

What is the Holland Professional Club?

Paper by David Trudell, given during the January 8, 2004 meeting at Alpen Rose

This paper originated from my desire to learn more about the Holland Professional Club.

Having been welcomed into the club last winter and accepting the position of secretary during the September picnic, I felt compelled to do some research on the club's background, people, and organization.

The Holland Museum was the source. There are two large cardboard boxes containing minutes, papers, meeting notices, photographs, and financial records of the club going back to 1940. I spent some time looking through the index and deciding what to copy. What I found was extremely diverse and it covered over 60 years of club history.

Original members of the club met with the Muskegon Torch Club in the fall of 1939 looking for ideas to organize a social group in Holland. As I would expect the independent founder members were not interested in maintaining a connection with the Muskegon torch Club and met for the first time as the Holland Professional Club on February 7, 1940. During these many years, it is quite outstanding how our club has maintained its traditions of a September picnic to start out the year, thought provoking papers on interesting topics by the members, and a Ladies Night every spring since the early 1940's.

Those of you that have been members for a while will acknowledge the quality of the papers presented over the years. The conversations and comradeship that comes from the discussions and the flow of ideas and questions is the core of the club. Maintaining a small group with a maximum of 25 members was a decision that has proven itself over the years.

The fact that there are currently no women members does not mean there will not be women members in the future. Bylaws were amended back in 1988 allowing women members. It has not happened in 15 years; maybe what we have here really is a “Guy Thing.”

In reviewing the vast index of papers from various members that are stored at the museum, I selected the following to comment on.

The first is a paper on “The Development of an Influential Institution” by Bernard Arendshorst written for the May 1951 meeting. Mr. Arendshorst talked about humanity and its desire for material goods. He spoke of how it all began where people gathered and goods were exchanged, such as in the “Agora” of Greece and the “Forum” of Rome. How the “Fair” created opportunity for this exchange of goods between the west and the east enabled by the passage of people through the Middle East during the religious Crusades. The first department stores are considered to be the, Equitable Pioneers Society Ltd., in Rochdale, England and the, Bon Marche, in Paris, France started around 1850. R.H. Macy began in 1858 in New York City. Major department stores of 1951 were: The White House and the City of Paris in San Francisco, Bullocks in L.A., Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney of St. Louis, Jordan Marsh in Boston, Marshall Field in Chicago, in addition to Penney’s, Sears, and Montgomery Wards located throughout the US.

The advantage of these large stores was their ability to secure low prices on their bulk purchases of merchandise. In doing this, the small independents down the street found it hard to compete. This sounds familiar today with Wal-Mart’s being built all over the country and eliminating the competition. The trend today is the mall with the myriad of specialty stores in between the huge anchor store chains. The largest mall in the US is the “Mall of America”

outside the city of Minneapolis, MN. This mall has the “Fair-like” space of “Snoopy Land” under a roof of glass skylights surrounded by various levels of mega-stores, specialty shops, movie theaters, and restaurants. The stores are more specialized these days, with the likes of Toys R Us, Best Buy, and Home Depot.

Another paper, also written by Bernard Arendshorst and presented during the meeting of October 1969. It was about the Euro Dollar and had little to do with the European Union. At that time it didn't exist. It was simply the act of transferring a dollar balance from a bank located in the US to a London branch of that same bank. That simple act created euro-dollars. This was done by Americans due to varying interest rates and the vast trade imbalance with Europe.

Now Europe is united and has a common currency called the Euro. The Euro is currently more valuable than the dollar. Some say lowering European interest rates would balance the currency values. Pasaal Larry, European Union Trade Commissioner, says that Asian currencies are partially behind this instability. Mr. Larry said, “Many Asian currencies remain pegged to the dollar, and as long as the Chinese Yuan, for example, tracks the falling dollar, it will give China an extra measure of competitiveness . . . and that needs to be dealt with in the future.” The China Business Post reported recently that China is quietly moving ahead with a plan to peg the Yuan against 10 other currencies, in addition to the US dollar.

It was interesting reading both of these well-written papers by Bernard Arendshorst. They were written 18 years apart and it appears that both were written on the same typewriter. Even the styles he used for the documents notation were the same. It appears that Mr. Arendshorst had a favorite style and he stayed with it.

In October of 1993, Michael Cole, wrote a paper titled, "North American Free Trade Agreement and Human Rights". It is better known as NAFTA. It discussed the trade agreement between the US, Mexico and Canada. NAFTA became law in January of 1994. Mr. Cole was for this law. He cited a letter sent to President Clinton and endorsed by 300 economists, per The New York Times that, "the effect on the US economy, both good and bad, would be small for many years."

Ross Perot claimed 5.9 million US jobs were at risk. He described it as "the great sucking sound" created by the mass exodus of industrial jobs. Mexico had several issues in regards to it, such as the potential cost of it's national identity. Mexico also had expectations that NAFTA would help jump start its economy and about how NAFTA would work. Possibly even more important, but less publicized, was Mexico's human rights violations and how preparation for NAFTA membership made that public. The preparation for NAFTA did improve the political climate in Mexico.

How successful is NAFTA after 11 years? In a report from a Seattle paper, an article indicates "an imbalance that skyrocketed during NAFTA's first decade, from a \$9 billion deficit in 1993 to \$87 billion in 2002. In Washington State alone, 13,000 jobs have vanished, primarily in lumber and electronics. On the flip side, a typical family of four is paying \$1,000 to \$1,400 a year less for products due to NAFTA, according to Bill Cents, president of the Washington Council on International Trade in Seattle. In regards to lost jobs, there are federally funded retraining programs available. Trade relations with Canada have run more smoothly, except those involving the lumber industry. Lumber was not part of the NAFTA package. Canada's lumber industry is subsidized by the government, leaving US producers at a disadvantage. NAFTA

has its pros and cons and supporters of the program say it is still in development and it has promise. It is not a black and white issue.

Finally, a paper by Marian Lindeman entitled, "What's Happening to Holland" written for the October 1965 meeting. Mr. Lindeman wrote about how Holland looked as he watched from the window of the Holland Hotel in 1920, shortly after he arrived and all the changes that have taken place over the past 45 years. Holland had gotten bigger and more spread out. He reminisced about the sound of the Inter Urban train breaking the silence on a quiet weekday evening as it rumbled into town. He commented on the unfortunate changes to the downtown brought about by urban renewal in the 60's. Mr. Lindeman reflected on the strict religious heritage of the Dutch founding fathers like John Calvin that "has kept our climate a bit stuffy." Even though residents have organized events like, Tulip Time and created places like, Windmill Island. He spoke of tradition and heritage. Saying tradition is subject to change and heritage is not. Tradition is simply a device to resist change with connotations of sacredness. In reality, traditions do change as the people and times change. Heritage is static and based on an inheritance of origin. Here in Holland, that origin is Dutch, whether your personal heritage is or isn't Dutch.

In conclusion, I have learned much about what is the Holland Professional Club, what makes Holland the city we see today, and the heritage of the people that live and work here. I look forward to the future papers of other members and the interesting discussions that often occur afterwards. I have become personally aware of the privilege it is to be part of this club as it has existed throughout all the changes of the past 60 plus years. Thank you for the opportunity.