

[0:00:00]

Robert Buckley: So that you were allowed?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Yeah [*holding up card*]

Robert Buckley: Let me see if I can ... [*camera zooms in on card*] All right, very good. Now, you also said you had a picture there. What is that picture of?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Well, that was that I was – let me make a member of the organization from _____ 1949 to '55 – 1945 [*holding up document with photo*]. And from this organization I got the pension because I had been in concentration camp. I have been ... yeah, because of the concentration [camp], I got a pension from this. Everyone who had been in the war as a prisoner, whatever he is that doesn't make difference, they are not the – they doesn't do discrimination here in Holland, and everyone who can prove he has been in prison during the war, he get a pension.

Robert Buckley: I see. Now, you have a few pictures there from before the war. Maybe we would like to see what you looked like before the war?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: [*Holding up photo*] Here I was a little boy. The picture show that.

Robert Buckley: Oh, yes.

Mr. Van Der Bijl: [*Holding up photos*] Here I was a little older and here is perhaps six months, perhaps one year, before the war when I was 24, 23, 25.

Robert Buckley: OK.

Mr. Van Der Bijl: [*Holding up handwritten document*] And then that was the first letter this I wrote to my parents, the first letter which I wrote to my parents, and this is a photocopy from the envelope.

Robert Buckley: OK. Now, what was the year that that was recorded or that you wrote that?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: July the 2nd in 1941.

Robert Buckley: I see.

- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Before that, I was already some time imprisoned by the Gestapo and by the police officer in Holland because I was – February 20 I was arrested.
- Robert Buckley:* OK, very good, yes. Now, after the war, what did you do after the war? Did you continue on in your Bible educational work?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Yeah because I was arrested as a full-time preacher, I started full-time preacher work in October the 3rd in 1941 – in 1940, October the 3rd 1940 I started full-time. And when I came at home, I went the same day, when I came at home, I went to the congregation servant and told him that I want to continue in the pioneer service. And after three weeks perhaps, some weeks, I got an assignment, and I started again in the pioneer service, till yet.
- Robert Buckley:* Now, the pioneer service is your full-time Bible educational work?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Yeah, yeah.
- Robert Buckley:* OK, very good. And then what did you do afterwards? You said you went to some special schooling of some type?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Yeah, I became first congregation servant. Then the Society called me for circuit servant. And then I was called to the Gilead school.
- Robert Buckley:* Now, what is the Gilead school?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* The Gilead school – that is where you get Bible training to become missionary or some other work in the organization. *[Holding up class photo and document]* You see that is my class. That's my class. That's my class, and this is my diploma.
- Robert Buckley:* And where was this school at?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* In South Lansing.
- Robert Buckley:* South Lansing where?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* In New York, South Lansing, yeah. It was very nice surrounding, very nice surrounding, Yeah, still I have a picture of it. *[Holding up photo]* A picture of it – that was South Lansing. The first building that is the school and the other building here, that's the library.
- Robert Buckley:* I see, and that school is close to what college in New York? Is that the one near Cornell?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: It might be. I don't know. It might be, yeah.

Robert Buckley: OK, and now what have you done since those year? Oh, what was the year that you graduated from that school?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: February 1949.

Robert Buckley: And what are some of the things you've done since?

[0:05:00]

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Well, I was – I got a big privilege from the Society because when I was in the Gilead school, I was thinking by myself, 'Perhaps they send me out as a special pioneer.' I was preparing myself that how I could do the work. But then Brother Knorr came to the school, and he was giving us the assignments.

Robert Buckley: Now, who is this Mr. Knorr?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Brother Knorr was at that time the president of the Society, yeah. And then I got assignment to become circuit servant in United States in the half part of Illinois and half part of Indiana. And so I visit[ed] _____ congregations there as circuit servant. And then the Society called me back, and I had to be sent to Belgium. Brother Knorr assigned me to Belgium. And since that time, I'm in Belgium. That's now about – in June the 1st this is 42 years that I'm in Belgium.

Robert Buckley: So you've been here in Belgium for 42 years?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Yeah, yeah.

Robert Buckley: And what is your present address now here in Belgium?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: _____ 19 Box 8, 8400 Ostend, Belgium.

Robert Buckley: Now, when did you get married? You told me you got married in what year?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: It was January the 4th in 1958.

Robert Buckley: January 4th.

Mr. Van Der Bijl: [Laughs] That was later. My wife is 20 years younger than I, we don't – we have no any feeling about the difference of our age,

- Robert Buckley:* And where is she from?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* She was born in Belgium but from Yugoslavian **elders** but since the time her parents, in fact, her second father. Her first father died. He was a coal miner. He died of a long sickness, and then her mother remarried also with Yugoslavian. But since then, parents are Belgian, have the Belgian nationality. And my wife has still Yugoslavian nationality but because of married with me, she has also the Dutch nationality.
- Robert Buckley:* I see and what have you both done during those years since you've been married?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Also the full-time service.
- Robert Buckley:* You were in the full-time Bible educational work, both you and your wife.
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Yeah, still yes.
- Robert Buckley:* I see. And what type of work do you and your wife do now?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Circuit work.
- Robert Buckley:* And what does that mean?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* That means that I visit the congregations. I have a part of a province, the province of West Flanders, and the congregations there. I visit the congregations and help the brothers and sisters and educate them in the Bible and morals, et cetera.
- Robert Buckley:* I see.
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Keep standing in the faith and keeping good morals.
- Robert Buckley:* I see so have you been able to share your experiences with people over the years?
- Mr. Van Der Bijl:* Yeah, that means I work with all these brothers and sisters here and had the privilege to help some people to become good Jehovah's Witnesses and also to become good citizens of the country or the city.
- Robert Buckley:* Have you had opportunities again from time to time to meet with other people who were in the concentration camps with you?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Well, once in awhile when we, for example, when we went on a convention, I met once in awhile a brother who was with me in the concentration camp and who are still living. Sometime I have written them a card, some letters, some words on a card, and I think they are still living when they have died. It might be that I write them once again. But then at an convention in Holland, then sometime I met them.

Robert Buckley: As you look back over your years of experience, especially those years in the concentration camps and in prison, how do you feel about those years? What do you think about those years?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Well, I one thing happy. That is that I never had the inclination, I think not even a thought, to sign or to make a *compromis*. You know a *compromis*?

Robert Buckley: A compromise you mean?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: A compromise, yeah. I did not even – I believe I did not even think to make a compromise.

[0:10:00] That's what I told the police officer. I said, "If you give me two million guilder, I don't want to do that."

Robert Buckley: OK. Well, we want to thank you. But before we do close, perhaps on the map you could show us the place where you were when you were picked up and then where you were put in jail and then to the prison and then to Sachsenhausen on the map, OK? I'll turn the camera off for just a second, but then we'll start it. And perhaps we could also have a picture also of your wife as well, OK?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Yeah.

[Switches to view of map]

Mr. Van Der Bijl: And that is Holland or the Netherlands and here in Germany.

Robert Buckley: OK, now would you show where you were first picked up and where you ...

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Here in Heemstede, Heemstede, I was arrested. I was some weeks in the prison, and then I was sent to Scheveningen. Scheveningen, there's a little village on the coast, on the north seacoast. And from there I was sent to Hanover.

Robert Buckley: You have Hamburg?

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Here, yeah. Then I was sent to Hanover. No, no, first to Dusseldorf, first to Dusseldorf. I was 10 days in Dusseldorf. Dusseldorf! Here I was first in Dusseldorf and from Dusseldorf to Hanover, to Hanover. From Hanover to Berlin. Berlin is here. And from Berlin to Oranienburg Sachsenhausen. It's a little north. No, no, it's not here, no. Sachsenhausen is 30 kilometers above Berlin, Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg. Yeah, Oranienburg here. There was, yeah. That was the last stop.

Robert Buckley: OK, very good. *[Camera returns to sofa]* Introduce us, please.

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Yeah, Justine is her name, and she is my wife. And my wife will tell something. How long are we married?

[Conversation in Dutch]

Mr. Van Der Bijl: She said that we are about 33 years have been married, and she is very happy that we can do the service for Jehovah God, and we will keep going as long as our health allows it.

Robert Buckley: All right.

Mr. Van Der Bijl: She is very happy, she says. We don't see any difference between our age because she is 20 years younger than I. She knows no difference.

Robert Buckley: Well, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum would like to thank the both of you for this opportunity. And we want to thank you for sharing your experiences with us, and we used this information for educational purposes. I just would like to take a picture of your home here. It's very fine *[Camera viewing apartment]* You have a very fine home here.

Mr. Van Der Bijl: Yeah.

[End of Audio]