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West Lawn Cemetery Tour, Orange City, Iowa

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Narrator's name: Nelson De Jong (1903-1991)¹
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This is the 21st day of September as fall begins. It is a very cold morning considering that it has been so very hot this past summer. It is freezing. There is ice on the water.

I have been asked by different people in Orange City whether I would record some knowledge that I have of the Orange City Cemetery Association. And I feel I would like to go to some old-timers, but it so happens that I am one of the old-timers and I just have been looking around and wondering who could give me more information than what I already have. I have tried and I have some information here that I'm going to pass on this morning, and then later on I will walk at the cemetery and just go step-by-step describing as to what I see and what I know about the history of the cemetery, because the people buried there are really the history of Orange City. And I would just like to pass that on to those who would be interested enough to listen to this.

First of, first of all, I have a warranty deed made out in, let's see, the 13th day of March 1894 to Klaas Noordhoff,² and then for \$10, that the lot, was he paid for the lot. And it was the First Reformed Church of Orange City in Sioux County, uh, that had this and the following described premises [unclear] and in the Orange City Cemetery according to the recorded plat of filed for record in the Records Office of Sioux County on the 17th day of October 1873. So it was the First Reformed Church that originally had ownership of the Orange City Cemetery. Then

¹ Nelson De Jong, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103115810/nelson-de_jong.

² Klass Noordhoff, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112196592/klaas-noordhoff>.

in 1900 between 1907, about in 1907, my grandfather also bought a lot at the cemetery and that was the 23rd day of April 1907 and then it still was owned by the First Reformed Church. That is my grandfather Garrit De Jong.³ Then, I find as that between 1907 and 1909, the First Reformed Church decided, perhaps, that it should be no longer in charge of that cemetery. So the Orange City Associ- Cemetery Association was formed and, um, my father, they sold shares in it, and my father bought a share. I do not see, ah, as to what the price of the share was; it does not state on this paper, but it was given, sold to my father in August of 1909 so the Cemetery Association was formed then about in that, that time.

A few years ago, maybe ten years ago, the Cemetery Association decided to have another name given to the Orange City Cemetery and so it was named West Lawn Cemetery. That is about all the knowledge that I can give as to the origin of the Orange City Cemetery, and let us always remember, things just do not happen by themselves. It takes a lot of effort and work in order to form an association and to keep up cemetery. It just, as I have just said, it doesn't come by itself. And so later on, when the weather is a wee bit more decent, I will walk up the road that leads to the cemetery, the road going directly east of the gate. On that road have gone many hundreds, in fact thousands, I think approximately 5,000 people are buried at our local cemetery now. And every year that number increases and increases as the population of this community increases. And it's amazing how it has grown in size since I was a boy about seven almost 80 years ago. It's really amazing as to what has happened at that time. Then there were not too many gravesites as yet, only the Northeast corner, and so in a few days, when it gets a wee bit warmer, I think I will walk that road where people have gone many years ago with wagons to the

³ Garrit De Jong, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/97530324/garrit-de_jong.

cemetery. They have gone there with buggies and carriages and bobsleds. Later on slowly, but surely, about by the year 1914 and 1911, a few automobiles were brought in to use.

And ah, so throughout the years they have been many, many changes. All, originally, the caskets were lowered into the ground. The gravesite was made by digging by hand. The caskets were lowered into the ground with six pallbearers, of course, holding onto three ropes that were placed under the casket. And they had to lower them, slowly but surely. That custom changed. And when they had the committal services, ah, always there was a committal of course, and they would take clods of ground and drop 'em on the casket as the minister would say dust to dust and ashes to ashes, and so forth.

When I was a boy, there was no such a thing as flowers on the casket. They just didn't seem to do that, they just in first place and in the second place, flowers were not available. And today you sometimes find just hundreds of flowers. Um, and in those days a rough box was placed in the grave, and then the casket was placed in there. By the year 1919, they were beginning to use vaults. [Clears throat.] Slowly, but surely, people turned to that. And [clears throat] I know that when my mother passed away in 1907, I know that the box that was placed around the casket in the grave was made of wood. And [clears throat] so that changed it too, and slowly, but surely, the custom of committal services also changed. No longer did they drop clods of ground on the casket as it was lowered. Slowly, but surely, when flowers came, they put petals of flowers, took a pedal from the wreath, and put it on the casket. And, um, it was quite a sound to hear. It wasn't very nice to hear that sound of the clods and then nearly always at that time the undertaker would lower, later on they would always lower, the casket into the gravesite while the people, mourners were there. And, um, that too was a heart-rending experience. Nowadays the

casket is literally covered with flowers and the casket is not lowered into the ground until all the mourners have left. How different things go throughout the course of only a matter of years.

And now I think I'm going to stop here as I sit comfortably in the room talking to you. I am going to wait, as I said, and then until a bit warmer weather and then I will walk the road to the cemetery and describe the things that I see. The things that I have learned to know, especially, naturally, I cannot tell you about all the people, but I will tell you about the people that were so well-known in Orange City and some of the stories that I have heard throughout the course of the years. So I'm going to stop now. How long I can talk as I walk down, as I walk slowly, but surely down the cemetery road, because it's quite a distance, and as I said, described to the right and to the left it might be of great interest.

This is the 23rd day of September. It is a beautiful frosty morning. There is ice on the water. I am on the road leading to the cemetery. You would almost call it the road of no return. It starts at the First Reformed Church and goes directly to cemetery. Um, it has been used for many, many years. Down this road of no return have come ever so many processions of those whose loved ones have passed away. And processions that were so different from that of today. Perhaps, at first in 1872, there were wagons. Perhaps later there were horse-drawn hearses and horse-drawn carriages and buggies. My earliest recollections as a boy of three, I faintly remember that I too was in one of the carriages that followed the hearse. It was the day that my mother was buried. That is more than 76 years ago. And as the years have come and gone, what are a lot of changes there are. Then, as of now, there are fellowship rooms in the churches where the people gathered together. At that time, there was very little embalming so they waited for at least four days before the funeral. Even today in the Netherlands that is the custom. There is no embalming to speak of. There are no vaults as we find them here on the cemetery. The

cemeteries there do not to grow in size because you pay for the gravesite every 20 years and you pay dearly. You, the grave, will be used by someone else.

Now as I have entered the cemetery, I am slowly coming to some of the names that I read on some of the markers, monuments. It'll be impossible for me to mention all of them. Only, if you, I see the name of Cambier. The Cambier family was well-known in Orange City for many, many years. Now in Orange City there are no people by that name. Cambier's brothers were in the machinery business, they were in the automobile business, and they had all kind of businesses. And so they were, as I say, a very, very well-known family.

Then there is also the Draayom family. They were quite well-known because the father of these people that are buried here wrote the story of Sioux County many, many years ago.⁴



And then I come to another marker. It is the marker of the Van Oosterhouts that too for many, many years has been a very, very familiar name in Orange City. And the last Van Oosterhout that lived in Orange City was a judge, a federal judge of the court of appeals in St. Louis.⁵ He had

been a judge in Orange City here too for a long time. His forefathers were buried first, placed first, in a cave here a little bit north of where I am now, at a sort of a triangle, where the road that I'm walking on now just directly inside the gate leading to the right and then there is one little

⁴ Gerrit Draayom, Sr. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64103504/gerrit-draayom>. His, [Remembrances of Former Days in Sioux County, Iowa](#), is on Northwestern College Digital Commons Archives.

⁵ Martin D. Van Oosterhout, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/199658085/martin-d_-van_oosterhout.

road leading to the right at the north end. And that road curves around. In that triangle, where the one turns right and the other left, there was a cave and then is where they buried the first Van Oosterhout's family, a father and a mother. For some reason something went wrong. I do know for certain that the water level at the cemetery, as it has been this past spring, could be very, very high. Perhaps, that cave was not waterproof. All I do know is that when they went in there one time, they found that the caskets had been floating around in different places. So they destroyed that cave and now they were reburied here on the east side of the cemetery and there are many, many Van Oosterhouts buried here. I count 6,9,12 markers and that is about the most markers for any family. It really is quite a sight to see.

Then I come to another marker, Van Roekel. That too has a lot of memories. They built a beautiful home when they got married north of Orange City about a quarter of a mile, and then suddenly there came the year of 1918 and 19 when the great flu season during World War I took over. That flu season was the death, caused the death of more soldiers than the actual War itself. But many, many mothers-to-be also died and this Mrs. Van Roekel was one of them. It was the tragedy to say the least.⁶ We lost relatives too. My father's sister, my father's cousin, and many, many more who died at that time because of that flu season. Especially mothers-to-be it hit them very, very hard.

And then I come right now, I'm walking right on that triangle, where is that cave was located many, many years ago. And as I travel to the north end here, I noticed markers that are of great interest if you knew the people. There is the Hollander family, very, very well-known. It is an enormous marker and what they did at that time, which was not a very bright idea, was to plant evergreen trees next to the gravesite. In this past spring or summer on July 1, there was a

⁶ Johanna Wilhelmina Brinks Van Roekel, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/83729108/johanna-wilhelmina-van_roekel.



terrific windstorm. There was a huge evergreen tree standing right next to the marker. The roots had grown under through it, and that great big tree blew down. And that marker, weighing many, many tons, was just lifted out of the ground and stood erect above the ground foundation, and all.

It really was hard to believe.

Now I'm going around to this north road and the farthest north on this cemetery and I am coming across a marker where a man who was a wagon train captain or leader as they came from Pella in the very first years of the existence of Orange City, and that the Dutch people came to Orange City. His name was Dirk VanDer Meer and he was buried here approximately in 1917.⁷ He was married twice. His first wife was buried in 1872⁸. Now I am now in the northeast corner of the cemetery, the first wife is buried in the northwest corner of the cemetery and there is lots of room there. To find the answers as to why this VanDer Meer buried his second wife who died in 1909, why he buried her in the northeast corner and he himself was buried there is beyond me. I do not know. I cannot give you the answers. We just have to sort of read between the lines. All I know is that her grave, the grave of his first wife, ah, was the first oldest marked grave in this cemetery. The marker was placed here also, in perhaps 1909 on her grave too, because it has the same granite material as the one that I'm looking at right as of now.

And then I go further and I just go traveling north. There's some beautiful maple trees here yet that were planted many, many years ago. They are old and I am in the shade of some of them. They have stood through the many, many storms and just like people have, they too in their lives.

⁷ Dirk Van Der Meer, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/110179250/dirk-vander_meer.

⁸ Cornelia Van den Bos Van Der Meer, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/110179615/cornelia-vander_meer.

I'm coming across the Korver family; they too was a very, very well-known family. They were mostly farmers. Later on a few of them became business people.

Now I am coming, looking to the right, I see a huge marker. It's the marker of my grandfather who came here in 1871 to Sioux County. My father was born in 1873. My grandfather's marker, he was about 78 years old, and it is huge as I said. When my mother was buried, I'm standing right there, and how well I remember when that day was.⁹ My earliest memory was of two horses attached to a hearse and a long line of carriages and as we stood here at his gravesite, later on I know, that there were six pallbearers and how different it was in those days from what it is now. The pallbearers had armbands around their arms. Ah, that still is the custom in the Netherlands. The women were all dressed in black veils, we seldom see that anymore. And of course the pallbearers, there was no automatic lowering by turning a little lever level the end of the casket. Oh no. Then it was done by ropes and as I have said before the beginning of this tape, the lowering end of the casket was done while the people were there. That was a very, very emotional time and it is no longer done.

And as I've said there were not any flowers and there was never any fellowship room after the funeral services as there were now. Yes, they would sometimes go back to the homes, but that was a very long, long trip to go there. Because my father lives six miles southwest of Orange City and actually, very nearly it was an all-day affair. They had to leave the home quite early, before noon in order to get to the church which is seven miles away, and so by the time they get home later in the afternoon it was no longer very early.

I am moving on and I come to a marker of that of Rieckhoff, which has for many years been a well-known name. They were quite well-to-do and his marker is completely different

⁹ Pieterella "Nellie" Neeval De Jong, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/81686475/pieterella-de_jong.

from any marker in this cemetery. It has a sundial. It's kind of rounded. It has just like a pillar and on top of it is a sundial. Now I read here that it is it's not even 8:30 on that sundial, not yet, because the time changes now. Years ago it did not. So I'm looking at the real sun time and that shows to me that it is awfully close, getting closer to 8:30 in the morning.

I'm walking down the road here going on to the West, in that north road, and I come to varieties of names. I see the name of Schalekamp. They too were people of business and they too were well-known in the town of Orange City.

Then later on I'm just about coming to another marker. It is the marker of the Hospers family. Henry Hospers was one of the first ones to come to Orange City.¹⁰ He was a banker, he was a lawyer, and he helped all the homesteaders make out the papers for their homesteads and so forth. He was a great leader in Orange City, and as I said he had a bank, and he live in a beautiful home. He had a chauffeur, or a man, I meant, to drive his horses and so forth. And he, um, when he passed away, his bank had gone bankrupt. He lost everything he practically had. And the Hospers name was very, very, very well-known. It was, there were many Hospers families. Some had a business like a grocery store. There was one whose maiden name was Hospers; she was an osteopath. There were people that were in other types of business.

And then I'm going a little bit south on this little road and I come to the name of Vande Waa.¹¹ He was the man who had a team of mules. He was the man who drove the very first wagon to Sioux County with three other men from Pella, Iowa, and they searched out a place where they could have a town. Where they can have a settlement of people that had originally come from Holland. And so they came here in the year of '69 and the next spring of '70, that is when he was the leader of another great big wagon train that came to Sioux County. The

¹⁰ Henry Hospers, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/38782234/henry-hospers>.

¹¹ Henry J. Vande Waa, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70252951/henry-j_-vande_waa.

beginning of Orange City, the beginning of a new community, the beginning of a new settlement, and most of those people were of Dutch descent. Orange City in itself was very, very much of that. The Dutch language was spoken continually.

I am now near an evergreen tree just only a few feet from this Vande Waa gravesite. It is under, there are two markers, one is slightly larger than the other one, a husband and wife. It is kind of unusual because those people were the, one family that operated a windmill feed grinding outfit business. It was located just east of the auditorium of our college.

I am looking to my right and I see one of the two markers on this cemetery as that marked the gravesite of a judge by the name of Hutchinson. He was a judge here in Orange City for many, many years in the early 1900s in the late 1800s, and he was, he did not live in Orange City, he had his home at the town of Alton. The marker faces south that's why it's a little bit different because it's just one of the two markers that are that way, and then just, and it faces south as I have just said.

Then I come to another family name, Casjens, it too was a very familiar name in Orange City.¹² And the reason it, um, made such an impression on my mind because the father, Eilt



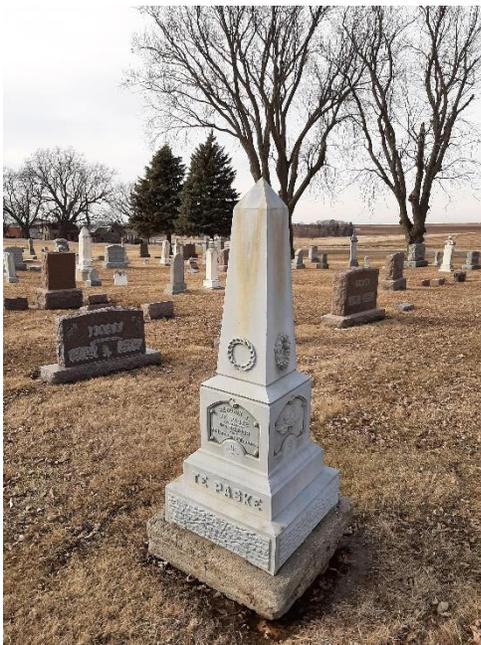
Casjens, was born in 19, 1858. He was one of the first victims of an automobile accident in Sioux County in 1912. The automobiles in those days were not fast, but traveling in mud was very difficult. Somehow or another, he was at the town of Maurice. He went off a low grade and

¹² Eilt Herman Casjens, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84689450/eilt-herman-casjens>.

the automobile fell on him and he was crushed. So that was the first victim of an automobile. Since then I can't even begin to tell you, how many more victims of automobile accidents have been buried on this cemetery.

I see another gravesite. It is kind of unusual by the name of Pennings.¹³ It is the only gravesite where the man is buried with three wives that he has had. That is very, very unusual to say the least. And, ah, because like I say, most of the time if a man would be remarry he would marry a widow and she would in turn be buried with her first husband. But that was not the case in here. And I knew practically all of these wives of this man. I knew the family real well. They were farmers to begin with.

But now I'm coming to a very, very interesting marker, as I'm going west, and that is Te



Paske. It, the marker is made of like metal. It is hollow and you can just hit it and there are little plaques in there that you can take out, and they would put the inscription, whatever you wanted, and that is very, very clear. This marker was placed hidden, here in 1886. And as I said it was hollow and it was used quite frequently for in the 18, 1918 and beyond. That when the Volstead Act came. It was one way for the bootleggers to hide their liquor. It had been done in Sioux County at one time. Not

here perhaps, but I do know in another town and that's where the customers would come so they wouldn't be recognized as they come to the home of the people that had the liquor. It is a novel way of hiding it, but a certain minister who was very intent on chasing those bootleggers. He saw

¹³ Perhaps Arent Jan Pennings, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103364878/arent-jan-pennings>.

flickering lights at this particular cemetery and he investigated and naturally that was stopped at that time.

Now I'm coming, going down the road west on this north road, going east and west on the north end of the cemetery, and I am coming to another gravesite. It marks the gravesite of a man by the name of Sybesma.¹⁴ Many years ago, he was a day laborer. He had, he had not been in this country too very long, and he went out cleaning wells. There was a farm place 2 miles east Orange City and a half a mile north. It was the farm occupied by Druivestein and they had a well in the east end of their barn. He was going to clean it. In those days there were no flashlights in those days. In those days, people would put a lantern in there before they go in a well to see if per chance there could be gas in there. He neglected to do that. So he went down in the well. He died there. What a time they had to get that body out because of the fact that we have had no flashlights and so forth. So they waited until the next day when the sun was shining from the east, the well was in east end of the barn. When the sun was shining from the east, by the use of mirrors, they were able to shine the light, the sunlight, down into the bottom of that well. That too was a tragedy because his wife was left with four little children and another baby that was coming. So, it was a great tragedy.

I'm walking north. I see two markers of that kind of white material, white metal material right here with a little lambs on top. Each marker marks the gravesite - one of two brothers and one of two sisters. And just beyond that is the marker of these children's grandfather. He was buried here in also in the 1870s, and his marker is the oldest marker on this cemetery. He was buried in 1877, but it is the oldest marker. The one who's the oldest marked grave, that marker was placed much, much later. And so I'm going in that white marker that I just told you about, is

¹⁴ Sybe Sybesma, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/142185050/sybe-sybesma>.

was my great-grandfather. There's one thing I see here and that is a lot of De Jongs. A while ago, I talked about the Hospers family. There are no people by the name of the Hospers living in Orange City.

There are many families that are gone that used to be very, very familiar on the streets of Orange City, their faces. And as I walk here now and thinking how many people are there buried on this cemetery. It is more than 5,000 of them and that is quite a number. It just seems to increase as the time gets larger, there are more and more people being buried here each year. I'm coming now to another marker which is very, very familiar in name. It marks the gravesite of the first Pastor, Reverend Bolks, the first pastor of the First Reformed Church.¹⁵ And I read it on this, they put a plaque here in about 18 – 1971. We the congregation of the First Reformed Church, Orange City, Iowa, in observance of our centennial dedicate this marker to preserve the memory of Reverend Bolks and to honor his neighbors as the first pastor of this church, May, 1971. And he was a combination doctor and pastor. He really was quite a man.

Now we are going further and I'm coming after a bit to a very, very unusual marker. It marks the grave, vaguely in my memory years ago, I remember them talking, that people talking, about a person who had taken his life. And it seems to me that it was very strange, that because as I come across this particular marker, it is like a stump, a tree stump.¹⁶ But, on a branch, on a protruding piece of a branch, is a rope made of the same material. Many years ago, it was very rare in this community that people did take their lives and yet, it's so very, very



¹⁵ Rev. Seine Bolks, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/41341127/seine-bolks>.

¹⁶ A. Van Rooden's stone is now fallen to the ground. According to records found on Ancestry.com, Van Rooden had his will written on August 10, 1898, the day he died.

unusual that this rope should be [on] this here tree. It is snapped off. It is broke. Yet it's, as I say, it was around a branch. And it was in 1898, he was 52 years old. It was only a few years before I was born. People were still talking about that incident.

And now I'm going to come to that marker in the northwest corner of our cemetery. It marks the gravesite of that wagon train driver. And I see that there is no less than 60 feet on each side of that marker where there are no gravesites marked, and that is gravesite of Mrs. Vander Meer, and I'm going to read to you the inscription that is on this here marker. Cornelia Vanden Bos the wife of Dirk Vander Meer born March 20, 1833 died December 7th, 1872. So you see, she passed away within two years, in only maybe a 1 ½, after they came to Sioux County. As far as I know she left one, and that son, too, is buried in the northeast corner of the cemetery.

Well, you find I just read to you, that the wife's maiden name came first. That was a custom in Holland. Only a few months ago we received a memorial card from Holland of the young lady. Her maiden name was on the memorial card and then as a survivor her husband's name was there. A woman's identity is not lost in the Netherlands and evidently, when they came down here first, people did not forget that, because this marker has the maiden name of the woman buried here and then her husband's name after that. I think that's a wonderful idea. I often wish that we had that over here too. And then we find the same things for dates. I mean, when we have a letter, they put the day and then the month and then the year, as we put the months and the day and the year. It makes a wee bit of difference.

I'm coming across the gravesite of another lady that died in the early 1900s, about the same year my mother did, and I like this inscription. Years ago they put oh so many verses and so far with inscriptions. It is in Dutch and [clears throat] and I'll read it in Dutch and then I will translate it for you.

[Speaks Dutch.]

There is more to that, ah, in most places, but this was most they could get on. But the full sentence is really this way: “Read prayerfully as you pass by, and the words given to me, as you are living, once was I, as I am now, so you shall be, so be prepared to follow me.”

That is an inscription on a tombstone. I cannot exactly find that one just now, but those are the words that are written on another tombstone and what an appropriate, that is what an appropriate verse, inscription on this marker that there is, because of the fact how true it is in our lives, as we are now, so they have been. As I'm walking on all these at all these gravesites, as they are now so we too shall be. In the very words so be prepared to follow me. That is the great aim in our lives.

I noticed that I'm coming very near to the end of this side of this tape. I've been talking 45 minutes, and as I walk in here, as I said before, is a beautiful, beautiful fall morning 'cause this is the first day of fall. And I am now getting very near to the west side of our cemetery. Throughout the years, we have bought additional, additional ground to this cemetery and it seems as though every year we are needing more and more of that.

Now I'm coming across a gravesite of a family by the name of Vogel. It is a very, very well known name here in Orange City. Many [unclear] years ago, 65-70 years ago, a family by the name of Vogel came to Orange City from the Netherlands. They were painters by trade and they, um, and pretty soon one of the brothers decided he would take up the business of mixing paints.¹⁷ That has grown into a huge factory. One of the brothers, one of the sons, of this, Andrew Vogel had a boy and he had a cancer and he is buried here, but it is a beautiful marker.

¹⁷ Andrew Vogel, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/102643266/andrew-vogel>.

It's almost black. It's to the northwest corner of the cemetery. It has been here since 18.- 1972.
Oh, it just seems like yesterday that this happened.

But I am also coming across some more markers by the name of Kraai, and about this, oh this is about 12 years ago already, Mert Kraai had a furniture store in Orange City. He had a beautiful daughter.¹⁸ She was a college student and she was with a friend, the daughter of the banker Rowenhorst,¹⁹ and they decided that before the college started they would go to the Lakes. There was an automobile accident, It was a tragic thing. [Tape cuts out briefly] ...Lake Okoboji. They were bathing by a steep ledge in the lake. Suddenly it went off. They all panicked. The teacher and another girl try to save them, but they panicked so that it was impossible to save any of the other. So the teacher was also drown. That made five in all. As one can well imagine, that is a tragedy that has never been forgotten. How well I remember that location. Hundreds and hundreds of people gathered at First Reformed Church, [it] was filled to the door [because] all the funerals were held at the same time. And, there was a crowd around the church. They had an amplifying system. Never forgot that, it'll linger long in the memory of those people who were living at that time. Those kind of occasions have happened and happened some more throughout the years. That have come and gone. It is all a part of life and we realize that illness, or accident, we must all live one day at a time and we must all realize how precious time is. So often we let the mornings and evenings go past without realizing that it has been one more day for us. How little we appreciate the birds, their singing until they are gone. How little do we often study and appreciate the beautiful flowers, around us. How often do we not appreciate all the good things that are given to us until they have been taken away from us. When illness strikes and those

¹⁸ Jennifer Kraai, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112099966/jennifer-kraai>.

¹⁹ Cynthia Rowenhorst, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112322218/cynthia-ann-rowenhorst>.

things that we have been taking so much for granted. How thankful we can be when we are well and healthy.²⁰

And now I'm going on another road to the east, the second road from the north side. I'm walking slowly because I'm taking in every little thing that I see. We have, as I am going east, I come across the marker of the Rowenhorst. Herman Rowenhorst, who was one of the first ones to be injured in World War I, later on he became the president of Northwestern State Bank.²¹ A number of years later his son became the president, Virgil, became the president of Northwestern State Bank.²² It is his son who also became the president of Northwestern College and he passed away four years ago. He was very young and it was really quite something. It was their daughter that was attending college and that was with the daughter of the Kraais who was hurt and killed in that accident, about 11 years ago. Time has a way of marching on and almost gets away from a person.

Then I am going south now on this little road. Um, the second road from the east and I'm traveling down here and I'm going to come across people with the name of Oggel. I well I remember that name because one of those was the publisher of a paper by the name of *DeVolksvried* and a Dutch paper.²³ And how well I remembered that the day I was to be married, I went to the barber. The barber's name was [unclear] and this man was in the barber chair and he was in a rush, and I can always hear the barber saying, "Hold your horses. The world will continue without you someday. They can do without you if necessary." And so he tried to put

²⁰ On July 14, 1934, four Orange City girls, along with their teacher, Margaret Blackburn, drowned in West Okoboji Lake. The four students, Wilhelmina Muilenburg, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/93916655/wilmyna-muilenburg>, Vera Muilenburg, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/93916672/vera-muilenburg>, Wilma Duimstra, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111569471/wilma-duimstra>, and Elise Herwynen, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111740348/elsie-a-herwynen>, are buried at West Lawn Cemetery.

²¹ Herman Rowenhorst, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9798708/herman-rowenhorst>.

²² H. Virgil Rowenhorst, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112322245/h-virgil-rowenhorst>.

²³ Dr. Henry Peter "Hendrick Petrus" Oggel, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112213392/henry-peter-oggel>.

this man at ease, because I guess he had to print a paper due to be printed that day, I do not know. All I do know was he was very restless in that chair.

And now I have come to the grave of Eerkes The inscription on there is also a very appropriate one: "I know that my redeemer lives". It was a well-known family, This John Eerkes has had a grocery store here in Orange City for many, many years.²⁴

Then I come to a marker. It marks the grave of Charlie Dyke.²⁵ How well I knew that family and I knew all of their children. He has a different kind of an inscription: "Prove all things, the truth shall make you free." He wanted everything that he believed to be certain, he wanted to prove it. And so he wrote also the story of Sioux County and it is a very good story. He got a lot of information and so he wrote that many years ago. Now they have made another printing of some more of those books. And so that is a name I should not soon forget. He used to be in the machinery business. He sold buggies and so forth and he also came here many, many years ago to Sioux County. [He] was one of the first settlers. He lived also through the days, which my grandfather did too, in the early 1870s, um, when they had that grasshopper plague. That was a very, very unusual thing. The crops were beautiful. The grain was ready to be harvested and suddenly on a day, I think it was a Sunday, there came a great noise in the sky. The sun was almost, sky was dark, and with all the millions upon millions of grasshoppers that came in just like that. And they just ate everything. Hundreds of grasshoppers would be on one stalk of corn and the grain was everything that they could find. The garden products, it was just literally millions, but almost billions of grasshoppers that covered the Midwest around here. And it was something that happened not just one year, because they had it for another year too, maybe the second year was not quite as bad. But this particular time they all came at one time and they

²⁴ John Roelof Eerkes, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90711279/john-roelof-eerkes>.

²⁵ Charles L. "Jelle" Dyke, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90650872/charles-l_-dyke.

all settled on all the green things and believe me it was quite a destruction of all of their crops. These [unclear], and the thing about it was, nowadays immediately if there's a destruction they want the government to help them. In those days, these forefathers, they helped themselves. They did not ask for help. They stayed here. They stuck it out so to speak. They did not leave and say we're going back to where they came from. And so, they decided to linger on here. And it all saw much better years financially. And they had just exactly what they wanted. They had land. They had freedom. The reasons these Dutch people had left the Netherlands because they did not have the freedom that they wanted, the freedom of religion, and so forth, and here they could have all of that. They could go where they wanted to. They could do all of those things.

I am now coming more to the south side of this cemetery. It's the newer part too slow more or less. I am getting near to those evergreens. I am again going west from here and I see the flagpole. Just beyond the flagpole are the markers of boys that passed away in the service. It is quite a role. I've known most of those boys and they gave their lives when they were so very, very young. Some only may be 19 to 20 years of age. It really is quite something and that these young people had to give their lives and sometimes we show so little appreciation for what they have done, for all the soldiers, Civil War veterans that are buried here, the War of 1898 with Cuba, the war with Germany in 1918,14, and so forth, and then the one of '42. We have a whole room of soldiers, former soldiers, that are buried here.

And then coming to the south side, I notice a lot of gravesites of course and I'm going to come across one large



marker that marks the gravesite of two veterinarians. They had married sisters, VanDe Waa and Fisher. This VanDe Waa, his father was the first band to drive those that mule team to Orange City. And he was, had a lot of brothers and sisters. But this VanDe Waa was a veterinarian for many years in Orange City; Fisher was also. And their gravesite is one head marker, and that is really quite a thing. And, uh, that's real neat I think, that these two brother-in-laws should have their gravesites together, as partners, as doctors, as veterinarians.

I see many, many markers here. I see one, a huge marker, of Van Wechel. He, I can see



him coming down the road yet, with a little [cart], horse-drawn old horse and he would pick up dead animals and he would see how much lard could get out and he was able to sell that. Later on he became a junk dealer. And he, I like the inscription in his marker, he that believes shall have eternal life. I like that

inscription real, real well. And it is he that is right underneath these big evergreen trees that we find over here.

We are going down the road to the west. There are more and more markers and more and more people that I have known. In fact, I would say there are more people buried on the cemetery that I have known in my lifetime than those that I know that are living. Because that is a period of many, many years that I have known all of these people, and how appreciative I must be that I have arrived at the age, of like in a few months, of 80 years. As I walk down to the cemetery road, the memories that go on as I walk on here, if I ever tell you about each and every one of them, if I could go on and on and on, but, that would not be of interest to you who are

listening, because naturally you do not know who these people were. I just have given you some of the highlights of these people that are buried here. Who walked the streets of Orange City? Who lived and laughed and had their joys, had their families, who had their problems, and they were big. They are different from the ones that we have nowadays. It's just like the illnesses. Years ago if a person had like the disease that my mother had it, it was a pernicious anemia, I think, I'm afraid, that it was leukemia. Knowing things of today, within three months she was gone from the time that she got it. There was nothing they could do for her. She was going to have a baby. And so in the month of April, they decided to save the mother and take the baby. The baby lived, two days later the mother died, never realizing she was given a little daughter. She already had three sons and she longed for daughter for all those years and now she had it and didn't know it. And so my father was left with a great problem, to raise four children. And I often wonder what life would have been like had I learned to know my mother. I cannot really recall her, my earliest memory is of that funeral. My earliest recollection of a little boy of three, I cannot recall what my mother looked like, but how often I have wondered. What would life had been like? What kind of person would have been? How all of you who are listening to me, how thankful you can be if you have had a father and a mother for a long time, [unclear] can be if you have had a father and a mother for a long time. It is the one of the greatest blessings that we can ever think of.

And so I'm just marching on here, walking to the right and to the left, I see several hundreds of trees, new trees that were planted only a few years ago, maybe four years ago. They are growing rapidly. Some of them have been damaged by storms that happens to many, many trees. As I said before on this tape, trees too are in the storms of life and they can stand erect because they have deep roots, and they will not blow down to easy. Oh yes, pieces may be

broken off, but they do most of the time they come back. And so some of the trees are blown down when they are new. We had a tree this summer with a terrible wind; it's only a few years old, but it went down! And so, then, you have some trees that are 70 and more years old and they have stayed up. How like life that is and how like life the tree is too. Branches can be ripped off, they cannot look perhaps like they have looked as neat, but they keep on a going. And so, in our lives too, things happen to us and we still have to keep on a going. Just [unclear] our faith in a God, who cares and loves us.

I have been talking now for nearly more than an hour and I feel that I have spoken just about enough about the cemetery. I've given you the things that have been passed on to me. I, as I said before, I could go on and on about the different individuals. I, down here we have people who are, were dentists, who were doctors, who were ministers, who were farmers or lawyers, who were judges, and many occupations. Mothers, housekeepers, teachers, you name it, they are all buried here. And I cannot help but think it doesn't make a bit of difference as to what we were, whether we were rich or whether we were poor. I'll never forget the book that I read about one of the presidents that was assassinated. He lived for a day or two afterwards. It was President, I think President McKinley, and the writer of the book was talking about President McKinley and the moment he died. It was not the president anymore, it was McKinley the man. And so, when we go over that road of no return, we are the same as anybody else, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, we are all the same. The great leveler gets a hold of us and plants us here.

Now, as we started out saying that here the cemetery grows in size, every time we have to buy more territory. In the Netherlands, that is not it. Ah, the place where my grandfather came from is not a large community but, the cemetery, right in the center of town. They don't have

enough room to have nice wide places for automobiles to go through, they just have bicycle paths or for a path about 3 feet wide, that's all! And there's, the hearse, never comes into the cemetery. At the gate of the cemetery there's a cart, and they put the casket on there and they wheel it in. There is no such a thing as a vault because that grave must deteriorate that is within it. So that in a matter of years, everything that was there can be removed. Those are the customs there. Down here we have to have vaults, huge vaults. Vaults that weigh many hundreds of pounds and you wonder often, what are we trying to prove?

And so the customs here and there are so different. Oh yes, we were in the Netherlands 17 years ago and I have been wondering if per chance I would even see some of the old customs. I did! As we were downtown in this particular town, I heard the clapping of a horse coming down the street. It was a one horse-drawn hearse. The only difference was the families came in automobiles. The undertaker was walking beside it dressed in a large black top hat, dressed completely in black, black gloves. The horse, as they were 76 years ago too, the horses were draped in black. And everything is black. And now we don't have that at all anymore. Times have changed so rapidly one can scarcely believe it. As the years come and gone, we see the rapid change from horse drawn vehicles to auto driven vehicles. And perhaps even some before that, as I said before, some of the people that came here with a funeral procession would come in wagons, because that's the only means the first years of Sioux County. There were no carriages at that time. In many instances, not everyone could afford one. And so they come here in different ways, and sometimes there would be a procession, goodness knows, how long. Sometimes there would be no procession at all. [Unclear.]

I am now once again cemetery gate, West Lawn Cemetery, which for the longest time was named the Orange City Cemetery. And I'm leaving here now. I'm going to my home which

is only one block north from this gate and one block east. I've been walking for quite a while which makes me ah, a wee bit tired. And so I think I better stop talking. I think I've given about all that I could make it worthwhile for you to listen too. And I hope that I have given you a little insight as to the wherefores and the whyfores of the cemetery.

Oh yes, I must come back to one item yet. In those days all the gravesites were dug by hand and many times in the wintertime that was a very, very difficult job, as one can imagine. At the southeast corner of our cemetery there was a set of buildings, and that is where the caretakers did live. And slowly but surely they came the gravediggers and those were much easier. They could go through the frozen ground without using sledgehammers and wedges in order to get the frozen ground loose. Now they simply push those machines into the ground and they get the job done very quickly compared to years ago. Then it would cost maybe around \$5 to dig a grave. There comes your big difference! Today that would cost you more than one hundred, and that is a marked difference is it not? In those day it would take nearly close to a half a day to dig the gravesite. Now they can do it in very little more than 20 to 30 minutes.

And so we see the changes in life. And I am slowly but surely walking toward my home and I'm going north. Now I shall turn right and go east. I'm going to stop now. I hope sincerely that you have enjoyed listening to what I have said. [Tape crackles.]

This is another morning. It is the morning of the 24th day of September of 1983. It is again a beautiful morning, crisp and clear, but not as cold as it has been the last three days. I am sitting now in my own home. It is more comfortable here. It is easier to just sit here and talk and then it is to be out walking and talking at the same time with rather a strong breeze blowing. It's sort of more or less took the breath out of me because I walked and walked for more than 45 minutes on the pathways of the cemetery, going here, there, and everywhere. And I found out

perhaps, having to talk about cemetery and knowing a wee bit about cemeteries, because I have inquired a great deal, and knowing about customs, especially so in the Netherlands, and realizing that very few people know, they know about cemeteries, but they don't really know what it means, like for a caretaker to take care of a cemetery. Can you imagine yourself taking a lawn mower and going round and round and round all these markers. Thousands of them. Just try it yourself. Just go round and round. Imagine that you're walking behind a lawn mower going around many, many trees, many, many markers monuments, and I tell you it really is quite a thing to be doing several times on cemetery in the course of one summer. It is not easy and it is not easy to mow the grass and the lawns. Therefore, that is the one reason why the, um, ruling has been made that there must be no planting on the gravesites, because of the fact that it requires such a tremendous lot of work on the part of the caretaker to do all of this work. And I think I explained as to the one reason too why trees are not permitted to be planted here, there, and everywhere, by the whims of those who would like to plant trees at the gravesite of their loved ones. Years ago there was a custom too of having a cement foundation around the plot of the, that, the old people owned. That was a great nuisance 'cuz it was higher than the rest of the ground and actually, it was like a curb. And to cut the grass around there, and then especially when the bigger machinery came. With a lawnmower is one thing, but just imagine trimming all of that cement, just as though you were trimming along your sidewalk. That was not an easy job either.

And then, of course, winter. What a job it is in winter. Very few people realize what a tremendous task. Even the winter of '82 and '83, with its tremendous amount of snow. What a time it was. There were times when they just could not open the roads and they had to find their way from a different direction to get to the places where they had to be. It is not fun and

sometimes the snow would be so deep. There was one time, only a few years ago, that they found the wrong spot to bury a body. And so later on it, because it was on somebody else's property, and so later on, a year or two later, they had to move that to the proper place only about 50 feet away. But that in itself is a tremendous job especially with these heavy vaults that the casket has been placed in. And so it is not the easiest of things to be a caretaker at the cemetery. We who are on the sidelines seem to often think that it is very easy. I personally have done a tremendous lot of volunteer work that was neglected to be done by the caretaker at the cemetery. That is why I learned in the past 17 years to be very familiar with everything that goes on down there. And so, once again, I repeat, it is of great interest and it is very good for people to learn to know that cemeteries just don't happen by themselves.

Now I'm just going to read to you this past spring. We received an obituary notice, a memorial notice, from the Netherlands of a young mother and wife who had passed away at the age of 42 years of cancer, leaving her husband as a survivor and two daughters. The one daughter, 22, and the one daughter, 14. This is in Dutch and I'm going to read some of it you in Dutch because, why do we do that? Because yesterday I went down that cemetery road and practically the whole north side is all that of people buried there who are of strictly Dutch descent. Orange City was strictly a little Holland many years ago. The Dutch language was spoken for more than 60 years in the churches and what-have-you. And so, ah, that is right when we got this obituary. It is quite a bit different than from when we go to our mortuaries and get our memorial cards in memory. Because it is, ah, great interest and I will read it to you as follows:

[Tape crackles.]

I will read it to you in Dutch:

[De Jong speaks in Dutch 1:17:43 – 1:21:15]

[Tape crackles.]

And now I will try and translate it into English. Of course, you cannot translate the Dutch into English word for word. It's impossible.

So, our tender, loving wife and mother, mama, Barbara Herbina Johanana Schraders. You will notice that this is her maiden name because her husband's name was Henri Blotenburg. In Holland, the maiden name is not lost. You do not lose your identity even on the monuments, the maiden name is there, making it ever so much easier if you want to find out when you walk down a cemetery road and you wonder as to the name of that man's wife, always the first name, very rarely that the last name that she had. And so it makes it much easier when you try to find your geneology, your ancestors, and so forth.

And so born at [unclear] the 28th day of August 1939. You will notice that in Holland the day and then the month and then the year, on letters too. Died at Ede, Holland, on the 8th day of May 1983. The survivors, Henry Blotenburg, Eva and [Plecine].

And then the 23rd Psalm which I need not read for you because you have known that personally I hope.

And then the address, 6713 JE, Ede, the 8th of May 1983 sent [unclear 1:23:13] date.

Ah, rather, no visitors at the home. And, the, [clears throat] one who passed away was taken to the [unclear] centrum, that's the name of the funeral home. And um, then the visiting there, were, um, sympathizing would be held on Wednesday at the 1900 to 2100 hundred hours. Notice the different way that they say their time. 1900 would be approximately 7 o'clock in the evening and ah, to 10 o'clock. On Friday, the 13th day of May at 1330, approximately 1:30 in the afternoon, the funeral services will be held at that particular church. And, ah, then at 14:30, ah,

the funeral service, ah, the committal services will be held at that particular gravesite. And after the committal services, there will be a opportunity to give your sympathy at the um, fellowship home, fellowship room, at the grave, cemetery. That's about the way it reads. But you will notice especially that the maiden name is not lost. And we too, when we get letters from Holland, they are always addressed with my wife's name included. And we also got a beautiful thank you card. And eh, it would be impossible for them to call on everybody and to personally thank everybody for, and this is the way it goes,

[In Dutch: 1:25:22 – 1:25:58]

And now I will try to tell you during the, um, powerful interest shown during the sickness of our one who has passed away, our wife and mama, Barbara Herbina Johanna Schrader, it is impossible for us to personally thank you all. Therefore do we wish by this manner to let you know we received a lot of support and comfort and found out by way of your [hearty?] and um, your tender participating. We wish to thank you for all of that with hearty thanks. Blotenburg, Eva, and [Plecine]. And so this was, um, the June of 1983. I thought it was real neat.

And then there is another thing in Holland, you are buried in caskets that are not made, metal. There are no vaults. There is no metal on the handles because of the fact unless you continue to rebuy the grave every twenty years you will not have that gravesite anymore, someone else will be buried there. There, that is the reason, the reason for that is the fact that there is not enough room in Holland for the cemeteries to get bigger. They just cannot do that. And so I thought I would read you this. And another thing, there is very little or no embalming in Holland. And so it is the custom there on about the fourth day always the funeral services are to be held. And that too was the custom down here in the very early years. Being no embalming, the neighbors would always come and stay all night long and sit up in the room where the

deceased was. And so they would come until, naturally, where the funeral had been held. That was a custom that has been very many years around that time. And I know they did it at my mother's death that they sat there, the neighbors came. And another thing, because carriages, buggies, and horses were used many years ago, ah, someone had to do the driving because when they would come to the church, someone had to take that team of horses, especially with that cold weather, they had to take them to the church barns. The churches were surrounded with barns for the horses at that time, so they, they could be placed in there during bad weather, yes, and other kind of weather too. Members of the church would rent those stalls for their horses. And that was really quite a thing. How that changed when the automobiles came and everything seemed to change at that time.

We are nearing the end of [tape cuts off.]