

30 May 1986

Willard Wichers

OTHER NAMES

1. Clarence Becker

his father originally represented HFC in GR. He also later one of the organizers of Home Furnace Co. Knows a lot about the early days of HFC.

2. Jay Wabeke

"Leading Democrat"

3. Nelson Bosman

knew PT Cheff well

WILLARD WICHERS'S BACKGROUND

Zeeland native. Father died when he was 4 years old. He spent a lot of time in GR as a child. His minister was Rev. Paul P. Cheff before Cheff came to Hope Church. He knew Rev Cheff and son Ted.

ON HFC

The company was well established and prosperous under Kolla and the Landwehrs. "They were on all ^{the} committees and boards and were very generous."

They built the Warm Tired Tavern and the Masonic Temple (Centennial Apts.) They also had offices in major cities throughout the country and were selling a very fine product.

Then... came the Depression, World War II and rationing. During these years, outlets were occasionally selling new furnaces and repairing parts. And then someone perfected the vacuum cleaning of furnace (coal-burning). It was a good service.

"But that's when you got some of these characters -- actually hoods, today's Mafia. These were the guys who would break grates and suck. Nasty stuff."

Slowly, the Better Business Bureau in larger cities began investigating -- and it ended with PT Cheff serving time in prison.

ON PTCHEFF

Was flamboyant. He was boss and executives weren't to dispute his authority.

"I can't believe that people like Mr. Tabaney certainly must have

been aware of some of these shenanigans."

"How could this happen to such a successful company? It has to do with leadership." PT's leadership was faulty.

After WW II, a lot of "revolving door stuff" -- firings.

"I think a bit of that (firings) was prompted by feelings of desquation. I think some of these birds out in the field were having a great deal of influence on him (Cheff)."

PT Cheff loved to debate any subject (a favorite was local and national politics). He liked to argue with Willard Wickler about how dull Dutch menus were.

ON HFC

"They were a very fine work force. (When the company failed) they had little difficulty finding other employment."

(Henry Boersma - a super man. Very fine)

HFC would pay for the whole Tulip Time program

Really a civic-minded company. "That was their tradition."

"That's how Holland, MI was put on the map."

After WW II, HFC sponsored nationwide radio broadcast of Tulip Time.