

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Ruth Buhling
April 11, 2007
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PREFACE

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RUTH BUHLING
April 11, 2007

Question: Good morning, Ruth.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: It's nice to see you.

A: Nice to see you.

Q: Tell me, what was your name when you were born?

A: Ruth Berliner.

Q: And when were you born?

A: February the third, 1922.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Cologne.

Q: In Germany?

A: Germany.

Q: Now, as I understand it, you were adopted at the age of six months, so you never knew your -- your mother's name -- do you know her first name?

A: Yes, I -- when my adopted parents got all the papers, and I knew her name, when she was born --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- I found my grandparents and everything, yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: And where did they adopt you?

A: In Holland.

Q: In Holland. So did your biological mother go to Holland, and -- or did they go to --

A: No. No, no --

Q: -- how'd it happen that you were in Holland?

A: The father that would adopt me --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- had to come by train -- he had no car -- to Cologne, and he pick me up in the orphanage. He heard this on a friend of him that knew that people that ran it. And so he got me. I don't know anything about the paperwork over there, how it went that time. But he only had an blanket around me, they had no clothes [indecipherable] in Germany, he had to st -- hid all the time, because they were still shooting. That was couple of years after the war, they still had trouble there. And then my -- he finally made it, and then he came there -- he lived in Haarlem, that's a small town, and -- and he came home and the whole family from both sides were -- a lot of them from that town too, were there waiting for me.

Q: Right.

A: So.

Q: Tell me about your adopted parents. What -- what was your father's name?

A: Joseph.

Q: Joseph. And his last name?

A: Mok, M-o-k.

Q: M-o-k. And what did he do?

A: They had a store at the time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And -- yeah, pots and pans and stuff like that, mm-hm.

Q: And did your mother work in the store as well?

A: Yeah, she was there sometimes when he had to go someplace.

Q: Right.

A: And then I was outside in the playpen, and they had the dog, he took care of me. No wa --

Q: The dog took care of you?

A: Oh yeah, we c -- nobody could touch me.

Q: And what kind of a dog was it? Do you remember the dog?

A: They called it [indecipherable]. It's like smaller than a shepherd? Mixed was it, I guess.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And once when I was a little older, I walked out of the store, and that family living the same s-street there, and then the dog went to the store, and called my mother to pick me up. So she came out and found me.

Q: So you were in a playpen in the store, or right outside?

A: No -- outside, yeah.

Q: Outside the store. So how come you were there? Where was your mother?

A: She was -- I was outside the store, she was in the store.

Q: I see.

A: And the dog was there, and nobody did anything that time.

Q: Right, right.

A: It was --

Q: And did you live near the store?

A: No, we -- we [indecipherable] and upstairs.

Q: I see, so it was right --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- right near each other.

A: All one place, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And how do you remember your parents? Your -- your adopted parents, what were they like?

A: They were wonderful --

Q: Yes?

A: -- great. The greatest parents ever anybody could have, yeah.

Q: And were you their only child?

A: Yeah. My mother was pregnant often, you know, but she could not have it all the way out, she always lost it.

Q: She always lost the baby.

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: So you were very important for them?

A: Oh yes, mm-hm. I sit --

Q: And were you close with both of them?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: And were they warm people?

A: My mother was very warm, my father was from that small town where the people were

[indecipherable] helping all the time, or things like that, you know, ma -- I know --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: No, not in Holland. Dutch people don't do that like here.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I was surprised, yeah. They know that -- that they love you, and that was enough, you know?

Q: Right.

A: But my was happy with me and now I know. But -- and then later on he was sick, and he didn't make money, and to -- there was not much food and I came home from school, you had to go home for lunch. And I said, don't you all eat? He said, no, we ate already. But later it seems that there was no food for them, just for me they had some food now. They sacrificed everything because the family always said, when I came from high -- elementary school, why don't you let her work and make some money and help you? No, they said, we don't do that. So they send me -- was a special high school. Very hard to learn, you learned all the languages and we had to learn all the books to read in every language, we had to learn poems in every language. Was a very hard school, and I know when we lived in America, there was an article in the paper, you know, then somebody sent to me that the parents complained that the kids get too much homework. [indecipherable] lot of homework. Well, it was good, what I get.

Q: It was good?

A: Yeah.

Q: So they were -- they were poor. They were not --

A: No, no --

Q: -- they didn't have a lot of money.

A: -- no, no. Because for awhile they did okay, but then here was the depression in '29 --

Q: Right.

A: -- and I [indecipherable] did, but the town where we lived was on the ocean, was a town with all fisherman, and that stopped. I never find out why that was.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And my father lost a lot of money, when he sold stuff, and people paid him once a week, and they just couldn't do it. So then -- oh boy --

Q: So --

A: -- then we went to Amsterdam.

Q: -- is that why he moved to Amsterdam, because he --

A: No, my mother didn't like to live there, she liked to live in Amsterdam because she had sisters and brothers there.

Q: I see.

A: So we moved. And she was sick, she had something in the leg, and so he brought her to Amsterdam, and then I stayed with one of the aunts. For three months she was in the hospital, mm-hm.

Q: She was for three months in the hospital?

A: Mm-hm, yeah. Was something with the leg, I don't know what it was.

Q: But that must have been hard on you. You were --

A: No, well, the aunt --

Q: It was okay?

A: Yeah. And the aunt and uncle are very rich, so I got a real good life there.

Q: I see.

A: And I only saw my mother, I pass when I went to school -- I went to school there, and then I passed the hospital and my mother, they put her near the window, and I could say hello, when years ago you couldn't go --

Q: You couldn't go inside --

A: -- as a kid, no.

Q: -- right. And you were eight years -- it was 1930 when you moved to Amsterdam, right?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you like school when you went in -- when you were -- started school in ho -- in -- you pronounce it Haarlem, so it sounds like --

A: No, I s -- we lived someplace else [indecipherable] on the beach, and oh, I liked it.

Q: Yes.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And did you like moving to Amsterdam?

A: Oh, it was okay with me.

Q: It was okay?

A: I lived in a nice neighborhood, I got friends right away. Oh yeah, mm-hm.

Q: So what did your father do when you moved to Amsterdam?

A: He sold textile, and he went to small towns.

Q: So he traveled?

A: He traveled, yeah, mm-hm, and he sold it. And then he did okay til the war came.

Q: Then he did okay?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were they -- where were you living when you were in Amsterdam? Did you live in the same place most -- until the war?

A: No, I lived in, about til I was 13 - 14 years old, we lived there, and then we went to different street, newer home and separate bedrooms, that was not in that one. And that was the home where my future husband lived on top of us.

Q: Right. So wa-was there -- were there only you and his family, your future husband's family?

A: No, it had three floors.

Q: Three floors.

A: You call it here the second, third and fourth.

Q: Right.

A: We called it the first, second and third.

Q: Third.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And the stairs are very steep in Holland, aren't they?

A: Yeah, but not -- that was a pretty new home.

Q: It was a --

A: But there are houses like that, yeah.

Q: Cause ones I've traveled up are very st --

A: Oh.

Q: -- very steep.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So you liked Amsterdam?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you like school?

A: Yeah.

Q: When you went there?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you liked learning all these languages?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: What languages did you learn?

A: Of course Dutch, and then English, French and German.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then I finish -- was four years in that school. I think we had about 18 subjects, it's not like here. I think they do so many in the three months, and every day the same? No, we had every time different ones. We had 18 subjects.

Q: 18?

A: Yeah.

Q: In one year?

A: Every year.

Q: Every year?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's a lot.

A: Yeah. Now [indecipherable] it was like gym, art, music, we learn notes and everything, and home economics, we learned how to sew and knit and crochet. [indecipherable] we get all homework. We had to s -- write -- translate stories, we had to learn poems and everything.

Q: So it was very hard work?

A: Algebra and geometry, yeah. Everything.

Q: So how many hours of homework did you do a day, do you think?

A: No, when I came home, at four, at least two hours, and after dinner no -- an hour.

Q: Really? So it was a lot?

A: Yeah. Was a lot, yeah.

Q: And were your parents religious, were you very religious?

A: No. They were Jews, not religious, but the didn't eat things like garlic and ham and shellsfish, that they didn't eat.

Q: But they a --

A: Like shrimps, and every -- no, that's all. And then like we had last week Passover. They ate -- they did eat matzohs, that's it.

Q: They ate matzohs.

A: My [indecipherable] because they were brought up Orthodox, mm-hm.

Q: Right. They were brought up Orthodox --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but they didn't behave as Orthodox.

A: No, no. And my father would have loved to go to synagogue Saturdays, but it was his best day. He couldn't miss that, so --

Q: So he went?

A: No, he couldn't go now --

Q: Oh, he didn't, he couldn't go?

A: -- could not afford that, no.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Once a year he went.

Q: Did you go to synagogue?

A: Not much. I went to Hebrew schools though, I learned Hebrew --

Q: Oh, you did?

A: -- yeah, they send me to Hebrew school, couple of years.

Q: So what was that like? What -- what did you learn in Hebrew school? That's --that's -- so your -- that's your 19th subject.

A: Yeah, I -- I don't know. I don't know that any more, but oh, translation, you could read it in Hebrew, but not like you see it on television. It had a -- like the A and the E and the O. And now you see it without the lines over that --

Q: Yes.

A: -- you know?

Q: Yes.

A: And -- but I don't know any more. One of my daughters, she went, the middle one. She went to Hebrew school and learned everything and she going to marry a Jewish, too in the synagogue. [indecipherable] smart.

Q: And when you went to Hebrew school, did you also learn about the religion?

A: Yeah, you learned about what the holidays --

Q: Right.

A: -- meant and all that, you know, oh yeah. You sha --

Q: And did you want to then celebrate or didn't you care?

A: Yeah, I didn't want [indecipherable] no, no.

Q: You didn't want to?

A: No. Like my daughter, she -- we had like Passover when the kids were home, and then when college still, we did it all together. And now they're not there any more, so --

Q: So you don't do it?

A: No.

Q: But when you were a kid --

A: Mm-hm?

Q: -- and you would come home so that -- your family would celebrate Passover, would you do the Hagadah?

A: Oh, we did, but we did always with family when we were just the three of us, you know.

Q: Right.

A: We did it together, yeah.

Q: So you -- you didn't necessarily have dinner with the rest of the family, with your mother's sisters?

A: Yeah.

Q: You did?

A: We did all that, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh yeah. We're very close.

Q: And did you have a lot of friends when you were growing up?

A: What do you mean, growing up, how old? I had always one friend.

Q: Well, when you moved to --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- when you moved to Amsterdam --

A: Yeah, I --

Q: -- when you were eight --

A: -- yeah, I found a couple of friends, yeah, mm-hm [indecipherable]. I had other contact with them, but she passed away years ago, really.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And well, at that time [indecipherable] Holland you had usually one good friend. Not like here you have a whole bunch of them.

Q: So did you have one good friend?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And did you talk a lot? Did you do lots of things together? Do you remember?

A: Yeah, later when she was married, and I was married and had kids, we went with the bicycle, went to the swimming pool and shopping a little bit like that, yeah. But then [indecipherable] later on, when I moved, I met a girl and she went to school with me, and she was my friend, I still write with her, she is still in Holland.

Q: Oh.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And did you share she -- secrets together?

A: No.

Q: Or no?

A: No, not with her.

Q: No.

A: I had one friend here. I worked a couple of years in a store and she came from Japan and she's still my friend.

Q: Yes?

A: We did that, because we knew she wouldn't tell anybody and I wouldn't tell anybody.

Q: Uh-huh, right, right.

A: Mm-hm. Didn't have much secrets.

Q: And what kind of a person was your mother?

A: Which one?

Q: How do you remem -- your -- your adopted mother.

A: Oh, she was sweet, she could sing good. I was always sitting on her lap, sing --

Q: She could sing?

A: -- oh, she's --

Q: Yeah?

A: -- if -- if they had the money that time, she would have been something in that.

Q: Really?

A: But she -- oh, she could sing beautiful. And told me stories, you know. And they all -- and my father too, they always played some games that -- after dinner. So, you know.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And [indecipherable]

Q: When did you find out that you were adopted?

A: Now, I tell you honest, when we went back to that one town where the [indecipherable] I used to live when I was adopted, we went to [indecipherable] and there were sometimes people came and they said to my mom, is that the girl? I didn't say anything. And I had -- I was probably smarter ri -- I had an idea, so I asked her once. Oh no, she said, during the war, we had a little boy. Kids from Belgium came over a lot. And -- but he went home. She didn't -- she didn't tell me at that time, I was too young. I -- I knew it. And then I asked my girlfriend's mother when I was about 10, and she says, no, not that I know. I don't know if she knew. But -- and then my mother want to tell me when -- before I was finish high school, because my diploma had to go my real name. But in Holland [indecipherable] the time, you could not adopt all the way that you got the name. Not -- after the war it changed, of course. But they could not do that then.

Q: So, did you ca --

A: I had original my own name.

Q: You had Berliner --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- all through school. So weren't you suspicious then?

A: I didn't know then, my mother went to school, my mother even went to my office, where they knew it, and I didn't want to ask [indecipherable] call me by my adopted name.

Q: I see, so yo -- so there wouldn't be -- but you had a suspicion from a very young age.

A: Yeah, from [indecipherable] that I was young. And she was gonna tell me, she had the hard time, she -- don't tell me, I said, I know. And then I told her [indecipherable] sometimes they say [indecipherable] you have a nice round face, looks like the Germans. Then I got all red.

[indecipherable] why you get so red? Said, I don't know. See, because they were talking about it. Yeah, I knew it. I didn't want to tell them.

Q: Was -- do -- so, was there -- you -- when she tried to tell you, you said you knew already.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Was she upset in some ways, do you think?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: I don't remember exactly, but she didn't have to say any more, so it was fine.

Q: And this didn't bother you that you were adopted, no?

A: I didn't feel different, you know?

Q: Right.

A: My parents were sometimes afraid that they will to -- take me back when they could have done it.

Q: They could have?

A: Yeah, because I was adopted -- like foster parents.

Q: Right.

A: Official -- they didn't get paid. I was official, I had papers at home that they adopted me, but it's not like it is here that you get the name.

Q: Uh-huh. So they were always afraid that your biological mother would come back and try to get you?

A: Yeah, yeah. And I tell you, if a [indecipherable] when I left here, I got a letter from some person from Detroit and he wrote me that he was married -- he knew from my uncle, that he was married to my mother. But she never told him that she had a kid. He said, if I would have known it, I would taken you back. My parents were always afraid for that. I was so glad that he didn't know it. Was a nice guy, when my mother inherited a small home in Cologne, and he said because I was the daughter, he gave me three-quarters of that money.

Q: Really?

A: And from that money we went to America. We have to pay for that.

Q: That's interesting.

A: I never contact [indecipherable]

Q: Were you di -- were you curious about your mother?

A: No.

Q: You've never been curious?

A: I got some -- I got some pictures -- one picture from the end that's from my uncle that lived here, that is -- and another picture with family. No, but I had my parents, and I had nice family.

Q: Right.

A: Didn't bother me.

Q: It didn't bother you.

A: When my mother said once, she saw the name, my name, Berliner on the list from people, and they lived not far from us, she said, you think that is family of yours? I don't care.

Q: Yeah.

A: I didn't want to know. If you don't know -- and my mother gave me away because their parents are probably Orthodox, and you know years ago -- she was not young, she was already 30 years old. And she has the boyfriend, but he didn't marry her. And so --

Q: Right. How old were your adoptive parents, were they -- were they older? [indecipherable]

A: When I was adopted in '22, my mother was born '86, so she was 36 --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and my father was 35, something like that, so --

Q: So they weren't very young.

A: Not real young, no.

Q: Right. When you -- you moved to ho -- to Amsterdam in 1930, so you were eight years old. By the time 1933 comes, Hitler is in power.

A: Mm.

Q: Do you s -- are -- do you start hearing things, your --

A: No, we hear --

Q: -- in '33, you're 11 years old.

A: -- in '36 we heard, because then they start with breaking windows and all that ju -- mm-hm.

Q: So you hear things?

A: Yeah.

Q: And are you now living in this new place where Joe's family lives?

A: Yeah.

Q: And are they very political?

A: His father was.

Q: His father was?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: S -- and are you -- the families are close, your family and his family are sort of close?

A: No, when they met each other -- they did not really visit each other a lot, no.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: Because that was already in the war, and when I came out of that one building and I went to the house, they were happy and [indecipherable] you know, they're okay, but they did not visit that much, no.

Q: I see. So your friendship with Joe came quite separately from the --

A: Oh yeah. His mother came to my mother's house --

Q: Right

A: -- [indecipherable] to pick up some for -- his father was in hospital, and then she show me and then she told him to come, and that was it.

Q: I see.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Oka -- it happened very quickly, huh?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Joe and I -- I didn't look Jewish at all, and -- and I had an special paper that they could not pick me up, so I took my s -- star off, and I [indecipherable] sometimes [indecipherable] to a movie or some.

Q: Right, right. But let's talk earlier.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, are y -- the people around you, your parents, are they worried about what the Germans are going to do? Or they don't think that the Germans are going to come to --

A: Yeah, my father, he knew.

Q: Your father was --

A: My mother didn't show much, but my father knew, because sometimes they were throwing bombs in the neighborhood and we went downstairs and she stayed in bed. She said doesn't matter, she said, we're die one way or the other. And he knew always what was going to happen.

Q: So there's -- there's a Nazi up t -- there's a s -- s -- a surge of Nazis, Dutch Nazis, before the German Nazis come?

A: No, the Germans came already in '40 --

Q: In '40, right.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But before that.

A: [indecipherable] it's -- no, no --

Q: Before that --

A: -- no, not -- not that we knew.

Q: -- you're not seeing anything?

A: What that was, there were a lot of German girls that came as maids to so -- and my aunt had one like that, and later they find out -- they find the ones, they spied, and give information to the German -- I don't know how you call it in -- and a lot of [indecipherable] German girls that did it.

Q: Really? And they came before the Germans came in 1940?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah, she was there maybe in -- sh -- when I came to Amsterdam she was there [indecipherable] and they worked --

Q: Right.

A: -- [indecipherable] people.

Q: Now, you start work when you're 16 years old.

A: Yeah.

Q: Am I right?

A: Mm.

Q: In 1938?

A: Eight, yeah.

Q: Right. So have you finished school, did you --

A: I was finished, but I took courses after that. I --

Q: At the hise -- you did take courses after that?

A: Yeah, in English, how you call commercial.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And in French. And then I had to stop from the -- I couldn't do it anyway.

Q: Right. And what kind of a job was it that you had?

A: Was in a office, and like secretarial.

Q: Right.

A: And other things I did.

Q: And you lived at home?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: You were still a kid, actually, right?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: So, did you bring money home to your parents?

A: I brought some money, but they didn't want any, but I gave them because they didn't need at that time, but then they spent so much money on other things for me, for clothes, you know.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. But I want them to have. Every two weeks I got paid, so I gave him some.

Q: You gave them some money, right. Well, did you like working?

A: Oh yeah. Was a nice job.

Q: Was a nice job?

A: Yeah, very nice.

Q: Why was it so nice?

A: Cause the people were nice, and later, when my boss, he went with his family to America.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So one of the managers from the bookkeeping department, he took over with another one.

And they were good friend -- I-I still was friends, he passed away. We always saw him in

Holland, and wrote each other. And his wife [indecipherable] we went there. But I liked it. They were all nice and they were good, nice people.

Q: And when the -- the original owners left to go the u -- to the United States, was that before the war, before the Nazis took over, you --

A: I think it is maybe just before they came in. They still could do it, I guess --

Q: Mm-hm. And they could leave.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think they left because they thought the Germans were coming?

A: Of course.

Q: They did.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Did you want to leave also? Did you think about that?

A: No.

Q: No. What was it like in May -- May 10th the attack came, right, and by the 14th or 15th of May, it's over, right?

A: Over, yeah, it was only a couple of days.

Q: Do you remember those days?

A: A little bit, mm-hm. Nothing much happened, they bombed Rotterdam, and then they were going to bomb Amsterdam, and they didn't want -- that's why they gave over. They stopped the war.

Q: They stopped the war

A: They saved the city.

Q: -- so that they wouldn't bomb it.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Right. Do you remember the Nazis coming in and taking over?

A: No, I didn't look when they came in, but I know they came in, and they -- when my boss left the office, the city government appointed a lawyer, you know, to look over it.

Q: Mm.

A: And after that we got an German guy, he was an old soldier, he was hurt, he had one arm, I guess, and they put him down there, too.

Q: So he was running the business?

A: No, he d -- he held up -- he was good -- he was good to the people. He even told me, he said, you want me to be a father, and then he gave [indecipherable] and all. Well, my parents didn't want that. He want -- he want to do that.

Q: He knew that you were Jewish?

A: Yeah, when I had to leave in '42. I couldn't work any more.

Q: Right. So -- so let's talk a little bit about what goes on between 1940 and '42, after the Nazis come in, are you identified as Jewish?

A: We had to get I.D.'s. I have one with me. And my parents had an J on it, and I didn't have to because I only knew two Jewish grandparents, and according to Hitler, you was not Jewish, and I was someplace when we were picked up, and the men didn't know anything about Jewish [indecipherable] father was Jewish. And he really was not Jewish according to the Jewish religion, you are what your mother is. And he was picked up and sent away and so I didn't have to have a J. I didn't want to be without my parents. So I took it and you could -- you couldn't go out after eight o'clock, nobody could go out any more. And the Jews only could shop between three and five, things like that. But nothing really happened til '42.

Q: There were -- there were a lot of restrictions, right, for those two years.

A: Yeah, but not til '42, then they start picking up people.

Q: Right.

A: You know, marketplaces and stoop --

Q: But do you -- do you remember there were government workers who were fired because they were Jewish. Do you remember that?

A: No, I don't know, we -- where we lived it was not really a government town, was more in the capital at The Hague, and all.

Q: I see.

A: But I'm sure they were. I was even in the private place, I couldn't work.

Q: By '42?

A: The Jews couldn't work any more.

Q: Right.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But you can't -- you can't have a telephone, you can't have radios.

A: We didn't have telephones.

Q: You didn't have a telephone anyway.

A: No, only with aunt who was rich, yeah. And radios, no. They -- you could not do [indecipherable]. We had the radio -- see, we had the radio what you could rent and pay every month, four stations or something. And then they brought an regular one, a nice one. Well, that we could not keep, you know. We have to turn that in.

Q: You had to turn that in?

A: Yeah. Not everybody did that but we did.

Q: Right. So the restrictions are out --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: -- they're --

A: For everybody.

Q: -- it's like a pain in the neck, right?

A: Yeah, but it was for other people too, they couldn't listen to radio from England, and I always listen to radio from England. And that you couldn't do.

Q: That you couldn't do -- right.

A: That's why they took it from everybody, yeah.

Q: But that was true for Jews and people who were not Jewish as well?

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Everybody.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right. But there were certain restrictions that were just for Jews?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: We're -- we're gonna have to stop the tape now.

A: Okay.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: You had an I.D. card, cause everybody had to have one.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Did it have a J on it?

A: Yeah.

Q: It did. Is that your choice, to have it?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Yeah, that was my choice, for me yeah, cause I didn't have to. Because when I worked in the office still, the lawyer went through the German embassy and got a paper for me that they could not do anything to me because I was not supposed to have a J, but they didn't take it off. And I always had to carry that with me, mm-hm.

Q: And so that was in 1941?

A: Uh --

Q: The I.D. cards?

A: Yeah, it could be '42, something around there, yeah.

Q: Do you remember when the Jewish star had to be put onto people in '40 -- inf -- I f -- which I think was in '42.

A: That time, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Did you have to put on a Jewish star because --

A: I did.

Q: You did?

A: Yeah, but I didn't always use it because nobody knew I was Jewish, so when they left, you know. And Joe and I, we went sometimes someplace.

Q: But did people know that your parents were Jewish?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: So wouldn't they then assume that you were Jewish, or not?

A: No, I don't know if they thought about. Maybe I took it off later. I got --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- don't know exactly.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you scared when the Nazis were there, when they took over?

A: No, no I'm not the scary type, no, no, no.

Q: You're not -- you're not the scary type?

A: Joe was more than I was.

Q: But when you started to see the deportations, when they started to take Jews and bring them to Westerbork -- well, you had heard about Westerbork before, because it was started by --

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah --

Q: -- the Dutch, right?

A: -- yeah.

Q: For people who had come into Germany --

A: Yeah, they did. Yeah, they did.

Q: Right. But then when the Nazis take over, something else happens, right?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And where -- what's -- what's happening to your father? He -- he -- there's no business?

A: I don't know.

Q: No, I mean, bef-before he's ta --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- before he's arrested.

A: Yeah, no --

Q: He can't work.

A: -- he could not [indecipherable] no. He -- they put him in a work camp. They did all the Jews, from the big company there, and every day they came home. Til one time, after maybe about three, four weeks, they didn't come home, and they were sent to Westerbork.

Q: And they were sent to Westerbork.

A: And then the next day -- that was Fridays, and on Saturdays they came to pick up the wives and the kids.

Q: And did you know he was in Westerbork, or you didn't know where he was?

A: Yeah, we -- oh, we knew that, we heard that, yeah, yeah.

Q: And that's up north, and you were at Amsterdam so it's a bit --

A: Yeah, that is one of the northern --

Q: -- it's a bit of a trip.

A: -- provinces, yeah.

Q: So the next day they come to pick up you and your mother?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: And what happened?

A: We went through someplace where everybody went, and somebody asked -- my mother said that I was a minor. I was already 20 [indecipherable] didn't have to show anything. He said okay, he said, go home. So we could go home. And it didn't --

Q: And they ju -- they believed you?

A: Yeah.

Q: He believed it?

A: Oh yeah. I don't know if it was a Dutch guy or a German. And you know, they say too, if I don't pick you up now, then somebody else will pick you up later, you know, so they let us go. So my mother stayed in the [indecipherable] about almost a year.

Q: Before you -- there was another arrest.

A: Yeah, for half a year, something, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Did you go back to your old apartment?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: And your st -- you're still working? Is that how she gets supported? I mean, how -- how do you get food, how does --

A: No, I didn't work any more. We took some work home for sewing. I had to sew -- I worked for a company that imported sewing machines too, so I had a nice sewing machine, and we did some work at home, and we got paid some from that.

Q: But that was difficult, you probably --

A: Oh yeah, but -- my mother had to sell some rings, and all that. But we made it.

Q: Did you ri -- you rented your apartment, so you had to pay rent --

A: Yeah, rent, no, rent --

Q: -- plus food.

A: -- rent. Yeah.

Q: So it's expensive.

A: Mm-hm. I don't know how she did it all, but she did.

Q: She did. Do you think she got money from her sister?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, they were already in hiding.

Q: They were?

A: The rich were -- went in hiding, yeah.

Q: Did you think at that point when your -- when your father was taken and then you were arrested, and then you were left free that you -- you ought to put your mother in hiding, or you should go in hiding?

A: Well, yeah, but she -- I had [indecipherable] at home, she was all ready if they came upstairs -- they came up, sometimes by the people to see if the no -- people were living. And there's one time for my mother, said, she is not here, and I told her, go in that closet. And said, no, she's gone already, long time. And they were talking and talking, and she got -- later she told me she was nervous because she was afraid something would happen when sh -- they left luckily, and then she came out. And we told her, you know? But -- and she went outside sometimes too, what she shouldn't have done, but --

Q: Did she look Jewish?

A: Yeah, she kind of, yeah.

Q: Well, could the -- could the Dutch tell that somebody was Jewish?

A: In Holland, yeah --

Q: Yeah?

A: -- we could, yeah, yeah.

Q: Could the Germans?

A: I guess. I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Why would she go outside? She didn't care? Or it was --

A: Yeah, well she couldn't stay in the house all the time, she always liked to have people around and stuff like that there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And was she wearing a Jewish star, or had she taken it off?

A: No, no, she had one.

Q: So it was clear that she was Jewish if she'd go outside?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: But she was okay for about a year?

A: That was in October, maybe a half a year or something like that, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: And then there was another arrest. Were you both arrested again?

A: Yeah, yeah. Somebody must have told on us, and we both were, yeah. We had to go to a theater, and there were a lot of people, family too, and other people, and usually people, they were mixed marriage, we had friends, she was not Jewish, he was, they came out. On -- that time, nobody came out. I was the only one. So they asked, anybody here that thinks they can get free? [indecipherable] I said, I don't want it. And my mother says, go up front. And she push me

and then she says, yes. So I told him. I says, yeah, I said, I am born in Germany, and my parents didn't care if I was German or not, there, and they took care of me and all that, and I have an I.D. [indecipherable] So he said okay. He says, you can go. So it was night already. I had to go across the street, was in a -- in a -- for children that went with people in the -- well, they went there, for children, so I had to go there. And somebody working in that theater, and I knew he lived across the street from Joe. So I told him, says, tell Joe that I come out tomorrow morning. So next morning I came out and I walked a little and there he came with a friend. His mother had my dog, and you should hear that doggie. Everybody was looking. He was so happy he screamed and screamed when he saw me. And -- and that was it. But what I did, was a good thing I did get the key from the apartment. Found after people were taken out, the Germans came and took all the furniture out. Everything. So I told Joe, said, what are we gonna do? And he said, you know, I told my other neighbor, he was Jewish, his wife was not, so he -- he had no trouble and he lived on the fourth floor, but he slept in veranda [indecipherable] porch-like, in the back. And what they did, they took all the nice furniture, put that down with the cable, I don't know how they did it, and up to that guy's house. He helped us. So, and what we -- was no good, we put in the front and they picked that up. So lucky that I have the key. And then somebody find out, his mother told [indecipherable] and somebody that the neighbors downstairs has a sister and she likes to live in that house. Was a beautiful apartment, was all new. Had bathroom, now nobody had an bathroom in Holland, except if you was rich. And -- and she told him, and Joe said to me, listen, we have to go someplace else. So we found an ap --

Q: Let -- le-let -- let me ask you something. When did you actually meet Joe the first time?

A: Oh, I knew always, when they lived on top of me.

Q: And so you were what, how old when you first met?

A: I was only couple years younger, ma -- I still went to school. I was still a girl --

Q: So you were [indecipherable]

A: -- and he was working already.

Q: I see, so you were 14 or 15?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you fell in love right away?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: He didn't pay attention to me.

Q: He didn't pay attention?

A: No, and I had a boyfriend and also, know?

Q: I see.

A: Til later in the war, then my hus -- my mother gave some food for -- his father was in the hospital, and his mother picked it up. And then she saw me, and she told him, boy Joe, you should see how she changed. She said, you have to come. So they both came, and that was it.

Q: And that was it. And how old were then? This was -- this was when you were working?

A: That was in -- no, I was about 20 - 21, something like that.

Q: So it's -- uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: So that was when you were -- when it was 1941 or 1942 --

A: No, that was in '40 -- let me see. Father wasn't there any more. Must be close to '43.

Q: Closer to '43.

A: Yeah.

Q: So it's rather late that you become very close --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: -- but it -- it's rather immediate, once that happens?

A: Mm.

Q: Right. So he's somebody you want to lean on and call when --

A: No, we went --

Q: -- because you give a message when -- when you leave your mother. You gave a message to someone that Joe should come and pick you up, that you would be --

A: No, that was in the theater, where we were.

Q: Right.

A: And they were all transported to Westerbork.

Q: Right.

A: And I came out.

Q: Right.

A: And then I told somebody to tell Joe that I was coming out.

Q: Right, right.

A: And then he picked me up, yeah.

Q: Now, how --

A: And we were going [indecipherable]

Q: Did you feel funny leaving your mother in the theater?

A: Of course, mm-hm. I had s -- s -- I still thought maybe, you know, that they would come home. I didn't know what they were doing that time. They never made that public.

Q: Right.

A: You know?

Q: Right. But your mother was very clear.

A: Oh, she knew.

Q: She knew.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And she wanted you out of there.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So then Joe picks you up with the dog and a friend --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And it's your -- it's the dog, it's the Maltese dog, the one --

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- that guarded you. And how did he get the dog?

A: His friend's parents took him, when Joe's parents had already dogs, mm-hm. She -- they took care of him.

Q: Right. So, it's clear that you shouldn't stay in the apartment where you were staying, right?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And Joe thinks you should have --

A: Now, but somebody had to call that I lived there and they would pick me up --

Q: Right.

A: -- so, and Joe, too, and he was not supposed to live there either.

Q: And -- and why was j -- Joe was vulnerable also. They were -- they were sending boys to Germany, is that right?

A: Yeah, Germany, yeah. And his boss was working for a German company, and he was a little anti-Jew. And he know that Joe was going with me, and that -- he gave him up to -- for Germany. And he went there to the labor, there's a labor office where you go, and I went with him, and he said -- he went there, and they have to report we never went to Germany. So he was really at risk, too, you know?

Q: Right, because he was refusing to go.

A: Sure, yeah. Every young person had to go.

Q: Right, right. So how did he find -- where did he find a place, another place for you to go?

A: Oh, there was something, you know, as a part of the city, an apartment, so --

Q: And you then had a fake name, right? Is that right?

A: Then I got it -- then he got it for me, yeah. Mm-hm.

Q: You had an -- you had a fake I.D.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And what was your name then?

A: Karin Magteld [indecipherable] I guess, yeah.

Q: Karin Magdel?

A: Magteld, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Mm-hm. [indecipherable] too [indecipherable] people came from Denmark, original, mm-hm.
So --

Q: And did -- did Joe have a fake I.D. as well?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: He could stay with his own name?

A: Oh yeah, mm-hm. Was just because I had the J on it, that's why, mm-hm.

Q: So he -- he and you were now separated from his family, right? Because his parents are still in that apartment hou -- the original apartment house, am I right?

A: Oh yeah, where I used to live, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. They knew, mm-hm.

Q: But they knew?

A: Oh yeah, mm-hm.

Q: So how did you support yourselves?

A: I tell you, first the -- I don't know if I told you that, that the lawyer that we had, her father was chief of police --

Q: Mm-mm.

A: -- from Amsterdam. And he to -- and she told him that we are going to live together, you know, that was not nice years ago. We felt bad about it. So he said, okay, he said, when did you want to get married? And we gave a date. He said, okay, he said, I'll put it in the register that you are married. I don't know if he did that just that we felt better, but he -- he said he did that. So we lived there, and Joe had no job, so -- and there was no food. So he had the good friend, and he said, go to another part from our county. He -- that was an guy that ground wheat for the farmers.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So he went there, that was 65 miles on a bicycle. And --

Q: One way?

A: One way. And he got flour from him, and later he did again, but then he brought something, she could use something, you know. And he came home the same day, he didn't want me to be by myself. And a little bit we had to sell to pay the rent and to buy some food. And then we had wheat, and I had to bake bread every time. And that's the way we did it. And he did it off -- sometimes they took off -- took his food, too, you know, all around. But, yeah, it was quite a trip for him. He always brought something home, mm-hm. And he had the --

Q: And so o -- h-he left for the -- for the day and then would come back.

A: Oh the same day [indecipherable]

Q: It's a long trip.

A: And then there's money we had, we paid for his car -- for his bicycle, because without a bicycle you couldn't go anyplace.

Q: Right.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were you able to go outside, since you were --

A: Oh, I went.

Q: You went outside?

A: Yeah.

Q: No longer wearing a star?

A: No. And I had this false I.D..

Q: Cause you have a false I.D..

A: And nobody would say I was Jewish, I didn't look Jewish at all.

Q: And you were now with people who didn't know you, so they didn't realize what your history was.

A: No, no, they didn't know me.

Q: Right. So you felt pretty safe.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: What are you hearing about what the Germans are doing? Do you hear that there are deportations from --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Westerbork?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Are there rumors about what's going on?

A: Oh yeah, we heard that, and I had an -- we had a doctor, she was a woman. And she came always by to tell us, don't let Joe go out on the -- there's gonna be a razzia [indecipherable] they picked people. Oh, they picked just not Jews, everybody they picked up.

Q: Right. So they would warn him?

A: Mm-hm, yeah [indecipherable]

Q: Did he ever have a close call, did he ever almost get caught, or not?

A: No, he was stopped by police sometimes when sa -- one time there on his bicycle.

Q: Mm.

A: [indecipherable] because without my bicycle I can't -- and then when they're almost by the police station they let him go, you know. They could not official do it. But like that. And sometimes he got picked up and he gave them cigarettes.

Q: He gave them cigarettes?

A: The Germans, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they let him go.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah. He gave them a pack of cigarettes. Til the end when he came back the last time, the Germans had opened the dams, all of them, and all the water came in our county.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And he was on top of that -- we had a lot of dykes, and he was driving then, he didn't know if he could -- left or right there was all water, but he made it.

Q: Wow.

A: That was almost the end of the war.

Q: Did you see people being picked up around you?

A: No. In daytime I didn't go outside much.

Q: You didn't go outside --

A: No.

Q: -- you went out in the evening.

A: Yeah. No, I went to the -- every day wi -- to the store, to the -- you know, to get some potatoes or stuff like that. And that was all, no.

Q: In addition to Joe, did you have other friends who knew who you really were, or did you keep --

A: No, nobody re -- I --

Q: Nobody.

A: -- I saw people that I knew and they didn't even look at you because you could not trust anybody at that time.

Q: What is that like not to be able to trust anybody?

A: Yeah.

Q: It's awful.

A: It's bad, yeah.

Q: Did you learn that very early, that you couldn't trust anybody after the Nazis came in?

A: If I what?

Q: Did you learn that very soon after the Nazis came in that you can't --

A: Oh yeah, sure. Oh yeah, yeah, you know that from people, yeah. And I know there was some guys and I think was a brother from Joe's mother, and nobody had contact with him, and he was -- you could not trust him, I know. He went to people's house and threatened them, and took things from them, yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. [indecipherable]. Once he tried, but he had no luck.

Q: And did Joe do some resistance work as well --

A: No, h --

Q: -- as trying to get you food?

A: What he did, that was still when he was working. He took I.D.s from people that worked there, and hid them someplace and gave them to other people, Jewish people.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I know different people he gave them to, mm-hm.

Q: Did you work for the resistance at all, or --

A: No, I could not --

Q: -- you couldn't.

A: -- no. You could not do that. It di -- if they caught you for that, you know --

Q: Then you were finished.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: No, we had enough to do with the food and all, and --

Q: It must have been difficult just trying to survive in those circumstances.

A: Yeah. And you had no coals, you had nothing, no heat.

Q: So it was c --

A: So he -- so he went to the park and cut some trees.

Q: He cut so --

A: That was not nec -- was not allowed, yeah. And cut the root and put it in there, so we had that.

We could not complain. And a lot of people got food from [indecipherable], you know, and it was so bad, and we got it, but we gave it to somebody. We didn't want to eat that.

Q: And where did you -- where did he put the wood? Did you have a wood burning stove in the apartment, or what?

A: Oh yeah, we had an old stove, with the pipe.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah, mm-hm. And put --

Q: And was it able to keep you somewhat warm, or --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes, yeah. I still had it -- oh, when the second daughter was born we still had that.

Q: You were in that apartment?

A: No, I lived someplace else, but we still had that [indecipherable]

Q: That same --

A: Yeah.

Q: That same stove?

A: Yeah. But then we had coals, of course, yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Right, right, right. The winter of 1944 was a terrible winter in -- in Holland, wasn't it?

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: For everybody. Do you remember that time?

A: Yeah, it was bad, mm-hm. Yeah.

Q: How bad was it?

A: Well, snow and ice. But otherwise, I don't know. It was really cold, I know that.

Q: And was food hard to get?

A: Oh, there was no food in the stores, or so, no, no.

Q: So there was no food.

A: No, what you got sometimes was people got an rate -- rated -- fa -- rate -- an ration card. Here -- they got it here too, I guess.

Q: Mm.

A: And then you could get some food. And he got one for me too, someplace. So -- well there was not much food anyway, but -- and then, before the war was over, I think, on America, they sent on the Red Cross, they sent food over. And then everybody who had a ration card, you could get some.

Q: Did you lose a lot of weight?

A: No.

Q: You didn't?

A: I stayed always the same.

Q: You stayed the same.

A: Yeah, yeah. I was not a big eater, and I baked bread and Joe got some potatoes and stuff, you know. And sometimes we bought -- w-we had some friends, we bought some meat.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: If it was real meat or dog meat, I don't know.

Q: Did you ever get sick?

A: No, I was very lucky.

Q: No? You didn't get sick --

A: Joe in the end, cause of his nerves, he had a little breakdown. When I went outside to see the soldiers come in --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and he could not, mm-hm.

Q: And what was that like when you saw the soldiers come in, when that was the liberation --

A: Pretty good.

Q: -- it was pretty good, huh?

A: Yeah, great.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. That's what I say, people should not forget that, what the Americans did.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you -- when the war was over did you try to look for your parents? Did you think that maybe they were alive, or did you think that they were gone?

A: No, we heard then what happened and all, yeah. Mm-hm.

Q: So it was clear.

A: Yeah. I couldn't find anything, no. Mm-hm.

Q: And was there anybody from that family who was alive?

A: Oh, an s-second cousin came by, and that was -- and I had one second cousin girl that she -- she was in hiding too, and she worked in a nursing home, and we went there sometimes and she came over my house to meet her boyfriend who was in hiding too. And she was -- yeah, she was the -- really the only one. And then my mother's sister, who was rich, she came out of hiding with her husband, and so I had her. That was the only family we had.

Q: So it was a very difficult time then --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: -- when liberation came --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- cause in the end --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- you can't go back to -- to what you were.

A: Oh no. Mm-hm. And Joe couldn't find a job of nothing. So what he did -- my father had the textile license and he took that and he bought textile and he st -- was standing on the market with textile, to make some money. Well, you only could buy it on ration cards, you know?

[indecipherable] by points. Like a handkerchief would be five points and a towel would be 10 points, something like that, you know?

Q: So, to be th-these textiles he had to --

A: Yeah, oh yeah.

Q: -- use the ration cards?

A: Yeah. It was not easy after the war, mm-hm.

Q: Was there a lot of destruction in Holland, or not?

A: No, not in Amsterdam, really.

Q: Not in Amsterdam.

A: No. Rotterdam was bad.

Q: And -- and you stayed in Amsterdam?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: How long did it take before it started to feel a little bit normal, or did it never feel normal?

A: Ah, I got my daughter, yeah.

Q: How soon was your daughter born?

A: End November, that year after 40 f --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: '45.

Q: And when did you get married?

A: '44.

Q: '44.

A: The first. And then I got the other one about three and half years later, mm-hm. And we moved from that apartment where we lived during the war, and somebody, an uncle from Joe lived in a nice house, first floor. And was too much money for him, so we -- you couldn't get a house of a rent or anything, so we exchanged. That you could do. So he went to that apartment, we came in his house. That's where I got my second child that time.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And did you want to stay in the Netherlands, in Amsterdam?

A: No, didn't want to.

Q: You didn't want to stay?

A: No. I had nobody an-any more, no.

Q: And Joe didn't want to stay either?

A: No, he couldn't get along very much with his father.

Q: He couldn't get along with his father?

A: No, no, he was not nice. And then we left. And I think 17 later -- 17 years later, we went back to Holland, and I told him, see your parents and he didn't want to. Says, do it for your mother, your mother, she always worked hard and she was good. So we went and then he was so happy, the father now.

Q: The father was different.

A: [indecipherable] appreciate it, you know?

Q: Right.

A: Well, he was nicer when we came there, and he brought us some present. He was nicer to me than to the other daughter-in-laws, and they are looking at me, he [indecipherable] you know?

Q: Really?

A: And he realized that Joe was one of the best sons he had. He didn't know that years ago.

Q: He didn't know that earlier.

A: He didn't know that, yeah.

Q: How long did you stay in -- in the Netherlands after the war?

A: We left in '53, October.

Q: Oh, in '53.

A: Yeah.

Q: And was then a difficult time between 1945 and 1953 for you there?

A: No [indecipherable] not. No. We had friends, Joe played soccer. I made a lot of friends there.

No, we had pretty good.

Q: So life was -- was not so bad.

A: But was hard financial. He didn't make that much. And then with the kids and all.

Q: Right.

A: And that was hard and that's when my uncle said, you want to come to America, we said okay. And that was in '50. Took a little over three years before we could come.

Q: Was it easy for you to be a mother?

A: Easy? I was the only child. I didn't know how to put a diaper on, Joe had to do it, and other things he did, but otherwise it was okay.

Q: It was okay?

A: Yeah.

Q: We're going to have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Ruth, when did you find out what had ha -- really happened during the war, about the death camps? Do you remember?

A: Now, I heard from people that came back. I have the girlfriend, she lives now in Israel, and I still have contact, and she was in concentration camp. She didn't tell -- one thing she only told me, that she had to look at somebody -- everybody had to look somebody that got hang, you know, one of the girls?

Q: Somebody who got hung, yes.

A: Hung, yes. Well, first thing she didn't say anything and she is doing fine. And I had an second cousin who came over, and he told me why he's -- was still alive, because they had to stay in line and walk, and then they took the first part to the gas chamber. Next time he was in the back of -- in the front, and they took the back. He was lucky like that. But that's about all I heard. People didn't talk much about it.

Q: Did you see -- did you see things in the newspaper? Were there reports in the newspaper?

A: When? After war?

Q: After the war.

A: No, I don't remember that any more. I heard from the American soldiers that came in, you know, what they saw, and I saw that sometimes one television. [indecipherable] we didn't have a television. Was no televisions --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- til after I was here. So then later I find out. And here I find out by the Red Cross, they said they could find out when people died, and when they came to my house and she said she couldn't find out everything. And when we went -- that summer in Holland, we went to

Westerbork, and was in that office, and I told him. And he said, oh, you want to know? He said, what's the name? He went to the books, and picked the book up and he showed me just --

Q: Your father's [indecipherable]

A: When -- where he was born, when he was born and where he died, and my mother too. And I told -- I called later the Red Cross and I told them, if you get people asking from Holland, tell them where to get it.

Q: Right.

A: They said, oh, thank you.

Q: Since so many Jews were killed from Holland, very few come back.

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Was it a difficult time being Jewish, or did people not know you were Jewish at the time, after the war?

A: I don't know, I know people, some people, I had friends even, that were in hiding, and they were usually very -- people that were Christians, you know, religious, and they didn't do anything. They didn't even talk about it any more that they were Jewish. Yeah.

Q: They were ha -- they were hiding it, that they were Jewish?

A: Yeah. And it's -- I knew somebody had the signs from concentra -- she had that taken off, you know. But --

Q: So what did you think about that?

A: I wouldn't do things like that, but -- because I thought [indecipherable] well, that way it won't happen again in Holland, you know. Other countries will not help -- help us, but you know, that's their business.

Q: You think there was anti-Semitism in Holland?

A: Hoo.

Q: There was a lot.

A: It's a lot in Europe, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: A lot. And it's often because people were [indecipherable], they get some help, you know, from [indecipherable] so and so, like that they deserved it. Yeah, there's a lot of -- in Europe too. Here, too.

Q: There was a lot of what?

A: A lot of anti-Semitism.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Here, too. It's all over.

Q: And did you s -- did you feel it when you were in Holland?

A: No, no --

Q: You didn't?

A: No, no. Mm-hm.

Q: Is that because people didn't know you were Jewish, do you think?

A: I don't know if they knew. We lived in -- the last five years we lived in an -- now what's that [indecipherable] four years we lived in different neighborhood, we exchanged the homes.

Q: Right.

A: And didn't talk about it or nothing, mm-hm.

Q: So that wasn't one of the reasons why you left?

A: No, no. Joe -- Joe want to go out too, cause of his family, you know. And to get better.

Q: So, explain again how you got out of the Netherlands. There was -- there was someone in the United States who -- who sponsored you?

A: Yeah, a -- a brother from my natural mother. He went to Holland too before the war, and he was in hiding, and later on he moved to Amsterdam. And he was -- he had an business in Germany, he did car u-upholster work, and he was my -- friend of mine. And she told me later, she said, you know, I had an upholsterer came to Germany from Cologne, and he has your name, and he could be your unc -- family. I said, nah, I don't care, you know. Don't bother. But he kept on asking, so finally we went to see him. And that was my mother's brother.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But he was not a nice guy. She was nice, and the daughter, so we went around [indecipherable] the daughter, and then -- then they left. He told me later -- he came over sometimes. I always sent him an sports paper every week. And he came over and -- and then he told us, said, if you want to go to America, he said, I can help you. He said, but don't get any more children. I had two, he said [indecipherable] harder. So -- and he was our sponsor. He didn't pay anything for us, nothing.

Q: So what does it mean to be a sponsor, what does that mean?

A: He have to give up his name, that if we in trouble or we need money, then we have to go to him, I guess.

Q: I see.

A: He is responsible for us.

Q: I see.

A: That's what it is.

Q: But you had to raise the money to come here?

A: No, I told you, I got the money from that house --

Q: Right.

A: -- from my mother.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, we paid everything. We paid six -- six -- about 2000. That's --

Q: That's a lot of money.

A: It was a lot of money for Holland, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: We came here with hundred dollars.

Q: With a hundred dollars?

A: Hundred kroner, hundred kroner. Kroner.

Q: Really?

A: And my daughter ruined her shoes on the boat, I had -- we had to buy shoes, and then the rent, and some food [indecipherable] Joe had the job, and I started to work too, in that little town.

Q: Now how -- how little were your kids when you came over?

A: Karin was seven, she became eight in November. And Josette was -- she was the next day four years when we came here.

Q: So -- so, eight and four.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then you had a third child eventually?

A: Oh, that was later.

Q: Later.

A: '57.

Q: Uh-huh, and when did you -- but you came here in '53?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: And where did you go first?

A: First we went to Flemington, New Jersey.

Q: Uh-huh. Why did you go there?

A: Because the daughter from my uncle lived there.

Q: Lived there. I see.

A: She had the chicken farm there. And she was --

Q: A chicken farm?

A: Yeah.

Q: So did you work on the chicken farm?

A: No, I helped her sometimes a little [indecipherable] and then -- later they moved up too, mm-hm. So -- and the kid -- the oldest went to school there. I tell that so often -- I call people sometimes on the radio about that kids have to have their own teacher in Vietnamese and in Spanish. Karin was only two weeks in a school in Holland, came here, the first day she was in kindergarten, second day she was in the first grade, and the third -- end of that week she was in second grade. And after a couple of months the teacher says, she's one of the smartest in the class. She was very smart. But they -- they don't need somebody to talk in their own language. I mean, Josette [indecipherable] when she'd hardly talked. She was not a talker, so --

Q: Did you speak English? You did. And did Joe speak English [indecipherable] was from school?

A: Yeah, I got English in school, and I had my degrees. Joe, no. He had -- they went to school in the small town at night, couple of time. He had two jobs, but he still went to --

Q: Did you like it when you came here?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: You did?

A: Yeah. It was so much easier than in Holland.

Q: It was easier?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: It was easier what, financial, or --

A: Financial, yeah.

Q: It was easier.

A: Financial, yeah, yeah.

Q: So, did you get a job right away?

A: No, I worked that somebody -- like cleaning, because I couldn't go to an office

[indecipherable] it's a small town. And you know who I was with? I don't know if you know the name, Johannes Farms, ever heard of that?

Q: Mm-mm.

A: A dairy f-farm.

Q: Huh.

A: And they have these Ssips, juices they sell here. They still do.

Q: Juices?

A: Juice.

Q: Really?

A: It's called Ssips. And she still [indecipherable] and we're still friends. They live in Flemington, but they go to Florida. They have there an beautiful home, and we see them when

we in Florida still, mm-hm, yeah. And I worked there, you know, not like what I did at home, what she wants me to do. They are very nice people, and she helped when I got the -- the baby, I got all the clothes from her daughter, you know, they were rich, so it was nice, yeah. So, and I did that for some years, and then we moved to -- I got pregnant, so I had to quit, mm-hm.

Q: And where did you move to after Flemington, New Jersey?

A: That little town, that Trenton, New Jersey.

Q: Trenton?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Trenton is bigger.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's the capital. Ten years we lived there, mm-hm.

Q: And what was Joe doing at the time?

A: He was a bookbinder.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But he couldn't get any further, and they -- people didn't like the -- guys that were managers there, they didn't know much about it --

Q: Right.

A: -- and he knew more when he learned it good for so many years, so -- and he couldn't get ahead. So then we had friends -- we were a member of the Jewish Community Center, and they had the swimming pool, the kids went to camp the whole summer and all. And he said, what you doing Joe? He said, I'm a bookbinder, but right now I have no job. He did the odd jobs and so on. He says, you know, I work at post office, and I work in that department, they're asking for

bookbinders in, what was it, San Francisco, and in Denver, I think, and in Washington. So he said, why don't you fill out? He filled out and he got it because they needed it.

Q: So then you [indecipherable]

A: So he went --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and I stayed here in -- because Karin had to finish high school, and the middle one had to finish middle school. So I didn't want to do -- quit and then go someplace else. So we stayed there, and then we went, '64.

Q: And you liked that?

A: Mm-hm. And Joe found a house there, and I went over to see it, so it was fine.

Q: That was fine. Did you tell your kids about your experience during the war when they were growing up, or not?

A: Not everything, no, little. And my granddaughter couple years ago asked me about things and I told her. But no, and I hear from people they don't talk much about it. She knows about that my parents and all that. Well, not what we all went through, exactly. I wrote an -- I typed a letter on the computer and I have it with me, to tell them. And I gave everybody a copy.

Q: Right.

A: So they knew it. We were supposed to tape it for my daughter, she gave us something for Christmas, and when the last time we came from Florida, I said to Joe, we have to do it when we there, but we did not, and we lost that thing. So now she can -- I got tape [indecipherable] and everything.

Q: Right, right. We ca-can send this tape to her.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think about yourself as a survivor?

A: No. [indecipherable]

Q: You don't?

A: No.

Q: Why not, do you think? Is it because you were not in a camp?

A: I was still young, and you know. No, I tell my husband sometimes, you know, thanks to you I'm still around, you know?

Q: Right.

A: But otherwise no, not really.

Q: Are you glad that there's a lot of publicity about the Holocaust, that people read about it?

A: Oh yeah, that's good because a lot of people -- lot of people don't -- I tell you, my middle daughter's family -- her husband's family, Jewish, she didn't even believe it when -- she said she never heard anything about it during the war. She -- she didn't -- she could not -- she didn't even believe it.

Q: Does she believe it now?

A: I don't know --

Q: You don't know.

A: -- she passed away and we had no contact with them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They were not nice.

Q: Now you said that when you were in Jersey, you -- you went to a Jewish community center.

A: Yeah.

Q: So did -- did you bring up your children in some ways as Jews, or as -- as nothing?

A: My middle one. The oldest one didn't want to go to Hebrew school, the middle one went to Hebrew school. She really wants to -- she married Jewish.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And -- and our daughter, she got married couple years ago, and he is Catholic, and he had an -
- somebody from the church, and she had somebody, a rabbi to do it. [indecipherable]

Q: She had the ra -- so that was both.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: That's interesting.

A: But [indecipherable] really feels really like it. So --

Q: Is that important to you?

A: Yeah, it's fine. It's okay.

Q: It's okay.

A: I like it, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's good. And the other ones all married different, you know, and the grandchildren married not Jewish, so -- but they still are Jews, and the kids are still Jews.

Q: Right. And Joe, does he have a religious affiliation?

A: Oh yeah, he was Catholic. They sent him when he was young to Catholic school. Why we don't know, because they never went to church, and [indecipherable] long time, he had to walk home, he always had to go home for lunch, high school too, and back. And he had to walk at least 45 minutes.

Q: To go home.

A: And they had two hours for lunch, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: And back. And then again. So then they put in a [indecipherable] school.

Q: Have you been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

A: Oh yeah, years ago.

Q: What did you think?

A: Hm?

Q: What did you think about it?

A: I liked it.

Q: Did you like it?

A: Yeah. I have to go again sometime, but I took my brother-in-law and sister-in-law too that time, mm-hm.

Q: And you went through the permanent exhibition and saw that whole exhibition?

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm. That was quite some time ago, maybe about eight years ago, some -- and my daughter went with the kids.

Q: Right.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Do you think about the -- those years a great deal now, or not?

A: Oh sometimes I think about the family, a lot.

Q: You do?

A: And my parents, yeah.

Q: Yes. Is it more now than it was years ago?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. If something happen, I think always, I hope they know what's going to hap -- I have daughters, they all did really great. [indecipherable]. Two have CPA's, and one is a lab technician, and her -- their children, one is engineer and one is -- they all doing great, and I always wondered, you know?

Q: They know.

A: You know, I hope, yeah.

Q: It's not easy, is it?

A: Mm-mm.

Q: No.

A: Yeah, even that you're so old, and all th -- but you don't see them older than --

Q: They [indecipherable]

A: -- they're always in their 50's, you know.

Q: Right.

A: That's the way you see it.

Q: So they haven't aged in your head, they're the same as --

A: That's right.

Q: Right.

A: That's right.

Q: Well, thank you very much for talking with me.

A: You're welcome. I'm glad --

Q: And we'll stop the tape and we'll do the photographs, okay?

A: Oh, okay, fine, mm-hm. Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you all.

Q: And who's the -- who is these folks -- who are these folks?

A: That's my father, mother and grandfather.

Q: And do you know when that pictures was taken, approximately?

A: I think in [indecipherable] 1930, and I never knew him. So that must be about 1915 or 1916 or so.

Q: Okay. And who is this?

A: That's my mother with my doggie and the cat.

Q: And this is the doggie?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what was the dog's name?

A: Kerry.

Q: Kerry?

A: Kerry.

Q: Now who is this cute looking baby?

A: That's me when I was nine months old.

Q: [indecipherable] a chubby baby, very chubby.

A: And I was so skinny when I came. I was happy with food.

Q: And this picture?

A: I was three years old.

Q: And where was that, do you think? Was that in Haarlem?

A: That is -- that was -- no, that was taken in Amsterdam.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I had -- we had the birthday at some -- somebody's house.

Q: And this picture?

A: I was five years old.

Q: And where was this taken, do you know?

A: Where?

Q: Where, yeah.

A: That was in [indecipherable]. Was for my father's birthday.

Q: And this?

A: I was nine years old, I'm sitting with my father, just posing on -- on a motorcycle, was not ours.

Q: So he didn't drive a motorcycle?

A: No, no.

Q: No. And this shot?

A: I was 11 years old.

Q: And was that in a studio or at the house?

A: Yeah, yeah, studio.

Q: In a studio.

A: Mm-hm. Yeah, we did have [indecipherable] and all that.

Q: How about this one?

A: I was 15 years old. Boy, what a long dress, they wore long clothes, I guess.

Q: And what did you say about your hair?

A: Oh, he hated it.

Q: Who ha -- who hated it?

A: My father.

Q: Your father hated it. And who's this?

A: My father and I, in f -- 1942.

Q: And where was this taken, do you know?

A: Yeah, it was in our street where we lived in Amsterdam.

Q: And what is this?

A: That was an false I.D. what I used during the war, on a different name.

Q: It's Magteld.

A: Magteld.

Q: It's M-a-g-t -- M-a-g-t-e-l-d.

A: Oh. I couldn't even use it when I [indecipherable] daughter a second name like that. They told me how I had to spell it.

Q: And this?

A: Well, it's my husband's I.D.. [indecipherable]

Q: This picture?

A: Is a picture of me in 1942.

Q: Is that on your roof?

A: Yeah, there's an -- everybody -- every apartment had a room on the other floor, and we had ours there, mm-hm, with a little roof that's all, like this.

Q: And who is this?

A: This Joe and I where we got married in 1944, in city hall was that.

Q: And when were these taken?

A: 1941, I guess. These were separate [indecipherable] beginning of the war.

Q: And this is you?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You think this is 1941? Both of these? And who's that?

A: That's Joe.

Q: And how long have you been married?

A: '44? It will be 63 years in November.

End of Tape Three

Conclusion of Interview