more human feeling. Everybody kept them on just as long as they possibly could. They didn't make any money, but they at least kept them on as long as they could.

K: Do you remember seeing your first automobile?

B: Well, practically, yes. Dr...Dr. What-do-you-call-him had one and...

K: Hoffma?

B: No. McAlpine.

K: McAlpine.

B: McAlpine had one and then there was somebody on Second Street hill that had one. And there was another one in Spring Lake. They had a stick to steer them, you know, no steering wheel. Cobb was the one, I think, on Second Street hill.

K: Was he a doctor?

B: No.

K: Cobb. No.

B: No. Dr. McAlpine was a doctor.

K: I imagine some of those automobiles had a tough time making it up Piety Hill, didn't they?

B: Oh, ya. A lot of them had to get out and help push them. Had them in gear and help push.

K: Did they have to back up? Did they sometimes put them in reverse because there was a better gear ratio for getting up a hill?

B: No, I don't know. I don't remember that. No, I don't remember.

K: What about electric lights? Do you remember when you first had electric lights in your business?

B: The first lights we had in our business was...in our home, was gas lights. Gas lights.

K: Alright.

B: Hi. I gotta see this lady a minute.

K: That's fine. Remember the May Graham?

B: Yes, very well.

K: Did you ever go for a ride on it?

B: Oh, yes. The May Graham used to run up the river to Eastmanville and they had a big board that they put out. The farmers would put, you know, bring their berries-there was a lot of berries along here, strawberries and raspberries-they'd just pull up and carry those berries on and then they'd take them to Grand Haven and they'd go to Milwaukee and Chicago. Milwaukee mostly. They went down here every day. And a lot of people took a trip too, you know; just take a trip up the river and back.

K: There's the May Graham.

B: An old side-wheeler.

K: People used to party it up on it a little bit once in awhile?

B: Well, they'd take trips, you know, up the river. They'd also bring back fruits, you know. They had a lot of berries up around Bass River. They had a lot of berries, raspberries, strawberries, and they'd haul them with teams down to the river and then they put that big board out and carry 'em on.

K: Like that. There's the board that you're talking about.

B: That's right. That's right. They carried them on.

K: And they had grapes too, didn't they?

B: Grapes and strawberries and raspberries, all that kind of stuff.

K: Do you remember the Fanny M. Rose?

B: The Fanny M. Rose run to Fruitport.

K: Yes.

B: And they had another one they called the Ensing.

K: Ya. Say, if you're getting tired, I want you to tell me. I got a few more topics here I'd like to ask you about but if you get tired at all, why you be sure and tell me.

B: That's alright.

K: In the early 1920's the Ku Klux Klan was kind of active in Grand Haven. Just a couple of years. It wasn't long. Do you remember seeing any crosses burned?

B: Yes, I saw a few crosses burn and they had an office, or a club room, upstairs by Steiner's Drug Store.

K: What is now Steiner's Drug Store, they had a...had a...

B: They had two floors up above here, you know. One floor was the Ku Klux Klan, I remember. What it amounted to, I don't know. I didn't belong to it.

K: Henry Tysman was invited to one of those meetings once and he said that they were really pretty tough. That is, if you went up there, they'd give you their sales pitch and they had guards at the door. They wouldn't let you out unless you signed on.

B: That's right.

K: He said he had a friend who got out of there. He didn't sign up either. But what was the purpose of the Klan at that time, do you have any idea?

B: I don't know.

K: Do you know of anybody around who could tell me about the Klan? I know that a fellow by the name of Vander Meiden was active in it, but he's gone now. In fact, he died not too long ago.

B: Vander Meiden?

K: Ya.

B: Ya, I don't know nothing about it. I knew the Ku Klux Klan with their white sheets on 'em and all that stuff.

K: Did you see that?

B: Oh, yes.

K: Where?

B: Across the river. They'd have a fire and burn crosses and stuff across the river by Dewey Hill there.

K: Did you see any of the Klan activities going on on Mercury Drive here, near where Moore's Barn is?

B: Nope. Moore's Barn was a popular dance hall.

K: Yes. Did they have bands and things there?

B: Oh, kind of half ass bands, you know.

K: Maybe somebody with a fiddle?

B: Ya, ya.

K: Do you remember the big strike, the big tannery strike, that first strike in Grand Haven?

B: Yup.

K: Now you...you probably weren't involved in that in any way because you weren't connected with the tannery. How did the townspeople feel about that strike?

B: Well, it was just like any other strike. It had two sides. One takes one side and one the other side.

K: I've talked to people on both sides of it and I've read the newspaper coverage. The newspaper, of course, was all pro-tannery, pro-management.

B: Ya.

K: They...in fact...in fact, one of the guys-Swart-you probably remember him, Bud Swart. He was one of the guys who headed up that strike. The Tribune cut him off their circulation list because he was involved in that strike.

B: Ed Donahue was one of the big pushers of the strike. He was a union man. 100% union man, Ed Donahue. He got to be...through that strike, he got to be a big wheel in the union.

K: Oh, did he? I understand they were striking at that time for the right to bargain collectively. They weren't asking for money at that time. But it was getting a foot in the door and the management knew that.

B: Ya. Yup.

K: And it was a pretty nasty strike in some ways. Some pretty dirty things were going on.

B: Ya, they threw paint on houses and broke windows. People were scared to go to work, etc.

K: Who was your physician way back there around the turn of the century? When you got sick, who did your mother take you to?

B: Presley.

K: Presley.

B: That's right.

K: Did he come to the house them days, or did you go to see him? Or both?

B: He came to the house with his little black bag. Dr. Presley and Dr. Vander Veen. Dr. Vander Veen was another popular doctor.

K: I think that's Dr. Vander Veen. I'm not sure.

B: It could easy be, I don't know. He lived in...Vander Veen; you know where his house is?

K: Ya. Ya, that nice house with the cupola on it.

B: Ya, across from City Hall there.

K: Ya.

B: Ya, that's the old Vander Veen place.

K: Okay. Another thing I'm interested in in the old days is this: How did...how did somebody go about the business of courtship, or dating? Obviously, it was different than it is today. Where would you take your girlfriend?

B: Well, there was dance halls. There was Highland Park, the Cutler House and different places. You went to the movies. You went to the movies for a nickel and if you went to the ice cream store for a nickel, you had a pretty big evening.

K: Ya.

B: That was a pretty big evening.

K: How would you get to Highland Park?

B: Well, a dummy. Dummy, a little steam dummy. First it was teams and buses up the Second Street hill and then finally the Munroe, the dummy. They had open cars.

K: That's the dummy. That's the steam engine. See it?

B: Ya, ya. Yup. That's the dummy.

K: Where...which ice cream stores did you go to?

B: Well, there was one right where the tavern is now, a very popular one. Right on the corner of Washington and First.

K: Was it called Candy Land?

(End of Side One)

K: _____ In what's now Smitty's Bar. And Candy Land was where?

B: A couple doors further down.

K: Okay. Now Carrie Palmer worked in one of those things about that time.

B: She worked where the bar is.

K: At Smitty's?

B: Ya. She also worked in the other one, I think, Pete DeBoef's. She worked at Pete DeBoef's, too. Pete DeBoef ran one.

K: Where was Pete DeBoef?

B: Pete DeBoef was right where Viening's Clothing Store is.

K: Oh.

B: He made his own ice cream too.

K: They all did, didn't they?

B: Ya. (Noise on tape) another there. And her father was a house mover.

K: Yes. George still has some of the equipment.

B: Ya.

K: He showed me that.

B: He has blocks and rollers and stuff.

K: And her grandfather was a doctor.

B: Old Doc Palmer.

K: Do you remember him?

B: Yup. He was right on Fourth Street, Fourth off of Fulton. Ya.

K: Do you remember any Negro families in Grand Haven?

B: Ya. The Hicks.

K: Emerson?

B: Emerson Hicks and Ed Hicks.

K: Were they brothers or father and son?

B: Brothers. And an old lady. And then there was also the Graves. There was four or five Negroes in Grand Haven. Hicks and Emerson, they were brothers and they were, oh, horsemen. You know, they drove horses a lot. And then there was Charlie Molson. He worked for Robbins on the docks, you know, on the Goodrich.

K: Yes.

B: Charlie Molson and Bobby Graves and another Graves. There was about, oh, I don't know, I don't think there was over ten or twelve Negroes in town.

K: More than there are today though?

B: No, about the same.

K: About the same.

B: There's more than that now. There's more Negroes in town than ten or twelve now.

K: McDonalds.

B: I don't know. There probably isn't too much difference. I don't know.

K: Ya. What about...do you remember the chicken place where the Tip-A-Few Tavern now is?

B: Ya.

K: Did you ever go there and have chicken dinner?

B: Ya. Yup.

K: Was that a good place to eat?

B: Ya, they was the ones that started that southern fried chicken and they done a land office business there.

K: Their name was Carue.

B: Yup.

K: As I recall it.

B: Yup. They started later on; they started up on the Muskegon Road.

K: They didn't do so well.

B: No. That southern fried chicken when that first come out, oh boy, people flocked down there. There was quite a few...I don't know if you've been to People's Bank but there's some pictures in there about the bank robbery.

K: Oh. The one downtown you mean?

B: Ya. I remember that bank robbery real well.

K: Do you remember reading about it or were you on the scene?

B: On the scene.

K: What did you see?

B: Well, Pete VanLopik got shot. Serg Planets got shot. Not killed, of course. And one guy, they got him right there. And the first thing they done was pull his clothes right off. And he laid right back of the bank there. Then the other guys, Joe Schuster, he run a filling station right next to Thielman's. His wife and kids were going down Franklin Street. And, of course, the get-away car got scared when the fireworks started to show, so he shoved them people out and he took their car. But they got the one right away, but they got the other one...I don't know, there was three, four of them in it but they got the other one about six months afterward. And they got another one, he was running a dry cleaning establishment in Missouri, I believe.

K: Didn't Ted Bolt get in a fight with one of those guys?

B: Ted Bolt got hit with _____. Pete VanLopik got hit with a bullet. _____ got hit. Not killed, but they got hit.

K: There was a guy by the name of Welling working in the bank, too. He was the one who kicked off the alarm.

B: Ya. But he's not there anymore now. He's retired.

K: That's right. I did talk to him about that. Ya. Do you remember when the First Reformed Church burned down in 1907?

B: Ya.

K: Did you see that fire?

B: Well, I might have, but it...

K: You don't have clear memories of that.

B: Well, I was born in '91, 1891. Let's see, that's nine...Wasn't that burned in '13?

K: I think so. It burned in 1907, too. And it burned in 1889 when the Cutler House burned down. That thing burned down four times, I believe.

B: Ya. That's the church that I went to Sunday School in.

K: First Reformed?

B: Ya.

K: The old Dutch church.

B: Ya.

K: Yes, it has a long history in this town.

B: Jake Braak, he's out of the bakery now-his grandsons have got it. But Jake Braak was one of my first Sunday School teachers.

K: Oh.

B: Old Jake Braak.

K: Hmm.

B: Well, I'm in a bad way with my wife gone. I don't know what to do. If she...if she never clears up, there's nothing...I don't know how she can make it.

K: Has anyone told you that that's an Indian Marker?

B: Ya, it's on my papers.

K: It's on the papers on your...

B: On the abstract?

K: On your abstract?

B: That's what they say. I don't know.

K: There's one like it on George Kehoe's property, too.

B: Is there?

K: Ya.

B: There's one around in Fruitport, too.

K: Harry Locke's dad.

B: Ya, Harry Locke's dad. He had one sister that was married to a Thompson.

K: Mm-hmm.

B: There were two children in the family, Harry and his sister. And she was married to a fellow named Thompson. They're Catholic people.

K: Well, Harry has another sister too.

B: Oh, has he?

K: She's single. She lives in Dayton, Ohio. They call her "Doll" but I don't know what her real name is.

B: I thought he only had the one sister.

K: But what did Harry's father do for a living?

B: Milk wagon. He had cattle and he had milk. He sold milk around. Peddled milk around the houses.

K: Horse and buggy and a tank back there? Or pails, or what?

B: He had pails.

K: Milk pails, I suppose.

B: There were three Lockes, John Locke, Jim Locke and Harry's father. There were three Locke brothers.

K: Harry's father's name was?

B: Shucks. Jim was a brother and John was a brother.

K: You don't remember Harry's dad's name?

B: I can't remember his dad's name.

K: Do you remember that float bridge that used to go across Deremo Bayou?

B: Ya.

K: Did you ever drive across that?

B: Yes, lots of times. The water would squish between the cracks, between the cracks.

K: Was it a float bridge? It was on drums or something?

B: Yes. Well, it was a float bridge. There was cables or something, I don't know. But it was a float bridge.

K: But it was low.

B: Oh, ya.

K: And the water would come right through the cracks when you drove over it.

B: Ya, when you'd drive a team over it, it would wash their hoofs. The water would wash through the cracks.

K: What was the purpose of that bridge? I mean, why couldn't people go around the bayou? It isn't that big.

B: They could. But with horse and buggies, you know, a mile or two meant a lot. Two miles around.

K: Yes.

(End of Interview)