

4-4-2000

De Haan, Sander Oral History Interview: Class Projects

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Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Lamb, James, "De Haan, Sander Oral History Interview: Class Projects" (2000). *Class Projects*. Paper 75.
http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/class_projects/75

Published in: *History 201 Oral History Interviews (2000) (immigrant residents of Holland) (H98-1351)*, April 4, 2000. Copyright © 2000 Hope College, Holland, MI.

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Oral History Interview
Michigan History – Spring 2000
Interviewee: Sander De Haan
Interviewer: James Lamb
4 April 2000

JL: During your immigrating, what part of the Netherlands, I take it you're from the Netherlands?

SD: Right yes, we emigrated from the Netherlands. I was born and raised in the little town called Vinkeveen which is between Utrecht and Amsterdam. So it is in the center of the Netherlands. It's about twenty miles south of Amsterdam and about ten miles north of Utrecht.

JL: A little description about your homeland, like areas around, what it was like?

SD: I was born in a rural setting, I was born on a farm in fact and we lived in the middle of the farm area. My father wasn't involved in farming as such, he was with the feed and fertilizer business, but we lived on a lock which permitted boats to travel, barges to travel from one level of water to another level of water. I recall it being a country setting. My friends were sons and daughters of farmers in the area. Walked to school usually along the road that went towards Vinkeveen. We lived about two miles outside of town. When weather permitted I'd often walk with friends through the farmlands to the little farm community of Vinkeveen.

JL: Why did you guys leave your homeland?

SD: Well, I was seven at the time we came so I really wasn't terribly involved in the reasoning of it. But when my parents were married at the end of the war, things were pretty bleak in the Netherlands because it had been under German occupation and largely destroyed in many ways—the cities were. Economic future didn't look particularly promising at the

time. I think they applied for emigration from the Netherlands in 1948. My father had a couple of brothers that had come to the states some years before the war already, one right after the war. So there were reports coming from the States that life was good here and that there were opportunities, and it didn't look so promising right after the war in the Netherlands and even by '48 things were still rather bleak in terms of economic opportunity and raising a family and so forth. So they had applied for exit. It wasn't until '52 that we finally got to the list that we would be able to go the following year so we actually left the Netherlands in 1953. At that time there were already some signs of economic improvement, but again having made the plans and still thinking that America might be a better place to raise a family than in the Netherlands, my folks left then. I was the oldest of eight children and I think by the time we left in '53 there were five of us. So I think basically a move for better opportunity. Also because there were relatives in this country that would help us and work with us.

JL: You said you were seven when you left, did you have any concerns about leaving?

SD: I don't think I had great anxiety, it was an opportunity and obviously an adventure in many ways, and as a kid adventures are always interesting. I had relationships with aunts and uncles and both my grandparents were still living and had a good relationship with my grandparents, both my father's and my mother's parents. But again at the same time as a seven-year-old kid you're not worried that much about not being able to see grandma for a while, you know. I imagine I didn't think about it being a permanent kind of move. But the adventure of it was very attractive. I do recall as we were leaving that my mother was sad because she had to say goodbye to her parents and not knowing when and if she

would ever see them again. I think that struck me as something that was painful, but beyond that the rest was all excitement about travel and adventure.

JL: How did you guys get to the United States?

SD: We came by a ship, I remember the name of it was de "Groote Beer." It was the "big bear," the name of the boat. It was interesting we traveled in October and it was a pretty rough voyage. We had some stormy days, I remember one, I forget how many passengers there were, several hundred I think. But one morning my father and I went to breakfast and we were the only ones there, everyone else was sick because of the wavy conditions, the seasickness. I remember lots of folks not leaving their cabin for a couple days because they were just not up to it in terms of being sick, with the heavy seas. Other than that again it was interesting to travel the ocean. Had some fun on the boat as I recall. Was just all an adventure as I recall it was more fun than it was difficulty or challenge in my estimation, but I didn't have to make arrangements obviously, I was a kid and my parents took care of that.

JL: Do you remember how long, how many days you were on sea?

SD: I don't, I am sure that there is a record of it. I would think four or five, something like that. It wasn't a full week I don't believe, but it was at least four or five days.

JL: So, what made your parents choose the United States? I knew that we had an economy that was booming and all. But, like other countries like Canada...

SD: Right, right, well the main reason that they started thinking the States was that my father had two brothers and a sister who had already moved to this country. His oldest, it wasn't his oldest brother but it was an older brother had moved here I think in 1922, so years

before. Then an older sister had moved already prior to the war and then a brother for whom he actually worked in Amsterdam, moved I think in 1947 but he moved to this country. So all of that family relationship over here prompted him to think of coming over here. My mother had no relatives here, so she was pretty much went along with his suggestions as to where to go. There were other families from the Netherlands that did move to Canada at that time. Some went to Australia and there were other points of interest in the world where different people went. But we came to this country because of the family connections.

JL: Where was your first... when you got to the United States...what state did you arrive at, what was the first place you arrived?

SD: We came to Ellis Island in New Jersey. We went past the Statue of Liberty, I remember seeing that and then entering at the port there. I remember it being a long day, being not necessarily jostled about but having to stand in line and wait and again my parent being interviewed and having to show papers. Then we were taken to the railroad. Not sure it was in New York City or whether somewhere in Hoboken. I think it was where we hopped on a train eventually and the train took us to Iowa. Where we met my uncle then.

JL: When did you arrive in Holland? When did you come upon Holland?

SD: Holland, Michigan here. That wasn't until much later in my life and I was a student at Calvin College in the mid 60's and then on weekends we would occasionally come to Holland here. So that was my first connection with Holland, Michigan. My family emigrated to Pella, Iowa where I grew up.

JL: Could you tell me a little bit about that then?

SD: Pella. It's a small community in the center, south center of Iowa. I guess about forty miles southeast of Des Moines. A largely Dutch community. It was settled by Dutch settlers, a lot like Holland, Michigan the same, I think that Holland, Michigan was established here in the spring of 1847. Pella was in the summer of 1847. The same type of people, same group of Hollanders all of them having left the Dutch Reformed Church and establishing their own churches in this country. A lot of that tradition hung on there. I remember as a kid, a lot of folks in town could speak Dutch, not fluently necessarily but they had all grown up hearing some Dutch. So it was a very Dutch community. I would say even more Dutch than Holland, Michigan. The percentage of people who were Dutch was certainly higher than Holland, Michigan. It was a farming community. I think when I was growing up in high school or so, it was probably about 6,000 people. It was a small town. I think now it is closer to 10 or 12, but at the time I was living there was 5 to 6,000 people, so it was a small town. Interesting, it had three or four Christian Reformed Churches and three or four Reformed Churches. There was a Baptist Church, there was a Presbyterian Church, there was a Catholic Church, but the predominant membership was in Reformed or Christian Reformed churches in the community was sort of split down the middle. Feelings where not always cordial. I remember that playing on high school basketball teams we would never be allowed to play the public school team. I went to the Christian school and the public and the Christian school would not be allowed to play each other because the rivalry was so intense that it would lead to fights both on the floor and in the crowds and it wasn't considered healthy. So the school boards had agreed that there would not be athletic competition between the two schools. That changed in the

later '60s. I graduated in '63, I remember my younger brothers who played, did play against the public school. Some of those hard feeling between the Reformed and the Christian Reformed people sort of started to die out and improve later in the sixties and the seventies. Today as far as I know they have regular contests in all the sports. But when I was young in the '50s that wasn't allowed. Couldn't happen because of the hard feelings, it was interesting.

JL: So you lived in Iowa until you were eighteen or so?

SD: Yes, I went to Calvin when I was seventeen, in fact, and that was really the last. I went to school in '63 and of course I visited home in the summers although I think my sophomore year I really stayed in Grand Rapids to work. Essentially I left Pella in 1963 with visits regularly but didn't live there again.

JL: Was it hard to leave your family?

SD: I'm not sure it was harder for me than any other kid. Again I remember my folks bringing me up to college and typically the mother showed much more emotion than my dad. I know the first time that they brought me up as a freshman, and when we said goodbye that again there were tears and that is always tough to see your mom cry, but I knew that she would get over it. So, I don't think it was particularly tough for me. There were quite a few students from my high school that came along with me including the girl I was dating. So, that all made it reasonable. I had lots of contacts with friends and I played basketball, ran track and cross-country. So I had a lot of contacts right away. I don't recall feeling homesick while I was at Calvin. So no, not a particular problem.

JL: After college, can you tell me a little bit about why you decided to settle in Holland?

SD: Well yeah, one reason was that there was a job available here. I had gone off to graduate school after college and I spent four years in the Air Force during the Vietnam War. Then I came back and finished my graduate work and taught at Elmhurst College and then at Calvin College before this opportunity came up here at Hope College. Well I had been to the community, I didn't settle here because it was Dutch, but I came to the community because I liked the academic program here, I liked the students, liked the community. Both my wife and I felt it was a good place to raise our children. Again not so much because it was Dutch, but the fact that it was Dutch didn't put us off. So we came here and it has been everything that we have hoped. Not a hard decision, but it wasn't necessary made because of the Dutch nature of this community. I didn't set out looking for that, but it happened to be a good fit and it worked well.

JL: Can you describe some of the problems that you faced adjusting to life here?

SD: Well obviously the most serious problem was language initially. I remember I had entered the second grade in the Netherlands before we left in October. When I came to this country, put into school, I was put initially back into the first grade because the first grade teacher had a better handle on Dutch than the second grade teacher. So my younger brother and I were both in the first grade. We came in October, I think that lasted through Christmas maybe, and then after Christmas, I was put back into the second grade. So I remember as a youngster, first making friends in the first grade but not feeling totally satisfied with that because I knew I was supposed to be in the second grade. But, because we were learning the language at the time, I was put in that circumstance of being in the same class as my younger brother. Which again, I had no big thing, no problem with it,

except I felt I wanted to be a year ahead of him because I was a year older. So then as I moved into second grade of course I immediately had to fit in with a new group of people. That wasn't particularly hard, but I remember having formed friendship with one group and then suddenly you're on the other team. That kind of thing you play on the playground. So there was some adjustment in that. I don't recall learning English as being particularly difficult, as I said after we came in October and by Christmas or so I was conversant enough to where I went into second grade and that teacher had some Dutch but it wasn't as fluent in Dutch as the first grade teacher. I remember occasionally having to go back to the first grade teacher to clarify something that the second grade teacher couldn't clarify. But other than that I would think just the normal challenges of being a second grader, third grader.

JL: The two cities, Netherlands and then you have Iowa...the differences, what were some of the differences you saw right away?

SD: Well, distances I think struck us immediately. Traveling between Vinkeveen and Amsterdam, it was twenty minutes, half an hour on the bus or train, or whatever convenience you took. Here traveling a half-hour in any direction from Pella you'd still be in the boondocks. Then of course, just the train trip from Hoboken, New Jersey to I think we came into Atumwa, Iowa. That was a very long trip and we had never in our lives traveled anything like that. So the distances, also the distances between homes. Living out in the country even in the Netherlands the farms are not that far apart. The farms in Iowa were a mile or so apart. That struck us I think initially as different. The lack of water, it was not that there was no water in Iowa, but there wasn't nearly the

exposure to water that you had in the Netherlands. As I said we lived on a lock, with lakes and canals around all the time. The climate was much wetter than it was in Iowa. So I think that struck me anyway, I am sure it struck all of us that there was a difference in climate. It was a more continental climate and drier, and not an access to so much water. Those kind of things, and farms were bigger, the land was cultivated differently because of the differences in the soil and so forth. Which we noticed, but didn't worry about. Nothing else really that struck. Obviously you had to get to know a whole new set of people and still had a couple of uncles and an aunt in the area. So it wasn't totally without family, but a lot of folks that you were mixing with were not family, and back in the Netherlands a lot of folks were mixing with, at that time, were family. So that was a little bit different.

JL: Did you bring traditions that you had in the Netherlands over with you and continue to use them here in America?

SD: It was interesting, my folks had applied for emigration in '48 already I think. At some time either late 40s or early 50s they started taking English lessons in the Netherlands. They were far from fluent when we came here, but they had enough English to where they wanted us also to switch over to English as soon as possible for the school and so forth. So it wasn't long after arriving in this country that we settled into our own apartment or house, that we were using English even around the kitchen table at night when we had supper together. It wasn't very good English initially but it really was the purpose and plan to switch over to English as soon as we could. The only time that we would hear a lot of Dutch would be like Sunday morning after church or so when the uncles and aunts

would come over. Then there would be conversation in Dutch. For the rest, it was pretty much English from the time we learned enough English to handle it. No traditions. You know we never did wear Dutch costumes in the Netherlands, it was normal clothing. So, we would have wooden shoes there because you walked in the wet countryside where you needed wooden shoes. In the states you didn't need wooden shoes so we didn't bring our wooden shoes along. We had normal leather shoes but that was the same kind of shoes that we wore to school anyway. My mother continued to cook I suspect more Dutch kinds of meals than American meals. But again as she became more familiar with American products, what was available here. A porkchop in the Netherlands is appreciably different from a porkchop in the states here. So, I am sure my mother's way of cooking was more Dutch when she first came, then years later. I can't say I was observant enough to notice the changes. Clothing wasn't, styles change anyway. We came here in '53 by the later 50s as we were in school and so forth, styles change and you buy what is available in this country. So, I would say very soon we were indistinguishable from kids that had grown up in Pella. Other traditions, devotions around the table were in Dutch for quite a while, until but maybe not more that a year or two after we arrived that, that also changed. The church we went had English services although initially there were Dutch services once or twice a month in the afternoons and we went to those. That petered out after a few years. But the community of Pella has a tulip festival just like Holland does. So, as school kids we were always involved in that and had our Dutch costumes for that purpose and no other purpose. Again, Dutch traditions as such, I don't think there were any traditions that we maintained that were

particularly Dutch that I recall, just the same basic church membership. Went to Christian school, that's more related to our Reformed background rather than the Dutchness. So, I don't think we could call that a Dutch tradition. Really not, I don't think.

JL: After college and you had arrived in Holland, and you were settled a little bit, why did you stay?

SD: Well, first of all I continued to enjoy the work, the colleagues here, the students. My family was established in schools and joined the community. We enjoy Holland as community. We like the beach in the summer, good people largely. Friendly place to be. Just no reason to move. It was a good community and then of course as I made contact with others in the community that were of Dutch heritage then we formed some relationships. I got involved in some local organizations dealing with Dutch ancestry. You make contacts with people as you live in a community. Obviously I know Larry and have been involved with the Van Raalte Institute and things like that. And I teach Dutch here. So, all of that keeps me somewhat in touch with the Dutchness of the community more than an average person might be. But again it wasn't strictly that which kept me here. It was basically job satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of the community, the schools the opportunities for my kids and things like that. Which I would guess would be the same kinds of reasons anybody stays in a particular place.

JL: Do you tend to be involved in the community, in this Holland community?

SD: Yeah, I think so. I don't run for political office. But I've coached. We live in Holland Township so I've coached soccer and baseball and football. I've been a member of the

Crop Walk organization since its inception. I speak at school functions on occasion. Sometimes about the Netherlands sometimes about Russia, Poland. Traveled in Eastern Europe quite a bit. Yeah, somewhat involved, but at the same time I don't move heaven and earth.

JL: Is your church affiliation the same as it was or have you changed?

SD: No, no we came from the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands which you know split from the Hervormde Kerk, the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Some would draw parallel between the Gereformeerde Kerk and the Christian Reformed Church. Compared to the Reformed Church in America and the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands. There is some validity in that, at the same time where these churches are theological today in the Netherlands probably doesn't reflect that as much because in some respects the Reformed Church in the Netherlands is more conservative today than the Gereformeerde Kerk. In this county the perception at large is basically the Christian Reformed Church is still more conservative than the Reformed Church, although in many congregations that isn't the case either. So, when we came to Pella, then both my uncles and my aunts all went to the Christian Reformed Church and that is where we went. So we've stayed with that. My wife is from the Christian Reformed Church, and so we're still members of the Christian Reformed Church in town.

JL: Increasingly Holland has become more culturally diverse. When you see newer immigrants settle in Holland, what are your feelings about that? If you have any at all?

SD: Yeah, I was going to say do I have particular feelings. When I encounter new immigrants, I presume you mean from the Netherlands, there aren't that many new ones

that come in from the Netherlands, but occasionally there is a new one that comes from the Netherlands and you try to be as helpful as you can. I have as much contact with people from Germany as I do from the Netherlands because I teach German here. So because you have gone through the experience yourself you have I think more empathy with what they are going through, and you try to help and refer them to people that can help. Give them recommendations for where to live, what schools to go to, what churches to attend or try. Doctors, dentists you try to help as much as you can. And I am sure because of my own background that I take more of an interest in doing that for people than the average person does. But to say that I have particular feelings. Leaving the Netherlands at the time, I never had the sense or I don't think my family either that we were particularly persecuted in the Netherlands or that that it was a miserable place to live and that wasn't how it was perceived. And I think as you go back, and I have been back there often, I can see living there is a real possibility and I don't think it would be the end of the world if I had to move back there and live there. And at the same time, given the choice, I would choose to be here because there is more openness and I think more opportunity, more freedom in this country. Just I think the standard of living, the way of life, we're familiar with it here and were comfortable with it here. Living in Europe, all though possible and not a hardship would not be what we would choose to do at this time in our lives.

JL: What are your feelings about the Hispanic community in Holland?

SD: I think we need to work in more acceptance of the Hispanic folks. I know a lot of them and I think they come from difficult circumstances. Many of them came originally from

the migrant worker population. They've never totally shaken that image of being sort of second class citizens. I don't appreciate the way some folks seem to stereotype them in that way. As I have opportunity, I talk to folks about that and try to...I like to see them being treated more even handedly than they have been. I think things have improved in this community over the last twenty, thirty years. There is less racism, there is less discrimination now than there was twenty years ago. But there are still pockets of folks that really don't trust anybody but a white person. They can be nasty about expressing it. I think some of the discussions we're having on campus currently where people of color are talking about the experiences they have had in the stores even downtown Holland here, where people just treated them shabbily because of the color of their skin. There is too much of that. As I encounter it at least I try to work against it, try to bring people together. So I have no problem with, I don't consider this to be a Dutch community and we have to keep the Spanish out, that's not the way I see it. I think there is something valuable in the Dutch heritage which I would hope that the Spanish folks would also be able and willing to appreciate. But to say that this is a community for the Dutch only is nonsense and I think in many ways there is a good working relationship between the Dutch and the Spanish in this town. Many folks are working at it real hard and with some success. Unfortunately there are some that don't have the same attitude.

JL: How do you feel about the Dutch heritage that Holland has tried to preserve?

SD: Well, I don't argue with it, I don't fight against when I see an expansion even of the Tulip Time project. You know that it used to be a week now it is ten days and it's expanding all the time and it's as much a commercial venture as it is an ethnic venture obviously. And

so I have no problem with it. I think some folks...the whole question of how much is this community characterized by its Dutchness and how much is it characterized by its Reformed heritage, I think has often been confused. I think a lot of the work ethic, the good moral principles of this community are attributed much more to the Reformed heritage of and the religious fervor of the immigrants than their Dutchness. There is Dutch pietism, Dutch theological strictness, has a particular blend which certainly characterizes it's community. But I think it's characterized much more by that religious intensity than by its Dutchness. And the wooden shoes and the tulips, well. The tulips are a part of the Netherlands, there that's a major industry in the Netherlands. Fresh flowers and bulbs and so forth and so to import some of that and to say this characteristic of a portion of the Netherlands is certainly fine. The wooden shoes as I say I wore wooden shoes as a kid. So, farmers have to walk through mucky land all the time it is a practical convenience. People wouldn't wear those in the cities so to see the Holland band shuffle the Tulip Lane in there wooden shoes that's a anachronistic and it's funny. But hey if that's part of the festival that's fine. I have no problem with it and when my kids were young they used to march in the parade. Goodness, I went street scrubbing in the parade with my kids, so again, no protest at all. These days I probably avoid it more then I try to be part of it. It's irritating sometimes that I can't get my car through the city during Tulip Time so I ride a bike or walk which is probably better for me. It's just the little trifling irritations that you notice more as you get older. But again to say I have something principally against the Dutch festival here, the Tulip festival, no, not that. It would be helpful if people would understand what is genuine about that and what is just

dressing in terms of the kitsch for the festival. I suspect a lot of folks don't understand that. But it's not my burden to inform them correctly.

JL: Do you have any feelings towards, because we have, you have Tulip Time. The Hispanic have Cinco de Mayo?

SD: I think that's fine. There is a significant Hispanic community here. To celebrate what's precious in their heritage is fine with me. I've been to some of there celebrations and I think they're interesting. I certainly think that they have every right to celebrate that as we do whatever we celebrate.

JL: So the whole issue with the Tulip Time and stuff. Do you feel that the community celebrates the Dutch heritage well?

SD: Yeah, I think that way of celebrating it is better than no celebration of it. I think the average person understands that the average Hollander doesn't run around Amsterdam in Dutch costumes and wooden shoes these days. I don't think you have to get out and tell people that. If they think about it they'll realize it is not the case. And these days too where you have CNN is all over the world and you get images from the Netherlands as well as Bangkok and where ever. People have seen folks on the street in Amsterdam and know they don't wear Dutch costumes. So you don't have to go about telling them that this is just a throw back to an old era and it's not characteristic of the Netherlands now. I think most people realize that without anybody telling them that.

JL: Being Dutch have you ever been discriminated against in your lifetime?

SD: Probably not just because of the Dutchness, again I don't recall how people treated us and I don't recall being discriminated against in Hoboken as we were moving through the

lines of immigrants. I think most of the people coming in with us were Dutch. There were also Italians there, there were Irish, there were blacks, there were different people there. Most of the folks I saw were Dutch and there wasn't open discrimination against them. We moved into a community where the vast majority of the people were Dutch. So why should they discriminate against Dutch folks. As a kid first entering school, I recall some people teasing me about not being able to speak good English. I didn't feel beset by that, I don't think it was a problem. You know, once I learned English and dressed as everybody else, I don't think it was any different then. I was never discriminated for my Dutchness that I can recall. Went into service, everybody has a heritage practically and so if you speak English and you look like the next person nobody even knows you're Dutch unless they recognize your name as Dutch. So, no I can't say that I was ever really discriminated against because of my Dutchness.

JL: What paths have your children taken? Have they followed the Dutch, have they kept up with the Dutch Heritage any Dutch culture or have they kind of drifted away? Or is that a big issue?

SD: Well, I am asking myself to what extent it is a factor in their lives. I took a sabbatical some years back and we all lived in the Netherlands for a year. So, that has perhaps imprinted as much Dutchness on them as our own family heritage. My parents are both deceased now, but they retained somewhat of a Dutch accent while they lived. So my children growing up knowing their grandparents could hear that they had a Dutch accent. They know they've done enough, goodness...you're in grade school you do all these family history projects. So they've been through it enough to where they know, and they

know that they have relatives in the Netherlands. They went to a Dutch school for a year so all of them could go back to the Netherlands and probably within a couple of weeks be fluent enough to survive if they chose to do that. But, you know to what extent it impacts their lives on a daily basis or weekly or yearly basis I don't think it does significantly. They haven't actively distanced themselves from it, they have no reason to. Again I don't think they have ever experienced it as a problem or as a particular advantage. Two of my children have already graduated from Hope. A third one, Alex, is a senior this year. So, there is just a hint of Dutchness about this community but I don't think it effects them any more than it does you. Again, not a problem, not a particular opportunity unless your looking to learn some Dutch or you want to look into the history of the family. You consult the archives or something like that. But I don't think that they take particular delight in being Dutch. But I don't think that they take any umbrage at it either. It's just a fact which they are familiar with and I think if they traveled in Europe they would probably make a stop in the Netherlands and look up some of the people they went to school with. Because they had that experience they have that opportunity and they might do that. But beyond that I don't see how it impacts their lives on a regular basis.

JL: Do you keep conversations ever, do you have conversations in Dutch?

SD: In Dutch no, but about our time in the Netherlands yeah, that comes up from time to time sure. Because we spent a year there. After the school year we traveled in Europe for a year or for a summer. So those kinds of things, what you experienced in common together as a result of wherever you were. Those kinds of things do come up once in a while. Again that is not so much a matter of Dutch Heritage it's just an experience we

had living in the Netherlands.

JL: What would you say to friend who is considering moving to the United States?

SD: From the Netherlands?

JL: Yeah.

SD: Well I want to make certain that the friend had a realistic picture of what to expect here. I have more experience in recent years with people from the Soviet Union or Russia wanting to come to the States. Or people from Africa, people from all over the world want to come to the States because they have this image that everyone here is rich, everybody here is a movie star, or everybody here has these tremendous opportunities for achievement. I would say, you know, there are more opportunities here than in many of those countries, and of course, in some of those countries there is precious little opportunity these days because of the graft and corruption. But one has to be realistic and see that people who are successful in this country have to work at it. That's true in that country as well as here. When I hear people talking about coming to the States, I usually talk with them a bit and say now what are your realistic expectations, are you doing this for the right reasons, if you think it's going to solve all your problems if you have a dysfunctional family, taking that dysfunctional family to the states isn't going to make it a normal family you know, that kind of thing. So essentially try to sort out if they are looking for advice, most people don't consult me before they move from the Netherlands to the States, but the ones that do ask questions or with whom I have conversations I basically tell them what my experience has been. This is a great place to live and lots of opportunity. But it takes hard work.

(end of side A, beginning of side B)

JL: You have had many experiences in your lifetime with everything that you've faced, if you could, is there anything that you might do differently then you have? Maybe a choice or a decision that was made? Would you see yourself maybe doing something differently if you could do it again?

SD: Boy that's a tough question. First of all as we were talking earlier, I wasn't consulted when my parents decided to move to this country so would I have tried to talk them out of it then? As I said I was more excited about it then they were, and I don't see it as having been a mistake. I go back to the Netherlands and I see uncles and aunts and their children and so forth. I don't think that they are happier then we are, or that they had more opportunities then we had. I think we've had more opportunities then they've had. So I would say it was a good move. I could have argued with the timing of it. But I didn't and I have no reason to and I have no reason to say now it would have been better had they moved in 1950 rather than '53 or in '60 rather than '53. There is no basis for such judgement. Their decision to live in Pella made perfect sense cause my uncle who was sponsoring us lived there and the other uncles lived around there. Again would you choose to be from somewhere else if you had a choice? Not really--it was a good community, it was a small community, it was a supportive community. I think I had a reasonably good education. Well I came to Grand Rapids to go to college. So that was a different community again. Would I have gone to a different college, no I appreciated the education that I had there. Would I have rather taught at Notre Dame rather than Hope College, not really. I've had offers from other places and I've chosen to stay here. So this

is good place to work. Had I received a contract from UCLA the same day I received a contract from Hope College, would I have chosen UCLA or Notre Dame or BYU I don't know? I think I would have come to Hope College and I have chosen to stay here because I appreciate it. So, what would I have changed? We have four children, I'm not going to say that I would rather send Alex back. No, I mean my parents, my father died when he was 57 now if I could change that of course I would have changed but that wasn't anybody's decision that happened he contracted lung cancer. It confirmed me in never having smoked. He was a heavy smoker and so again that was a decision sort of forced on me by my involvement in athletics. I wasn't allowed to smoke I never decided to smoke and so I am thankful for that, but again it's certainly nothing I would change. Would I have changed his death or my mother death? Of course, but those are things beyond our control, things you really don't have the option of changing. So no, I guess basically not, certainly nothing connected with my Dutch ancestry or would I have rather been related to the German Kaiser, na not really. No I don't think so! Some of the things that I've experienced were sort of not my choice. I would have chosen to go right through graduate school and not served in the military, had that been my option but it wasn't my choice. Uncle Sam drafted me and I had to go serve. So you accommodate to the choice others make for you. I think essentially the answer to the question would be no. I don't think I would change anything that I've done or had to do. It's been good and I can't argue.

JL: Well I just want to thank you for taking the time to speak to my about this, your Dutch Heritage and all the events that have happened in your life. It's been interesting.

SD: Well good, I hope it helps.