

Good morning. My name is Bernard Weinstein. I'm the director of the King College Holocaust Oral Testimonies Project. We are affiliated with the Video Archive for Holocaust testimonies at the Sterling Library of Yale University. Sharing the interview with me this morning is Selma Dubnyk, a member of the Holocaust Testimonies Project here at King.

We are privileged to welcome Robert Mansfeld. A survivor presently living in Mountainside, New Jersey, who has generously volunteered to give testimony about his experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. Welcome, Mr. Mansfeld. I'd like to begin by asking you to tell us a little bit about your life before the war, and your family, and your community.

I was born on February the 13th in '27 in a house in Amsterdam. And after about three years, my father moved to Berlin to go into business with some friends of his. So we moved to Berlin.

What kind of business was he in?

He was in the high fashion ladies garment business-- manufacturing high fashion garments. And we moved to Berlin at the age of three. I don't remember, but it was certainly my first airplane flight from Amsterdam to Berlin.

And we were in Berlin from 1930 till 1935. I was witness to the takeover by Hitler. As a matter of fact, we were living in the same apartment house where Goering was living. He was an upstairs neighbor of ours.

Did you ever encounter him or see him?

No, I did not see him. I remember that one day, all of a sudden, we had police troops guarding all the entrances to the apartment basement, which led to the gardens, as well as the front. And it was very difficult to get in, because I was always let in. I was living there. That is really all I remember.

I have seen him going into his car to be picked up by the SS with his big limousine. And I was going to school at that time. I was in the first and second grade in Germany. In 1935, my father decided since we were Dutch citizens that it was about time that we returned to Holland because the situation really didn't get that good.

So he sent my mother, my sister, who was born in Berlin in 1930-- so my mother and I, and my sister, we returned to Amsterdam. And my father stayed behind to liquidate or sell whatever had to be done with the business.

As a Jew living in Berlin, even though you were a citizen of the Netherlands, were you not affected at all by being Jewish?

I was not affected. As far as I can remember, I was not affected.

Did you witness anything?

There was maybe some slurs were made in school. But generally speaking, I cannot recall any incidents that would really have provoked me.

Were you aware of what was going on?

I was aware of it. I had Jewish friends and I had Christian friends. And of course, from hearing from them and what's going on, of course you hear, even though you're a little boy. My mother's parents lived there, and of course, the aunts and uncles on my mother's side were all in Berlin-- and her brother and sisters-- no, one sister. The other sister was already married, and she left for England.

But in any case, in 1935, we returned to Amsterdam. And my father followed in 1936. And so anyway, what happened is that we changed our apartments because that apartment wasn't suitable, so we went into the apartment which we

would be occupying until the beginning of the war-- or actually till the time that we were leaving, which I will come back to in a minute.

In the meantime, what had happened is that my father and mother got divorced. And so that was kind of a real shocker, to me anyway-- the children are probably the ones who suffered the most. But we stayed with my father. And I saw my mother on a somewhat regular basis.

Then I was going through elementary school. I was going to high school. And then, of course, the German occupation came in May of 1940. And of course, for a while, nothing happened. But then all of a sudden, of course, the Nuremberg decrees were also posted in Amsterdam. I remember vividly that that day, all of Amsterdam came to an absolute standstill.

The Dutch population did not endorse what was going on. Street cars were left in the middle of the street, and the conductors just walked out. And everybody was on a general strike.

Was this a sudden imposition of the Nuremberg laws? Or were they--

You heard rumors that they were coming, but that was the day that they posted them and that we couldn't go certain things, at certain hours, and the whole thing, which was goes with it. So Amsterdam population got to in a general strike. Everything was at a standstill. And that lasted maybe for a couple of days, but you can never hold out completely, of course. They have to make a living too.

So there was a real resistance.

But there was a real resistance to the German imposition. And in general, the population of, at least, Holland, as far as I know, it was very anti-German. So that was instituted. And from the school that I was going to, I was put into a school where only Jewish children were-- Jewish high school-- to further the education. Of course, every day, some of the children were missing in the class.

And the reason for that being that they were picked up and were sent to Westerbork, which was the camp where all the Dutch Jews went first. They went to Westerbork, and from there, they were shipped to wherever.

Did you know when you went to school that morning if there was a fellow student not present?

I wouldn't know till I was in the class.

But when you got in there, did you know why that student wasn't there?

Oh yeah, we knew that people were being picked up. And at least we knew that that was the case. And of course, it became progressively worse. And my father, who was a very influential man, who was a self-made man, and also very influential before the war-- when he came back from Germany in 1936, he started to study economics.

He did not have a degree of any university but was a self-made man-- very smart. And he started to study, and the government asked him to take over one of the departments in the government-- I think it had to do with the interior. And he refused. Only they asked him, so he said he will work for \$1 a year plus the expenses for travel.

So that is what he was doing. And then came the war. And of course, he was picked up in I think it was in late-1940. He was picked up with a whole slew of other prominent Dutchmen. And they were all put in prison.

In Westerbork?

No, in Srebrenica, which was dubbed then the Orange House, because people were close supporters of the Queen and, of course, who were prominent Dutch citizens. And these were, of course, really hostages to get the top of the cream of the crop out of circulation so that the population wouldn't go into unrest.

So when your father was arrested, he was arrested as a prominent citizen rather than as a Jew?

That's right. As a matter of fact, this is what I was coming to. We were having dinner, and at that time, we still had two non-Jewish maids who were sleeping in-- very nice people. And they had a choice to leave if they wanted to, but they didn't want to leave. And they came into the dining room and they said that there were two German officers.

Well, the two German officers came, and they went to my father's study, and I hear a lot of shouting-- on my father's side too. And they finally took him away. And they took with them all food supplies that we had, which we had bought on recommendation of the Dutch government to hoard for oil, and canned goods, things that can stay.

But they even took everything which was in the refrigerator, including the butter-- nothing was left. It was just a cleaned up house. And we had to pack it in suitcases, and they took that with them.

So you and your sister were left alone in the house?

Well, not alone. We had a housekeeper at that time who stayed with us.

Without any provisions?

No provisions. And of course, neighbors helped, also friends of ours helped. My father had a lot of friends, and one of them was a German woman who was married to a Jewish man. And she was as anti-Hitler as you ever could get. Of course, it was a very good source, and she had a German passport, she knew a lot of things, and she could get through with a lot of things which a normal citizen could not. So there were some advantages to her-- a lovely woman.

So we were left without food. And of course, people helped. And next day, we could, of course, buy again. And so that was the situation. So he was in that prison, and he was arrested by-- and I don't know if he was a colonel-- I think he was a colonel of the SS who was the head of the Gestapo in Amsterdam at least, if it was not for all of Holland. And his name was [? Oscar ?] [? Funchtner. ?] And I mention that name, because I will come back to him later.

Yes.

So [? Oscar ?] [? Funchtner ?] and another officer then arrested my father. And of course, we wrote letters to the jail. And the housekeeper that we had, she, I think, could see him once in a while. So all of a sudden-- and he was in there probably six months or so, and of course, they were accusing him of helping Jews in Germany to leave, which he did. My father was well off, and he had a lot of friends in Berlin. And whenever he could help to help people to leave Germany, he did.

Did your mother's relatives get out?

My mother's relatives got out too. My grandmother, and grandfather, and her brother, and her sister both came to Holland. But there were others who, that is where the accusation came from, who went to Brazil and to other places. And I guess that was the accusation-- that they took money out or whatever. I really don't know exactly. I was never told exactly what the reason was.

But in any case, he denied it. He says, I don't know anything about that. So he was released after six months. And would you believe that we got the suitcases back? Of course, the butter was rancid and whatever.

It was still--

Was still packed in the suitcases. So we got all the provisions back.

They took it, in other words, just for the sake of taking it, not for their own use or even for--

That's what I gathered. And of course, that would probably not have been the case if it wasn't for [? Oscar ?] [? Funchtner, ?] who was the head of the Gestapo. I don't know why he raided there, but evidently, he did raid there. So that is then.

And then, of course, he had a lot of friends also in the confection industry, as we call it in Holland, which is the manufacturer of high fashion clothing. And then it became that we had to wear the star.

Yeah, can I ask you one question, though, Mr Mansfeld-- in the period that your father was incarcerated, how did you and your sister get along as far as provisions were concerned, as far as maintaining yourself? I know your house keeper-

The only thing that we could do is go to school, do our best, because that would have pleased our father.

How did you feel emotionally?

Well, I never buried that in my mind. We were just hoping every day that he would come back. And there wasn't any indication that he wouldn't come back. But when is a different story. And of course, in that particular time span in 1940, the star wasn't worn yet, the edicts weren't out yet.

There was no overt action.

What?

There was no overt action.

No, that was strictly, of course, as I said, the hostages of prominent Dutchmen who were arrested to get the cream of the crop out into the prison so that the population wouldn't go into uprising. So then when he came back, and, of course, life resumed with him. And through his friends, finally, of course, the stars we have to put on our clothes, which we wore.

And then, of course, that is when the real edicts came that all the Jews from outlying areas all had to get into Amsterdam. And so my aunt and uncle with their nine children and had to come from Arnhem where he was born-- they were living there, close to where my father was born and where my grandparents lived and had a store. They had to come to Amsterdam. And I remembered, of course, that during that time, I had my bar mitzvah.

Yes.

And they were all present, and we had-- not like they have over here, big shindigs-- but we had a nice luncheon or dinner afterwards at our house, which could seat quite a few people. And we had friends with them who came from Germany, which were friends of my father's. And I was friends with their son. And so it was a family affair, so to speak. And fortunately, I still have pictures of that.

So now it became more difficult. And in order to travel, and if you want to travel, you had to have a job which gave you the right to travel. So my father arranged that I was going to work for a furrier who was connected with one of his good friends. And this firm who made high fashion clothes also made furs, and then, of course, furs also for the German soldiers-- the rabbit jackets, you know? So I learned the fur trade.

Just a few minutes ago, you said that all the Jews in the outlying districts had to come to Amsterdam. Where did they stay when they were forced?

Well, there were apartments to be gotten.

There was no ghetto situation?

There was not so much a ghetto situation. I mean, people weren't forced to live in one particular area, at least not that

I'm aware of, because we never moved . But they were guarding them, after they probably had already arrested some who had already shipped people to Westerbork. But some people were then asked to come to Amsterdam, which some did and some didn't. And some went into hiding right then and there.

And as efficient as, of course, in general in Europe they are with identification is concerned, every time that you move, you have to go to city hall and you have to write in your address where you are. And that was a normal thing. So they had very good files, which later, of course, by the underground were either destroyed, or they were falsified, or whatever.

In any case, that is the time that I started working. I did not go to school anymore. And I worked for this furrier. And I remember one day, my father's friend came and he says, come on, Bob, let's go. I think there's going to be a razia. Razia is the word of closing off an area and then picking up all the people up.

And so she took me out with her German passport. And I just put something over my star of David, and away we went. Well, one day, that didn't happen. They did have a razia and I was picked up while I was working. And we were taken to Gestapo headquarters, which was right next to or close to the school where I was going-- an elementary school. It was a Christian high school that they had taken over which had nice walls and all this.

And that is where we were brought. And there were hundreds and hundreds of people who were brought into this particular area. And so we had to line up in rows and had to stand there. And I probably stood there for about eight or nine hours in one spot. In front of me was a middle aged woman, and I was a young fella-- so it wasn't as hard for me as it was for some of the other people.

But this woman in front of me, she moved a little bit. And an SS guy came along and he said, didn't I tell you not to move? And he put his heel right on her foot, and she fainted. So I held her up, because that was terrible. But anyway.

Were you standing in very, very--

We were standing in rows like this, very close. And that was it. And you had to wait. And you didn't know what is going to happen. So then it got late afternoon, all of a sudden, they said, everybody in the hall-- into the gym.

So there we were crammed into this gym. And there we stood again. So all of a sudden on the stage came a guy drunk like a hoot owl, and he started to read off names. And those names who were read out had to go to the right.

So my name was read out. What you didn't know when they were calling off the names, is that the ones who are exempt or the ones who are going? So I was lucky. This time, it was the ones who would go free. That is when I met my uncle who was evidently some kind of liaison. And I went back home at night, which normally, we wouldn't be on the street. We weren't allowed to be on the street at that hour.

What was your uncle liaison to?

Well, they had the Jewish committee who was trying to help and accommodate people when they come out. They go and they'd call a taxi or whatever it is. Everybody was out for their night. It's as simple as that.

Sometimes you cannot realize, but you do a lot of things for your own freedom or for your own life. And granted that my story is probably not one of the horror stories, but still everybody is fighting for himself. And probably, that was one of the reasons that he was doing it, because that gave him a little lease on life, because he had a certain piece of paper that he could be on the street and so on and so forth.

So it's something which one has to realize that one's life at a certain stage, you do anything you can do to save it.

Of course.

Well, he wasn't safe, by the way-- neither was my grandparents. So that hasn't helped either. Well, I came back home,

and I went back to work. And maybe a couple of months later, I can't really recall how much time was in between that particular episode and the time that my father-- let me say something else. We always had a suitcase ready. A suitcase was packed just in case.

With provisions?

No, clothes.

Because there was an underground. And my father had a lot of connections. As a matter of fact, later on, I found out that some of his friends were leaders in the underground. But I didn't know that at that time. But in any case, one night, my father got a phone call from the German woman. The Gestapo was just at her house. And she found out that we were the next on the list.

So she called my father and said, you better get out. Well, as it happened, as the Gestapo came downstairs and rang the bell for the janitor or the custodian to open up-- who had an apartment-- we took the elevator up to the top floor. There was a single room which was not occupied, which the janitor knew about, and I'm sure my father made provisions for him.

But in any case, we were upstairs while they were in the apartment. And unfortunately, even though our housekeeper did have a special dispensation thing, they arrested her because they didn't find her. She never came back. And so we were in that one night. That was a horrible night that we were trying to sleep.

And the next morning, I remember that we had a plumber who did our plumbing at home if we had a stuffed drain or faucet had to be changed. And I was going with the plumber. I didn't know he was in the underground. How would I know? But that is where I went.

My sister was picked up by somebody else, and she was taken somewhere else. And my father also disappeared. So we were now separated. I didn't know where my father was. And I stayed with this family who became my stepfather, so to speak, in my family, because they were lovely, lovely people.

And I stayed with them for a couple of months. And then one day, I was taken and took them on a train ride. And I was taken to a farming family, or to a family who lived on a small farm.

By the people you were staying with?

From the people I was staying with. But they knew where I was going.

How old were you then?

I was 14, 15. And so by train ride, I was taken to somebody's home in Friesland, as it turned out, and stayed for one night with the sister of the family where I would stay with. And then the next day, I was going to that family. And I stayed with them for the rest of the war-- the occupation.

The family-- the father, the mother-- he was working in the co-op factory as a milk separator. He was doing the separation of the creme from the milk. And so he had a job. And that's what he was doing. And he had a little farm, so we had a potato plot and we had a large garden.

Were there other children in the family?

There were three children-- three boys. The oldest was about a year older than I was. The next one was about a year younger than I was. And there was a smaller boy. And they really put their lives on the line, because they were hiding a Jew.

Now, I got identification papers which were genuine papers, but was false name. And I was the cousin from Amsterdam

who came because of the food situation and the situation. So I stayed on the farm with them. And I went to church with them. I couldn't change my religion, so I had to be their religion.

So I went to church with them. And they were a very religious family. That is to say that they were Dutch Reform. And so every Sunday, we went to church. And we prayed every day. And we read the Bible, so I know the New Testament quite well.

And so I was tending to the vegetable garden, weeding and whatever, helping around the house, learning how to milk cows, milk goats, milk sheep if we had to, and really did not really suffer except for complete separation, and don't know what the situation is. I did get letters through the underground. I did get letters from my father.

So you knew where he was?

I did not know where he was.

But you knew he was alive.

I knew he was alive. That's all I knew.

And your sister?

And my sister, I did not hear from until one day they told me to come to Drachten, which is the biggest town there nearby, where, by the way, the barber's daughter gave me lessons. He also was in the underground. Of course, you don't know this until later on.

So she gave me lessons so that I could keep up, at least with some of the studying. And she was a teacher. And one day I was going to Drachten to a certain address. And there was my sister. There was also the underground. And so of course, it was nice to see her.

It was purely coincidental.

Well, it wasn't coincidental. My sister, as it turned out, after we separated, she was taken to a children's home.

Like an orphanage?

Yes, or whatever you want to call it-- a children's home. And they got wind of it that somebody had portrayed the children's home, that there were Jewish children there. And they got wind of it. And before they could make any arrests, they took her out. And she traveled to Friesland through Drachten.

And that is the night that I saw her. And then from there on, she went I really didn't know. But it was nice to see her, of course. And so, of course, we were through the radio, the clandestine radio that we had in the factory that people had, they were listening to the news-- how things were on the front.

And of course, the situation became worse as the Allied were approaching Holland. And then, of course, they had the airdrop in Nijmegen and Arnhem, which was, of course, unfortunately, a fiasco, where the Allies didn't believe that there was a German Armored Division on the way back to Germany, and then turned around, and they got clobbered. The underground had told them that.

And so there it was then-- the winter, they were sitting there between the Rhine and the [? Dumas ?] dug in. And everything was at a standstill. Well, the situation got really bad then, especially in the cities, because there was no food. The Dutch Nazi sympathizers all had fled to Germany.

And the Germans, of course, took everything that they saw in sight. So the situation really got very critical in the big cities. I must say on the farm, I never had this, really, problem. We always had food. It was probably not plentiful, but

monotonous. But there was food. I never was hungry.

Did you ever worry that the Germans might come to where you were?

Yes. Let me relate an incident to you. One day, we were off the Main Street between Heerenveen, which is a big town, and Groningen. And that's the major highway. And that little farm was off the road just after the bridge. There was a little bridge because, as you know, Holland has a lot of canals that is for irrigation purposes and water control purposes.

And so that bridge was a target for the Allies. And everything, especially in the latter part after the air drop, because the Allied had air superiority. And anything that was moving, they were shooting at. They came down with the Spitfires and then started to hit. Well, one day, we saw these Germans coming down the path on their bikes.

And my mother, so-called mother, and I were the only ones who were there. The children were in school and the father was working. My father was working. And so what now? So I thought to myself, well, you just do if you're dumb. And you say, you don't understand a word of German-- which, of course, wasn't true. I understood every word he said. But I didn't--

You had lived in Germany.

I didn't let on.

So they wanted to confiscate bicycles. Well, all the good bicycles were all hidden.

Yes.

And we were riding around on old crates with solid rubber, and it's really hard on you know what when you ride around. But that's the only thing. So all the good bicycles were hidden, and they came to confiscate, they wanted to see the bicycles. I said, OK.

So I led them around in the barn, showed him them, said, kaput, that's the only word I said. So they left. It was nothing. So one thing I know and I had learned is that Germans like to intimidate people. But they are very easily intimidated themselves if you play the game right.

So I just didn't [INAUDIBLE] I just led them around, and they went. That's what I said. So that was already the time that it really started to get bad. Well, one day, I'll never forget it, I was working in the field and all of a sudden, I see all these Germans. What's going on?

They come with four or five people. This is the army. And I couldn't believe it. One had a German jacket on and civilian pants. The other one had German army pants on with a civilian jacket. It was a ragtime army-- unbelievable. Well, they were on retreat. But they didn't say it.

Were they traveling on foot or did they have--

Well, no, they were by foot, and they were--

Motorized?

Well, they came by foot. So they needed shelter. So the only thing we had is the little barn we had. We don't have any hay-- well, we had a little bit of hay but not really very much, because we didn't have any animals. All we had is goats.

And so they came. And there was an SS non-com who was the head of the group. So now it came time for lunch or for dinner, they didn't know. They didn't even have any idea where the kitchen was, which was seven kilometers away from them.



So they left to get the food, which was good. And then they came back. So they stayed there for one day, and then they left and went on their way back. But that was really a ragtimer. And I walked around and he was talking. I was just listening, biting my tongue.

It just came to me-- I wanted to go back a little bit because, of course, rumors went around real fast-- or if something extraordinary, even in the farm communities where the houses weren't very close, but they were close enough that there was contact. And so the rumor was that they would come to the farms to pick up, because they knew that people were hiding.

Well, we had built, first outside, first of all, the fuel that we used to cook with was wood. And so we had twigs to start a fire and wood. So when they buy this, they buy this bundled. And then you stack them up.

What we had done is we had bought a whole slew of those things, my hiding father, and he stacked them up, but we put a bed inside. So every night, I would sleep outside, go in there, especially at the time that there was a lot of activity going on, that people were farms being searched. I would sleep in there. And then in the morning, they would rearrange the things, and then I came out in the morning.

Well, that was all right for the summer and the fall, but then it got so cold that we brought everything inside and put it in the barn with the goats that we had. And so I was accompanied by the goats, and the mice, and everything else. But it's better to be alive and do that than the other way around. So that's something. Well, that's all part of life, I guess. As I say, you do a lot of things to keep your--

Where you were living, did you encounter other young Jewish children?

No, but I encountered other non-Jewish boys who were hidden because they didn't want to go to a work camp. Oh, yes, there was a farm not too far from us where there was somebody. And so I knew him. And of course, I helped on the farm too.

That's why I say I learned how to milk cows. And it was a very healthy life, so to speak.

Did anyone ever suspect anything?

No. Fortunately, people go by stereotypes, as you very well know. And of course, the Jewish stereotype was always, we're always pictured with a big hook nose, and dark hair, and dark eyes, which I don't have. So for me, it was relatively easy to go for--

You could have passed, so to speak.

I would have passed without any problem.

Yeah.

Except for the circumcision, that didn't show. So the thing is that where that is concerned, that was one of the things which probably helped. So that is why I could move around a little more easy, because they wouldn't suspect that I was.

I also learned this Friesian language, which is different. And so I have conversed in Friesian. I understood it. So I was integrated into the community, so to speak. Did the older son where you were living attend school? The oldest son attended school.

But you didn't?

I did not. I did not, but then there came a time that he also didn't attend school because they've started to arrest people to work as laborers in Germany. So the younger one, he went to school. And I know you're probably thinking, it wasn't that suspicious that I was on the farm or not.

Well, the people around didn't really know for sure. They could surmise that I might be, but they never knew for sure. But they didn't say anything, because some of them had their own problems. They had their own sons, they had also people in hiding over there. So where that was concerned, it was really not another real big problem.

Probably the biggest problem I needed once was a doctor, where we had to be a little bit careful. And I had developed, but probably later turned out to be a vitamin deficiency. And I got holes in my leg. They became sore, and then you put things on it, and it didn't heal. But it got worse, and I got big holes in it. So I had to go.

And I got a prescription. It wasn't the greatest, because it burned like hell, but I had to go through with it. But that is the only time that really I was in the hands of a doctor that you had to be a little bit careful. I did go to the dentist once too, but that was about it.

Yeah.

Now, I remember very well the day of the liberation. Of course, I had made a chart in which from the radio, I charted with flags where the Russians were, where the Allies were, what was going on so we had some idea. But--

You had radio and newspapers.

No, we had no newspaper. We had no radio, but the radio was in the factory, or near the factory, or one of the workers there. And he, of course, told it to my father, and he came home with that, and that's the way it goes.

Now, I never forget the day of the liberation, because, as I told you that especially towards the end of the war, anything that was moving on those highways, spitfires, you could always hear them. And then I would hear, for instance, the big bombing attacks in Hamburg and Berlin. They all came over Friesland and all over. And I could see them by the hundreds, these airplanes.

How far was this town from the German border?

I would estimate maybe 50 miles. There's another province in between, and then you have the German border.

So it was pretty close?

Well, that's all relative. If you do it on a bike, it's not that close. If you had to walk, it maybe was--

But for the planes--

Oh, yeah, well they came over from Britain, and they flew over Friesland in that direction. And we always knew something was coming. First of all, we heard a terrible hum-- a terrible, tremendous rum. And we saw the Spitfires which left their white trails. So we knew something was coming.

Yes.

And then sure enough, that hum became a big roar when they came over.

What about the other way? German planes--

No, there was no more German planes in the air by that time.

What about before then?

No, the only thing that we experienced, and that was kind of an experience, was that one of those V2 rockets came the wrong way and came our way. And, boy, I tell you, that was some experience. And we were all hitting the ground

because we didn't know what to think-- terrible noise. I can't imagine how these people in London must have felt.

And it had made a tremendous crater. And fortunately, it hit in a farm field. I wasn't there, but I heard it made a crater over 180 meters diameter. So it's a tremendous crater.

It's a good thing it didn't fall on a house.

But we saw them being shot, and we saw them when they didn't go right, because you see that trail and then falling back. Because that wasn't too far from us that they were shooting them. They were in the north between Bremen and the Dutch border that they were shooting it from. I don't even know if they shot them from Holland. I don't know.

When you saw the spitfires, was there a sense of jubilation?

Oh yeah. But it's very scary. If they're going to fly over, you don't know if they're going to shoot you or not. So I hit the ditch.

No matter what, no matter which way they went.

Forget it, you know? Because they came over, and they hit a German Volkswagen. And fortunately, they didn't hit the back, because there was dynamite in there. And that was right on the bridge. They stopped right smack on the bridge.

And right next to the bridge is a bridge house. It was from the olden days that they were collecting. And there was somebody living in there-- old house, an elderly family. So it would have been terrible devastation.

Did you really know that it was over when it was over?

No, I wasn't sure, because the day that we were liberated, it was very strange. We know that they were close, but we didn't know where. I know that they were moving up. And one day in the morning, I see this tank coming along and there's this turret like this.

So I hit the ditch, and the hell with this, you know? And that was the Canadians. There was the Polish armored corps which was attached to the first Canadian army. And then, of course, the rumor went around that we were liberated. And of course, we all went into town, and we all wanted to have a cigarette, and the whole thing, and traded extra cigarettes, and did all kinds of crazy things.

How soon after liberation were you reunited with your father?

Well, my father stayed in Holland, in Amsterdam. He stayed in Amsterdam. He was in hiding with a family and was inside for 796 days or something like that-- never saw the outside. And so they were not liberated as early as we were, because the northern part of Holland was liberated before the western part of Holland was liberated.

So we were hoping to hear something. Well, finally, they were liberated. And one day, my father, who by that time was already in his 60s, he and the family, which I said was my father and mother where I went in hiding the first time-- they came and visited me occasionally. The parents came to visit me occasionally.

And they took a ride-- my father hadn't been on a bike for I don't know how long. And I don't know how good of physical condition, but they took a boat. They got on a freighter who went over the Zuiderzee from Amsterdam to Friesland and biked from there all the way to where I was--

Yes.

Which is a good, good ride-- for a man who is not used to it is unbelievable. But he wanted to see his children. And of course, then the arrangements were made when I was going to go home. And of course, it was a very happy reunion.

[INAUDIBLE]. I'm sorry, go ahead.

And where my sister is concerned-- he went to my sister also, but I had visited my sister before my father did, because then I found out where my sister was. So I took the bike and took a trip to the farm she was. She must have been about 20 or 30 kilometers north of where I was. I met her family there.

And so then I made a couple of trips, because that wasn't immediately that we were going home, because my father had to make arrangements, and all that, and get an apartment, and all that. So finally, we came home. We took the train home. That was a very emotional experience.

How did your father look to you when you saw him?

My father looked very well. And so then my mother came back from Switzerland. And we were hoping that they would reunite after so many years, even after everybody went through all this, but that wasn't to be. And so then, I, of course, found out that my grandparents had gone, all of my aunts and uncles were gone.

I had one nephew who was writing a book. He was an economist and he was writing his book for his doctorate, and he was in hiding, and he was betrayed. And so they didn't come back. And out of a family of my other aunt from my father's side-- he had two sisters-- from the nine children, three survived.

Well, one we knew that had survived because she had immigrated to Israel in 1937 with her husband. And we saw them back in 1939 with the first grandchild at the grandparents'. And then two other sisters survived and a sister-in-law survived. My oldest nephew survived the war in Bergen-Belsen but died of typhoid. We both had typhoid.

Subsequently.

Subsequently. So he never made it.

You say your nephew or you mean your cousin?

Well, nephew-- isn't it cousin?

Nephew would be your sister's child.

Oh, then they are cousins-- first cousins. First cousins.

We're going to have to take a short break so we can change the tape. And when we come back, we will continue to conclude our story.