

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Barbara Lederman Rodbell
June 12, 1990
RG-50.030*0192**

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Barbara Lederman Rodbell, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on June 12, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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BARBARA LEDERMAN RODBELL

June 12, 1990

Q: Would you tell me your name please?

A: My name is Barbara Rodbell, currently. My maiden was Lederman.

Q: And where and when were you born?

A: I was born in Berlin, Germany, September 4, 1925. My mother's name was Else Citroen Citon, which means lemon, and it is a Dutch name because her father was from Holland had come from -- to Germany from Holland, and married my grandmother, Ellen Citroen Sileppe. Her name was Sileppe in Berlin. And so that is how the Dutch family lived in Berlin because that's where they married. They were three children, the old— four children actually, the oldest died very -- at 18. She was a poet and a wonderfully, well loved child, and she had a brain tumor and died. It took a while year and my youngest uncle tells that he has never seen his mother in anything but black ever after. So I saw her in other clothes, but he never saw her in anything but black as he grew up. At least that's how he sees it. People sees things in different ways. My mother, I remember as a childhood, as being relatively happy and her oldest brother was Paul, and he was lively and he was a painter. Didn't pay attention to anything but painting and art. And then she -- then it was she, and then it was a brother, Hans who also survived the war. The -- they all -- the brothers survived the war. Each of them had their own story, but they all survived the war. We lived in Berlin, and I had a sister, named Susannah who was three years younger than I was. And we -- my father was a lawyer, born in Hisberg, Silesian, over Silesian, and in Germany and studied in Verslomberland, later in Geneva for his Ph.D. in law. And he had a good practice. And he was quite old really. He was 35 when he married my mother. My mother was 20. That was done that way, that way, in those days. Anyway, I was born a year later and I remember my childhood in Berlin as being wonderful. It was -- my father loved Berlin, and we went all over Berlin as soon as I could walk. And he showed me absolutely everything. Every little corner, and he liked history and music and we went to museums and I still remember where the Rembrandt hung in this museum in Ber-- in Berlin because he loved it so. And I remember the trains from Casovillan trains, and the stories he told me about how Casovillan used to have big dinners in those trains, and he was a very faster easter, Casovillan was. Nobody ever got anything to eat because he was always finished before the last person was served and everybody had to leave very hungry. This was one of my father's story, stories. And my sister was born three years later, and we were very happy. We always went to Holland on vacation. And in 1933, when we went to Holland on vacation, one of my many cousins of my father's, Uncle Biet Pierson who was a journalist, a editor of a paper in The Hague said to my mother he felt that she should not go back. This was 1933. And Uncle Biet had, when he was very young -- when he was 19 and, and just learning to be a journalist, he had been sent to Munich to cover a trial. And nobody in Holland paid in attention to this trial. And when he came back and he wrote up his paper, they said to him, "Why are you making such a fuss?" And he said, "You pay attention to this trial. This is going to end up

being something quite awful and better everybody pay attention." It was Hitler's trial in 1923. And he was, you know, he was the only of them paid any attention to it. Took 10 years til things really heated up. So my mother, who always listened to my father because my father was the older one and, you know, he was the leader in our family said to my father, "I think we shouldn't go back." And my father said, "What does a lawyer do in a foreign country?" That's not a very good idea, and what am I going to do?" And she said, "Well, I don't know. You'll find something to do. It's -- I really think we should not go back." And so father said, "Well, I'm going to go back and see what I can do." I mean he had -- I think he graduated he'd already been a lawyer for 25 years. I mean it was -- it was practically impossible for him to start over. He spoke a few words of Dutch, but not very much. He got to Berlin and he went into his office and there were his secretaries and his assistants and stuff. There was also a big letter from the government, which said that from now on, he could only have Jewish clients. My father had no -- had very few, I should say, Jewish clients. I didn't know any Jewish clients that he had. But he had things like the Mid-European Watch Industry, a _____, Swiss Watch industry. He had big companies that were his clients, and now he could not represent them anymore. He packed up. And we could still -- I mean he could ship as much as he wanted to Holland. And we had two grand pianos, and he sold them because he didn't think that we could -- would have the money to have enough house or an apartment big enough to hold grand pianos so there was a big change in our standard of living. I mean I was raised with nurses and governesses and with English and French and you have Dutch and all those various things, with horse back riding and good schools. And when we got to Holland, of course, we had a little apartment. My father had to go back to school, to the -- to the university. He worked for a Dutch _____. He worked for a Dutch lawyer, but he had to learn Dutch, of course. He handled the clients who were very much like him who had come to Holland and, you know, he couldn't practice along because he didn't have the Dutch degree. So he went to the university, and I think he was now -- how old was he in '34, '35? He graduated in three years in a foreign language. I was -- we were very proud of him. It was very hard. He also worked at the same time. There was a big party and everybody came and then a few years later the Germans walked in, and it was all over. We are now getting to the point where my -- Let me go back and say that when we got to Holland and I got to my first school, in my class was a girl named Margo Frank. And they lived right behind us on the _____. We lived at the _____ which was the back of the same kind of development that they lived in. And we -- we always played at _____. That's how we met. And then our parents, of course, met, having coming from Germany the same year and having a lot of common and the Frank's and my parents socialized a lot and, of course, the kids played. As a matter of fact, Margo dragged me through school. Without her, I would have never made anything done anything because I was full of play and I was -- wanted to become a dancer and I worked very, very hard at that, but not at much else. So without her saying, "Today, we study," I wouldn't have been able to get through. So here we are in school and working hard and my sister's doing very, very well. She was very smart. And my father had great hopes she'd become a lawyer like he was. He would've like me to become a lawyer, but I think he gave up on me long -- very early because that was not my thing. I was more the way my mother's family was. More playful and -- and liked imaginary games and things like that. Let's see, where shall we go now?

Q: Let's -- let's talk a little more about your friends and your childhood. Did you meet Ann Frank too?

A: Well, of course, we all played together, you know. And Ann came to the house a lot and we went to her house a lot. When my kids grew up, I -- I could see that, you know, the same kind of thing, you know. You -- you go around to the people in your neighborhood and you work together for the schools and you do various things and My sister was a lot more serious than Ann was. Anne liked games the way I did. And she liked to play and have imagina -- imaginary games, and she was very high strung -- very easily upset, and -- . My sister tried to get along with all that, but it wasn't always easy. Ann was a very difficult child, an extremely difficult child. And not just for her family, but in school and she went to a special school, a Montessori kind of school I think or Dalton in one of those two kinds of school. And she did very well there. Not as well as Margaret, who was an absolute genius, if you ask me. But who -- Margaret also was very calm, and at least what I always saw of her was very calm, very deliberate, very, very beautiful. Margaret was very beautiful. Had great big brown eyes -- a very serious person. She would have made a real mark in the world. I know that. Just like my sister. My sister -- I can't even imagine how wonderful she would have been. She was so smart and so sweet and -- and she was very anxious to be very close to me which was amazing, you know, for a young girl. She wanted to see what I was doing and later on, as I got older, she was very interested in my friends and she always had very -- a lot of good advice for me. This is no good, and this is very good, and you know, she was just -- and she was so sensible. It was amazing! One of the letters I gave you is from her, and there you will see all that. It's a very good letter. Very, very young girl! Anyway, we had a normal, very happy kind of childhood with a lot of music and my Uncle Paul was a painter and a Dutchman, a Dutch painter, with a enormous German accent, but his nationality was Dutch. He was born in Berlin, but at 18 he had to choose whether he wanted to be German or Dutch because he was born in Germany but -- but he had a Dutch passport because of his father. And something in him made him make the right choice and he chose Holland and he went to Holland and -- and lived there even since, and became quite a well known painter and had a very happy life in -- in Holland. Married a beautiful woman, had a daughter, and I have two very close relatives about my same age. One is his daughter, Paulinka, and one is the daughter of my Uncle Hans, the younger brother of my mother who is Tamara and she is in Israel. She lives in Israel with her family. And now why was I telling you all this?

Q: Family and friends.

A: Family and friends. Yes.

Q: Can we go back a little bit? I would like to go back just cause it has some relevance to your childhood. There was a group of friends with you and Ann Frank and Margo. You had talked Hanna. You had talked about Tummi. And there's a picture all of you playing at the party.

A: Yes. Well

Q: Tell us about that circle and tell us about that party.

A: Well, these were -- these were mostly -- mostly, because on some of those pictures are also a lot of Dutch kids who were playing also who only were living in the same neighborhood. By the neighborhood was entirely mixed. Wasn't all Jewish. Was a completely mixed neighborhood. And as far as I knew the Dutch Jews and the Germans Jews got along very well. And I have just read a book which said that they were really pretty separate when it came to it..you know when things got tight. But I personally have never -- have never experienced that. And when I got to think about it not until I got in with a group of young people who were stridently trying to survive was it really all German? -- at that point I realize it was all German. It wasn't really my family that created that kind of atmosphere, but it was more when we were on our own, without family, you know, that it suddenly appeared that I really was in a German Jewish circle. This was when we were trying to save ourselves, you understand? As -- as children we played altogether -- everybody played together and was very good relationships between everybody. I've never heard my parents or Otto Frank, who by the way was an absolute angel, ever, you know, say anything nasty or have -- had any kind of problem with Dutch with the Dutch people. And, of course, I was half Dutch anyway. And the first time I realized I really wasn't Dutch was when the Germans came to Holland and there was five days where -- before -- before the Queen left Holland, while the Germans were there -- while the Dutch were fighting the Germans we were not allowed -- we had a great curfew. We were not allowed in the streets. And my grandparents and my neighbors had to bring -- my grandmother and my neighbor had to bring us food and everything because they wouldn't allow Germans -- we were then taken as Germans, not -- not as German Jews, but as Germans, and we weren't allowed to go out and to buy food except very limited periods of time during the day. It was the first time that I realized that "Hey. Hey. I'm really German. I'm not really Dutch." I never, you know, it -- I wasn't even aware of it, except when I came from Berlin and I went to school. I was in the -- I was in the 3rd Grade. I was put into the 3rd Grade. I was eight years old. And I had to write what they called in _____ which write, you know, somebody reads something to you and you write it down. I had 40 mistakes I think in -- in 30 words, or something like that because I couldn't. I think even Margo had 25 mistakes, but still it was a lot less than I had. That was -- you know, there I realized, you know, that it..that it was hard. And my clothes were all wrong. Because Berlin was very -- we were very elegant in Berlin, you know. I had fur coats and a hat -- you know, ridiculous really if you think about it now, it's -- but that's how it was in those days. In Holland, the kids were pretty much more still more _____, more plain, even in Amsterdam. And the clothes I had were absolutely inappropriate. So at some point there, I said to my mother, "This is it. That coat goes." I had a Russian -- I had Russian coat which was embroidered with a Russian hat, you know, with the embroidery around and stuff and I said, "Never am I going to wear this thing again." "You give it away to somebody in Germany." I mean I -- I -- it was too embarrassing. Nobody wore clothes that. So I had to get used to, you know, a lot of things like that. But I had lot more freedom than I had in Berlin. I mean Berlin was a big city and playing out in the street was impossible. And it -- it - - it was a very different life. It was a certain kind of freedom and relaxation. I didn't have a

nurse or a governess with me all the time. I could go, you know -- I wasn't supposed to, but I go more or less where I wanted to. And it was a more relaxed life. It was very hard for my mother, although I didn't hear her ever complain. And my -- I have a cousin who came to visit the other day from Holland and she's much younger. She was much younger than my mother, and she said that my mother never complained. Never! Never! And -- my mother -- I mean she'd had a -- a cook, a cleaning woman, a maid, a nurse for governess for us. You know, she never had anything like that to do. She did that social work. That's what people did. And of course, not for pay. I mean she did social work and now she had to learn to cook. My mother never knew how to cook. So she -- her mother was there. My -- my grandmother had gone to Holland before my -- my -- my parents and she taught my mother how to cook because my mother didn't know how. And she -- she had -- I think she had some help every day for a few hours, but that was -- I mean for her, it must have been an enormous change. An apartment, it had two stories but it was still a relatively small apartment compared to what she used to have and -- Of course, she was surrounded by family which she had not -- never had her own family. She had a lot of my father's family, but never much of her own. And here it was very different. And because the family was Dutch, of course, we slid very fast into the Dutch way of life and aside from my father and my mother and for the children, it was very nice. So I loved it in -- in Holland.

Q: You had again the friends of the children you played with these photographs that you showed us of all of you in a sandbox. and the more famous of one actually shows Ann Frank in there, but all of you were together. Can you tell us about the children in that sandbox. What were you doing and what was it like?

A: Well, we had -- I think we had a -- I don't remember now exactly, but my cousin she's now called Tamara Cidor, but her name was Dolly Citrean. And -- and she was visiting and we took her over to other family of ours who lived also on the _____, who lived downstairs so they had a garden. And they had also a little baby or a brother. She was now 1 years old. Hanna too -- Hanna was her name. And we went over there to play, so there was my -- myself, my sister, Dolly, my cousin, and Hanna, Toby, and we were a family. And then Hanna _____ and Ann Frank also came because they were friends of my sisters. So we were all playing there in the garden. And then my mother came and said, "I'm going to take - let me take a picture of all of you because we're together here." And she took what is now known as the sandbox picture. And Ann is in there. Then later on she says, "Well now -- no - only the family." Oh, the poor kids -- I can hear it. So..uh Ann and Hanna -- Hanna -- .Hanna went away and we put the baby between us on -- at the -- on the table, and you have that picture. She took that picture. On the second tape that you have, there is the mother of Hanna, now of course much older, and she said she took the picture. I was so surprised. I couldn't believe it. My mother took the picture. It's in my album and it's a long time ago. Even so, one could be confused.

Q: Sure you could.

A: Yal.

Q: You -- you said before that your sister, Susannah, was friends with Ann Frank.

A: Yal.

Q: Can you tell us the kinds of things that they did?

A: Well, to my great surprise it seems they were much closer than -- than I had thought because again this cousin from Holland who came to visit recently and who told that my mother was -- was never complaining and working very hard and really wasn't very strong, she was telling me that my sister, Susannah, used to bring Anna -- Ann Frank with her every time they came to visit. And they would visit in -- in The Hague, and they would visit in Glebare, where they had a little summer house, and they would stay for weeks and she describes on the tape, which by the way, I do have but I didn't bring with me she describes how difficult Anna was. And she says how -- now they were older then. I think -- let me see -- I'm -- I was 16 so my sister was 13, and Anna was maybe 12 at that time. So this is a later period that we are actually talking about now. And she describes that Anna was so very much more developed than my sister. Although my sister was only a year older, and how her interests were so very difficult and how difficult it was to keep her calm and interested and uncomplaining and -- and just regular you know. It's a very cute tape actually that little piece of it about Ann. It -- it was amazing to -- to most people, you know. I mean the book is, but - - but I could see a little bit of that I could see that she was thinking about many things. She thought about boys way before Susie ever dreamed of boys. And -- and she -- she would tell me that Susie is really very childish. Susie would say to me, "Ann is just silly. Always with these boys. Who watches that," she says. You know, she didn't want to play. So that's why I was surprised when I heard that at the very end even Ann would go with Susie visiting of -- our family and stuff. Yal. The families were very close. I mean it was due to the fact that it got -- they're at the time and they were in the same same age more or less. The children were the same age. The interests were a lot alike. My father was a lawyer and -- and Otto, of course, had a business. I don't know if my father worked for him or anything or if he did any of his work, but I'm sure he helped him if there were any problems. So there were a lot of -- a lot of reasons that our families were close. One forgets, you know. One forgets how -- how logical these things develop. There's nothing special. On that other tape that I gave you, Barry Spaanyard keeps asking the mother of Hanna -- Hanna's mother -- keeps saying, "Now how come you didn't know Anna so well? Anna's family. How come you didn't know the Frank's so well? Or how come you didn't -- " And she finally gets impatient with him and she said, "Well, we were families with the Ledermann's and it was just through them that Anna Frank came to play with us." They were not that friendly. I mean it's just -- why should be friend -- nobody is friendly with everybody. So there was no special reason or dislike or like or anything. You know, people know each other or they don't know each other. So that's was it.

Q: What..what were the the Frank parents like. Otto --

A: Uh Well, I said already, you know, how fantastic Otto was. He was wonderful with children. He was just incredible with children. He was patient. He was loving. He was everything you sort of wanted somebody -- he was also patient with this whole situation -- with the fact that he had to leave all of a sudden. I'm sure they came from the kind of background we did -- and they were reduced to what we were. I think they would probably this was very much the same. It was very much the same. He was very patient with it, and he worked very hard in his business, and he did well for the short time, you know, that -- that he had it. And now the mother -- I don't have that much of an impression of her. I can see her. And, again, I see this beautiful woman. I mean the eyes, and the hair, and just a beautiful woman. And, of course, I'm looking at her now not the way a child would. You know, I'm looking at her from my point of view now. And I realize what in the world she went through. I mean for a woman -- she came from the way my mother was -- had been and -- and she didn't have the the _____. She had to stay in the house with children and deal with every day things -- her own shopping, doing her grocery, her own cooking, her own -- It was very different from the way she was brought up. Anyway, she was not as patient. She didn't have the patience for Ann who was really extremely difficult. I mean I wasn't easy at all, but Ann was impossible practically. I mean she was she was difficult. And -- and -- Edith did not have that -- the patience for her. She did what she could. She was not a nasty mother or an angry mother or hitting mother or anything. She would -- she did what she could and Ann was very luck to have Otto and -- and to calm the waters between her and her mother. So it was a happy family really. And Otto had to work hard to keep Edith happy and to .to keep everything going. And, of course, Margaret did her best. She was more like her father. And it was a happy family. And we saw a lot of them. All the time! I just read a book, which I gave to you. The one on the _____ and in the book, it tells something about Edith, and that's it's the most amazing thing. They interviewed -- the people who wrote the book, the writers, interviewed two women who had been saved from -- in Auschwitz -- from Auschwitz. And what had happened was, of course, they got ill like everybody else. I don't know if it was typhoid or diphtheria or one of those horrible diseases, and she said there were two women who didn't give a hoot about what -- whether they would be punished or not punished or whatever they did, and they were very strong. And they knew that that one of the barracks in Auschwitz -- that everybody had already been sent away. And they put these two girls in those empty barracks, and they stole food and they gave -- fed them, and they took care of them, and they survived because of these two women. And one of them was Edith Frank. And I don't think that..that there's anybody who knew about that, because I had never heard anything like it. And I wonder if Otto knowed, because the book just came out now. And I don't know if -- you know, he'd dead. I don't know if he ever knew how fantastic she was. She found her -- she found her feet -- her sea legs, you know. And she -- she -- she decided, you know -- she didn't see her own kids, so she decided: Go for it! She did it. And I'm very happy to hear that. I sort of heard the same sort of thing about my mother and she -- .not about Auschwitz, because I don't know what happened to my mother in Auschwitz. But I have a friend who got relieved from -- I think it was from Bergen-Belsen. She had a sister in Sweden. This was Anna Marie Rosenbaum. And Anna Marie had a sister in Sweden, and this -- and she..they got exchanged. She got exchanged, I think, for Germans who had -- I don't know exactly how it all got together. Anyway, she managed to get exchanged, and she

got to Sweden. And, of course, she had -- had it very tough in Sweden. She had to work as a maid for years and things like that. Nevertheless, she made it through. And Anna Marie had talked to my mother in Westerborg, and my mother had told Anna Marie that when it was -- if she ever got out of this alive, she was going to go to the university and become a professional social worker and she was going to make a life of her own and she finally decided to do something for herself. Something that was important for her rather than just working for the family and doing what my father wanted and -- The fellow who saved my life and myself -- one of the reason we didn't end up married after the war was that we had the most terrible fights. And one of the fights was about the fact that he would say that my father murdered my whole family and my -- because by not wanting to go underground -- He had gotten papers for my mother and my sister and my father -- this friend of mine. His name was Monfred. Monfred had gotten papers for all of us. I had it way before from somebody else, but he also got papers for the rest. And my mother had given him the mother for it, so he could get it for her. And, of course, they didn't use it. I will tell later, you know, how -- how this all came about. But they didn't use it. But Monfred used to say, "He killed your mother. He killed your mother." You know, and I would -- I mean we were young. Right? I was like 18 -- 17 or 18. I -- I -- no, you didn't -- and I practically would even scratch him and fight and argue and -- Now, I -- I mean it's impossible to point blame. I mean it's impossible. But I think women now would have thought a little bit more for themselves -- maybe for herself. Maybe she would have said -- a woman now would have said, "Well, my dear. As much as I hate it, you know, you do your thing. But this is my life. And this is my child's life, and we are staying. We are taking a chance." My father -- he was older than my mother. And he was more staid, and he was -- and she wouldn't leave him. I mean when it came to it, she went along. And when she went, my sister went, who was only 14 then, you know, although I had told her -- we all had told her, you know, that we would take care of her and we had a place for her and all that kind of thing.

Q: Let's see if we can get this in the -- in some sequence.

A: It would be better to have it in sequence.

Q: Let's go back and do it and so we know what happened. You've had this child -- you're growing up. We're coming to the late '30s. Tell us what happened as the war came closer.

A: Well, as far as I was concerned, until the Germans walked into Holland, I didn't know very much about anything. I mean I knew that there was Hitler and that Germany was -- for us, you know. Things were bad. But I was just playing and going to school and dancing and having a good, you know, a good time. And then one day there was -- the radio started talking and -- and then we heard this lot of noise and we heard the bombardment of Rotterdam. We heard it all the way in Amsterdam. I mean it was just -- the planes, the low hum of the planes, and the wait of it. And I remember standing at the window and my father, you know -- the Germans were marching in right through our street which was the main street in _____. It now has a different name, but it was then. I see them singling ____ marching in _____ you know, marching into, over the _____ into the through the

_____ toward the center of the town. And my father standing in the window and saying to me, "Take care of your mother." I was 15. Take care of the -- your mother. You know, they'll come for me tomorrow. And my -- my father was not political. He'd never been political. And that's probably..that's one of the things I'd like to talk about -- about the intellectuals in Germany who felt that they were too good to talk politics. To talk politics was a terrible thing, and you didn't talk. It was for -- for who -- not very good people. I mean you couldn't - - you shouldn't talk politics, you know. So they didn't. And it's we all must be involved and..and fight against things that are bad now, you know, so it doesn't -- terrible things don't happen later. But that's not what they did. And then -- so he thought he was going to be picked up tomorrow. Of course, it took a year and a half, but, you know, it did happen in the end. The -- the first thing that happened, well, many terrible things happened then. People started -- Jews starting jumping out of windows and out of -- of balconies and -- and into -- killed themselves with gas and I remember standing on the balcony. We lived on the third floor, and the balcony was on the back of the house and -- and there was a center which had the -- had the gardens in -- in the bottom and then balconies everywhere, three stories high. And I remember a man being saved from trying to gas himself and him yelling and screaming I don't want to. Don't do this. Don't do this, you know. Don't save me, you know. I want to die. I want to die, you know. And I was 15. I mean this made a helluva impression on me. And I said to me mother, "What -- why does he want to die?" You know, I mean who wants to die? And then there was -- I mean a period there where people it wasn't one or two -- that's what I want to say. It was heaps of people killed themselves. And then my parents told me it's because they're Jews and -- and Hitler, you know, doesn't like Jews and it was the first time I was really aware of -- We're weren't religious so we'd never had any kind of -- or very little connection with it, although my grandparents, I think, were. And I remember going to temple with my grandfather when he was still alive and in -- in Berlin. He died in early -- in Berlin while we still living in Berlin. And I remember it being a happy experience. He put me on his back. It was the -- I -- what -- what is the day when when they finish reading the Torah and they start over. Which one? Whatever. And he put me on his back and they danced around, you know, and stuff like that. I -- it was pretty wonderful. And I remember him laying the Tefillin and I never knew what it meant and and we had Christmas at home. I remember the Christmas tree in Berlin was great, with the real candles and the apples and the _____ and the nuts and the the gifts for..for the maids and for everybody, you know. Everybody had gifts and presents. Took my mother two months to get ready for Christmas. And I don't remember Hanukkah in Germany at all. And I don't remember it really until the Germans came into Holland. Then that year -- and I think it was the Frank's also -- I think we -- we joined for the first time a reformed temple. I remember the Rabbi's name. His name was Malhe, and that was spelled with a E, not an A. And I remember him so -- so clearly, and I even learned to read a little bit of Hebrew which I have entirely forgotten because it only lasted a year. And my sister also went there, and I think Margaret and Ann and -- and quite a lot of..of people. That was the occasion. I mean once the Hitler didn't shove us back into the old mold of life. And it made a big difference in any case.

Q: What was your question?

A: You're doing just fine. Just tell us what happened now.

A: Okay. School. We went to school and we had a headmaster who was very anti-Nazi. And much too outspoken. I mean nobody knew what to do and how to behave in those days. There was one group who knew a little bit and that was the communists. But I didn't -- didn't know anything about communists, but they were the ones who knew already a little bit because they had had some people who had escaped from camps in Germany, you know. That was possible to escape. I mean at the very beginning in 1940, '41, people could escape from camps in Germany. And these -- these communists had already been picked up in Germany, put in camps, and they had come through Holland and they had told a little bit of what they had seen and what they had heard. And so they informed their Dutch friends -- the Dutch communists, a little bit about things -- what things were like. So the communists were a little bit prepared, but nobody else was prepared in Holland. And

Q: What happened to you? You started to say --

A: The school. The school. Well, the -- the headmaster called assembly and made a large, big speech about the fact that, you know, about the Germans and that we were a free country and we shall remain free and we all sang the song, you know, the national anthem, and. Anyway, he got picked up very early, and he died very early because that was -- somebody, of course, told on him. They were fascists in the schools. And then one started to hear about fascists right and left. And one started to hear about our neighbors downstairs who turned out to be not too good, and then we suddenly started to hear things like our neighbors on the other side -- well, he was Jewish, but she was not. Boy, they're lucky. I mean things like that, you know, which you'd never -- I'd never thought they were lucky. I -- you know, I mean, they're know different from us, and weird things -- weird things like that. As far as the school was concerned, I think we could go to school for a little while, but then, again, there was an assembly and we were told that the Jewish kids now had to leave the school and go to a -- a Jewish school, and have be separated from the others. And I went to my parents and -- and I said, "I don't want to go to a Jewish school. I'm not going to a Jewish school. I will not go to a Jewish school." And I can just see my children coming to me and saying I'm not going to go to this school. You know, I can just see the shock. I -- it was impossible. I was really impossible. I got to be very, very rebellious in every way, and I would not go to school. My sister did. She went to a Jewish school. And it was very frightening because what the Germans started to do is to isolate the Jews into various groups. I mean they -- at a later date, not right then in the beginning, but at a later date, they would go and pick up the kids in the school, and then make the parents come to get the kids and, of course, keep the parents and that was the end of that you know. Some people were then sent home again if their parents had good papers, you know some kind of exceptional papers. But I was -- every time I heard that the school -- the Germans or -- or green police or the Dutch cooperators -- the Nazis, the Dutch Nazi, and ~~anaspears~~. They were called then ~~anaspears~~ marching toward the school, you know, I would run to that school and finally after I had ~~Monfred~~ as a friend, he said to me, "The one thing you do when the Germans go somewhere is not go there." You know, I

mean I was so stupid, but we all -- most of us were because what did we know, you know, about how to save yourself and that you had to save yourself. You had to be careful. You have to learn to be scared. And I was not that scared. You know, I was dumb. I was plain old dumb. But it was very frightening to have my sister in a Jewish school separated in the eastern part of Amsterdam. We lived in the south and they had to go to Oster, Amsterdam -- Amsterdam ost . to school. Most of my friends did do that. Most of my friends that were Jewish did go to school. Some of them were picked up, and their parents and them shipped off. Others, somehow, survived, you know, just like me. You never know what's going to happen to you.

Q: What did you do during the day?

A: I went -- I had to go to school. And I wanted -- I told you I wanted to be a dancer. And there was school ran by Alice Kayser in Amsterdam, in _____. And she had a dancing school as well, where you learned other things as well. So it was -- it was recognized as a school. And my Uncle Paul came and talked my parents into into letting me go. He was always my savior in that respect because he had -- my father was just adamant I was going to go to a academic school. He didn't understand what was going on at all. I don't know if it was a wish dream, if it was something he didn't want to understand, or whether it was just incomprehensible to him because he had been raised in a human -- humanitarian fashion and the Germans he knew were like that. He knew many, many good Germans, and, of course, there were many, many good Germans. What -- but they -- they didn't have any power. So my father had trouble to understand and to -- he had great trouble to go along and make wise decisions in regard to the situation which -- which deteriorated from day to day. the first thing that happened was that the Germans took the German passport that my father had, so he had no nationality. He was stateless. We had applied for Dutch citizenship. You had to be there five years or I forget how many years before you could apply for Dutch citizenship and it's going to be granted in May of 1940. And the Germans got there just a bit too fast. It -- this is very bad for me later on, because the Dutch -- dear Dutch after the war when, you know, my parents were dead. I was alone and they would not give me the Dutch citizenship, because they said your father applied, not you -- that your father applied. Now at the time, I was under 16 and if you were under 16 the whole family was all naturalized at the same time. But after the war, you know, I was nearly 20 and I was so called a grown-up and I had to apply for myself and they -- even though, you know, I went through all this S-H-I-T, and they would not give me that citizenship. They sent me back the money. My father had paid 200 Gilden, and they sent it back I mean the bureaucracy was just so incredible. There were many other things which I'll tell when we get to that.

Q: Let's get back.

A: Yeah. So anyway, the school was -- I went to Alice Kayser, and I went there for -- as long as my parents were there and could pay for it. I went to Alice Kayser. In the end she was also taken away. And then that part of my life was over. My grandmother -- and I don't know the exact date now -- it was 19 -- it must be '42 my grandmother had a home for elderly people.

These were old people who brought their own furniture and their own things. They were -- and she had nurses. It was like -- what would you call it now? A home for the elderly I mean. and she ran it. It was her. I mean she set it up. She -- she had to make -- to earn money and and this is what she did. She had help, of course. And one day they came and took everybody including her. They had just emptied out the place. The Germans they had came. And my mother was beside herself -- beside herself. What to do? We had to get her back. Now the youngest brother, my mother's youngest brother was -- lived in France, and if you want to, I can tell that story. But he lived in France. The older brother lived in The Hague, near The Hague in Gosmer and had no funds, you know, whatsoever. So my mother went and took our jewelry to a jeweler. She got in touch with a guy named Putcomer, who was known to mediate between Germans and other people and -- to get people free. And he said to her that she had to give industrial -- the Germans would take industrial diamonds for my grandmother. Well, my mother went and gave to Nave who was a jeweler, her jewelry and said, "I need industrial diamonds. Just see what you can do." And Nave came back and said there are no more industrial -- you know, Holland was closed up and -- there were other people besides us that were looking for that -- industrial diamonds and -- and he didn't have any more. So Putcomer told the Germans. The Germans came back and said we will take gold bullion -- gold bars, thick gold bars. So my mother said to Nave, "It's gold bars. Get us gold bars." And then Nave managed to make or get or somehow gold bars, using my mother's jewelry as payment. And I remember that one day after my class at -- was it after class -- I think -- well, whenever I was told to go on my bicycle and pick up a package from Nave. And I had -- I had two bags, you know, these -- these Dutch bicycles -- these black bicycles with a -- with the saddle bags. In one side was my books and the other side was -- was -- the gold bouillon. And Nave just handled them to me. I think he wrapped him. Not very much. I saw them. And I brought them to my mother. And my mother gave them to Mr. Putcomer and Mr. Putcomer gave them to the Germans and my grandmother got out. And she then, of course, she couldn't live in her house because that was -- they closed the house then. So she came and lived with us. And it was terrible. I mean, for my mother. It was extremely hard to have another mouth to feed. It was very -- it started -- you had to start buying on the black market. It was starting to be very difficult. I don't know if we already had ration coupons at this time or not but any case and my mother was so worried about my grandmother -- that she would be sick. She was in pretty good shape, but she was a tyrannical old lady. And I can just see my poor mother between my father, who was so scared he was starting to get heart trouble and a little ulcer and -- and trying to keep us kids calm and trying to run the house and trying to get the food on the table and we -- it must have been -- and she started to get very, very thin. I mean my mother got very thin. And I -- I was very busy with myself. I was discovering boys and I was 16 and, you know, I..and but I even noticed she was getting very, very thin. And I -- I loved her to distraction. I mean she was my one solid -- my, you know, and -- and so was my father except I started to see he was scared and that was very scary. Well, where were we? So anyway

Q: Your grandmother has gotten out.

A: The grandmother came back. Yal. That -- So one day my tyrannical smart, but what do you

call it when you -- impulsive grandmother said, I have to get some of my paintings. I have to get some of my rugs. I have to get some of my this, and I have to get my silver and my -- Else, you need it, she said to my mother. You should have it. I mean why should the German get it. What the Germans used to do was after they took everybody out of the house, they would go and take all the furniture and whatever was there and I am -- I don't know what they did with it. I think they probably later on gave it to the people who were bombed out, or they gave it to Goering and he took what he wanted and then gave it to -- I mean I just don't know where the stuff went. But my grandmother went, without telling my mother, went to her house. Of course, she had the key and she went in and, of course, the house was being watched, and my grandmother was taken again. And that was it. I mean there was no jewelry to sell. and Mr. Putcomer -- my mother starting running around to Putcomer, to this, to that, and she couldn't get my grandmother back out. And I have letters of hers and I mean which are so -- so touching. There's just no words for it, you know, I mean, where she says -- "Oh, my poor Mooty," she calls her Mooty, of course, "and Mooty, she doesn't even have a blanket and she doesn't even have a sweater. I mean she just went there. Right? She does have anything, and how am I going to get to her?" And these letters are also a brother in Voltsneir who couldn't budge. He couldn't -- Anyway, and she managed, she got to somebody who managed to bring my grandmother a blanket and to bring my grandmother a sweater and to bring her some shoes while she was still in -- on the _____, there was which was a Jewish theatre. It was in the Amsterdam Oldst, which had become a Jewish section. There was a Jewish theatre where -- where plays and musicals and stuff were being performed and that was now used for a collection place for Jews from Amsterdam and that were going to be shipped to Westerborg. And while my grandmother was still in Westerborg -- sorry -- while she was still in this _____ there, my grand -- my mother managed to get things to her. People took it in. I don't know how. But she managed it. And she agonized. And she got thinner and thinner. And then one horrible thing after another happened. My Uncle Hans and Ava -- my cousin Ava, who came to visit me just now, told me these stories about Ann that I mentioned. Hans and Ava who had a little baby did go underground. And my -- my father was just so upset because he said oh, if they ever find them they will be punished more than the Jews are already punished. At the time they thought all Jews would go to labor camp and just work, you know. And my father was very worried about that. Hans was his favorite cousin and he really was worried about that. Anyway, Hans and Ava -- You want their story?

Q: No.

A: Okay.

Q: You -- just very briefly. In fact, this is a good place to stop. I think we're going to change tape and then we'll pick up the story again.

A: Okay.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: I'll like to come back to Grandma, would you please.

A: Okay.

Q: Would you both tell us her name and tell us what happened to her?

A: Her name is Ellen Citreon ~~Sleppe~~. Her name is ~~Sleppe~~. I think I mentioned her when I spoke about Berlin. What happened to her was that she was first sent to Westerborg, where she was quite awhile. She stayed quite awhile, and then she was sent to Bergen-Belsen which was, in a way, not as bad as Auschwitz. It was bad enough and she did die there. She died of illness, but the stories that come back about her are fantastic. Again, this Anna Marie Rosenbaum I talked about earlier who was exchanged to Sweden, she was telling about my grandmother and she actually brought me a little purse which my grandmother -- .send it to me, which my grandmother had given her. she said that my grandmother always had some tea. If it was made out of thistles or if it was made out of anything you know or what I sent -- I -- we did send packages to them in Westerborg. We managed to do that. And she had tea and she would have a -- a napkin over an orange crate and she would always have something when people came to visit, and she was always upbeat and she was always brave. And my grandmother had been a volun -- done voluntary work as a nurse and she was doing that in the camp. She was 72. She wasn't old. And she was extremely energetic, and so when she was sent to Bergen-Belsen, she lasted quite awhile there, but in the end, she did die in Bergen-Belsen. But we heard nothing but nice things about her. Anyway where shall we go now?

Q: What happened to you? Grandma has been taken away.

A: Grandma has been taken away. And we are now starting to -- to get -- people my age -- I was -- let's say, I was 16 going on 17 I guess. The Germans started to call up young Jewish children like me who were 16 and up. At 16 you were considered a family on your own by the Germans. And they would call up -- these German -- .young people by name, not in big ____, but by name. And I had many friends who were called up and we used to have -- they had parties before they -- the night before they went, they would have parties and they would sit around and they would say oh, what we're going to do. We're all going to get together. It was like ____, you know, as if they were going to Israel, like it was going to be a -- a summer camp or, you know, a holiday camp or something. Yes, we going to work very hard, but in the evening we'll put on your lipstick and we'll all be together and we will sing and when the war is over, the Americans will come and we will be saved, you know -- this kind of atmosphere. Now when I was 16, I needed -- my father worked for the Yotsrat, which was one of the things that gave you a permit to -- it postponed you're being, supposedly, your being taken away. And when I was 16 I had to get my own security. I didn't -- I wasn't secure anymore under his permit so I needed a permit of my own. And they looked around and they looked around and it turned -- I managed -- they managed to get it for me. I don't know

how, but I had to go to work work in Amsterdam Oldst, -- eastern Amsterdam and I got a place in what was called the Cultural Mission and it was to _____. I think it was to _____.

I am not sure. That's the one that described in the book, and that's where I met Monfred, and that's where -- I think that's where -- that was the _____. Now there it was mostly, perhaps even all, and I'm not sure of that, because I didn't pay attention to it, X-German Jews. It was - - and there was -- they were a lot of communists there. And that was the first time that I ever heard the word, and that I, you know, ever came near to hearing but there was some kind of organization. What happened was I had to work -- I worked in organizing courses. God help us. Courses for people who were going to be shipped and killed and murdered in various ways which we supposedly didn't know, which -- but what I was -- which I was told by the people for the first time are the people in _____. They told me -- the young people there -- they were conscious. They were political, and they were conscious of what was going on and they said to me, "All the young people that you're sitting around with -- you silly goose. They're all going to be dead within two weeks." Now that might have not been true, but that's what they told me. And I started -- I said that's not true. I went home and I told my father. I said you know, I was told that. And he said, "That's nonsense. Germans would never do a thing like that." And -- and I -- at that time I had met Monfred and I told Monfred and Monfred, who was my friend -- my boyfriend, he was 20 -- .who became a boyfriend. Matter of fact, I met him in _____. I took courses as well as organizing the classes for others. And in one of the courses and, of course, on _____ very necessary for people who were going to get killed. And in a course on _____ I met -- there were two fellows actually that I liked, and one of them was Monfred. And Monfred and I started going out vaguely if there was such a thing. I mean he walked me home and, you know, picked me up and we walked. There was no transportation so we walked to _____. And he said to me about this remark of my father's -- Germans wouldn't do a thing like that. He said, "But your father doesn't know these Germans. These are not the Germans your father knows -- knew. These are different Germans." He said to me, "Look at the soldiers. Look at them. That's the kind of German. Look at the Nazi. Don't look at the kind of Germans -- the lawyers and doctors and the kind of people that your father knew in the voluntary organization. Look at who is running this place." And he tried to educate me, you know, to tell me. It was hard because I believed my father. You know, I mean he was my everything and I -- I couldn't believe it. But I told my mother. And my mother said, "Mon might very well be right." And she said, "Bring him home." And I brought Monfred home and he and my mother and my sister became fast friends. I mean they believed in Monfred, more than I believed in Monfred because I had something to protect. And so -- but he -- he -- he was everything they said he was, you know. He was the rock of the ages, and at 20. He came from a different kind of family also from Germany, but very different. And he was political from a very, very early age, and so was his -- his sister was less political, but very conscious of the situation. And anyway Monfred told me that I would be murdered if I -- "If you get called up," he said to me, "you do not go." And I said, "That is impossible. I mean what would happen to my parents if I don't go." And Monfred said to me, "Nothing that wouldn't happen otherwise," he said. And it was terrible. I mean I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Everyone who goes and gets into their hands will be killed." He said, "They are all going to die." And I wouldn't believe it and I couldn't believe it. So he took me to a party -- one of those parties with the kids and

everybody was sitting around saying we're going tomorrow and rah rah -- and Monfred said to me, "You see this guy over there, Leo Vials?" "Yes." He says, "He's not going." I said, "That's impossible." He's saying he's going. He said, "That's what you have to do. Nobody has to know that he's not going, but he's part of us. And he is not going." And then it took him about three hours to explain to me how anybody could not go, and what you'd do if you don't go. And -- and how you survive, and where do you get food. And where do you get money and -- And this was my first acquaintance with the possibility, you know, of not going. And then in my dance class -- I went after work to a dance class -- I met a fellow named _____ and he had a friend who he told me could get me false papers. Ike came to me and he said, "It is time for you to start thinking." Now he was Dutch. He was not Jewish -- and he said to me, "It is time for you to start thinking about doing something about not going." I said, "Where do you go come on. Where do you take it." He said, "I have a friend who told me all about it." He said, "You need paper." And he said, "It'll be 300 gilden." I remember that. 300 gilden. That was a lot of money you know. And I came home and I said to my Mother that I needed the money and she said, "What for?" And I said, "For the papers." And she said, "Tomorrow, when you go back to school you'll have it." And those were my first false papers. And they were very bad. But they saved my life. And on the papers -- in -- in those days, at the early days, the -- the false papers were people who died or people who had happened to have really lost them or various ways that you could get papers and what they would do is they would take out the picture of the person -- the original person, and insert your -- your picture and your fingerprint and whatever else they had to change -- to change. And, of course, these were not papers that had a J on it, which those were identify papers without a J. They looked very authentic. Now mine was of a 22 year old girl. I was 17 maybe and I looked like 13. Pigtails, little. So they were unlikely papers. If anybody really stood there and looked as it said, this girl is 22 years old you know. So those were my papers. And I had them. And then one night -- oh, he also, Monfred also -- then I told Monfred I had the papers and he looked at them and he said, "They're not bad. They're not bad. They're very good. Keep them where you can get to them." And then we went to another party, and there he had organized that one of the escaped communists from Germany was there and he took off his shirt and it was, you know, he had welts and -- and x-cuts and I mean it was pretty bad to look at it. And he -- and this guy told us that, you know, that he'd gotten that in one of the camps, you know, and he had -- I think Bergen-Belsen. He had escaped and he was, he was telling us about the camps. And he was telling us about the salt mines and he was telling us about all sorts of things, you know, that and when we were through with that, Monfred said to me, "Do you believe me now?" I believed him. I believed him! And I came home and I said to my father -- I told my father I had the papers, my false papers and I said to him, "I'm not going. Whenever they call me, I said, 'I'm not going.'" And my father said, "You have to go." He said, "What will happen to us." And there came this beautiful guilt was put on me like a hood you know, all over. If you try to save yourself, that's what it meant, you know, we will all die. Because in that -- in Westerborg, they had various kinds of barracks. They had barracks for -- the normal barracks for people were picked up normally, and they had barracks that had a big S on it for Straasburger, and in those barracks were the people who had been bad, you know. And that would -- would be them. And those people would go on transports first. They would -- in during the selections.

I think because I know very well that some of them escaped and some of them got out and some survived just as much I guess. Maybe a less percentage, but just as much as anybody else, which in Holland wasn't good. So for months, I tried to live with that, you know, and say, "Okay. I can't kill my family." And my father, he felt he had calmed me down. And then one night we were sitting on our big window in the living room and we were looking out. It was -- already it was curfew. There were curfews at night. And all of a sudden, we see trucks come out. Long rows of trucks. And they're starting at the _____ at the -- at the high rise that you saw in the picture. On the _____ not on the _____ on _____ where we lived -- and they were coming out. And I -- I mean I couldn't believe what was happening. They were pick -- going into every -- the way this -- and the street is set up that they were -- every entrance had steps going up to a platform, and then a wide staircase going up to another platform and on that platform were six apartments. I think there were six. And they would -- at that point they did not just pick up everybody, you know. They -- they came with lists and they picked up people by name and they took -- I know I remember it as today, they picked up old Mrs. Triman Mr. Triman was married to a Gentile lady and he was okay. But they picked up his mother. And she could hardly walk. She was a very old lady, and I -- my stomach -- they were good friends of ours. My stomach just turned. They picked up all the people I knew. And they stopped about two stoops before ours -- two -- you know, two platforms before ours. And, however, Monfred always knew what was going on. And he knew -- he lived in another part of town. And he knew that they were doing our street. And he sent this Leo Vial that I mentioned -- the guy. He had good false papers. He was a German civilian -- German soldier of some sort. He had -- wore a long leather coat and he was on a motor bike and had hood on. I mean you can imagine he looked like. And right in the middle of all this going on, the door bell rang and, of course, we -- my parents thought they were gonna -- I mean I thought I was gonna die and we thought how come. You know, the trucks aren't this far away. They aren't at our house yet. How come? What's going on? And it was Leo Vial, and he came to get me. Monfred had sent him to get me. Right in the middle of all this thing going on. This curfew and everything! Right? So I put my false papers in my pocket and I said to my, of course, the J was not on my clothes. I took it off. And I said to my father, "Goodbye." He grabbed me, and he kicked Leo down the stairs and Leo drove off and told Monfred, "I can't get her. She -- they won't let her go. I can't make a fuss. If I make a fuss, I get arrested. So I can't, you know, make a fuss." So he left and I was left there and, of course, that -- as I said, they stopped two platforms before us so nothing happened to us that night. But that was -- after the next getting together I went to _____ and I talked to all the people there and they didn't trust me because I was blabber mouth and everything, but they said -- they said to Monfred, "Hide her if you can." And that's what happened. Monfred's father had a factory where they made cosmetics, I think, and soap bottles and all this little stuff, and the first night I spent -- I was hidden in the factory. And it was right close to Ann Frank were -- the Ann Frank house. I mean it was on the same kind of a canal. I don't know if it was on the Frank's house, but it was on one of the canals. It was the same building, the same situation. And I stayed there, but they weren't planning for me to stay there. They couldn't have people stay in that house, so some how Monfred had arranged for me to go to a paisson where the woman didn't know anything about me. She got my false papers and she thought I was that person and she registered me with the police under that

name and the police didn't you know, they just registered me and that was it. And I lived there and that's where you have the pictures from -- the pictures of Monfred and me. They were taken in my room at that paisson. That was -- that was my first underground place. And I even got mail. They arranged even for me to get mail so the woman wouldn't get suspicious that I was alone -- a loner and that maybe, you know, there was something wrong with me. And she got my coupons. I got food coupons, which Monfred somehow got. I had everything. I went to ballet class, a different school, of course, not -- because Alice Kayser had already been picked up, so I went to a different school and I will tell you about that school later, but in any case, I lived a relatively normal life. I was no more hungry than anybody else and -- and it wasn't so bad then anyway during that early period. And Monfred and I became very good friends and, you know, I couldn't go to _____ anymore, of course. I was finished with that part of my life. I was underground. My parents were still there. You know, I forgot -- let's see. My parents were picked up twice. And the first time it might have been before I finally left, but I'm not sure. Maybe it was. I came home. It might have been before I finally left. That was when Ike said, "Now you need papers." _____ said -- . Yes it was before I finally left. Again, I was sitting -- and was up in the attic with a girl from next door who was half Jewish, and we heard all that noise. And there was this during the day and the green police were picking up everybody in the street, everybody who was Jewish on that street. And what they hadn't done -- they hadn't stopped the traffic and they hadn't stopped the trollies. They hadn't stopped every -- anything. It was during the day and everything was going on normally and they were just having themselves a little rautsey there. And I -- the girl next door went over the roof to her house and I went down and my father wasn't home because it was a working day, you know, and I took off the J and I took my false papers and I went -- no, I didn't have false papers. I had nothing! That's right. I had nothing. And I went down the stairs and again with the pig tail, you know, the whole works. I came on the lower platform and two German soldiers jumped up on it. And I was standing there in the middle. Little German girl in pig tails. Right? Little bag that said gym class. And they said to me, "Get the Hell out of here. We've got work to do" or some kind of thing. ____ That's what they said. _____. And it -- and I went and then I went on the trolley. I mean the trolley was running. I went on the trolley and I went -- I went to -- to Ike _____ mother house -- mother's house. And he -- they hid me. And then when he said, "You need false papers." That's how it was -- coming back to me. That's when I got my first false papers. And his mother hid me for three days and during those three days I kept calling home and finally, of course, I didn't get an answer because they had taken my sister and my -- and my mother, and my father, of course, went there -- there too. They had taken them in some gym room of a high school where they assembled them. And at that time my father's paper which said that he was working for the Yotserat and had -- had given him a freedom a permit and he -- and they let him out. They let my family out. And that was -- that was the first time they were taken away. Now, here I'm now going back to where I was in this paission. My mother at that time -- she had given some things to some Gentile neighbors below us. She had given silver, some clothes, some valuables -- things that she wanted to keep that she thought might be safer with them in case of an emergency. She had given things to one of my uncles, Yohan _____, who later became the head -- the director of the big theatre in Amsterdam after the war. paintings and stuff like that. Anyway, I'm in this paission and I'm going to

school and everything. And I hadn't seen my parents for a long time. We talked over the phone. I -- I'm very homesick, very homesick. And they are -- they want to see me. Right? And it's -- it's going to be a holiday. It's something we call _____, which I think is _____ but I'm not sure. It was about June 18th that I went there or June 19th, 1942. And I -- Monfred says to me, "You are crazy. You should not do such a thing. You never know what's going to happen, you know." I mean nothing has been announced. He hasn't heard through his sources that anything's going to happen, but you just don't know and it's better not and why should you. You know, I had to put up a star and -- and a J to go to my -- to go home. I mean if the neighbors would see me without, you know, I mean, they would know that I was -- it was ____ It was terribly dangerous. It was stupid. It was dangerous. And I did it anyway. I -- I went to somebody's house, sewed on the J, lightly but I sewed it on, and I went to see my parents and my sister. And, of course, there was a lot of crying and there was a lot of happiness that we were still there and we were still together and it's now 1943, June 1943. And everything goes fine that first evening and then the next morning at six, six o'clock -- in the letter that I wrote later, I write the right time a woman we used to call Cassandra came -- comes up and said, "I just heard. This whole area is closed off and we're all -- this is the big deal for this area. All the Jews are going to go. This is not a little rautsey by name. This is not by name. This is everything. Everybody!" And I was there. I was there! I was caught! I was -- I couldn't -- I mean it was terrible. At the same time, you know, I was with my family and if anything happened to them, it would happen to me and this was it, you know. And my mother said to my father, "Frans, _____," which means Frans, she goes. She has to leave, you know. And I had my papers. I had my papers. Couldn't take a thing. My father says to me, "Bless you. Go. This is the end. I think this is it. This really is it. This is the last time. This is it." He said, "You go. You go. Try it. Doesn't matter anymore, you know. Just try it." And I didn't even think how fantastic that was, you know, that I had his -- at least at the last moment that he said I agree with you, go. And not that it lessens the guilt. Really, it doesn't lessen the guilt of not being with them, you know, not participating in that thing that happened to them. We had a hiding place in the house which was in the attic where there were two nice rooms in the attic and there was a double wall and we had suitcases. They used to be called elephants. They were more like trunks with a rounded top and they were grey, and that's why they're called elephants and on the back of one of those, my mother had made a handle, and she had made a big hole in the wall and you know, Susie -- she promised me she would put Susie in that hole. And I said to her, we will come and get her, you know. And you can go in there too. She had papers. Monfred had gotten her papers, and had gotten Susie and -- and my father papers. He said, Monfred had said to me, "You father will never use them, but I don't want to have it on my conscious that he can't if he needs to, you know," and so as I left, you know, I said to them, "Put Susannah in -- in there, you know, in that hole. Give her her papers. Make her pull the thing. And you to _____, you know." All of you. Go in there." And -- and, of course, they didn't, I mean. They didn't even use it. They didn't use the papers. They didn't use -- they didn't go in the hole. They didn't do anything. Anyway, I went down -- down and it was a beautiful day. It was like this morning except cooler you know. Sunny, warm, June day in Holland. So beautiful. Little clouds and -- It's so easy to close a neighborhood off in Holland in Amsterdam because there are water everywhere. Right! All you have to do is stand on the bridges. Just stand on the bridges. You

can stop anybody. I didn't know where to go. I had no where to go. I didn't know the bridges were closed off, so I went to the bridges. And I went to the first bridge and I saw there was somebody standing in it. And then I remembered that there were people from ____ where I had worked who had good hiding places, who were communists, you know, and who would certainly hide a little blonde girl. Right? So I went there. And man, they were so angry. They told me I'm stupid. I was endangering them. How would I dare come to a house, you know, people might be watching me. I'm coming into a house -- nobody else is on the street and here's this kid walking down the street and it's coming to their house, and they have to be saved because they later on want to save Germany. Right? After the war, they want to make into a great communist country. Or anyway they want to change Germany into something good, and I was endangering them. And away with me! That was the end of my communisms if I ever had any. I'm telling you I didn't know what it was, but I -- right there, I knew that, you know, these people were no different from anybody else and it's dog eat dog and save yourself and, you know, I didn't think all of that right then. I just knew I had no place to go. All of a sudden, loud speakers all over the place. "All Jews had to prepare themselves. Gentiles are not allowed in the streets." Loud and clear. All over. And I'm in the streets. The only person in the street except for those damn people on the bridges. Right? There were no trucks going yet, because they gave them an hour or something to get ready. So I was the only one on the street. Of course, there were people in the windows, and they saw me. Right? I was already out of my neighborhood, so it must probable that people who saw didn't know who I was and and I'm walking along and I come to that -- to the first bridge, and there's two soldier, a green soldier, you know, and there is a black anspera on that bridge. And I didn't know what to say, you know. And I go up there and I say and they say, "What the Hell are you doing." I mean I had -- there was nobody there. And I said, "Well, I had come to that part of Amsterdam on the trolley in the morning to go swimming with a girlfriend. We were going out far away and -- and anyway, I tell this long story and they look at me and they say, "Boy, you are lying because no trolley has come into this section the entire morning." And I, of course, didn't know that. Trolleys start at six and I -- So they said, "If we could get off this bridge, we'd take you to the police, but we're supposed to stand here and we're only ones on the bridge and we can't go anywhere, so -- " They said, "You better get away from here and go home. Go back to your girlfriend's house or something." So I went to the next bridge, and the next bridge I already know something you know. I know. And I say, "While I was staying over with a girlfriend overnight to -- to go swimming in the morning and now I hear all this going on and I think my mother is going to be very worried about me, and I better go back home and I -- I want to get home, and I have to go over there. And -- and he said, "Like to make a date for you tonight, but right now, you know, I can't get off the bridge and you can't go over there. It's against the rules and I can't -- I can't do it." I'm getting very scared. I'm -- because it's only one more bridge that's not too far before they come in with the trucks and I -- I thought what am I going to say? What am I going to say? And I couldn't think of anything to say. And I get to the bridge and there's one German soldier. Just a young, German soldier. And, again, this total surprise, you know. And he says, _____. And I'm crying. _____ in German, you know, and I'm crying and he gets all upset. You know, he's young. He thinks I am his sister no doubt. And he says _____. Where is your mother? Where is she? And I say _____. "Get

over there. Hurry!" That was it. Saved by life. Sunday, beautiful Sunday over there. People going to church. Quiet. Nothing going on. Two streets up nobody knows what's happening one street further. I go to Monfred, not to my passion because I'd said I'd be gone for several days and I don't want to suddenly show you up, you know, on a day where there is a rausea in another place, you know. So I got to Monfred's house. They are sleeping. Now, you have to know that Monfred -- he says now, he's not tied in with anything. I don't know. He always knew. He always knew what was going in -- on, and he knew nothing. He knew nothing! They had ways to get into closed off areas. Again, there were the leather coats and the German accents and the papers. They had everything. So they tried to get over there, to get my parents, to get their friends. They couldn't. They couldn't get in. This time everything was closed up. He couldn't believe it either. He just -- we tried everything. Just everything. Of course, the phones didn't work. I heard later that the Jews just came down the steps. They just came down the steps. And they just climbed on those wagons. They helped each other up there, and they sat and they were taken away. Now, you have to know that I had many friends. I had a friend named Marie Austria, who was a photographer, my teacher -- photography teacher later on, and her sister _____ later on, and she lived on _____. She lived about two of these stoops away from Ann Frank. And I had modeled for her. She's the one who took all the pictures that you have -- the big ones. And she she decided -- she and her sister decided. This is big rausea. This is a mixed neighborhood. How do the -- this is Sunday. How do they know who's where? Which door is what. It's not as if they come with a list. They didn't come with a list. And so they had a hiding -- the same hiding place that we had. You know, in the double wall behind -- with some -- well, I don't know what they had hiding that hole in the wall, but that's where they went. They went up. They never opened the door when they knocked on their door. They didn't open. And it was a big rausea, and they didn't break any doors. They did nothing. They just passed that door up. Nobody opened the door. It might be people that are away on a trip. It's Sunday. They -- anyway, in the evening they left. And they survived the war. I mean -- you know -- it's just -- there were other circumstances that they survived the war and they had other dangers later on. But we're talking about that moment of decision. That moment! That moment of decision. One little thing. One little thing. One decision made. I later heard of people -- actually friends of Marie Austria or a friend of Marie Austria, a woman who had been in Auschwitz and had lost most of her teeth, you know, and looked like Hell, and when the Germans left Auschwitz, they walked the people. You have heard of that. and they walked them and many of them died because of the bombardments on the middle of the road, etc., like that. But she -- who was French. She was French. And she at one corner where all the Germans said, "And now to the right," she went to the left. And she survived the war. She came home. Back to France. She found her husband who really -- that was really a story. I mean I'm getting off the track here.

Q: Let's -- Let's come back to you. Okay?

A: Yal. Yal.

Q: June '43, what did you do?

A: Anyway, June 20th, so I went -- I went, after a few days, you know, I went back to my paission. I stayed with Monfred and his mother and his sister and her fiance. They all lived together in a -- how had they found the place where they were going to survive the war in 91 Valarstraats in Amsterdam. Monfred's sister, Marga, whose picture you have was a very inventive and a very intelligent, very bright young woman. She was -- I don't -- I imagine she was three years or two years older than I was, maybe four. I'm not sure. But she had always sort of helped support with sewing. She was a genius in -- in clothing design and manufacturing. And she always was much more practical. She wasn't at all a girl who went to school or anything, but she always had her hand in things. And she know how to get acquainted with people that were important. for her! For what she wanted! She saw an ad in a paper for the upstairs of a house in the Valarstraat with a family of Anespairs -- actually Dutch fascists. And she went there. And she said, "We would like that. We would very much like that and the apartment, and there will be various number of people because all of us travel. We work for the German for the Wehrmacht and we do this and we do that -- you know, speaking German very well. And this was a Dutch woman who could not speak German very well. Her husband was an Anespair and -- and she and her son were living down stairs while the guy worked for the Germans somewhere in Germany. And that's how they got that first apartment. So it was a pretty safe place to work -- live if you didn't give it away. If not something, you know, you couldn't have assemblies there. You couldn't -- you know, you had to take into account what kind of place it was, but all of us, nearly all of us -- of this particular group were not hidden away like Ann Frank was where you couldn't move. I mean we all were on the streets. It was dangerous, very dangerous. I mean I was well known in Amsterdam. My family was well known in Amsterdam. It's a small town, you know. It's not like now, millions of people. You -- you were very well known in your neighborhood. And I wasn't in the exact same neighborhood. I was still in Amsterdam south, but it was the old south, rather than the new south. And I was not as well known there, except by a few people. So the way they made your papers, your false papers -- they gave you the same first name that you really had. So if somebody would suddenly see you and yell, "Hey, Barbara," it would be okay. You don't call each by the last name so you know -- so -- That's my paper -- my name always was Barbara, which was very helpful. So that was why I went to see Monfred that night when we after -- or that morning after my parents were taken. Anyway, I heard that they were all taken away, and they -- again, they tried to get free with these papers, but the papers were now null and void. It was pass the period that these papers would do anything for anybody. And they were sent to Westerborg, which is the assembly camp. In the -- in the assembly camp was already my cousin Heinz. I've told you about him and his wife. My cousin Heintz was hidden through the Dutch underground -- some kind of channel. The way -- the way it seemed to have happened was all through individuals. You knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody. There wasn't a great big organization where people all knew each other. It was one person knew another knew another knew another. The less you knew the better, because if you get caught you can give away maybe one person. Maybe! If you were not tough as nails. And this is what happened with my aunt and uncle. They -- rather my cousin. They were hidden by a -- a Dutch family, and it so happened that the son of that Dutch family also did other things. Most people who hid people were not allowed to do anything else, but they, of course, didn't

know about their son who was receiving weapons which were dropped by the British in Holland for the resistance -- to be used by the resistance in the middle of the night -- .planes that flew low, you know, whatever it was. And he he was given away by somebody and they came to that house and they took -- they took the men. Just the men. Not my cousin, my cousin Ava. They didn't take her or the wife. And Ava was immediately put somewhere else. But Heinz was caught and he was then sent to Westerborg as a Jew. The -- This other person -- the Gentile survived the war which was a miracle, but he had somebody who got him out in somewhere.

Q: Let's come back to you.

A: To me. Okay. Well, my Uncle Heintz -- my cousin Heintz was already in -- in Westerborg, and he, of course, he saw his mother. He saw my mother. He saw my father. He saw my sister. He saw my grandmother. All going through there! And Heintz did survive the war in Westerborg. There were very, very few people who did. There were -- I think there were 300 at the end. And he was one of them who survived. And they actually kept him in the camp for a little while just to make sure he didn't happen to be -- because of his German, again, his German business. But he wasn't a German who was trying to hide as a Jew -- in a Jewish camp, which happened a heck of a lot. I mean, any -- later on, it was the Germans who were trying to save their lives and -- and hide and -- and try to stay alive. What about me? During the war, I must say that most of the war really spent standing in line for food. Because of the way I looked I could do that. And we had -- we hid a lot of people. And that really was -- after reading the book, I realize that it was true, that what the little groups did was try to help themselves and each other staying alive. It was less a big picture, you know, that you -- that the underground would attack something or somebody, although I guess that happened, but not with us.

Q: Tell us about you!

A: About me?

Q: I'm not interested in the book right now. Okay? I want to know about you and what you did.

A: Okay. I stood in line for food. I also did a few other things. I was -- as -- as I say, they had to be careful with me because I was pretty stupid. And I -- they put me to work -- they put me -- I was a dancer. Right? And there was a ballet company in Amsterdam run by Evan Geeorgi, -- Evan Geeorgi who was a great dancer from somewhere in Germany, and Hamburg or Hanover -- something like that, and she was put by the Germans in into the Dutch large state theater to run the ballet company. I went into her ballet school and took classes and I was then asked to join the company. And I asked if -- the underground, "Was it alright?" "Oh, Yes!" Because you got fantastic papers when you went there -- into this company. Because the company traveled, you got papers to be out after curfew. And that way I could help shift people from one hiding place to another or like American soldiers -- shot down people other people who were underground -- . And let me tell you how this was

done. There were no more trucks, taxis. And there were very few cars, because there was no gasoline for them to use. So what they had was people on bicycles pulling, you know, like in third world countries, they would pull little wagons behind them. Some of them were covered so that when it rained, which it does a lot in Holland, you know, people wouldn't get wet. And others were open. All sorts of various ways of transportation. And the few people that I moved were moved in the middle of the night, you know, I mean after curfew. With them being the bench and me sitting, you know, sitting like this bent over and me sitting on top on -- on sitting on their backs with a rather short skirt and my very good papers, with make-up on still from the ballet and when the Germans stuck their -- when the Dutch police stuck their head in there and saying, "What is this?" you know. Curfew is on -- you could -- I would have a smile and papers. And I shifted a lot of people. That way! You know, from one hiding place that had gotten dangerous to another one which is new, hopefully better. And I did little things like that. Also, Monfred would distribute the _____ which was the communist newspaper. Marga was distributing the ____ which was the regular -- the -- the other newspaper. And I would be sent carrying bags of those with lettuce and tomatoes and carrots on top. And, again, you know I would be -- I would be told, "You bring this to a certain little portal with and just somebody will come and get it." I didn't know who was going to get it. I didn't know when they were there. If they were there before me or after me. I -- you know, I would go. I would watch the portal and if I saw somebody go into a specific corner of it, and not ring the bell or -- or, you know, whatever it was that I thought these were the right people, I would walk up with the bag. And if they took it, they were the right people. If they didn't, I would walk on. Little things like that. I also Marga's fiance -- we were constantly short of money of course. That was a big problem. And Monfred in his letter to me just now said that some money we had because some more jewelry of my -- they had a lot of jewelry that was being sold and I had little pieces left that I could sell. It was sold to Dutch people who, you know, wanted it as an investment. And the money was used for us to eat and -- and live, rent and stuff like that. Later on Leo Vial would transport Dutch workers to France. We tried to mix-up people, because the Germans were taking all the young people to Germany to work in those factories, not particularly in concentration camps, just in factories while their own people went to the various fronts. And we would mix-up these. We would have Frenchmen in Holland, and Dutchman -- and when the Germans would find them, the French would say, "We were sent here to work in -- in Holland and for the Dutch -- for the German industry," And the Dutchman in France would say, "But we were shipped here by the Germans to work for the for the French industry." I mean it was a total mix-up. Some people also would be sent, if we were lucky, would be sent through France and Spain into Portugal and would then join the Dutch Free Forces on the British 8th Brigade in England if one would be able to get there. But our Leo only took them to France. Well, on his way home he would often bring suitcases full of lipsticks and _____, you know, all these wonderful French things that you couldn't get. And perfumes and other things that the French and that Holland didn't have. And then me, I would be sent to sell them. And I would go to -- he even wrote the addresses down where I would go to sell them downtown in Amsterdam. And people would buy them like crazy. I mean I didn't -- I sold them wholesale. I sold the whole suitcase full all at once, and we would eat. And one time I came home and I saw the Dutch police all over the place, watching -- in our house. Well, I knew enough,

Thank God, not to go home. So I stood on the corner watching til they came back out and -- and they had made a mistake. Of course, they didn't. I don't know what Monfred did, but he got rid of them. And -- I mean there -- there were always -- always these horrible moments, you know, where you think, "Now, this is it. This is it." And also one time I drove -- rode my bike up a one-way street the wrong way. I..I was really confused. It was downtown and there was a lot of traffic. And I got stopped. And, of course, they looked at my papers. By that time, I had much better papers. Now, with the dancing, that ended because somebody told Evan that I was Jewish. Now she was supposedly pro-Hitler and pro this and pro that, but she knew that I was Jewish and she never did anything about it. Never! She called -- did call me in and she said, "It would be better if you had a little more training before you go on further trips." She put that very well. She never said, you know, "I put you into this company because you were so good and what the Hell have you done to me?" She said exactly what I told you. She said, "A little more training would be good for you, so just go to school." So that she -- you know, wouldn't be endangered and I would be must less endangered. And the strange thing was that she had been told by people who were actually watching out for me. Was a different group of people. It was Maria Austria and her friend, _____, who are all in the book who thought it was much too dangerous for me to do what I did, and who didn't want me to do it. And I wouldn't listen. And so that's how they did it. They went and they told Yvonne Georgi about that. So I have -- I have a picture of Yvonne Georgi which she had signed for me and -- and, you know, and I gave her her book and we -- we left. I never did believe that was really a fascist. She was a artist who -- who maybe didn't have as much character as one was supposed to have, but she was a German and she was -- I don't know. I -- who's going to throw the first stone. She didn't kill me. She was good to me. Really. And after the war, when all the artists marched -- you know in the -- in the -- what's the big festival after we were liberated -- liberated? I was not allowed to march because I had worked for the German, you know, in the ballet, during -- Nobody ever said -- nobody ever said: But she did it because of the papers. The underground didn't say anything. Monfred didn't say anything. Nobody -- I mean, Monfred probably didn't think it was very important. I thought it was terrible! I should have been able to march with the others and, anyway, this is after war stuff. That's German -- Dutch bureaucracy kicked in and -- and everything was -- was, you know, back to the way they thought life should be run.

Q: Okay. We need to pause here and change tapes.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Okay. Now we go. You were going to tell us a little more about your underground activities, particularly in smuggling packages?

A: I didn't smuggle. I sent them by mail. The Germans would let you send packages to people in Westerborg, and I managed during the nine months that my parents were there -- I managed to send a lot of packages. And I was always collecting things, you know, as I went along. And, of course, we had ration coupons so it was hard, and I always got letters back. Actually, we had mail from there. Regular mail -- regular mail from my parents. And the mail I guess was read, but it was sent on. And they received everything I sent. Nothing was dis -- had disappeared. I also want to say that, you know, when they were taken away that I never knew that they were in Auschwitz. I didn't know where they had gone. I heard they had been sent on, and that was it. And it now appears that it was in January of '44. And it was -- it was a terrible shock. It was just really incredible shock. And I also want to say that I think I survived because I was 17 or you know, by that time 19. It's the sort and it was exciting, you know, this living alone and not knowing -- everyday it was something else, and not knowing what was going to happen. The drudgery, you know, of trying to get food and of survival and -- Okay. At 19 they felt I was getting old enough to do some other things also. You know, since I couldn't be in the ballet anymore, I had to be good for something. And besides standing in line for food, which was hard in the winter in the rain and in the cold I can tell you. We took care of a lot of other people who were underground who could not be out. I mean from the point of view of -- I didn't particularly see these people, but I had to supply food, you know, get food for them. Somebody made me or helped me -- I forgot how, but I rented an apartment. Was the same apartment with the same street, the 91, you know, where we had been before. This was now an 86. was on the second floor of 80 -- number 86 in the Valarastratt. We might have just heard that it was coming free, you know, because we were right there in the neighborhood. Anyway, it was rented under my name my false name, of course. And then a very difficult time started. Very difficult! First of all, we went into the hunger winter. You know the time that the south was liberated, south being Braba -- north Braba, and all those. And that only did provinces around _____ were still occupied and _____ was coming up along the Rhine and we were stuck in that area. Not only us, but also the Germans. They couldn't get out. And this was the first time that they also had less food. They started to be hungry. And we started -- they started to be scared of the underground who had all the weapons -- had so many weapons. And they had weapons, but they were mostly old men and kids, you know, and it was just a very, very scary situation. And during that time I had the apartment and apartment had big windows. And I met the neighbors from across the street, and they were telling me that the people downstairs would go upstairs to our apartment when we were out and steal the food out of the closet. Well, that was one thing. But we also were hiding people there. And that was another thing! Right? And the -- imagine them running into these people. So we had hiding places. You know, we had closets -- what used to be closets, was now papered over and there was an entrance via the floor and there was a rug that went up to it. And, of course, the people we hid knew how to get into these closets. Of course, the Germans weren't stupid either and if something was going in --

on, you know, if they did have a rautsea, if they did have a check into various apartments, they would stick their bayonets into the walls and into the floors and, you know, looking for people. And There was one guy which was assigned to our -- to my apartment where I lived with Monfred and with various other people of the group whoever was around at the time. And this man was, I think, a Czech -- Czechish communist. And he would give lectures in our apartment and we weren't allowed to have more than three or four people, so this very scary, and I started to be very scared. And, first of all, I didn't like what he said and I said to Mon, "You know, I do not want this anymore. This is my apart -- you know, I hired under my name and I would -- I'm responsible and it's dangerous. And these people, they will tell on us. And Monfred said, It's nothing to be done. We have to have him." He also had to have his wife on weekends. So she was hidden somewhere else. RighT? But on weekends, she came to our place. And one day this -- this one woman and I who took care of the apartment were told that the Germans were going to check into place, and in several in the neighborhood. So we had to move him. We had to move him. And we moved him at night some -- to another apartment -- another place. And then we had to clean up to see that they didn't see that there had been a man anywhere, because there was supposed to be two women living in this apartment. So we started -- we went into his apartment -- into his room and he had left everything. Cigars! First of all, how did he have cigars? Nobody had cigars. Apples! Foods! Cheese! We didn't give it to him. How did he get it? And when -- finally when all this was over, you know, the Germans never did come to visit -- to us to check up, but when it was all over, I said to my friend, "I do not want this guy." It's terrible. I mean he was a hoarder, somebody who hoarded things. We were supposed to share everything, you know. This was very important. And he was a communist. He should know how to share. Anyway, he -- I told Monfred, "he has to go." And Monfred got very, very angry. They beat up on me because they were so angry that I would, you know, and I -- and they said, "Well, what can you do to us. You can't do anything anything to us." I said -- and I stupid -- my old stupid, I said, "Yes, I can go to the police." Can you believe it? I was just impossibly stupid. I mean I was so desperate. You know I thought we're all going to be caught. You know, we're all -- and -- and I'll never forget that guy. It was awful, and his red headed wife. Impossible! So anyway, those are -- were some of the adventures, you know, during the -- and, of course, the Americans -- New Year's Eve -- American soldiers, who had to be hidden, you know, from -- they would be shot down by the Germans over -- the -- the -- the planes would come flying. They were full of bombs, you know. And on the way home, he might have a bomb left. And they would drop a bomb. They would just drop the bomb -- the -- the Americans. So sometimes the Germans got one of those planes, and we got somebody to hide -- English, American, whatever. New Year's Eve, the American went on the roof and shot off his gun. I mean I'm sorry. Ohhhh! So -- uh -- then the -- the hunger got so great that the -- and we got to the end -- toward the end, you know, the Germans knew -- toward the end. And they let the Red Cross drop food in Amsterdam -- in and around Amsterdam. And the Red Cross -- we had flat roofs. You know, the roofs in Amsterdam behind the decorations are flat. So they dropped cases of food on the roofs or in the parks or in open space, and the Germans were so scared by that time they didn't dare to pick them up. And the underground and -- I -- the food was distributed evenly, you know. You had to give whatever -- if you found one on your roof, you know, you better take it. And we were all starving. We were really -- the bread was

-- had gone sour. We ate everything, you know, that -- that they dropped. And then the -- we heard that the Canadians were coming to liberate us. I haven't told you about Akmier.

Q: I'd like you to go back and tell us about Akmier.

A: Okay. Well, toward the end of the war, I kept hearing about a man man Almier who was a German, and who did fantastic things for the underground, the Dutch underground. And Monfred said one day that Akmier's place of hiding was not very good and Akmier should, perhaps, if it was alright -- it was my apartment -- right? -- Akmier should come to us. Well, Akmier came to visit -- to see if that was alright. Well we also arranged a girl for him to come that he might like. We wanted him to come because it was dangerous for him. We didn't want him to get into trouble. Now it turned out that -- that he was -- he really had to stay where he was he felt for a little while. And the underground came to him to Monfred and said you have to get him out of there because if he is -- when we get liberated, if he is where he is now, we might have to send him back to Germany or anyway he'll be in deep trouble. And so they sent me to get him. And I went over there I said you have to come and stay us and you have to come. You have to come. So Akmier came. And then I heard his whole story. He -- he was a German -- was involved in a Munich story where the six people were hanged. Six students -- they turned over a whole suitcase full of pamphlets on -- on an assembly in -- of Munich University full of anti-Hitler propaganda. And in one -- of course, they all got caught. I mean it was very early on and nobody knew what to do. So -- so in one of their books was his name? -- in one of his -- the notebooks, address books was his name, and somehow they managed to get him out of Germany. He had just finished his medical studies and he was sent to Villemina Hot Towers in Amsterdam, which is a mental institution and hospital in Amsterdam, and he was supposed to study further psychiatry. He wanted to go into psychiatry. So he studied there and worked there, and he started working with the underground. And he -- he's the one -- one of the people who supplied us with all the serums -- of in..inoculations, of all the diseases you caught during the war. He got us a piece of soap once in awhile. He he helped people. He moved people from one place to -- he did a whole lot probably that I don't even know about. And then the Germans shifted him to France because there were big battles going on in France, and they needed psychiatrists -- some people to help. And in France and once -- once he got there, the situation was so disastrous that he was supposed to tell the soldiers it was worthwhile fighting for Germany. It was worthwhile fighting. And he saw -- he couldn't do that It was idiotic. It was ridiculous to fight. And one of the lucky things, then -- more or less, lucky -- was terrible for him -- was that they needed surgeons worse than they needed psychiatrists in the end you know. And he was made to work sewing up these left over pieces of flesh and he absolutely lost his mind. He just couldn't. That was not his nature. He couldn't stand -- stand it. And so toward V-J day, he had a little Fiat -- little thing, you know, that they had the one -- for one person like bug, they used to call little bug, and he got in it and he -- he rode. He got to Belgium _____ and there were Germans there and they painted big white zeros, circles on -- on all the cars that went through. So Akmier said to himself that doesn't look too good, you know, why should I have a mark like that on my car. And he went to the next town and he washed off the zero -- the -- the -- and he drove on and he heard shooting and he saw a whole

lot of cars with big white zeros and there were men and women standing up against the cars being shot, one after the other. Deserters. Shooting the deserters! He didn't have a zero on his car, and he made to Holland. And in Holland, he called the underground and the underground -- the car had broken down so he had to walk a little bit. And in Holland the -- the underground brought him a suit, took his and buried it -- his uniform and buried it, and took him to Amsterdam and hid him. And Akmier did a little bit of work, but not too much then because he could -- what could he do, you know. He was, himself, endangered. And -- and then after the war, Akmier stayed in Holland. He got this -- you know, the Queen said he was a guy and he could stay -- a good German, and he was -- he was really very marvelous. But he had a lot of damage done to his physic during the war, and he never, you know, he just -- he was a psychiatrist and just -- just by himself you know. He didn't -- he worked as a psychiatrist, but not -- he doesn't share. He doesn't -- I often I always asked him, you know, "Don't you share with others? Don't you discuss your cases with others, don't you?" "Uh-huh." Nothing. Nothing. Just sit. And

Q: You and Akmier became involved.

A: We became very involved, but in the end I decided to come to the States anyway. No, I -- I wanted children and Akmier did not want children. He said, "This is not a world" -- this is one of the things that was done to him. I mean, what happened to him. He couldn't get passed it, shall we say. He said this is not a world for -- for any children. And he ended up marrying a woman who already had a child and couldn't have anymore. I mean he really looked for somebody like that and he found somebody who was divorced and had the kind of blood disease that she couldn't have any more children then. He -- he -- it was terrible. It really was so sad. And he -- he had such talent. You know, he played the violin, and he was very well educated. His father was an incredible person. His father -- there were three sons. Now let me just say that because you have to hear something good about Germans. ____ His father was the headmaster of a school and when this all came about and Hitler came up -- his father called his three sons and he said, "There's only one God." They were all Catholic. "There's only one God and he is not on this earth. And there is only one law, and it's God's law." That's what his father said. And all the boys were terrific. I mean two of them did go to the front, but they all survived. But I mean there are people like that. And he lost his job. The father was thrown out. Right? But they needed teachers so bad, he ended up teaching, just plain old teaching then.

Q: Come back to you. The war's end is approaching.

A: The war's ending. The war's ending, and people are showing up. People come popping out of the woodwork. My cousin, Ava comes back. She says, "Here I am." And she told me they were all -- my cousins -- you know, I started learning who was alive and who was dead.

Q: Tell us -- tell us about the day of liberation?

A: Well, you know that was a day -- we knew -- there was a terrible thing that happened at the

last. You might have already have heard about that where the underground had been able to absolutely -- and was not able to do anything because it -- you know -- it -- and they were so frustrated. I mean they did do things like shoot a soldier -- shoot -- shoot somebody, you know, or -- or blow up some trains. I -- I guess they did some things like that, you know. But they had all these weapons. And they hadn't been able to get their hands on the Germans, and they really wanted that. And in Amsterdam, you know, we knew the -- the Canadians were coming and -- and everybody went downtown to the Dom, which is the big place in front of the town. And on the Dam also was the German officer's Club, right -- I mean the Palace of the Queen is, shall we say, to the north and officer's club just a little street apart, maybe 10 feet, 12 feet. There was the German Officers Club. And who was in this club? Old guys and boys of 15! I mean really the Germans had nobody left that, so the -- some how somebody had a big shotgun in -- in the Palace -- the underground had a big shotgun and shot into the club. And, of course, the Germans then had to fight and I think since there were so many people standing right there in the Dom, I think 147 people died -- and -- and I -- many Germans died. I mean it was totally useless. It was one of those things that happened in total confusion and fear on both sides, fear and loathing on both sides, and just a horrible, stupid, awful thing. Well, during that period we were getting sort of ready. You knew you could already go on the streets. You knew you didn't have to be as afraid. And they were coming. And they did come. They came. And I remember looking at the trucks coming and full of these healthy pink and blond and blue and black-eyed guys. I -- I thought our -- our guys were great looking, you know. I'd never seen so much flesh. I mean it was incredible. And, of course, we went out there and screamed. We just screamed. And all my dance buddies, you know, my ballet -- my friends, they all -- I heard all of them -- they all had boyfriends. They all got boyfriends, and this and that. I, of course, had a friend and I did not. I had always been scared to death of any kind of soldiers, so I never had anything to do with any kind of soldier. Anyway, gun carrying, uniformed person. It was awful. It was -- I mean it was wonderful. It was heavenly, and it was scary. Very, very scary! Because I didn't really know where I belonged then, you know. I knew I had -- I had immediately withdrawn because I got into the ballet. The ballet 1945 was started right then. It had already been started for a whole month before that, and we had rehearsed to get ready for -- for the ballet. But then it really started and I started to work nearly immediately after the war was over in the Ballet 1945. Then later we came to the States, Ballet Company, _____ grew out of that. And then they had a festival, a wonderful festival. And, of course, there were no lights. There was not yet any electricity. By that time we had to go down and get water to the third floor in buckets between three and five, you get -- got assigned periods where you get water in buckets and we were pretty starved. I mean during that we ate from the fox kitchen. We ate bulbs flower bulbs, soup made out of flower bulbs and we ate -- well, whatever the soup kitchen came up with, that's what we ate. You know, you had three little pots and one of you had to go and get it. And the amazing thing was that the formerly poor people complained much more than the people who formerly had money. It was very, very funny. And the articles in the paper were a riot. But hunger was not funny. And we would go up and get up in the morning and have -- have a ship's cracker, you know, one of these hard tack things, and we haven't -- hadn't had any butter or fat for so long that we were freezing to death. I was always cold. I was -- and this is still one of my greatest fear. I can stand hunger better

than cold. It was terribly cold. We would take -- there was six of us or seven of us in the apartment -- we would go all in one bed and put everybody's blankets and mattresses on top of us and we still were cold, you know. And eat a hard tack before getting up, and then only cold water to wash with. And, of course, after -- right after -- oh, we had no coal to heat -- heat the stove, which by the way was the only thing to cook on. Remember gas wasn't there anymore. So we got -- Monfred had a big -- he got a lot of peat from outside and -- and we brought -- we had a whole room, small room, storage room full of peat. And we used the peat to -- to cook on the stove which was just a little heating, which also heated the room. And that peat was full of fleas and we had a flea plague on top of the cold and the hunger. And one night I caught 84 fleas. I killed 84 fleas. I mean we were covered, and actually we didn't get rid of it til the Americans gave us some DDT, which was brand new then. I mean I don't think there even. I mean it was just in total disaster. We were hungry, cold, and full of fleas by the end of the war. It was outrageous. And then there was this wonderful festival where they made fires everywhere and they had -- I don't know where they got lights, but at night we had lights and boats were laid across the canals and you could walk from one side from one -- to the other just over -- over the boat. I was in love. And it was wonderful. It was the most wonderful -- wonderful day in my -- I can ever remember. And I didn't think -- I didn't let myself think about my parents and my -- for that one day. And then afterwards, I said, "Now what? Now what?" And then we started hearing that -- oh, they are lists. They are lists of people who were coming back, and your mother is on one of the lists. Well, Monfred said to me then, "Don't believe it." And I -- I already hated him with a passion. Right? Because he had done all these horrible things. And he said, "Don't believe it." And I said, "I'm going to believe it." We then knew -- we knew about concentration camps. In '45. So I started going to the train stations. And, of course, I stood there. When I had the time, I stood there and I stood there and I stood there. I asked -- and when I see these films, you know, they are films made by the French. They were wonderful French films, but and -- and they're these people going to -- other people coming out of trains, you know, and they have their shaved and they looked awful and there are these people coming back from camps and you ask -- that's how it was -- and you asked, did you know so and so? Did you know so and son? No. No. No. Now I think that one of those people was somebody took my mother's name to get back to Holland. I'm sure of it. And recently somebody showed up with my sister's name. And, of course, when I started looking, she was gone. I mean there was nobody to find. And it's the same sort of thing and then I started waving goodbye to people. I had girlfriends who met Americans and who married them. And I started seeing people who were not good and women who were not good in the war. And I was waving goodbye to them because they were marrying American soldiers. What do the American soldiers know? They know nothing! And if they had known, what would it have mattered? They were in love. You know, such is human nature.

Q: We need to move. Can you tell me just tell me what, very briefly, what you did now and -- .

A: Well, after the war, of course, I -- I worked for two years in the Ballet. I danced. That's how I make money. And I started to realize that every time I got a job, they had to ask for a work permit because I was not a Dutch citizen. And it was a lot of work for them and bless them,

they did it. I mean I did not -- I thought I wouldn't have done it. I can get another girl, you know. But I always had a job. And Akmier, of course, was working by that time, and so we managed. But when I decided -- a friend of my family Lotta Kalinaski, also from Berlin who was -- is quite a well known psychiatrist here in the States I think -- I went for shock treatments and things. And Lotta was looking for my parents. I had gone to my older apartment -- our -- our apartment where I lived with my family and had told the woman there where I was living and to please forward any mail that she would get and to please let me look in the hiding places that we had around the house. And, of course, she'd found the hiding places. There was nothing there. And then the woman below us, who was a fascist during the war, she said, "I saw you got on -- you know, it was dangerous for her -- dangerous period for her. She might have been shipped to Germany or killed by the where all the Dutch wanted to take revenge on their people -- and she said, "I didn't give you away when you ran away. You helped me." And I said, "You were helped enough." Because she had a lot of our stuff, and I didn't get anything back. So I -- I said, "I won't give you away, just like you didn't give me away." And that was all I ever did for her. I didn't give her away. I said, "If they catch on to you, that's not my fault. I don't -- you know, it's your." Anyway, I got a -- I got a lot of mail from all over the world, from Australia, from Canada, from America, from -- all -- all over the world where people had managed to escape to. And one of the letters I got was from the Kanaski's and they asked me to come to the States. At the time I was in the Ballet and I was with Akmier and I thought Akmier would get over the fact that he didn't want to have children, which I knew I had to have children. So I said to Kanaski, let's wait. Let's wait. He said, "I'll give you an affidavit and you come." And he kept coming by because he -- he went to Berlin to lecture. He helped set up the free university of Berlin as psychiatry -- department of psychiatry there, and giving lectures. So he came every year two or three times and he said, "Now you must come." And made -- he sent me the affidavit and made me sign it, and by that time I thought it would be better and that's how I came to the States. He was very -- they were very good to me -- very good to me. And I also have other family here. They were also good to me. So -- and I worked as a ballet -- as a dancer. And that's it! Thank you.

Q: I want to thank you. Very much!

A: Thank you. You're welcome. You don't want to know I have four children.

Q: Bonnie, turn it back on so the lady can tell us okay, she has four children. Can you turn it back on for a minute please?

A: No. That's alright.

Q: Okay. Tell us about your children.

A: I just wanted to say that -- you know, you hear all these horrible, horrible stories that I made it through and I have a nice husband and four children, who are very, very happy. And my husband's name is Mike Rodbell. And we live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and

everything's fine. I survived. Yal

Q: Okay. That's it Bonnie. I'm sorry I had to hurry you, but I really do. It's two and a half hours and --

A: Oh, my God!

Conclusion of Interview