

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Betsy Cohen
April 27, 2006
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PREFACE

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BETSY COHEN
April 27, 2006

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Betsy.

Answer: Good morning, Joan.

Q: It's -- it's -- it's very nice to see you here. Tell me --

A: Thank you. It's good to be here.

Q: Good, I'm glad. Tell me what was your name when you were born.

A: Was the same as it is now, because my husband had the same last name.

Q: Uh-huh. So tell me what --

A: It's Betsy Edith Cohen.

Q: It's Betsy Edith Cohen. And when were you born?

A: In '28. 1928.

Q: And what was the -- the month and the day?

A: The day was a Monday, I was told, of April 23rd.

Q: April 23rd. And where were you born?

A: In Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Q: Right. Now, what I'd like us to do is talk a little bit about what your life was like before the Nazis came. So I'd like to know about your f -- your family and your house and all of that. So let me first ask you about your father, I know you were very close to your father. What -- what did he do?

A: Well, my father was a pastry baker, and he had a coffee house, I think you'd call it a coffee house here, in the heart of Amsterdam. And then the depression came, and he couldn't keep it

up. But my mother was an accountant, so then my mother took over and became the breadwinner.

Q: Uh-huh. But your -- your father also was a pastry chef on a ship, right --

A: Yes, he worked --

Q: -- on the -- was it the Dutch Holland line?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that was before you were born?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. So do you remember him baking in the house?

A: Oh yes. He baked every Sunday, something --

Q: Yes?

A: -- very good.

Q: Yep. So he was a good chef, he was a good pastry chef?

A: I think so --

Q: You think so.

A: -- they -- they wanted him to go a bit after the first World War, and at that time he said, I've had enough, I want to settle down.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they really put the pressure on him to go, and he didn't want to go. And as it happened, that ship was torpedoed.

Q: Really? So that was fortunate that he said no, wasn't it, yes.

A: That he said no.

Q: So what kind -- how do you remember him during those early years as a father? What was -- what was he like?

A: He was a kind, patient, tolerant, wonderful person.

Q: Yes? Did he have a good sense of humor?

A: Oh yes --

Q: Yeah?

A: -- that too, yes.

Q: And did you do things with him alone? Did he take you for walks?

A: Yes.

Q: He did. And so did you have conversations with him about what you were doing, or -- or did you --

A: Do you mean just before the war?

Q: Before the war, --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- yes. When -- when you had these walks.

A: We --

Q: Were you --

A: Well, he walked me to school, he walked me to grade school that first year.

Q: Really?

A: Mm-hm. That's a 10 minutes walk.

Q: So that's nice.

A: And he took me in every day like that.

Q: Did he pick you up as well, or did you walk home by yours --

A: Yes.

Q: He picked you up also?

A: Mm-hm. For a little while.

Q: Uh-huh. So was he working at all, or at a certain point he wasn't working, he was --

A: No, he wasn't working.

Q: He wasn't working. So who cooked meals in the house?

A: Well, supposedly Mother hired a young lady to -- to help her in -- with the laundry.

Q: Right.

A: And with cooking. And we didn't always have the same young lady.

Q: Right.

A: But one time we had one who came from Starving, Germany, who was happy to be in the Netherlands.

Q: Really.

A: And she was very young, and we became the closest of friends. And she lived in --

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: -- with us. And she took me to the movies, and walks, and -- and she was Catholic, and she showed me all these beautiful images of Jesus Christ, and -- and Mother Maria, and I was just fascinated by that.

Q: Really? Did she take you to church?

A: No.

Q: She didn't?

A: No.

Q: But she showed you these pictures, and all --

A: The pictures.

Q: I see. Did she live insi -- in the apart --

A: In the house.

Q: -- in the house.

A: Yeah, we had s -- we had the spare room.

Q: Right. And how long was she with you, do you think? Do you remember?

A: I would say probably three years.

Q: That's a long time.

A: Yes.

Q: And at what -- do you remember approximately what age you were when she was there?

A: Yes, mm-hm, four and a half, three and a half, five and a half. I think she left when I went to grade school.

Q: So you were a really young kid.

A: Yes.

Q: And was -- this was before your sister was born?

A: Yes.

Q: Uh-huh. So was it odd for you to have your father at home and your mother be the breadwinner, was that an odd circumstance?

A: Not for me.

Q: Not for you, but for -- wi -- in terms of what you saw around you, is it --

A: I didn't compare.

Q: You didn't compare, uh-huh.

A: I didn't compare.

Q: Well, that's good.

A: I -- I didn't realize it, I didn't know.

Q: Right, right.

A: You know, the working, so forth, family --

Q: Sure.

A: -- and what -- who should have what role.

Q: Right.

A: To me, this is what was happening, and so I accepted it.

Q: Right.

A: I wasn't thinking about that.

Q: What was your mother like?

A: She came from Vienna, Austria, and she came to the Netherlands, because after World War I, that was the land of milk and honey. And she found a job at the bank, and through mutual friends, my mother and father met.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And there were 10 years between them, and that --

Q: And your father was 10 years older?

A: Yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yes. Mother was -- came from a family that -- from Vienna fo -- culture, and everything, and my dad, he was the fifth boy in the family, the fifth and the last boy. And he has three or four, five lu -- five name. And my father -- when my father came along, there was just enough money for prep -- vocation such as pastry baker.

Q: I see. So he comes fr -- he came from a different economical --

A: Different environment --

Q: -- di-different environment.

A: -- altogether.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And Mother came fr -- from -- well, her dad was from Galicia, and her mom was from Hungary. And her mom's dad was a rabbi, and so my -- my grandma was very fine, very soft spoken, intelligent woman. My grandfather was from Galicia, and he had a toy store in Vienna. That's how they make a living.

Q: That must have been nice for you as a kid to go to Vienna and visit them, with a toy store.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you get lots of toys from it?

A: No.

Q: You didn't?

A: No. We went a lot of -- through a lot of parks, walking, and sightseeing, and looked at the opera house from the outside, we didn't go in.

Q: You didn't go in. Were you -- did you find your grandmother easier to be with than your grandfather?

A: Definitely.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. Yeah, and I think my -- my mother got a lot of personality traits from her dad.

Q: I see. So she was more difficult to be with.

A: Mm-hm. She was a -- he was a perfectionist, and so was she. And if I came home with a report card that had two B's and all A's, she would say, that's not good, why don't you have all A -- B -- A's on there. And my dad would say, that's a pretty good report card. And that was the difference between those t --

Q: Yes, so was that -- that must have been difficult for you as a child growing up, having these expectations. Or -- or was it good for you? Do you know?

A: At that time it was good for me.

Q: It was?

A: Mm-hm. It became more difficult as I -- after. When I had to live with my uncle, who was Mother's brother, who was -- he was somewhere in the genius range.

Q: Really?

A: And he couldn't understand why I couldn't understand some things, or get some things as quickly as he did.

Q: As he did. And of course you were much younger also, so --

A: Yes.

Q: -- the expectation was -- so it became difficult. You know, I forgot to ask you, what was your father's name?

A: Jacques -- that's -- Jack is named after him. This is the French Jacques.

Q: Jacques, yes.

A: Theobald Alfred Karl Frederick.

Q: So it's many names, and Cohen is the last name.

A: Yes.

Q: How come he had so many names, do you know?

A: Because he had -- he was the last one in a row of five boys. There were five boys in that family.

Q: But you -- you did say earlier that -- that each child, depending upon where they were in the birth sequence, they would get more names? So your father had five names because he was the fifth?

A: Yes, but I don't believe they did that with the children before that.

Q: With -- but just with him.

A: With him. Because he was also the last one.

Q: I see. So he got all the names --

A: Yes.

Q: -- that they didn't give to other -- was he known as Jacques?

A: Yeah.

Q: Or was he -- that's -- that's how he was known?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you notice when -- when you were growing up that your parents got along well, or -- because they seem so different. From your description --

A: Yes.

Q: -- they seem so very different. It seems as if it might be difficult in the house. Was it?

A: Yes [indecipherable]

Q: It was?

A: Mm-hm, sometimes.

Q: Did you all eat together as a family? Did you eat --

A: Yes.

Q: -- dinner together at n --

A: Yes, we did.

Q: -- noontime or something. You did.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Was there a lot of discussion then, did they ask you and when Hedy was old enough to speak, did they ask her questions, or was it a very quiet meal, do you remember?

A: They mostly talked to each other, they didn't ask too many things --

Q: No, huh.

A: -- from us. That came later -- I mean later in the day, because we would always have tea about an hour after dinner.

Q: I see.

A: And the tea we would have in our living room upstairs, whereas we had dinner in the kitchen, downstairs.

Q: Uh-huh. And would your mother and father be upstairs at tea, or just your father with you?

A: Everybody --

Q: Everybody was --

A: -- wa -- was there, yeah, and that's when we got to talk some more.

Q: I see, so that was a more informal --

A: Yes.

Q: -- situation. So was dinner a very, sort of formal meal?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: That was really not formal --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- except -- well, Mother was working and then she was telling some events of the day --

Q: I see.

A: -- to -- to my husband.

Q: Right. You mean to her husband.

A: To her husband.

Q: To her -- her husband.

A: Yes.

Q: Right, you said my, right. Were you surprised when Hedy was born? Were you told that your mother was pregnant?

A: Yes.

Q: You were told.

A: I was told, but I was told I would have a sister, or a little brother. No, not little, I'd have a sister or a brother.

Q: Right.

A: And I was eight years old at the time, and I thought I would have a sister just like me, just as old as I was and everything. And so when I saw her in the crib in the hospital, and she was the sister, well oh, I can't play with her. I was very surprised.

Q: And you -- were you disappointed?

A: Yes, yes I was.

Q: Cause you expected to have someone who was your equal.

A: Yes. I -- I expected to have a playmate.

Q: Right.

A: Instead I had to have -- I was -- became a babysitter.

Q: Right. So your parents didn't really explain to you that it was a baby that was going to happen.

A: No, not at that time.

Q: Not at that time.

A: No.

Q: And so when you said to them, I can't play with this, this is a -- this is a baby, did -- did they think you didn't -- that you should have understood? I mean, what did they do? Did they try to explain it to you then, or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: So were you annoyed at this baby who can't do anything?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And did you became a babysitter pretty quickly?

A: Yes.

Q: So at age eight you're taking care of a little teeny baby?

A: Yeah. And I had to take her to the park for walks.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: Spent the whole -- at that time we had no school on Wednesday afternoon.

Q: Really?

A: And no school on Saturday afternoon, and those afternoons I better take out my sister or else.

Q: Really? And what was your sister's name?

A: Hedwig. She -- she was here.

Q: Yes, that's right, she -- we had --

A: Hedwig Hella.

Q: Right. Now was -- was hel -- Hella the middle name, or was that a --

A: No, th -- it was just na -- another first name.

Q: Another first -- oh, so she had two o -- two first names? Hedwig Hella.

A: Hedwig Hella.

Q: And she's now known as Hedy.

A: Yes.

Q: Hedy [indecipherable]

A: But she was known as Hedy.

Q: Hedy.

A: Yes, we all called her Hedy, but then when she came to the States --

Q: Yes.

A: -- everybody called her Hedy. So we called her Hedy at home still.

Q: Right.

A: But everybody else called her Hedy.

Q: But would you have spelled it the same way?

A: No.

Q: No, you wouldn't, right? Would you have spelled it H-a-i-d-y, Haidy?

A: Haidy? H-e-d-y.

Q: You would have spelled it that way --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- the same way as she spells it now. But you don't pronounce it the same way.

A: Yeah, Hedy.

Q: Hedy. Hm. So was there a point as -- as Haid -- I'm going to call her Hedy, when -- as she's growing up that you find that she can become a playmate, or is the age difference so big -- cause you're eight years older.

A: Yes.

Q: That's a big -- it's a big --

A: It was a big difference.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: So she was always a kid.

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. Did you go to school on Saturday?

A: I think so.

Q: Really? So f -- so it's M-Monday through Saturday, but not Saturday afternoon and not Wednesday afternoon?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So does the Saturday make up for the Wednesday afternoon, maybe?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Did you like school?

A: Oh yes.

Q: What did you like about it?

A: I liked -- I was an only child, and I was lonely. And I enjoyed being with all the children, and -- with whom I could play, and to whom I could talk.

Q: So before you went to school, did you not have a lot of friends?

A: No.

Q: You didn't.

A: Not of my own age, no.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I never went to a -- the school before --

Q: A nursery school or something.

A: A nurser -- no, never.

Q: And were there not children in the neighborhood?

A: Well, if there were, I never met them.

Q: Really?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So they kept you at home? Or with them?

A: Yeah, but my dad would always take me out.

Q: Right, right.

A: Not always a great thing, but out, something.

Q: Right. So when you started school, were you five years old or six years old? Do you remember?

A: I was six.

Q: You were six. So for a long time you're very lonely, I guess.

A: Yes.

Q: In terms of having --

A: Yes.

Q: -- kids your own age. You had your own room in the house, is that right?

A: Yes, I d --

Q: What -- what -- which is sort of unusual I would guess, in some respects, so what did you -- what did you do when you were by yourself? What kinds of things did you do?

A: Well, at the time Queen Wilhemina had reached a 40 year reign, and they made tiles for that, and distributed them to the children in school, and all kinds of other little things to m-memorize this.

Q: Right.

A: And I always liked nice little things, so I had a lot of them on my nightstand.

Q: Little toys you mean, or --

A: Yeah, little toys, or a little wooden statue, or a very beautiful what do you call these round things that you play with, they are made out of glass.

Q: Oh, a top?

A: Not a top.

Q: Not a top.

A: No. Ye -- they're round, they're glass, and you play with them, they have games.

Q: Marbles.

A: That's right.

Q: You played with marbles.

A: Yes, I --

Q: They're quite beautiful sometimes, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, and I -- I sort of hung on to the beautiful ones.

Q: Right. And did you read a lot when you were a kid?

A: Read?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh yes, my dad took me to the library.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And introduced me to everything in the library, and I fell in love with reading.

Q: Yeah.

A: In fact, I fell so much in love with reading that after I was supposed to go to bed and sleep, I had myself a little flashlight and crawled over the cover and read.

Q: Right.

A: For awhile.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it hard to read under the covers?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes, it's pretty difficult, isn't it? But it's wonderful that you were reading so much. What was -- what kinds of things were you reading, do you remember?

A: Yes, Jules Verne. My dad liked Jules Verne.

Q: Really?

A: So I started reading Jules Verne. I got several of his books and was fascinated by that.

Q: Right.

A: Then I discovered my mom had an anatomy book in her closet, and when I could get at it, I took it and -- and studied it, and read about that.

Q: Really? In her closet? How did you know it was in her closet?

A: Well, she had like upstairs [indecipherable] was -- we have -- the offices were downstairs.

Q: Right.

A: And our little quarters upstairs, except for the kitchen.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And --

Q: And where was the kitchen?

A: The kitchen was sort of in the back part --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- sort of sticking out. And my room was above that kitchen, and that was very nice because I was partly already in our own backyard.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And with a view on the coal shed.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And the coal shed was a gathering place for cats, and they came there and they -- they sang their horrible song. And I would get up, take a big glass of water and throw it.

Q: Really? So -- I see, would they wake you up?

A: Yeah.

Q: They did, cause they were talking to each other, right. But you also got the smells from the kitchen, so that must have been very nice. Or did you? You didn't.

A: No, I didn't get any smells.

Q: Uh-huh, I see.

A: No.

Q: Did you also -- was there somebody in the apartment complex that was playing the piano and you would sit and listen to the piano?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yes. Do you like -- did you like music?

A: I like piano.

Q: You like piano in particular.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you want to take lessons?

A: No.

Q: No? How come?

A: No, it was like -- well, I felt I didn't have the patience. I didn't want to spend time practicing.

Q: I see.

A: I wasn't that crazy about it that I wanted to do it myself. I just felt I -- I wasn't -- I -- I wasn't cut out for that.

Q: Right, right.

A: And -- and Hedy, she had to take it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: When we came to uncle and aunt in the States --

Q: In the States.

A: -- Hedy had the piano lessons, and was I ever glad, because Hedy was always on the piano, bang, bang. I-I still didn't want to take them when I had another chance, but --

Q: But you didn't want to do it.

A: I preferred to listen.

Q: And would you sit on the windowsill in your -- in your room?

A: Yes, I would.

Q: And listen t --

A: Yes, I would.

Q: And was this person good?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes? So it was your own private concert in some --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- in some ways.

A: I don't even think that he knew --

Q: That you were sti --

A: -- that I was listening.

Q: Uh-huh. And did you know him?

A: Just enough to say hello.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He was a young man in his 20's and that's all I knew.

Q: Right. But you didn't say to him, you know, I listen to you and it's wonderful.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no, I was too shy.

Q: Were you too s -- too shy. We're going to have to change the tape.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Betsy, the neighborhood that you lived in, I know that in Amsterdam there was a kind of Jewish neighborhood, but you didn't live in that neighborhood, right? You lived in a -- a mixed neighborhood?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there many Jews who lived there, or not?

A: No.

Q: No, there weren't.

A: It was -- was a little -- no, it was sort of a ritzy street --

Q: It was.

A: -- on which we lived. And the whole neighborhood, from our house to the school was sort of -
- not rich, but upper middle class.

Q: And would you remember the name of the street?

A: Oh yes.

Q: What was it?

A: Pieter de Hooch Street.

Q: Pieter de Hooch Street. Was your family religious?

A: No, my father was actually an atheist, and he taught me that so far as he was concerned, I didn't have to do anything until I was 18, and then, he said then I could make up my mind, did I want to be Jewish, did I want to be religious too. But Mother came from a more religious family. But so that I didn't go to school on the high holidays and I didn't go to school on Passover.

Q: So -- go ahead. You were going to say something.

A: We didn't -- we didn't celebrate Chanukah because in Holland they celebrate Saint Nicholas, and that is December the fifth. And he is not the Christmas man who comes here at Christmas, no. He was a -- a saint from Turkey, and he helped poor children. He would -- as the legend goes, he would throw food into the orphanage backyard, and he was supposed to come every year from Spain, with his ship, and a black assistant, Schwartz Piet, and a white horse.

Q: Really?

A: That way he would come, every year.

Q: Uh-huh. So everybody celebrated --

A: Yes, ev-everybody.

Q: So was that a religious holiday in some way or not? It wasn't terribly religious, was it -- is --

A: No, it was not at all religious. It was a fun day.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Everybody had parties, and it was a little bit of a tradition to write a little poem, when you gave somebody a gift, and you could -- you could be very -- you could be criticizing the person to whom you gave it, but make fun, in a fun way.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So it was a really wonderful celebration. I never heard the word Chanukah until I came to the States.

Q: Really? But you knew of other Jewish holidays --

A: Yes.

Q: -- because you did --

A: Yeah.

Q: So were you very conscious of being Jewish, or somewhat conscious, what do you think?

A: Well, it was my mother who made me conscious.

Q: Not your father.

A: And well, in retrospect, I can see what happened -- my mother kept saying to me I was Jewish and I had to be careful because there were so many anti-Semites in the world.

Q: And she said that to you when you were quite young?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you think about that?

A: I didn't agree with her because I hadn't -- I-I hadn't felt any until the very last year, I used to pick up two friends along the way to school. And the first ones were quite -- you know, did you ever hear the word [indecipherable]? They were very conservative and the father came from a family that had a plantation in the East Indies. So they were very well-to-do, but they were not very friendly, they were cold. And so even was the girl whom I picked up, but I didn't want to go to school all by myself.

Q: Right. So at what point would -- we were talking about whether you ever experienced anti-Semitism. Was she antis -- was that family anti-Semitic?

A: No, just cold.

Q: Just cold. So when your mother is warning you that there are a lot of people who are anti-Semitic in the world, you just don't find this to be the case, you're not -- that's not your experience. It was --

A: No, that was not my experience --

Q: Right.

A: -- until Hitler came.

Q: Until Hitler came. And did your father hear that your mother was saying this to you?

A: Yes.

Q: And did he say to you, don't pay attention, this is no --

A: No.

Q: He didn't say that.

A: He didn't say that.

Q: Uh-huh. So did you say to him wh-why is she saying this, I don't -- you know, where -- where are the anti-Semites?

A: No.

Q: Cause you're not -- you don't -- no.

A: No.

Q: You didn't question that. So un -- when you're a very young child, cause you're born in 1928, in 1933 the Nazis take over in Germany. So when you are six or seven years old, do you hear about things that are happening in Germany?

A: We heard that the Jews were in plight there, and that they fled to Holland --

Q: Uh-huh, Holland, yes, right.

A: -- a lot. And --

Q: And so you heard that?

A: I-I heard that and I had a friend who was one of them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She became my bosom friend all the way through, as long as we knew each other.

Q: And did she tell you what was going on in Germany?

A: No, no.

Q: Did we -- and you didn't ask her?

A: No. There wasn't that much talk --

Q: I see.

A: -- at that time.

Q: Right, right.

A: And the father was a lawyer and her mother was a -- a music teacher. And my friend herself was very ta-talented. And I -- I always came, and he had to practice, but for me this was a pleasure to listen to. And then afterwards she practiced, then we'd do our own thing, but --

Q: Right. So did you sit in the room when she was practicing?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You did? That's very nice.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: So you really loved music, didn't you? Do you still love music?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes, oh yes.

Q: Now, let me ask you something. Bef -- before you were born, so you can only talk about what you've heard, I think. Your parents didn't live a-at Pieter Hooch Strasser, right?

A: No.

Q: They lived somewhere else.

A: Yes.

Q: And this has some significance because of a bakery that's there.

A: Yes.

Q: That your mother goes to. So can you talk about -- where did -- where did she go? She went every day to buy some bread --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- from a woman who came to be known as Tante Toos to you, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: So how long did they live in this other place? Do you know? A few years?

A: Maybe four. That was a different neighborhood they were -- it was called the -- the old new south.

Q: The old new south?

A: South, yeah. And somehow many of the German Jews settled around there, that neighborhood.

Q: I see. But your mother had lots of conversations with this woman. Every time she went in she would talk with her, is that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. So I-I'm just mentioning this because later on this woman is going to become extremely important, in fact ends up saving your lives.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. Do you hear about the anschluss in Vienna, in -- in Austria?

A: Yes.

Q: Because your grandparents were there, is this very -- di-did they stay in Austria, or did they leave and come to Holland?

A: They came with us for a couple of years.

Q: They did?

A: And then they got an apartment of their own, and that's the last I know of them.

Q: And you don't know what else happened, right. But did your mother's brother Sam, who ends up taking care of you when you come to the United States, he and his wife, does he come to stay in your apartment?

A: Yes.

Q: He does.

A: Yes, he did stay with us for a year because I think he had to wait for a -- his quota number to come up.

Q: I see. So when does he come? In 1940, 1939, do you remember?

A: Well, I was 10 -- 11.

Q: So it's '38 - '39.

A: 20 -- '38 - '39, yeah.

Q: So he comes after the anschluss --

A: Yes.

Q: -- with the grandparents.

A: Yeah.

Q: So for awhile it's your uncle and your grandparents that are in the house?

A: Well, my grandparents didn't stay in the house very long --

Q: I see, so he stayed longer.

A: -- a year, and then they got their own apartment.

Q: So he stayed for longer than that?

A: Yeah, he stayed at our house.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now, was he trying to convince your parents to leave?

A: Oh yes.

Q: But they wouldn't do it?

A: Well, my father would have, but my mother thought she has a good job, and she expected a big pension and why should she go and forsake all that? And so she was not ready to go.

Q: To do that. Did you know that at the time? Did you hear these conversations?

A: Yes.

Q: You did?

A: Some.

Q: Some of them. So were they arguing, was your -- was your uncle saying you must go because Hitler's going to do terrible things, or -- do you remember any of it?

A: No, I don't think they were arguing.

Q: Uh-huh, you don't.

A: No.

Q: So how did you know that your uncle was going to leave and he was asking your parents to take you, the kids, and themselves out? Did you overhear these conversations?

A: No. Hitler came into Holland in May, '42. When he occupied Holland, my father said to me, if ever anything happens to us, get in touch with your Uncle Alfred in America.

Q: Do you think he told his -- hi -- his brother-in-law the same thing?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: He did before.

A: Yeah.

Q: So the Nazis take over in 1940 I believe, May of 1940, right? So your father -- but your father tells you directly --

A: Yes.

Q: -- this, right. Did you want to leave? Did you --

A: No.

Q: You didn't?

A: No.

Q: So you didn't feel danger until the Nazis actual --

A: Well, until the last few months, because the -- the Wehrmacht, they had their offices, and they took over the house right next to us. And when they were right next to us, and I saw them wherever I walked, then I did get scared.

Q: Then you were sca --

A: And that was also the time that they told us to wear a star on our --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- on our garments.

Q: Right. But that's a little bit later. When -- when you start -- you finish grammar school --

A: Yes.

Q: -- in 1939, is that right? And go to gymnasium?

A: Yeah, I guess so.

Q: Is it 1939 or 1940?

A: See, I had the year on a quarter of gymnasium, and that quarter was in '42.

Q: Uh-huh. So maybe it's '40 -- you start in '41 or late --

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. Right, 1939. So at a certain point you can't go to school, as a young Jewish girl, right? You have to go to a Jewish school. The Nazis come in in 1940.

A: Yeah, they came and then after awhile they chased out all the Jewish --

Q: Right.

A: -- professors, and all the Jewish students, and they mi -- they took a building that used to be a really Jewish school, but they took over that building, and people -- Jewish people from all over Amsterdam were congregated there, and -- and classes were held there.

Q: Right. D-Do you remember when the Nazis came in to the Netherlands? When they marched in? Do you have an --

A: No.

Q: -- do you have any recollection?

A: Ah, no, except that I did hear a lot of shooting.

Q: You did.

A: And because we had -- Amsterdam was at the time, a port at the [indecipherable] that little inland sea that -- that the Netherlands has.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And it was a pretty big port, and well, if anything was happening there, we could hear it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So we could hear very much shooting. And then that died down, and at first they were very friendly, and then came one bulletin after another banning the Jews.

Q: Had your uncle left by this time? Did he leave before the Germans came? Your Uncle Sam? He had left.

A: He had left.

Q: So he was lucky.

A: Yes, he was.

Q: Was he married at the time?

A: Yes.

Q: To your Aunt Anne, was that right? So they were -- were -- were they both in the house with you?

A: No.

Q: They weren't.

A: He went first.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And she went later, and she has an adventure. You want to know?

Q: She has a what? An adventure?

A: Was something happened.

Q: Really?

A: They were the last train out of Austria, they were the last people allowed to go out of the country.

Q: Really?

A: And they came to the Dutch quarter and they took them all out, and they were going to shoot them. Now, the border was marked off by -- what you have around the chicken coops, you know?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And my aunt saw a place where she could possibly go on the knees, but not very quickly, and the Dutch people pulled her over.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: And did they shoot these other people?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really? Oh my. So did she come alone?

A: Yeah, she came alone.

Q: I see, so she came separately from. Wow. And when did you hear this story, when you came to the United States, or did you hear it --

A: Oh, we had been here sometime already when I heard that.

Q: When you heard that, so you didn't hear it when you were in the Netherlands --

A: Not then, no.

Q: Not then, right. Okay. When the Nazis took over bef -- before you father unfortunately he was taken somehow in 1942, but was -- was he arrested and then came back and arrested a couple of times before this final time?

A: Well, they cloaked it all on the taxes, and my father got a notice that he owed some taxes.

Q: He owed taxes.

A: But -- well, among the taxes were also our radios. We had to hand in the radios, and he went there, they talked to him and they let him go back. And they wanted him back the next day. And he told us, you better go under, because I don't know if I'm coming back. He went.

Q: He went back by himself.

A: He went back by himself.

Q: So nobody came to your house to take him away.

A: No, he --

Q: He just went back.

A: Yeah.

Q: Why do you think -- who was he going to talk with? With the Germans or Dutch?

A: Yeah, Germans.

Q: With Germans. And they were saying he hadn't paid taxes?

A: Yeah, or something.

Q: Sounds odd, doesn't it?

A: Some -- some odd thing.

Q: So did -- did the f -- his -- your mother, Rose, say to him, don't go back? Why are you going back? Did somebody say, don't do it?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know. Did he say good-bye to you? Do you remember that day?

A: Yeah, but not -- not -- not an unusual --

Q: Did you know where he was going?

A: Yes.

Q: You did know. Were you scared?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. Cause by then you knew these guys were not good guys.

A: Yeah.

Q: So once he goes, you never see him again?

A: No. And I never knew whether he was alive or dead after the war, until the Red Cross released some report, and it turned out that he then died.

Q: And where -- where was he taken, do you -- did it say?

A: A part of Auschwitz.

Q: Birkenau? Was it Birkenau? Was he in Westerbork first? Did they bring him to Westerbork and then he was deported from Westerbork. But you did not know that and your mother didn't know it. Or do you not know whether your mother knew it?

A: We knew that he would go to Westerbork.

Q: You did know that, because that's where they were sending the Jews.

A: That we knew.

Q: Yes.

A: And the brother of Tante Toos was in the underground and he had heard that they had took -- where they took my father.

Q: Uh-huh. So did you -- your mother knew that before you did. Your mother must have known that when you were in hiding. You think?

A: I-I was there when he told.

Q: When he s -- so you knew too.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: When your father said I'm going to go and you should get out, he was saying to his wife, your mother, take the kids --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and leave.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Go into hiding, yes? But you had no idea that there was a preparation being --

A: No.

Q: -- had -- preparations had been made for hiding.

A: No idea.

Q: No idea at all. So is it very soon after your father goes and leaves and he's not there, that your mother says we're going? Does she do it right away?

A: Yes.

Q: Right away?

A: Yes.

Q: So what does she say to you? I mean, what is it like, is this in the e -- at night, is it in the morning, when -- when is it?

A: Well, we went at dusk. We took our stars off because we weren't supposed to be on the street after dusk --

Q: Right.

A: -- at that time. I don't remember even whether we took the tram or walked all the way. She said we are going to Tante Toos, we are going to stay there.

Q: She did say that?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did you know who Tante Toos was?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Cause -- and you had -- you had met her?

A: Yes, because I always went th -- bread with m -- with my mother, I went to the bakery that Tante Toos was managing at the time across, and ju -- it was right across the street from us.

Q: I see. So you lived in that older apartment? Yes, not -- not the one at Pieter Hooch? Or did she -- di -- was her bakery near --

A: Well, when we moved from the street where we lived, where she had the bakery, we moved to a different street.

Q: Right.

A: And so far as I know, they had no contact any more, but they did.

Q: But they did. So they were clearly very close in some way in order to make these kinds of plans.

A: Well, she was very grateful to my father, because she had worked for my father for many, many years.

Q: I see. In his café? Is that where she worked?

A: Yeah, like a little coffeehouse.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: You could get coffee and tea and pastry.

Q: Right.

A: And she had married a man who was 25 years older than she. He was in the military but he had done something bad, and he was out of it, and he was old, so she -- she was the breadwinner.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And when we went to the Pieter de Hooch Strat, she became the manager of a liquor store in an entirely different neighborhood.

Q: Hm. But obviously they -- your mother and she obviously had something in common in that they were both the breadwinners in their house.

A: Yes.

Q: Which in some ways was unusual.

A: Yes, they -- they were really pretty good friends, and --

Q: Really, yes.

A: -- but there was a bond with my father because Tante Toos had eight miscarriages.

Q: Eight?

A: Yes.

Q: Wow.

A: And each time she had to stay out of work.

Q: Right.

A: And m-my dad kept the job open for her each time.

Q: Each time.

A: And she was very grateful to him.

Q: Right, right.

A: That's what did it.

Q: So there were a lot of connections with the family, yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Huh. So you -- you remember that -- your mother saying we're going to Tante Toos.

A: Yeah.

Q: And did she have a bag that she took?

A: Yes, we had a little bag, not -- nothing big.

Q: Nothing big. Were you able to take something for yourself, or did she just grab the two kid -- the two of you, put on your coats, take off the Jewish stars --

A: I -- I could take a couple of things, and I think that's when I took my diaries.

Q: Uh-huh. Cause by then you had been writing in them for a few years.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right, for three years or four years.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: And wa -- then I was supposed to go to Tante Toos's sister and brother-in-law who lives nearby.

Q: Right.

A: But they lived on the third floor in a small apartment and I was to stay with them. But after a few weeks they -- they got cold feet and they said, "We don't -- we can't keep you here because there is no place to hide you anywhere." So in the dark one night, Oome Cor, we called him, he took me to Tante Toos.

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Let's see, I think I've been confusing some things. I think that I said that it was Uncle Sam who came to stay with you, but it's not Uncle Sam, it's Uncle Alfred, is that right? So it's Alfred Schwartz, who is the brother of your mother, who came to stay with you, and then with whom you stayed when you came to the United States, is that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So when you go with your mother and Hedy, your sister, you -- you don't remember whether you walked or whether you took a tram to Tante Toos?

A: Oh, they lived close by, we walked.

Q: You walked. It was close by, I see.

A: I mean, when I went from Oome Cor to Tante Toos, we definitely walked.

Q: Yes, but now I'm talking about when you first went to Tante Toos --

A: Toos --

Q: -- from your house, do you re -- do you have a recollection whether you were walking, or whether you --

A: I have a -- a hunch that we were walking because then, if we would have taken the tram, we would have been more visible.

Q: Uh-huh, right, right.

A: It was far, but I think we -- we walked.

Q: You think you walked.

A: Because we didn't want to attract any attention.

Q: Attention. Now let me ask you something, when you -- you had to wear a star on your outer clothing and on your clothing, it's --

A: No.

Q: -- just on your coats?

A: On -- on --

Q: On the arm?

A: Yeah, arm.

Q: What was that like for you when -- when that first started, when you were walking?

A: Awful.

Q: It was awful.

A: And that's when I got in touch with anti-Semitism, because I had the other chum in school who was not Jewish. Her father also took her to school, and her father and my father became friends, and we became friends, too. And after the star, she came to tell me that she couldn't walk with me any more, that her parents didn't want her to walk with me any more because of that star.

Q: What did you think?

A: Terrible.

Q: It was awful, huh?

A: That was hard.

Q: Did she feel bad, too, or did she just state, well this is what my parents say, this is what I have to -- you don't know, or y --

A: I couldn't tell.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I couldn't tell.

Q: And you were 14 at the time. Was 1942, with the star --

A: When I went into hiding.

Q: No, but when you -- when the s -- when you first have to wear the star.

A: Oh, I don't remember.

Q: Remember. I think it was '42. So you're -- you're not a kid. You are -- I mean, you're a kid in a certain way.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But you're not a child child --

A: No.

Q: -- you're -- you're -- if it was 1942, so you're 14 years old. So that was really hard on you, cause you're very conscious of who you are as a young person.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did anybody else do that to you?

A: No.

Q: And when you were walking on the street, and you had the Jewish star, people stare?

A: No.

Q: No, they didn't. So did the Dutch treat you in a o-okay way as far as --

A: Yes.

Q: They did. Except for that one incident.

A: Yeah. There were a couple of h-homes that the Germans had occupied and the so -- some of the Soviets were sitting outside in the front yard and I would pass with my star, and they would whistle at me.

Q: They would whistle. What'd you make of that? It's a little stran --

A: They were very young ones, very young soldiers, all of them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: So did you think they were whistling at you because you were a young, attractive girl?

A: Yeah.

Q: Not because you were wearing the star.

A: No, no, I don't even think they saw the star.

Q: I see. So they were on your street?

A: Yes.

Q: Yuck, that must have been horrible.

A: Oh, it was.

Q: Yeah. So were you nervous when your mother took off the star that night when you were going to walk to Tante Toos?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And -- and think that you were very vulnerable?

A: Mm-hm. Yes.

Q: Did you have baptismal papers, I mean did your mother have some false papers for you?

A: No.

Q: So if she was stopped, they would have known you were Jewish.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have an identity card --

A: No.

Q: -- that had a J in it? No.

A: No.

Q: So there was nothing --

A: No.

Q: -- in Holland.

A: No identity card.

Q: Nothing. So when -- when you got to Tante Toos and you walked in, did you feel, i-if you can remember, did you feel more secure, not secure, because you knew who this person was, and you felt safer, or did --

A: And the set up was better, too.

Q: Excuse me, the --

A: The set up.

Q: The set up?

A: Yes. Because we could know beforehand when somebody was home to come. She -- the front of the house was the store, the back of the house was a little bedroom and living room, kitchen.

Q: Right, right.

A: And the front of the store starts here, and just there was the door to the basement. So when somebody came, we quietly went through that door.

Q: To the basement, uh-huh.

A: And when the store was closed, we could come in the living room.

Q: You could?

A: Yes, we could, unless a neighbor upstairs was always going to shave Uncle John. Did Hedy tell you exactly who Uncle John was?

Q: No, tel -- you tell me. He was -- he was Tante Toos's husband.

A: He was her husband, he was the 25 year over husband --

Q: Right.

A: -- who had done something. But he was from -- somehow from the nobility, and his first wife came to visit him every week.

Q: Really?

A: And of course his first wife, she was also from the [indecipherable] and she was not supposed to know, so Jewish --

Q: Was not supposed to know that you were there?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: So that was a whole day for us in the basement for sure.

Q: Was there a toilet in the basement, or nothing? No. So you had to just --

A: Chamber pot.

Q: Chamber pot. So you're 14, and Hedy is --

A: Six.

Q: Six. So she's -- how does sh -- how is she in this circumstance? I mean, she's a -- a kid who must be noisy, or you know, wants to play.

A: She was very good.

Q: She was.

A: It was unbelievable because before, she was a brat.

Q: She was?

A: And after fi -- after things sort of normalized in this States, she came a brat for a little while longer.

Q: But she was not a brat when you were in hiding?

A: No.

Q: So she must have understood how --

A: She must have.

Q: -- how -- how dangerous it was. So talk about something of what it was like to be -- could you go outside?

A: No.

Q: No, you had to stay inside.

A: Yes.

Q: So nobody around could know that you were there.

A: No.

Q: That must have been very hard. Was like being in prison.

A: Yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: But -- but nicer, cause people --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- were nice to you. Tante Toos was taking a big risk, wasn't she?

A: Yes, she was.

Q: Why do you think she did it?

A: Out of loyalty to my father.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She was very grateful that he kept the job open for her --

Q: Right.

A: -- through eight miscarriages.

Q: Right. But still, this is a time when you know that the Nazis are there, this is extremely dangerous. Now when -- wh-when you left her -- it's her sister and brother-in-law, or her brother and sister --

A: Her sister and brother-in-law.

Q: And brother-in-law. When they brought you back, was she aggravated with them, or did sh -- and -- or did she just welcome you and say okay, so it's three people instead of two people?

A: Well, she welcomed me but reluctantly, because that was not the way it was supposed to be.

Q: Right, right. So she was better than the sister, wasn't she?

A: Yes.

Q: But of course her circumstances were such that there was a place for you to hide, whereas there wasn't a place --

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But you spoke fluent Dutch.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you look Jewish?

A: Well, when I was in grade school, some people thought I looked Indian or Spanish.

Q: Spanish.

A: But I don't think I looked outspoken --

Q: Right.

A: -- dut -- Jewish.

Q: Or different than the other kids.

A: Yeah. No, not --

Q: And what -- who were you supposed to be when you went to her sister's, were you supposed to be -- I mean, if somebody came and visited and they saw you, were you supposed to be a relative? I mean, who were you supposed to be? Did you know?

A: No.

Q: No, you don't know. Did you have the same name, or were you given another name when you were in hiding?

A: No.

Q: You weren't given another name?

A: No.

Q: So you didn't have any other papers.

A: No

Q: So you were there without papers, you were just there? Okay. So what was it like?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: No, what was it like, what was it like to be in hiding there. Was -- was --

A: Not good.

Q: Was it --

A: I -- I -- I felt like -- you know, I was 14, I was going to go to the second grade in gymnasium, and we were all getting friendly, the whole class was Jewish and Christian and -- and I had my Jewish chum still, and -- no, I didn't have her then, she was already gone. One time I went to see her.

Q: This was a friend?

A: She was really my bosom friend.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We were always together. I went up there to see her, she lived on the third floor, across from the grade school. And the neighbors across the hall came out and told me that she was picked up by the Germans.

Q: So she was taken to Westerbork probably, and then deported. So that must have been really awful for you.

A: I had [indecipherable] a cousin for awhile, who was in the underground. She was walking around with false papers and blonde colored hair. She somehow knew a person who was related to the math professor in gymnasium. And this relative wrote a book on the students who all had to go to that quickly established Jewish school. And he did a lot of research and -- with another author. I should have brought the book. And he found out that she was killed in Auschwitz. Me -
- I still didn't know until I got that book --

Q: Right. Is this Presser?

A: -- from him.

Q: Is this Jacques Presser, is that the professor?

A: Jacques Presser, no that -- Jacques was the history professor.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But you had him as a professor, yes?

A: Oh yeah. Oh, did I adore him.

Q: Yes.

A: How do you know his name?

Q: Because he wrote a book about Dutch Jews and the war.

A: Oh.

Q: So you had him as a professor?

A: He was fantastic.

Q: Really?

A: Because history is difficult to teach, and he made it come alive for us, he brought -- he brought pictures. He was talking at the time about Greek and Roman architecture, which can be boring.

Q: Right.

A: Ah, no, we got the pictures and he showed us the difference in -- little differences in architecture.

Q: Right, right.

A: And then we had our workbook, and then we pasted in this thing --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and you had to write something next to it.

Q: Right.

A: And it was fun.

Q: Right.

A: And he was nice. He was very nice.

Q: Uh-huh. So this -- this happens, of course, before you go into hiding.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you go into hiding and stop school because you go into hiding. Or -- or did school stop before you went into hiding?

A: No, the school -- and that's exactly what this relative of the other [indecipherable] remained, only the classes became smaller and smaller and smaller.

Q: I see. And is it -- does -- is this the Jewish school?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: This is where the Jewish --

Q: Jews.

A: -- children from all of Amsterdam were put together.

Q: Right, and it becomes smaller and smaller because they deport more and more --

A: Yes.

Q: -- kids, right. Did you know Tante Toos's son before you went --

A: No.

Q: You didn't. So you didn't know she had a son?

A: No.

Q: So he is what, 19 and you're 14 when you first come there, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Is he in the underground?

A: No.

Q: He's not. But he has a radio. Is there a radio in the house?

A: Yes, there was.

Q: There was. So that was not confiscated. They kept their radio.

A: Yeah, but they were Christians.

Q: So they never confiscated radios from Christians?

A: No.

Q: So did you listen to that radio?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you hear war news?

A: Yes, I heard Churchill.

Q: You heard Churchill from the BBC. Did you understand English?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: You don't think so.

A: Just a little.

Q: So did Hans understand English?

A: Yes.

Q: So he would tell you what Churchill was saying?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you follow the war by putting --

A: Yes. Hans did.

Q: -- pins on a map?

A: Hans did that.

Q: Hans did.

A: He put the map on the wall and --

Q: Right.

A: -- we put the pins then as the war went on.

Q: Did you think the war was going to last as long as it did? Or did you think it would be shorter?

A: For a long time I thought it would be shorter. But when it dragged on --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- up until the time of the invasion, I thought I don't know how long this is going to --

Q: Right, right.

A: But when they invaded France, that was when my mother died. When they invaded France, Mother died right on that day, that night, but at the same time everybody began to get a little more hope that that war --

Q: Would be over, right.

A: -- would end soon.

Q: Right. Did you hear rumors about what the Nazis were doing, that they were killing people?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: You did?

A: Yes.

Q: And what sort of rumors did you hear?

A: Well, Uncle Cor brought most of the rum -- the news and Uncle Cor also brought us our false food stamps. We -- we would -- everybody get a food stamp card each week, and these -- so many stamps for milk and so many for meat, etcetera. He would get a set for us --

Q: That -- that were false [indecipherable]

A: But I -- di -- I don't know how he got it or -- but it was through the underground. And Tante Toos could take them and buy food for us.

Q: And did anybody question that there must be more people in the house, or they just didn't?

A: The neighbor, I found out later, the neighbor upstairs who came to shave.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: He did.

Q: He questioned it.

A: I think he had seen us slip, or somebody's back, or --

Q: But he didn't say anything to the Germans?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: No. A -- Tante Toos had another brother-in-law, who did see us, and that was about in the March before they invaded. He -- he had a long talk with Tante Toos, telling her to get rid of us and why, and how, and how the consequences, and -- he was trying to get rid of us.

Q: But she wouldn't do it.

A: No.

Q: So what was she like?

A: I hardly knew him.

Q: No, her. Tante Toos.

A: Tante Toos?

Q: Yes, what was she like?

A: She was unique. She was -- how can I say that? In London there is a -- a neighborhood that's called Cockney or something?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Well, so in Amsterdam there is a neighborhood that's called the Jordaan, and they have also a slightly different -- which she was originally from the Jordaan, and because she had all this business experience she -- she didn't have that language with her any more.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But we -- the swearing words --

Q: She did.

A: -- she kept. And she [indecipherable] was very loyal to my dad and she was a happy person, an optimistic person, and somebody who liked to make a joke, even a off color joke.

Q: Right.

A: And so she -- she was an up person, most of the time.

Q: And as you remember it, how did she get along with your mother? Your mother seems as if she's a very different kind of person than Tante Toos. And the friendship seems al-almost odd.

A: Well, it wasn't really odd.

Q: No?

A: They only put -- because they didn't live together --

Q: Yes

A: -- they were -- they were really good friends. But on living together, this thing deteriorated.

Q: It did.

A: My mother was the -- the head of the household.

Q: Right.

A: She was the hausfrau. Then she had to go in a little place and do what this lady said, eat what this lady brought.

Q: So she didn't like it. So they didn't get along very well.

A: No.

Q: Did they fight?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they argue?

A: Yeah. They would get very bad.

Q: Really? And they never were able to work it out? It was always --

A: No, that -- it came worse.

Q: It -- in what way does it -- it -- it -- you mean the -- there -- they became less and less friends as the time went on, not more and more. So that must have made it very difficult for you and your sister living in that sort of circumstance. Did -- did you take sides, do you think, in your head? And you were on the side of Tante Toos? Yes. And you feel a little guilty about that?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: But do you now, as you look back as an adult person, do you think she was right, or your mother was right, or there's no right and wrong here?

A: Well, it's difficult to say exactly who was right. It was understandable that my mother would not feel so happy.

Q: Right.

A: Because she wa -- used to be the boss --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and she wasn't any more.

Q: Right.

A: And she'd lost her husband, of course.

Q: So it was all very difficult for her.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. And she wasn't working, of course, so that made it even worse.

A: Yes.

Q: But what was -- did she bring money into the house? She must have brought mo -- some money that she had so she could help out --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- with Tante Toos, yes? But you also said that you didn't bring things with you, but she hoarded food. So was there food in Tante Toos's house, that's -- so the food had been brought there, it was ready. And what kind of food could you --

A: Rice.

Q: Ah, staples that didn't need refrigeration.

A: Jam.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Tea.

Q: What?

A: Tea.

Q: Tea. Ah.

A: Coffee, flour.

Q: Interesting.

A: That's about all.

Q: Right.

A: But there was a lot of it.

Q: There was. So it lasted a long time?

A: Yes.

Q: You -- you started a kind of a relationship that became very serious with Hans at a certain point, is that right?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Wh-When did that start? After you were there six months, a year? Cause you were there for three years.

A: Yeah.

Q: At least during the war, and then -- then for another year, or almost a year, yes? When you were 15, when you were 16, what do you think?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah, and we both realized that Hedy was not getting any schooling.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And we tried, between him and me, to get Hedy ready for school --

Q: Huh.

A: -- so that she, when she came out wouldn't have to start at class number one --

Q: Right.

A: -- but she could put right away, and -- and she was ready.

Q: Really?

A: So she didn't lose time because we had tutored her.

Q: That's fabulous. Did you have books? Did you have some books, or did you just make it up as you went along?

A: I had some French textbooks, but I think Hans had a few grade school textbooks left.

Q: Did you like doing that? Wa -- di -- I mean, it gave you something to do.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you enjoyed that and --

A: Yeah.

Q: Did that bring you and Hans closer together?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. The fact is that Tante Toos did like to make a white lie. Nothing serious, but if -- if my mother asked her, could you get fish today, and she had just a little bit, she would say no, I don't have any fish for today.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Little things like that. And Hans began to notice it. That's what brought him closer. He didn't like that.

Q: I see. So you became closer together.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: We need to stop the tape.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Okay, Betsy, when -- when we left the last tape, you were talking about Hans realizing that his mother told white lies.

A: Yes.

Q: And that this bothered him, and that this brought you closer together. Can you explain why that brought you closer together?

A: Well, we also had in common that we were teaching my sister. That was all at the same time, and it was shortly after my mother died. You know, my mother died while we were hidden.

Q: Yes, I was going to ask you about -- right. So this -- this happened afterwards. So let's -- let's go back then, and talk first about your mother. Was your mother ill when you went into hiding?

A: No, but she -- she wasn't ill, but did th -- before she died, she had these terrible headaches, and they became worse and worse and worse and worse. And Tante Toos knew a doctor from the underground, but we were all hoping, well, let's see how it goes through the night. And then, during the night, she expired. And this particular doctor, he saw to it that she got a grave at the Jewish cemetery near Amsterdam.

Q: Really?

A: Well he must have, because there she is. And not only is she, but my grandmother and grandfather, they're there too. And I have no idea who -- there must have been several people involved, to get her there.

Q: Were your grandparents then -- they died in Amsterdam?

A: Yes.

Q: They were not deported?

A: The -- a -- in -- in Amsterdam and there -- it -- it's not certain whether they got sick or whether the Germans hit them, or -- nobody knows exactly what happened. But they are now in the [indecipherable] cemetery by Amsterdam, right next to my mom.

Q: And your -- your mother died in 1944, right? Is that right? You were bef --

A: Yeah. My mother died on the night that the allies invaded Normandy.

Q: Really?

A: That night.

Q: This must have been a big shock to you to lose your mother. Now -- now you -- you lost both parents.

A: Yeah, I woke up, my sister and I, we sleeping in one bed. I woke up and felt my mother was too quiet and I felt her hand and it was ice cold, of course. So I started screaming, oh Hedy, now we are whatyoumacalls, people without parents.

Q: An orphan.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you discovered that your mother was dead?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: She was sleeping in the same room with the two of you?

A: Right next to us, actually.

Q: Right next to you. Hm. Now, you didn't have a funeral, you were not -- they did -- they take the body away, right?

A: No. No. And that same doctor, he arranged that her body was carried out and he really did a great deal.

Q: He did.

A: Because he knew pretty soon -- pretty early that we were there. Yeah. I don't know who knew him, but evidently Tante Toos trusted him.

Q: So this was very -- very quick, diz -- whatever this was --

A: Yes.

Q: -- in your mother, it was -- it went very fast.

A: He si -- he thinks it was a -- a tumor in the brain.

Q: Mm-hm. Had she had headaches for a long time that you remember?

A: She always had some headache.

Q: She always had it, uh-huh.

A: But nothing unusual.

Q: But this -- these were really extreme, painful?

A: Yes.

Q: Now, in relationship to when she died, prior to her dying, there was a secondary hiding place inside the apartment, right? There was a -- some sort of a false wall that was built.

A: Yes.

Q: How long before your mother died? Because she was there and hiding in that place with you.

A: Yes.

Q: Right? Was that a year before? Do you rememb -- do you have any recollection?

A: I'd say half a year before, but I don't know exactly.

Q: Right.

A: Like I -- I don't know, Hedy said there was a hiding place underneath the -- the window where they displayed the bottles of gin, and whatever. Tho -- she said that was at first designated as our hiding place, but I don't recognize this at all, I don't remember seeing --

Q: Right. Well, do you remember this other hiding place where this false wall was --

A: Oh yes.

Q: You do?

A: Oh -- oh yes, we were all in there, Hans too.

Q: And why was Hans there?

A: Hans was in there because the Germans wanted to have boys come to Germany and work in the factories. And Hans went to some kind of -- because he wanted to become a telegraph operator at sea, so he went to school for that, and that was one reason why he was still around, but when they did go around, they would pick up these boys and send them to the factories in Germany.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So there were -- there was mother and my sister and Hans and I in a very small place.

Q: You would ha -- you would -- where was this inside the a -- the apartment? You've described that behind the store was the living space.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what -- was it on that floor, that same floor as the -- as the store was?

A: Yes. Actually, there was a kitchen, and the ceiling was that high. Right next to the kitchen was the bathroom, and the ceiling was much, much higher. And so they built a false wall.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: From the ceiling of bathroom, which was higher.

Q: So how much space is there?

A: Maybe two and a half feet by four feet. I can't think of it now, I'm getting mixed up with the -
- I -- I forgot how to copulate cu -- how many cubic feet those are. It's small, extremely small.

Q: Could you sit, or did you have to stand?

A: We could sit, but we have to pull up our legs and --

Q: And how many hours would you stay there, usually?

A: It differed. Sometimes only half an hour, and sometimes two and a half hours.

Q: And this was when -- when you would be warned that -- that Germans were coming?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: And once the Germans were gone, then you could come out?

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you know who would warn Tante Toos that somebody was coming? Do you have any idea?

A: It might be Uncle Cor, I mean, that was her closest link to the underground. But it might also have been word of mouth. I -- I couldn't tell you.

Q: Right. Was Hans connected with the underground at all as time went on?

A: No.

Q: He wasn't?

A: No.

Q: Not at all.

A: He was not.

Q: Did you fall in love with him?

A: Yeah, I did.

Q: You did.

A: I thought I did.

Q: And now you think it wasn't that?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Why?

A: Well, we were pretty close together and at that age, what do they call it? Puppy love.

Q: Mm. And so that's what you think it was?

A: Yeah.

Q: But this must have been good for you in some way? No?

A: No, it wasn't.

Q: Oh, it wasn't.

A: Because a-at that time, he didn't fall in love with me.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We were close friends, but he didn't fall in love with me until after the war. He had the close friend who came, and he paid attention to me, and Hans became jealous. And then Hans decided he was in love with me, and we were going to get married.

Q: You were?

A: Yeah. Hans was going to get the job at sea, and then he'd pick me up, and then get married, and I'd be in Amsterdam. But just the fact that he was at sea, he wrote me pretty soon that he saw a girl in Hamburg, and they were going to get married. And that was that.

Q: And that was the end. So he wrote -- this is after the war, he wrote to you and said this?

A: Yeah. For a long time he wrote almost like we are going to get married. I mean, that was really the real thing, but then suddenly came that letter that --

Q: I see.

A: And he saw this girl in Hamburg.

Q: But you remained in love with him for -- you were pretty constant?

A: Yeah, I was pretty constant.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I was pretty constant, but I was -- but his friend was really the better one, only at the time I didn't realize it.

Q: His friend was better for you?

A: His friend was better for me than Hans.

Q: Than Hans, uh-huh.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Was he your first boyfriend?

A: You could say that. When I was still in school, there was a minister living upstairs with his family and he took in borders, medical students a lot. And he had a nephew coming in who was my age. And nephew and I talked a little bit about things. That -- that was the closest I came to a boyfriend --

Q: Right.

A: -- at that time.

Q: Right. Now that your mother is no longer alive, is -- does Tante Toos become a -- a mother figure for the two of you, or do you become the mother of Hedy at this point? I mean, what -- what -- what happens now that your mother is not there?

A: My father had always said, if something happens to everybody, that I should take care of my little sister. Tante Toos felt that she was the mother, and it made her feel good. And -- and Hedy responded very -- very well to her, but it was I who had to take her to the doctor, it was I who had to go downtown with her, get her new clothes, and she get her shoes repolished. I was really

closer so far as care giving is concerned. And Tante Toos was -- she gave us a roof over our head and food to eat.

Q: But now you're talking about the time when the war is over, when you can leave. I'm wondering before the war is over --

A: Yeah.

Q: And you're still in the house --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and you can't go out.

A: No, not yet, and half an -- about four months later, Uncle John died.

Q: Uh-huh, after your mother.

A: Yeah, after my mother.

Q: I see.

A: Was very short, yeah. We lost two people. But Uncle John was old.

Q: Was old. How old do you think he was?

A: I think he was 82, and was very much paralyzed --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- by strokes.

Q: Right.

A: And he couldn't speak very well, and he had to be helped to bed, and to the bathroom.

Q: I see.

A: And f -- we fed [indecipherable]

Q: Did -- did you spend time with him as well, or not?

A: Well, he was always sitting in his chair.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So when we came to the living room to eat, he was there.

Q: I see.

A: He was always there when we were in the living room, although on a one to one relationship with him, I think none of us had.

Q: Uh-huh. And was he the -- the only husband of Tante Toos? This is -- this is the father of Hans? So it's not --

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And Hans has -- had two half brothers from that first wife. Two half brothers and one half sister, and the half sister -- the brothers were caught in the Dutch East Indies. They were caught by the Japanese. And the [indecipherable] sister, she lived in the city not too far, and she also came to visit Tante Toos.

Q: Hm. Okay. So when -- when you were in the house, a-again, now that the -- Tante Toos's husband is dead, and your mother is dead, does she become more of a mother figure inside the house, or she remains the same for you?

A: She remains the same.

Q: She remains the same. And do you begin to take even more care of Hedy even though you're -- you're in the house? Is that difficult for you? I mean, you're now -- how old are you? You're 16 in 1944, and she's eight. That's a big responsibility as a 16 year old, isn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you resent it?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. Because she -- she was not a brat at the time, and she realized what was going on. And on top of that, after the war, when she went to school, she became very ill with whooping cough and pneumonia, and she had to spend several months in the hospital, several months before it all cleared up, because we were all undernourished.

Q: Yes. That -- was that last year a very difficult year because it was such a bad winter in 1944 and '45 --

A: Yes.

Q: -- in -- in -- in the Netherlands?

A: Yes, it was a very bad year because the Germans, as they withdrew, took all the food from the farmers, everything they could. And all -- all the art that they could find, and sometimes they burned houses behind them as they withdrew. And we were isolated. Whatever food there was went to the German army.

Q: So how did you get food? What did you eat?

A: We got one little loaf of bread, from whatever that was made we don't know. And maybe two potatoes.

Q: This is a week?

A: And that -- but Tante Toos had connections, you see, and she had connections with people who sold eel, smoked eel, which is a delicacy in Holland, and with people who ha -- had the pastry shop. And maybe a baker. Couple of people that she changed then her little bit of gin or whatever it was, because she got less, too, she exchanged it then for food.

Q: Was she still getting these ration -- with this fake ration books, so she could use it, or was that not even done any more?

A: After the war I don't think we had them any more.

Q: But it still went throughout -- until the war was over?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: But it became harder and harder --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to [indecipherable] food. Do you -- do you remember being very hungry?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. Actually, when I came in there, and I had to stay in the house, like [indecipherable] I got very heavy, and when there was not so much food, my weight dropped, and I was not sorry. But I didn't realize that I was undernourished.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It came out later on in different ways, but no I didn't really feel -- that the worst feeling was of being isolated, knowing that the other kids were growing up and going through the classes, and seeing the wa -- the professors, and social life, and it was out. I didn't have it.

Q: So you felt deprived?

A: I felt very much deprived that way. Of course I missed my father, too. We were very close.

Yeah, I felt out of it, you know?

Q: You felt out of it? But around you, you were seeing a s -- a -- a kind of normalcy of the non-Jews --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- of those wh-who were not being oppressed. Do you think it was so easy for them? Or that it was more n -- it was normal, what -- in other words, the people who weren't hiding like you, were they living a more normal life as far as you were you concerned? Do you think?

A: Well, not a hundred percent. Socially they were.

Q: Mm.

A: That's what I was thi -- I felt isolated from the other kids --

Q: Kids.

A: -- who were growing up, who were going classes.

Q: Right.

A: Going out together, had picnics together, and got to know people, and here I was.

Q: Alone.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you -- in '44, given what you were hearing on the radio, did you think the war would be over soon?

A: Yes.

Q: And then it wo -- then it seemed sure that it would be over?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah, people have great hopes. That's why it was so difficult in the wintertime when there was no food, and people had hope. Somehow the Red Cross in Sweden could get airplanes over Holland and throw down white bread, a couple of times, during that bad time. How they got there, I don't know. Was dangerous. But -- and even after the war, they helped us out with white, good bread.

Q: Do you remember the Nazis leaving the Netherlands?

A: No.

Q: You don't.

A: No, all I knew was that we didn't hear any more stories about them. And toward the end there, there was -- well, Tante Toos says come out on the street, that is very quiet, is nobody here. A-And that must have been May the fourth, or something like that. So we went out on the street, it was quiet, no tanks, no heavy footsteps, those German marching footsteps. And it was just uncanny. So that's when we knew there are something going on.

Q: And it -- obviously they seemed not to be there, so something was up.

A: They seemed not to be there any more.

Q: Yeah, yeah. We have to change the tape.

A: Yeah.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: Betsy, could you re-describe the scene when Tante to -- Toos says it's clear, there's n -- there's nobody here, come out. What -- what did -- what is it that you see? Do other people start coming out?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So describe the scene that you -- that you remember.

A: Well, it's tra -- it's a very wide street in a newer -- ne -- at that time, newer part of Amsterdam. And there are s-stores all on the first floor, and apartments on top of the store. And people came out of the doors [indecipherable] talking to each other, exchanging news. There's one thing that happened during the war that I think that it made me a whole different person. The Germans were going through that town again, looking for Jews, and they were in our street th -- for the first time. And we were about two houses -- two stores away from the end of the block. So they came from the other side and searched all the houses, and when they reached the end of the block before ours, they stopped, they were finished. They went home.

Q: They just left?

A: Well, that was not yet when they withdrew, I mean --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- they were still doing their jobs.

Q: Right. But they didn't come to your street.

A: They didn't come to that block. Now, I think that's a wonder.

Q: And what was the street named that you were hiding on. What were -- were -- were Tante Toos living?

A: Jan Svetsenstraat.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And that was in this -- in the -- the new --

A: Newer.

Q: Newer part of Amsterdam.

A: Of Amsterdam.

Q: Is that in the south of Amsterdam?

A: Southwest.

Q: Southwest. So when are you sure that the Germans are gone?

A: I think the ships in the harbor, they started blowing the horns. And at -- that -- that was announced over the radio.

Q: So do you remember feeling relieved?

A: Yes, sure. But you know, I thought how wonderful, the war is over. It was a terrible war, now we are always going to have peace. That's what I really thought.

Q: It's understandable. You've been disappointed, I would gather, yes. What did you thi -- what was one of the first things that you did? Did Tante Toos want to adopt you when the war was over? Did you s -- did you speak about staying with her, or -- or what?

A: This is a long story. Again, we hadn't talked about it. It was -- we were going to stay with her until we went to Uncle Alfred. But during this time, I went to see -- me and my friend who wasn't supposed to walk with me in the star, where she was. Well, her parents had this sort of a - a sewing hand embroidery store. And she was not in the country, she was studying to be a pharmacist somewhere else. So I talked to the parents. And they asked how we were, and they -- they wanted to know how things were set up, and how we slept, and wh-where the -- see where

the coal was, you see, because a basement was usually for coal, anthracite. And they were just wondering were we right next to the coal, or what. Okay, fine, I-I didn't see them any more, I didn't hear from them any more. One day a social worker comes in. Are Betsy and Hedy Cohen living here? Yeah, why? Can I see them? Sure. So she came to us in the back and she said, you cannot stay here. This is no way of living for you, in the basement. Hans slept in the basement, too. There was a partition, curtains. And with a young man sleeping there, we find that's not right. And we all put up a big stink.

Q: And what did y -- this was a she, this social worker?

A: The social worker was a she.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: She came that once and told us, and I think there was a phone call that we should go and then there was a letter and how did they know where we were? Because of the parents of that -- that friend.

Q: Was Tante Toos there also when she said these things?

A: Yes. Now she -- she had an answer, she -- she was right up there, and then Hans was there, we all di -- and even Uncle Schaap, and he said no, th-they should stay and -- but that was really something. I go to these parents in good will, and they send a social worker out after us.

Q: Now what -- was your intention that -- from the very beginning, was Tante Toos told that if something happened to your parents that you would be contacting your Uncle Alfred and --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and Aunt Anne is -- Anne is her name, yes?

A: Yeah, uncle and aunt, yeah.

Q: What's her name, the aunt's name?

A: The aunt?

Q: Yeah.

A: Annie.

Q: Annie. So Tante Toos knew this?

A: Yes.

Q: But here she is being with you folks for three years, living every day --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- with you two kids. Does she want you to stay? Does she not want you to go?

A: I think in a way, she wanted us to stay, because she always kept saying, well, I'm your mother, you know. On the other hand, I think that she didn't want that Hans and I would become too close. And it turned out that she didn't want that Hans and any girl became too close. So Hans fell in love with a girl who came from the -- a social worker, who came from the East Indies. Her family came over -- she -- her family was invited over, the government invited them over to come. And Tante Toos was prejudiced against this girl. But this was the real girl, so they waited until she died, and then they got married.

Q: And then got married?

A: Yeah.

Q: Huh. Now you -- you write to your Uncle Alfred?

A: Yes.

Q: In Roche -- they're in Rochester --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did you know that -- you knew that they were in Rochester?

A: No. I wrote to New York City, and somehow --

Q: It got to them.

A: -- it got there, and it's this American Distribution Committee. They were closely connected with them. It came out after they died, and my sister con -- correspondent that show that they have helped many Jews to -- to get out somehow.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And we didn't know a thing about that.

Q: Now, were you expecting when you wrote to your aunt and uncle, that they would somehow arrange for you to come to the United States?

A: Yeah.

Q: You s -- you did. And did you want to come?

A: No.

Q: So then why did you write?

A: Because my father told me to.

Q: And is -- is Hedy too young to know what she wants, did she care that she go to the United States, or she stayed? Did it matter to her, do you think? Or she didn't care?

A: I don't think she wanted to go either. She had made some very good friends. And I was very much against it because, well I -- I-I could go back to school. I -- I had all my friends, except for [indecipherable] and -- and -- another thing, when -- when my uncle stayed with us, he was -- he was already married, but he was alone, so he was -- he didn't have too many worries on his mind at that time, except for waiting for his visa. And I was crazy about him, because he was a photographer, an amateur photographer, and he did beautiful work. And he did all his work himself, in our house, and he showed me what he was doing. And I was fascinated, I followed

him like a little doggie. And I was looking forward to seeing him again. It wasn't the same man any more.

Q: But you, of course, didn't know this --

A: Didn't know that --

Q: -- un-until you -- until --

A: -- I didn't know, and I didn't understand it either, and I was -- now I realize he was married, he had to keep a job. He came home very irritated often from her -- his job. He worked for an optical lens company as an engineer, and he was complaining that they would put the young whippersnappers in there who didn't know anything and didn't want to listen to what he had to say. He was very uptight. He was completely different from -- from what he was before.

Q: So when you heard -- did you get a letter that you were going to go to the United States? Did you know that they were trying to get --

A: Yes.

Q: You -- you did.

A: Yes.

Q: So when you got the letter saying here are all the papers, you can come to the United States --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did you want to just write and say, ah, we-we're not going to come? Or not? You -- you -- you were just going to do whatever --

A: Yes, because my father had said -- told me [indecipherable]

Q: And that was enough for you?

A: Mm, Father and I was very -- we were very close how I felt I had to, if --

Q: Yeah. That's a s --

A: -- that's what he said, that that's what I should do.

Q: Was Tante Toos upset and surprised when you came to her and said we're actually going?

A: She was upset when the social worker came. We all were, but she was terribly upset. She was somewhat upset. She didn't take us to the train station.

Q: She didn't?

A: No, she didn't want to come along, she said she was too nervous. So Hans and Uncle Schaap took us to the train station early in the morning, one morning.

Q: And did you each have a suitcase?

A: Yes. We also had the trunk.

Q: A trunk?

A: Yeah. Now, I don't know where the pieces of this trunk [indecipherable] any more, but --

Q: Did you take anything that your mother had brought? Did she bring anything from the house into Tante Toos's house? Nothing.

A: No chance. They -- evidently they -- they did the basic, most important things. Linen, blankets, the beds.

Q: Your actual beds were in Tante Toos's house?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember them leaving your apartment and getting --

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I don't know how they got there.

Q: It's so odd, because you were living in the apartment --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- yes, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: So there was a certain familiarity in Tante Toos's house because you actually had some of your own things.

A: Yes.

Q: So in the trunk are clothes?

A: And some linen.

Q: And some linen.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And did Tante Toos give you something when you left?

A: Yes.

Q: What did she give you?

A: She had a little lamp standing on a sewing machine. It was a little Arab sitting on the leaves -- some leaves which are gone by now, and some kind of shelter over his head. And he was smoking a very long pipe. I fell in love with -- I li -- I still do, I like little lamps like that. And she knew that, and she gave me the lamp.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And she also gave me yi -- what Jack mentioned, that little windmill. Was a little windmill about this big, made out of little sticks of wood. But it didn't withstand the times. The boys put the fingers in the window, and pushed it a little bit, and it started falling apart.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It was old.

Q: Well, by now, yeah.

A: But that was already then.

Q: Even then it was old?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm. So who took you to the train station if Tante Toos didn't? Did Hans take you?

A: Hans and Uncle Schaap.

Q: Uh-huh. And did your uncle want to leave as well, or did he not? Your Uncle Schaap.

A: Did -- did he want to do what?

Q: Leave.

A: Yeah, he thought it was better for us to leave.

Q: And did he want to leave as well, or he didn't want to?

A: No. No, he was an older man.

Q: I see.

A: But --

Q: And was he in hiding in --

A: Yes, he was in hiding --

Q: -- in the Netherlands also?

A: -- somewhere in the country.

Q: And he's your father's brother. His eldest brother, is that right?

A: He is my father's cousin's --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- husband.

Q: Father's cousin's husband, okay, so he's not a blood relative.

A: Not really --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- but he behaved like one, that's for sure.

Q: Right.

A: And -- and -- and the wife was the blood relative, and she did not. But she is a very, very warm [indecipherable]

Q: Uh-huh. But they both survived?

A: Yes.

Q: Was this one of the few people in the family that survived?

A: Yeah. Uncle Schaap, and Tante Schaap and Betsy.

Q: And that was it.

A: You know, my cousin Betsy.

Q: Yes, and that was it. And this is a pretty big family that you had.

A: It was actually, you call fi -- four brothers and their families.

Q: Right.

A: And they all had something in Amsterdam. One brother was a tailor, and he made my father's suits, because my father had the hunchback.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So that he was actually the only one who could really make a suit for my father.

Q: Was it a very severe hunchback?

A: Yes.

Q: It was?

A: Mm-hm. Yeah, the story goes that his mother dropped him when he was still very small. That's the story, but there is no -- that's all we know.

Q: That's it. And how did affe -- how did it affect him, do you know? Or was it not a very big deal for him?

A: Well, he took it pretty well, he wasn't complaining. No, he was -- I knew [indecipherable]

Q: Right. Did you get sick after the war, or only Hedy got sick?

A: Hedy got si --

Q: Hedy, Hedy.

A: Hedy got sick.

Q: Sick. You didn't?

A: Well, I got something else. I walked in the rain to school, and the top of my shoes were wet, and they were rubbing against the skin of my foot, and they were rubbing it open. And it just didn't heal. And I had to stay home, I had to keep my feet up. The doctor tried everything under the sun.

Q: And it didn't heal?

A: It didn't heal for five months or something like that. And the last treatment I remember is that he put silver on it.

Q: Silver?

A: Mm-hm. I read that sometimes it's used, silver for healing.

Q: Right. And did that work?

A: Yeah. Now, I don't know it -- if that worked, or ba -- but that seemed to ma -- close it up.

Q: Did you have to stop going to school?

A: Yeah.

Q: [indecipherable] so th --

A: There I was again.

Q: Right. So you take a train to Marseille, is that where you take the train to?

A: Yes. Where we took the trains through Brussels and went to Paris, where we stayed a few days.

Q: Alone?

A: No, we had a -- a -- a -- we call it a -- somebody who oversees a couple.

Q: A chaperone?

A: Chap.

Q: Yeah.

A: We had the chaperone from the American Distribution Committee.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And we were about seven of us from Holland and she in charge of us.

Q: I see. So you stay in par -- did you see Paris at all, at that time?

A: Paris?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: You did. Was that nice?

A: Yes. It was nice because there were from all the fellows who c -- who took us out, and we went to this part of Paris where they have -- I don't know what you call that again. It's a wheel that goes up and you go in there and sit and you go up and around.

Q: A Ferris wheel?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. And you were taken to that?

A: Yeah, I was --

Q: That was nice. And then from Paris you went where?

A: Marseille.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And when we came to Marseille, we slept in a wheelhouse. Our orphans, the whole group of infan -- orphans, with the different chaperones. This was a great big warehouse, and we all slept on the floor that night before we went on the ship.

Q: And then you get on the ship the next day?

A: Yeah.

Q: You didn't get sick on the ship, did you?

A: And how.

Q: Oh, you did?

A: I got seasick, but Hedy got sick. Yeah, she got bronchitis and pneumonia.

Q: Really? And you just got seasick, which is pretty awful.

A: Yeah, yeah, I was just seasick, but -- I mean, she had to go to the infirmary.

Q: Really? And what was wrong with her?

A: She had pneumonia and --

Q: And bronchitis.

A: -- and bronchitis, and they put cups on her back [indecipherable] cups of kind of thing.

Q: Did you see this?

A: Yes. And at -- that was still -- is still done in some places, I think. But [indecipherable] she got better.

Q: Uh-huh. So she was 10 and you were 18 when you left?

A: Yeah.

Q: Right?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So you're already a young woman at 18?

A: Yeah. We --

Q: Yeah. And she's still a kid.

A: She's still a kid. That's why it was so easy for her to call Uncle and Aunt Mom and Dad right away.

Q: But you couldn't?

A: No.

Q: Yeah. Cause you already had a mother and father.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Oh, we have to change the tape.

A: Mm-hm.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: What kind of a ship was it that you were on?

A: A French -- a converted French freighter. And the conversion was done in the place where all the luggage goes. What they did was they put beds in there. And i-in the middle was a -- a sort of -- it's almost look like a little podium. And on the one side we had the girls, on the other side we had the boys, and there were no curtains or anything, so that -- and the beds were two ba -- on top of each other. And -- and it was not -- we had no hot water, we had to wash with s-sea water. Well, you can't wash with sea water. It doesn't -- it just doesn't --

Q: It doesn't work?

A: -- work. And it was crowded, and we were not the only people. We -- we orphans were not the only refugees, there were more adult refugees from Poland, and even a professor from Holland who was not a refugee. He was going to teach at -- at Boston. And we had long discussions because downstairs it was no -- there was no ventilation. And so we stayed on that as long as we could, and -- that freighter, when they came to New York there was a big scandal and got into the papers that this ship was converted, but it certainly didn't have the standards that they were supposed to have. And the food was terrible, besides I was seasick, yeah, I didn't eat much. And -- and he was jailed, the captain was jailed.

Q: Really?

A: That was in the New York papers, I understand.

Q: And why was he jailed, do you know?

A: Because he -- he had this ship, and he took all these people, and he knew -- he was paid for, but he knew that he was way below the standard of a passenger ship.

Q: How long were you on the ship?

A: Three weeks. After one week, one engine died. After two weeks, the second engine died. And we went on one engine this last part, and that's why it took so long.

Q: So this wasn't a great introduction for you, was it?

A: No.

Q: Did you s -- did you see the Statue of Liberty when you came in?

A: Yes.

Q: Was that nice to see? Was that important in some --

A: Yeah, that is exciting.

Q: It is?

A: Because that is -- that seemed to us a symbol of the United States.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The United States, the freedom, justice. Now, we were standing there, crying.

Q: Crying, yes? And was Hedy okay? Was she well by then, by the time you --

A: Yes.

Q: She was okay. And did she see the Statue of Liberty, too?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I don't think she was impressed by it.

Q: But you were?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And were a lot of people standing outside --

A: Oh yes, almost everyone. That was the end of the trip.

Q: Right. And who was there to greet you?

A: My aunt. My uncle was there, but he couldn't wait for three weeks. He -- they couldn't take three weeks off from work, so he had to go back to work.

Q: So she waited for three weeks?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Because that ship was supposed to come at a certain date, and it didn't, and she stayed.

Q: Hm.

A: We stayed in a hotel after that, but she had friends in -- in New York, and I suppose she stayed with them before we came.

Q: But when you came she went to a hotel with you?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you then take a bath?

A: Yes, and we learned a lot of things that are different.

Q: Like what?

A: Like in -- i-i-in the Netherlands, in the wintertime it gets m -- humid and cold, and people wear woolen underwear and longjohns. And [indecipherable] will wear woolen panties. And she told us to forget about all that, because we were going to be living in centrally heated houses or buildings, and we would be -- we would not be needing that kind of underwear any more. And she told us about deodorant. We didn't have any. I guess it wasn't necessary.

Q: But now you were supposed to use it?

A: Yeah. And she told us about putting hand lotion on after you -- after you wash your hands, so your skin doesn't get rough. And I think she told us, never go barefoot on the floor, because you get athlete's foot. We never heard of that.

Q: So is this all before you get to Rochester?

A: Yeah.

Q: She's giving you all these little lessons. But you remember her from when she was at your apartment.

A: She was just -- yeah, she was just one night.

Q: Just one night in your apartment?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: I see. But did you recognize her when you saw her?

A: Yeah.

Q: You did.

A: Yeah.

Q: She looked the same?

A: Pretty much.

Q: Did you like her, were you comfortable with her?

A: N-N-No, not at the beginning.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Because -- it's a story again.

Q: That's fine.

A: Tante Annie had sent me from Vienna, a scarf and a very nice little automatic pencil. Little, dainty, very nice. And she came when she saw me, and she said, you never wrote me a thank you letter. I felt so bad. This was the greeting.

Q: That was the first thing she said?

A: And I thought she was awful. Yeah.

Q: And that's what you remembered about her.

A: That's what -- that's the only thing I remembered from [indecipherable]. And then -- yeah, that's all I remembered, and I didn't really know her at all. And she didn't know us, and she had a difficult job. And, you know, in retrospect, they never had any kids.

Q: So here comes a 10 year old and an 18 year old.

A: And an 18 year old Dutch. And I was always called the stubborn Dutch girl, always. Hedy is stubborn.

Q: But you were called stubborn?

A: But I -- I was called the stubborn Dutch girl.

Q: Were you stubborn?

A: A little bit, but not to -- not of -- much more than anybody else.

Q: Mm-hm. How -- how old -- do you know how old they were when you came? Were they much older? Were they in their 50's or 60's?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. I think they were -- there was six years between them. She must have been maybe 39, and he was in his middle 40's --

Q: I see.

A: -- I would guess.

Q: Was she warm to you at all?

A: Very much so.

Q: She was?

A: Yes. And she had written letters to us in Holland --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- before we came. And in the letters she was very, very warm, yeah. And she -- she -- she was warm.

Q: Mm-hm. So did you come to like her very much? Or was that difficult?

A: That was difficult. One thing is that I already had most of my manners, and some -- my personality was pretty well formed. I mean, it was not that you couldn't change anything, but it was mo -- more difficult to work with an 18 year old than with a 10.

Q: Right.

A: And I -- they always had something to say, everything was wrong. They wanted me to be a perfect American girl, the all American girl, one, two, three. Hair different, dress different, everything.

Q: So this was difficult for you?

A: Mm. It was not difficult for Hedy. She fit right in. I didn't want to have them harp on me all the time, and they were. They wanted to turn me into a very attractive American girl, which I wasn't.

Q: Did you say anything to them?

A: No, I did not. And that I had left over from the war. I felt if I would start saying something, they would throw us out. And they wouldn't have, but that was in my mind. One time, when I said -- contradicted Tante Anne, Uncle Alfred came flying down the stairs. How did you dare to contradict your Aunt Annie? That was the first time that I had said something, I forgot what.

Yeah, they became quite desperate with me, and I was put in the senior year of the high school, so I could have the American diploma, things would be easier for me. And they wanted me to tell them what I wanted to become, what life work I had chosen. I had no idea. And they had me go

to different technical schools, and they told them they -- they told the school principal they didn't know what to do with me any more, and the counselor. And there was a school psychologist who gave me a couple of tests. And they told me -- they told them to send me to college.

Q: Wait a minute, say this again, they what? The -- they -- the --

A: This -- they told me to send them -- to send --

Q: Send you to college?

A: -- me to college. The college was right behind the high school that I went to. There was -- and -- and not to worry, and send her to college.

Q: Did that make you feel good?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Mm.

A: Yeah. Of course, I didn't know exactly what college would be like, because in the Netherlands, when you graduate from the secondary school, you go to the university. You are a student already, you are almost a grown up. And a college here is not yet for grown ups. But I liked it.

Q: What sort of culture shock was there for you in coming to the United States?

A: All the food you could eat, all the bananas everywhere. All these pastries all over the place. The automatic [indecipherable] we had a little bit of that in Amsterdam, one little spot which [indecipherable] was a great big automatic thing, and oh, I had never seen that before. You've got -- you know. And so many people in the streets, and so -- s-so humid and so hot. That was terrible, I ca -- I'm still not used to it. It was -- that was New York in September, and it was hot. And di -- the department stores, the size of the department stores, there ha -- there are department stores in Holland, but the gigantic sizes here of everything. And I still think so when I come in

from winter, the distances are bigger, everything is so big and wide. And the other culture shock part of it was that I was -- I couldn't speak too well yet, but I heard what all the other girls were saying [indecipherable]. They were saying, oh I'm so tired, oh I'm so tired. I got to say that later too, but at that time -- and then they were talking about, did you see him? He asked me out for Saturday, and did you see her clothes? They didn't fit at all. Well, I -- I couldn't understand how 16 - 17 year old girls could talk like that. They are more mature in Holland. They were. Things have changed.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But at that time, when you were 16 - 17, you were pretty serious student, no matter where you were. And you -- and you don't talk about somebody else's clothes, or -- or guys, or -- yeah, guys of course, once in awhile, but not all the time. And they never talked about a book they had read, or more serious things. And I could not -- I could not understand it.

Q: Do you understand it now?

A: Yeah. Well, I see where they're coming from.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I think some of them have become more serious, some of the teenagers, because of the conditions we find ourselves in now. They realize it. But, of course, that was a pretty golden time for the States, 1950 -- 1946 - 1947. They had everything they wanted.

Q: Were you very unhappy when you came here, and stayed in wa -- Rochester? Did that make you unhappy?

A: I had no say over it. It was the only thing we could do. No, it didn't make me happy, but I -- but what were we going to do? We had to do what Uncle and Aunt told us to.

Q: Right.

A: I know they had a difficult job, but they really left me with the feeling that I am not smart enough, I don't work fast enough, I -- if I don't have a date calling back it's my fault. And after I left the house and went to private school, what did they say to my sister? Why don't you study? Betsy always studied. Why don't you do this well? Betsy always did that well.

Q: That's what they said --

A: To Hedy.

Q: -- to Hedy.

A: After I left the house, and I was in Cleveland then.

Q: And did Hedy tell you that --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- this was what they were saying? You must have been shocked.

A: Yeah, I was. It -- it even worked in -- in college. It just so happened the French professor liked me, and -- and Hedy didn't s -- ma -- she didn't work as seriously, maybe. I don't know how she worked, I wasn't there. But Hedy told me that my French professor told her, what's the matter of you? You're Betsy's sister, why -- why can't you learn that? All that happened afterward, but it's already done damage.

Q: Did -- did you ever tell them, later on, when you were no longer in the house, what it felt like?

Or you never did?

A: I never did.

Q: They also told you not to speak about your experiences, am I correct?

A: True.

Q: What did they tell you?

A: Oh, don't tell anybody, because nobody will understand. Nobody who didn't go through these things personally, they don't have any idea what you're talking about. They won't understand it. You may as well not talk about it.

Q: Did they ask you? So you told them what happened? Di -- I mean, did they ask you to explain what had happened to you during the war? To them.

A: Uncle and Aunt?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So they knew.

A: Not an awful lot.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They wanted me to forget about it.

Q: Yeah. It was said to a lot of people who came, wasn't it? Don't talk about it.

A: I don't know.

Q: I think so.

A: I don't know anybody else to whom it was said.

Q: Uh-huh. Did that make you feel bad?

A: Yes. Well, I wasn't going to shout it around. I wasn't going to make that a subject of a discussion. Didn't have to tell me that, but the fact that I really wasn't supposed to --

Q: Right.

A: -- yeah, it bothered me.

Q: Did -- did people at school ask you what happened during the war, or was it as if -- I don't know, the war happened to other people, it was never the people that you were me -- do you

know what I mean? It was if it was a blank time. So did any of the students say to you, you were in the Netherlands, what happened? No. Not the teachers? Nobody?

A: Nobody.

Q: So di -- did you keep thinking about it, or did you also try to get rid of it in some -- in some way?

A: No, I didn't try to get rid of it, but I didn't wa -- I wasn't preoccupied with it any more at all. I was -- I became preoccupied with the school work.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And no, I wasn't. My father -- I missed my father all along.

Q: More than your mother, it was your father that you kept thinking about?

A: Mm-hm. I missed him awfully much. It wasn't until I got married that -- that that stopped.

Q: It stopped. And you met your husband in Cleveland when you were going to school?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And did he ask you about it?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: He did.

A: But that was not so good, because now I don't like going over the border, being asked where I'm going.

Q: You don't like to a -- you don't like to be to -- asked where you're going.

A: Where I'm going, wh-where -- who am I visiting. That's what we are asked at the border.

And on the way back, what did you bring, who gave you something, what was it, what was the value? I don't like that. And that is from the war.

Q: It reminds you.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Hm. We have to change the tape.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: Betsy, when -- when did you actually start talking about your experiences during the war?

Only in the f-family, or did you talk in di -- in other places?

A: I did a little bit in college, because people would ask, where were you during the war -- the Jewish people.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So I told them I was hidden during the war. Just Jewish people. And my doctor in Windsor somehow knew about it through Roseanne because he's ro -- my daughter --

Q: Right.

A: -- he's her doctor, too, and he -- he went down and sat with me and wanted to know everything, before, you know, he became [indecipherable] and wanted to know how it was and how I felt. Yes, in college I didn't do much about. I told you I spoke at the PTA meeting once, but I -- yes, I was asked to speak at the PTA meeting when I was in high school, but I was asked to speak about Holland. So I had to do research because things had changed already.

Q: Right.

A: So I spoke about Holland, but not about my experiences.

Q: Did you -- when you -- when your kids were born -- you have three children, did you -- when they reached a certain age, did you tell them about your experiences? Or only when they were older?

A: Well, they all knew about it, but gee, I don't remember if I told them, or my husband. They all had different reactions, though. No, I don't think I went down and sa -- and told them, like you know, like we are talking.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: No. No. But then the boys got older and they started asking more questions and then I gave them more answers.

Q: Right. But you say that they all have different reactions. What are the -- what are the different reactions that they have?

A: Jack is very interested in the experiences. He also wants to see where I went to grade school. He wants to see the house we were in, and the Germans next door. And by the way, in that house, in the front room under the floor are still several jars of jam that my mother put there, but she never had the chance to get them out. And if nobody changed that floor, they are still there.

Q: They are still there. This is the original, the -- the house that you grew up in?

A: No, that was the house where we lived before the hiding.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: Yeah. The offices were downstairs, and --

Q: Right.

A: -- I don't -- I don't think she had any help, I think she did that all by herself. Cut -- cut the piece out of the floor and put the --

Q: Put the jam in. Why did she put it there?

A: Well, you were not supposed to horde any more, so that was one reason. And she wanted to have it, though. She thought it was important to have.

Q: Mm-hm. Hm. And Roseanne, what's her response?

A: I don't want to be Jewish any more, because I don't want to go to a concentration camp.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Now that was all the way through, all the way through until maybe just a year ago. She has a 10 year old daughter who sings in a choir, and the choir is the Windsor [indecipherable] opera

choir, so everybody's in there. And Roseanne thought around Christmastime there were too many songs about Jesus. And she told them so. She said, I don't do Christmas, I am Jewish. You shouldn't just think -- but Roseanne has a way of saying things [indecipherable] make angry. So now she's got to come to a meeting, there are going to be board members there of that opera situation. Now, that's the first time that she has come forward to say that she's Jewish. Before that, she didn't want to have anything to do with it. She didn't even look for Jewish guys ever, ever. She had two bad marriages. Mark, that's the middle one.

Q: That's your son, yes.

A: He was very interested. He was very interested. He went to Israel when he graduated from college and he stopped in Amsterdam. My cousin was still alive, my cousin Betsy. And he wanted her to take him to the old [indecipherable] synagogue there that I-I even haven't seen. And he wanted to know a lot about the time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But he has become ultra-Orthodox, and so now he's more interested in making me Orthodox. But he has the empathy. He definitely has the empathy.

Q: Mm-hm, for your experience, uh-huh, yeah.

A: Yes. He is a very sensitive person, he ought to be a social worker or a psychologist, but he cleans the shule.

Q: Mm-hm. And he lives in Israel? He lives in Israel?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: With eight children.

Q: Eight?

A: Mm-hm. He lives in -- on the West Bank, the disputed territory. And I'm the mother, so excuse me, but I think Mark is very smart.

Q: He's very smart?

A: So is Jack.

Q: Yeah.

A: But Mark is in a different way. He seems to pick it up out of the air. He was good student, and he's just that smart.

Q: So let me ask you, you -- you were not feeling very much Jewish identity during the war.

A: No. No.

Q: What about after the war?

A: Passover?

Q: No, after the war.

A: After the war?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Well, e-everything changed. All I knew was matzoh at Passover, no bread. And not going to school during the high holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And that's all I knew. Oh, I also knew that Jews sometimes ate different foods, but I didn't know how different until we came to the States and Uncle and Aunt -- Uncle being Mother's brother, being family of Schwartz's [indecipherable] was pretty religious. And they belonged to the Conservative synagogue. And we had to stay home from school and go to all the services.

Q: So was this part of your culture shock?

A: No. What disappointed me was that the women had to sit on the balcony, and there was no air conditioning, and it was September in Rochester and it was hot. I thought I'd die. And so there

was so much Hebrew. I hadn't learned any Hebrew. Now I'm beginning to feel I should know more, but at that time, they talk Hebrew, well, I was daydreaming.

Q: Did they send you to Hebrew school?

A: No.

Q: They didn't.

A: You mean in Holland?

Q: No.

A: Oh.

Q: In Rochester, when you moved there.

A: No.

Q: No. Did they send ha --

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Neither of you.

A: But Hedy became a Sunday school teacher in the Reform synagogue because she got to know some guy. And so he got -- she became a Sunday school teacher, so she learned very much more about Judaism quickly, where she start keeping to everything. And like I said, with Uncle and Aunt, I learned -- bagels were new, bagels I had never heard of. And -- and -- and smoked he -- smoked salmon, I didn't know anything about. And such thing as [indecipherable], which my husband's sister make very good [indecipherable] and I -- I had never, never seen that.

Q: Did you like it?

A: Yes. And the only way you could eat matzohs in Holland was with butter and sugar over it.

Q: Butter and sugar?

A: Yeah. Very fine sugar. Not powdered sugar, a sugar in between. And that does taste good.

Q: Really? I'll try it.

A: Yeah.

Q: So do you think that in s -- that because of being in this household where it was more religious than you grew up, that you became more identified with je -- with Judaism, or it's just that you were -- it was clear you were Jewish and that was it? Were -- did you -- did you go to synagogue more once you were --

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And the reason why I did, and especially [indecipherable] they had Rabbi Phil Bernstein, and Philip Bernstein wrote a book which is called, "What do Jews Believe?" It wa -- it was a long time ago, but it was a bestseller. And his sermons were just out of this world. So I went out of my own will, I went every Friday in my last year of college, cause he was inspiring.

Q: Well, that's interesting.

A: Yeah.

Q: And when you got married, did you go to synagogue? Or did you send your kids to synagogue?

A: We always landed in a neighborhood that was far from the Jewish community, because we moved around a lot. And even in Windsor, I lived in Windsor east, the Jews lived in Windsor south, but we couldn't afford the homes there. So the children were really not exposed much, except that we sent Jack and Mark to Sunday school in Mansfield at the time, which was about 12 miles away from us, Mansfield, Ohio. And Jack was ready to be Bar-Mitzvahed, but he didn't

want to be Bar-Mitzvahed. And when Mark was in college, he became almost a born again Christian. He happened to have a friend who was, and his friend's mother and I met through unusual circumstances and became close friends. But she got Mark. She got them to go with her to Washington to the Peace March and all the things that they do. And my husband said, I don't like that. And then my husband read in the Jewish news that there was going to be some kind of Jewish meeting in New York City, but you didn't know how Jewish. So he went there, and he met Rabbi Hecht. Rabbi Hecht was very ultra-Orthodox, and he was -- his work was to reach out to the students. And he got Mark. And now Mark is Orthodox.

Q: Right.

A: And it's really unusual because we -- we didn't have mu-much contact with Jewish people when we -- in Cleveland, yeah. But then, when we had to move to those small communities, there were hardly any Jews. And it was a hardship to take him every Sunday to Sunday school, especially if one of them didn't want to. So Roseanne was not very much -- we couldn't show her very mu -- didn't show her very much. But she had her own reasons for not wanting to be Jewish, you know.

Q: Right, right.

A: So that's how it worked with the kids. I think Jack identifies with us as being Jewish, but he wanted to show his daughter what the high holidays were like, and he brought her to a synagogue in L.A., and they told him you can't come in unless you pay 500 dollars. That was --

Q: And that was the end. Have you ever talked about your experiences to schoolchildren, have you ever been invited to do that, or wanted to do it?

A: No. But the Jewish center got to know about me through Mark, who was a -- a member there, active member. A-An -- and -- and -- and about my -- he talked about my background, and they

have a Yom HaShoah -- they have a few days ago in the Conservative synagogue, the Reform, and there's little one, ultra-Orthodox. And some [indecipherable] in town, and they have some kind of ceremony where we have to -- the -- the survivors have to go up on the stage, and they have to turn on a candle. And they don't say who they are -- we are, but we are the survivors, and so I was called by the Jewish Center to take part.

Q: Are you pleased that there is so much publicity about the Holocaust now that -- that there are more programs on television, that there's more written about it than when you first came?

A: Yes.

Q: You are.

A: What upsets me now is that there are people who still don't believe.

Q: Mm. How do you think this experience has affected you?

A: It's going to affect me?

Q: No. How has it?

A: That I was very angry, cause it was the -- the minister of one of the western provinces who said -- he was Dutch -- it never happened. An-And -- and he s -- he was -- made anti-Semitic speeches, but when he said it never happened, I was thinking, what can I do about that? Yeah, I didn't like that.

Q: When -- when you think about your life now, and you think about what it was like for you in the Netherlands because of the war, and because you were in hiding, do you think that changed you very much?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think it affected you a great deal?

A: Yes.

Q: And -- and how -- how would you explain what it did to you? Do -- do you know?

A: Well, I knew that Tante Toos's brother-in-law said, get rid of them. And I just figured if -- if we would make trouble, and -- and make things difficult for Tante Toos in some way, like my mom did at times, we would be thrown out on the street.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that feeling has been with me all the time. I don't want to antagonize people because I'm afraid they'll throw me out on the street.

Q: So you don't want to fight, you don't want to argue.

A: No. And -- and -- and my kids are the opposite, all three. They say what -- what they think. I don't.

Q: Still you -- you still don't.

A: Actu -- I say what I think, but if it's going to make friction, I don't.

Q: You don't.

A: No. And like I said, I don't like border inspection.

Q: Right.

A: Stuff like that. And I also horde. Once in awhile Windsor cannot sell a product and slowly it will go off the shelves. And when I notice that, and it is something that I'm using, I horde.

Q: So what are you hoarding now?

A: I -- I have a couple of pieces of Caress soap. They took that off the Windsor market, but I understand it's still [indecipherable]

Q: Right, it's here. Shall we send you some?

A: Oh no.

Q: No.

A: I still have about five big pieces.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay.

A: That should go me awhile.

Q: Do you think that the -- do you think that the war harmed you?

A: Yes.

Q: How?

A: You know how isolated I felt, and now, afterward, I'm -- I'm just very shy. I'm not aggressive, I'm not self assertive at all because for one, I -- I don't bump and rock the boat. And for another, I want the other person to show me first, how -- what they mean, are they really friendly, or are they just putting it on?

Q: And for you that -- you think that comes from the war, not from before?

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I think so because Hitler made it so obvious that there are Jews who did everything wrong. And before the war, to me, the Jews weren't any different from anybody else.

Q: Right.

A: I had Jewish friends and I had Christian friends, and there were -- well, first my mom of course, would -- I didn't accept it from her really, but then when Hitler came, you couldn't help it any more.

Q: You had to believe her then, yeah.

A: And the name was Cohen, too.

Q: Who was Cohen?

A: I was Cohen.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you couldn't avoid it.

A: No.

Q: No. This is --

A: Yeah.

Q: Is there anything that you would like to say that we haven't talked about?

A: Yeah, I -- I should say that you should not judge a person too quickly. That -- yeah. Wait and see more of his personality aspect before you make a judgment. That's what I want to say.

Q: Okay. Well, Betsy, thank you so much. We spent a number of times on the telephone and I'm so glad that you were able to come to Washington and --

A: Oh, thank you.

Q: -- and be with us. Thank you very much.

A: Well, thank you for asking.

Q: You're welcome.

A: And thank Jack for coming with me because alone I wouldn't have done it.

Q: Right, I know.

A: Yeah.

Q: So thank you to you and to Jack. Okay.

A: You're welcome. I hope it will make a nice story.

Q: I'm sure it will.

A: But what do you do with it?

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: And Betsy, who is this?

A: This is my mother in Vienna, the -- in 1922, I think it was.

Q: And what was her name?

A: Roseanne.

Q: And who is this on the left, Betsy?

A: That's me when I was in Vienna, visiting grandparents.

Q: How old do you think you are here?

A: About four and a half, five.

Q: And on the right?

A: Same thing.

Q: But you're smiling. And who are you holding?

A: A teddy bear, I think it is.

Q: And this shot? What is this?

A: They're all -- all three of them are me. The top one, I wore that to school the -- the dress there, the [indecipherable]

Q: It says 1934. Is that --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what's this shot here?

A: That one is -- the baby is my sister, and my father's hand is visible, and I -- and I'm right next to her. And it is in a sea resort off the Netherlands, it's not taken in Amsterdam.

Q: What is -- what's this picture? This picture? This picture? You see --

A: That is a picture of my baby sister in the wagon, I think, a little wagon, and I am standing by her being babysitter.

Q: And who is this couple?

A: My father and my mother.

Q: Do you have any idea when this was taken?

A: What?

Q: Do you have any idea when this was taken, what year?

A: I think it was 1937.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is a family picture. My mother is to the left, and the little one is my sister, Hedy, and next to her, that's me, and next to me on the right is my father.

Q: And do you think that was 1937 also?

A: Yeah, they were taken the same day, yeah.

Q: Yeah. And when was this picture taken?

A: '46.

Q: And who is it?

A: That's me.

Q: Is that you?

A: Yes. Yeah, that's me on the bottom.

Q: And who's up top?

A: That's my sister, Hedy.

Q: So you're now --

A: Me --

Q: -- you're 18, right? 1946, so you're 18, and Hedy is 10.

A: -- 10. But that was --

Q: And this picture?

A: It's my sister Hedy in the hospital. She became very ill after the war.

Q: So she was there for a number of months, right?

A: A couple of months, yes.

Q: Yeah. And who is this group here?

A: That's my sister and me, and behind my sister is Tante Toos, and next to Tante Toos is her son, Hans.

Q: What about these, Betsy? Do this one first.

A: That's my sister and me sitting in the same door. Those doors go open to the backyard. We're sitting in the sun.

Q: So this was at Tante --

A: Toos's --

Q: -- Toos's --

A: -- ho-house.

Q: -- hou -- where you were hidden.

A: Yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: And the other?

A: The other, well the girl is me, and on my right is Hans's friend, whose name is Roel, R-o-e-l.

And on the other side is Hans.

Q: And this picture?

A: That's my sister when she went to school right after the war.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is our passport picture. We went on -- we both went on the same passport. At the -- at the left it's me, and the little one is my sister Hedy.

Q: And what is this, Betsy?

A: This is a towel to dry glasses. It's especially glasses, that my mother bought in 19 -- in the late 1930's.

Q: This was part of the linens you brought back with you, when you said you saved linens?

A: Well, that was my mother's, she brought it along.

Q: And you took it from -- from the hiding place --

A: Yes.

Q: -- where you were and brought it to the United States.

A: Yeah. She took it to the hiding place, and yeah, that was the only thing we had.

Q: And what is this?

A: This is my father's cigarette case.

Q: And this? What's this?

A: It's supposed to be [indecipherable]

End of Tape Eight

Conclusion of Interview