

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Wilhelmina Juhlin**  
**July 16, 2015**  
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## PREFACE

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## **WILHELMINA JUHLIN**

### **July 16, 2015**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Wilhelmina Juhlin**, on July 16, 2015, in **Morristown, New Jersey**. Thank you very, very much Mrs. **Juhlin**, for agreeing to speak with us today, to share your story, to share the story of your family, and to let us know a little bit about what your destiny was, as a result of German policies – Nazi German policies, during World War II. I'm going to start our interview at the very beginning, and the first three basic questions that I have is, could you tell me your date of birth, your place of birth, and what name you – you had at birth; that is, what name you were given at birth.

Answer: My date of birth is November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1939. I was born in the **Netherlands**, in **Schoorl**, which is somewhat north of **Amsterdam**.

Q: Okay.

A: And my name at birth was **Wilhelmina Monica de Kadt**, but now everybody – I am known by everybody now, as **Willie**, very Americanized.

Q: Yeah. It's a lovely nickname. So, can you repeat the name of the town you were born in again, I'm not familiar with it. **Shkoren**(ph).

A: **Schoorl**.

Q: **Schoorl**?

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: **Schoorl**.

A: Near **Alkmaar**.

Q: Ah. Is that on the coast?

A: No, it's not on the coast.

Q: Okay. And about how far north of **Amsterdam** would it be?

A: In kilometers I don't know, but I think it would take you about an hour to drive –

Q: Okay.

A: – north there.

Q: Were your parents from this town, from this place?

A: No, my parents were from **Amsterdam**.

Q: Okay. How did it come to be that you were born there?

A: Because when they were married, they moved there, and there was – my father and his family had a business there, so I think he wanted to be nearer to that area.

Q: What was the business?

A: The business was a factory that made condensed milk, in tubes.

Q: Condensed milk in tubes? I wonder how that must have looked like.

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A: Well, it looked very interesting, because I do have some footage of it, where actually workers are seen on an assembly line, and on a 1938 or so assembly line, making these tubes of – of milk.

Q: Isn't that interesting?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Let's cut for just a second. **[break]** So, you say there was footage of workers actually pouring this milk into tubes?

A: Right, on the assembly line. But previous to that, on that same footage, it shows the factory being built in a tow – very small town called **De Reit**(ph), which isn't far from **Schoorl**. And it shows my mother laying the cornerstone, and it shows the workers laying the bricks.

Q: That's – that's so unique, very unusual. Can you tell me how your family then, the – your – your – probably your grandfather, or – or, you know, other generations, came to be in this business?

A: That I can't tell you, because I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know. I think it was just in the family.

Q: And do – were – did your father have more siblings, or was he –

A: My father was one of three.

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Q: Okay.

A: He had a – a brother, and a si – and a sister. **[phone ringing] [break]**

Q: Okay, tell me a little bit about your father. What was his name?

A: His name was **Ludwig**.

Q: **Ludwig**?

A: **Ludwig de Kadt**, but every – he's known as **Lou(ph)**.

Q: Oh.

A: So when I named my s – when my son was born, his middle name is **Louis**, because even at that time – my son is now in his early 40s, I didn't know that hi – my father's official name was **Ludwig**, I always thought it was **Louis**.

Q: Oh, really? Now, that's also an interesting – it's also an interesting fact, because how would one – how would one find out? How did you find out that your father's real name was **Ludwig**?

A: Because I – I'm sort of the genealogist in my family, and I did some research, later on. Cause growing up I really didn't know, I wasn't interested, and so on. I had growing up things to do.

Q: Okay.

A: And later on in life, I became very interested in the genealogy of this fairly large, convoluted family, both on my paternal and maternal side, where there were lots of

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siblings, and there was a time when cousins married cousins, or second cousins, cause their world was smaller than it is now, and they didn't have the chance to reach out and – or you know, a dating service to meet –

Q: Yeah, other people.

A: – other people.

Q: Was your family an old Dutch Jewish family?

A: Yes, it – it was. Yes, it was.

Q: Do – in your genealogy research, were you able to go many generations back?

A: I went back as far as the mid-1700s, and – to show, you know, the different cousins and sisters and brothers, and so on.

Q: Was this all from the **de Kadt** side?

A: No, some of – no, some of it was from – a lot of it was from the maternal side.

Q: Okay. What was your mother's name?

A: My mother's name was **Sonja Rita Swaap**.

Q: **Swaap**?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And also an old Dutch family?

A: Also an old Dutch family.

Q: Okay.

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A: Her maiden name was **Lupowt(ph)** – not her maiden name, her – her mother's name –

Q: Maiden name.

A: – maiden name was **Lupowt(ph)**.

Q: **Lupowt(ph)**. Where did you conduct most of this genealogy research, here in the **States**, or back –

A: Oh, here in the **States**, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Cause I grew up here.

Q: And the – but the documents, were they Dutch documents?

A: Some were doc – yes, some were Dutch documents, and some were interviews, informal interviews of – of various family members, whom aren't around any more, to ask.

Q: Okay, okay. So let's go back to 1930 – the mid – late 1930s, and – and pres – just preceding your birth year, father moves there to – I can't pronounce it.

A: **Schoorl**.

Q: **Schoorl**, and the factory is built. How large a place was it?

A: It wasn't very large, no, it wasn't very large, to my knowledge. And when we went back, my brother, his daughter and I went back, I think it was around 2002 or



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three, that factory, which was confiscated in – in the Nazi era, is now a furniture store.

Q: Did the ow – did you speak with the owners of the fur –

A: We did.

Q: And –

A: We did, because that cornerstone is still there. They preserved the cornerstone, which was –

Q: Did they know of the building's history?

A: They did, somewhat, yes. They did. And he was very accommodating.

Q: How interesting that –

A: Yeah, it was very interesting.

Q: Yeah. Did – okay, so your mother's side of the family, can you tell me a little bit about her family, her background, where they came from, and so on?

A: Well, they were an old Dutch **Amsterdam** Jewish family. My f – grandfather was in the diamond business, and – and he tra – you know, **Amsterdam** was a hub for that, as – as well as **Antwerp**. She has – my mother has – had two sisters, the youngest one of whom also died in **Auschwitz**. But her older sister, my aunt **Ella**, still lives. She's 97 years old. She lives in **Cliffside Park, New Jersey**, on her own,

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ver – in very good health. She plays a lot of Bridge, I think that's the secret to old age.

Q: People say it's good, healthy living, I say it's cigarettes, liquor and Bridge.

A: It's Bridge, yeah.

Q: Wonderful, wonderful.

A: Yes.

Q: Can we cut, just for a second? **[break]** That's an amazing fact, that your Aunt **Ella** is still around, still with us today.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And did she tell you many of the stories of the family, of your mother's family?

A: She did, yes, and now, although she is in – in good health, some of those facts have become rather fuzzy.

Q: Yeah, that happens.

A: Yeah.

Q: That happens. So, your parents are there, your father has two siblings, a sister and a brother, is that correct?

A: Correct.

Q: And were any – either of them in the business as well?

A: Not to my knowledge.

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Q: Okay.

A: Certainly not – not the – not the sister.

Q: Okay. So, it would have been your grandfather and your father. What was the name of the company?

A: Of the –

Q: Milk.

A: – milk company? **Het Nieuw Beemster**.

Q: **Het Niema(ph)** – **Nieuw Beem** –

A: **Nieuw**, new. **Het Nieuw Beemster**. And I've been trying to find out what is the meaning, or why did they call it **Beemster**. In fact, I've tried to find that out very recently, and nobody seems to know, if it's an acronym for something, I have no idea.

Q: Have you researched the documentation of the comp – if there's documentation for the company?

A: No, I have not, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

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Q: Cause I wonder whether the old municipal archives, there might be some mention, you know, of – of businesses that were formed in the 30s, and – and earlier, so –

A: Well, that might be an interesting thing to do if I go – if I go back –

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: – one day. But my Dutch – my Dutch – I can understand it, but my Dutch language skills are severely lacking, because when – at the time that I came to the U.S., in 1946, it was the melting pot.

Q: Of course, of course.

A: Become ac-acclimated and acculturated as quickly as possible, which my grandmother enabled us to do. And being that young – I was six at the time – being that young, I lost my native skills.

Q: It happens with many children.

A: Yeah.

Q: And particularly at that age, children like sponges, and they absorb a new environment and absorb a new language quite easily.

A: Right.

Q: Often at the expense of the older one.

A: Right. Which isn't done any more now.

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Q: That's right, that's right. So, you're born in 1939, and can – do you have any early, early memories, as a toddler, as – as a two year old, or a three year old, or something like that?

A: I have no memories of my parents. I had a very distant, or vague memory of my grandfather, whom, at the time – well, we – we lived in **Schoorl**, and around 1942, which was rather late for my parents, their – earlier than that, there was an edict for all the Jews to move to **Amsterdam**, and so ghettoize them, be ghettoized, basically, and make it easier to round them up. My parents were in denial, or – or tried to avoid that until the very last minute, which was around 1942. And so, we moved into the second home of my maternal grandparents, because they too, even though they lived in **Amsterdam**, they had to relocate from their original house, to the ghetto area, which I –

Q: And that was the second home, that you're talking about?

A: Well no, it wasn't their second home, they were forced –

Q: They were forced –

A: – out of their home.

Q: Into –

A: Yes. Now, whether tha – and because they couldn't keep up their home any more, whether that was because of the war, and the difficulties they had, or – with

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the Nazis, or because, again, of the war, the business was not going so well any more.

Q: The one –

A: The diamond business.

Q: Oh, the diamond business.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: That, I don't know. But in any case, they – they relocated, and so my parents, with my brother, who was a – eight months old or so, at the time.

Q: So he was born in 1941?

A: Yes, he was.

Q: Okay.

A: We're about – exactly two years apart.

Q: Okay.

A: Myself and my parents moved in with my grandparents.

Q: In this ghetto area.

A: In this – what I believe it was a ghetto area.

Q: Okay.

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A: And so I remember my grandfather giving me some sweets, basically, and that's about it. But I do remember then – I don't know – I don't remember the exact transition between that house, and the home of my hiding parents.

Q: Okay.

A: But I do have various memories of my hiding parents, with whom I lived for about four years, from the age of two-ish, to the age of six.

Q: Okay.

A: And they lived in **Amstelveen**, which is a suburb of **Amsterdam**. **Amstelveen**, at that time – well, as you can imagine, it's changed tremendously in – in those times, become a bustling mini-city now, but at that time, it wasn't. I lived with them. I'm – I am still in contact with my two hiding sisters. I remember my hiding father and mother. I have been back to visit them, who – they are now deceased, but I had been back to see them a couple of times, and my hiding sisters, we just saw two years ago.

Q: So you've maintained a lifetime contact.

A: I – yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And they are very open to that. In fact, last – two summers ago, the whole family went to **Amsterdam**, and – with a specific intent; among other things, being a

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tourist there, and so on; of going to **Dordrecht**, where they live now, which is about an hour south of **Amsterdam**, and we visited them.

Q: Okay, we'll come to that in a minute.

A: Okay.

Q: I still want to focus a little bit more on those years that – where you don't have a direct memory, you were –

A: Okay.

Q: – too young, but you probably know the story of what happened. When – when your parents then were in this town where the milk factory is –

A: **Schoorl**.

Q: **Schoorl, Schoorl**. Did – you said that the – the business was taken away?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. Do you know when it was taken away from them?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Okay. So, were they – do you think they were running the business until 1942 when they left, or were they deprived of the – the business before?

A: No, I think they were running the business until at least 1942, and that's – that's on the little film that I have. But I do remember – I don't remember the exact transition –



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Q: Okay.

A: – wha-what exactly happened, but I do remember what happened, they – when they moved into **Amsterdam** with my grandparents.

Q: Okay.

A: Where they didn't live with them very long, and they tried to avoid, obviously, being deported. But – and they didn't heed the edict that the Nazis gave them. I don't know if they ever wore the yellow star, or anything like that, but I – I know that one day, the knock came on the door, which was in 1942, probab –

Q: Of your grandparents' place?

A: Of my grandparents' place, which was probably in early August, late July of 1942. And luckily, my brother, an infant of eight months or so, was sleeping. And they knew enough – he was sleeping in the bathtub, for safety's sake. And you hear that, you see it in the movies sometimes even, when in a – in a – in a thriller, and somebody is looking, the gangsters are looking for somebody, take refuge in the bathtub, it's – which I thought was a unique idea, but apparently it's not. But it was lucky for my brother that he was sleeping the bathtub, for his safety, and that he was sleeping, and not making any noises. Because he was overlooked.

Q: So what did they do, who – they were ki –

A: So they took my parents and me to –

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Q: Excuse me – okay, let's continue. I heard a noise.

A: They took my brother and ma – my parents and me to the **Hollandsche Schouwburg**, which is a place in – it's an old theater in the middle of **Amsterdam**, which was a rounding up place for transshipments to **Westerbork**.

Q: So further dep – yeah –

A: The landscapers.

Q: Yeah. **[break]** We were talking about bi – as the noise was happening, about being in this central place, where you were taken with your parents, a sort of like a transit area, a holding area.

A: Yes, the sh – the **Hollandsche Schouw – sh – Schouwburg**, which is – still is there today, and it's got a big plaque on it. It is a – a th – it was a theater. And they rounded up the Jews there for transshipment to **Westerbork**, which is a transhi – it's not a concentration camp per se, but it's a transshipment place.

Q: It's a transit camp.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my grandmother and grandfather went with, because at that time, in 1942, the Nazis were not interested in older people, they were just interested in younger, working – able-bodied younger people to work.

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Q: Okay, so I'm a – I need to have a little bit of clarification. The knock on the door comes in 1942, in the late summer, something like that?

A: Yeah, mm-hm. Y – mid-summer.

Q: Yeah. Your brother is – baby brother is sleeping in the bathtub.

A: Yes.

Q: He makes no noise. You and your parents are taken to this holding area in the theater, and your grandparents come with you to that theater?

A: To s – to say goodbye.

Q: Oh, I see. And so, with your baby brother, or leaving him alone?

A: No, no, no, I'm sure there was somebody in the house.

Q: Okay. Okay. So they've come to say goodbye because there's no danger that they would be taken as well, is that what you think?

A: Yes, that is correct.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And –

A: And so, in so doing, my parents, sort of like a **Sophie's Choice**, handed me over, and in the confusion, handed me to my grandparents, and I went home with them. I was spared going to **Westerbork**.

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Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So –

Q: So, it was kind of like last minute?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Do you have any memory of that?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: That might – might – must be psychological – well, and I was only two at the time. But I don't have any memories of that, I don't have any memories then of being placed with the hiding parents.

Q: Let's – we'll get there.

A: Okay.

Q: Okay. And you don't have memories of your mother or your father, then.

A: No, I don't.

Q: Okay. That's quite a loss.

A: It is.

Q: Yeah.

A: I still feel that, even you know, when ladies go out to lunch, and talk about their mother, I have nothing to talk about.

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Q: Yeah. What happened to them?

A: They went to **Westerbork**.

Q: Let's cut for second. **[break]** So, what happened to your parents, after they gave you over?

A: They went to **Westerbork**, and I did do re – I was – I went to **Westerbork**, as a tourist, and I did some research on it, and I know that **Westerbork** was a shipment – a transshipment camp, that they set up as a functioning village. And in – you tried to make yourself useful, whether you were a secretary, or – they had a band, they had a soccer team, a good soccer player – you tried to make yourself useful, so that you wouldn't land on the train.

Q: So you wouldn't be on a sh – on a – on a list to be further deported.

A: Right. And every week, they have the – I – I believe it was Mondays, they published a list, and on Tuesdays, those people that were on the list, were transshipped to **Auschwitz**. And it didn't take my parent – my parents were not at **Westerbork** very long, and they were transshipped to **Auschwitz**, where they died. It is in the records, they died on August – well, they weren't died, they didn't die, they were murdered, August eighth.

Q: Of what year?

A: 1942.

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Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my goodness. So it was – it was – it was within weeks.

A: Exactly. And my aunt, my – my mother's younger sister, was there as well, and she was there a little longer. They were not transsh –

Q: Were not deported together.

A: They were not deported together, but she wasn't there very much longer.

Q: And you found these documents where?

A: My brother had written a letter to the [indecipherable] Institute for more documents, and it is in the ar – in their archives.

Q: So –

A: We have a letter, stating their exact dates of death.

Q: When did you get that letter? When did he get that letter?

A: Oh, in the early 90s.

Q: Okay. So half a century went by, until you learned these things?

A: The exact – the exact dates, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And that was spurred by the conference of hidden children, the first annual conference that they had in **New York City**, at the **Marriot Hotel**. A huge

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conference, where – and that was really the first time I – I knew, where I labeled mys – I was able to articulate that I was a hidden child. Because we were – growing up with my grandmother, we were not encouraged to talk about it at all. She told us eventually, my grandmother told us what happened in vague terms, I think. But we weren't encouraged to talk about it, because we weren't in a con – we didn't really suffer. We weren't in a concentration camp. We were well ta – both my brother and I, although we were hidden by separate families, cause it was too dangerous to be – all of a sudden two kids turn up in one family. We – we were well taken care of, as well as you could be in times of war. And so, we – it was – we weren't considered to really have suffered. But this conference, where I think, if I'm not mistaken, about 1600 people, all hidden children, turned up in one room, it was mind blowing. And that's what spurred my, and especially my brother's research into more details.

Q: In what way was it mind blowing? Tell me, if you hadn't really been affected before, what affected you now?

A: Well, we knew we were hidden children, and that we had gone through this experience. And we never – I never really thought about it. My brother is quite a bit more introspective than I am, but I never – we were young, we were – you know, we didn't think about – dwell on it that much.

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Q: Well, you know, there is a school of thought – I’m going to kind of mention different schools, but there is a school of thought that says – and it’s quite prevalent in – and in ha – makes sense in one way. That if you don’t have direct memories of something, what is the loss that you suffered? Because you don’t remember the loss, you don’t remember what you had, in order to know that you don’t have it.

A: No, that’s true, mm-hm.

Q: And – and – and so, in some ways, you’re spared.

A: Mm.

Q: But there is another school of thought that says, the way, you know, we all experience things at different developmental stages of our lives. So how you will respond to outside stimuli when you’re an infant, a toddler, an adolescent, a young adult, in some ways is affected and influenced by what stage of your life and your development you’re at. And I have heard people say that others who have been working with hidden children, that sometimes the sadness and the sorrow from hidden children, is so deep, because they experienced these losses at such an early stage of life, when you need to have that sense of security. Something is broken, whether you have a direct memory or not, when it comes back, when your history is something that your – something happens then, that a person who might have gone through true abuse and torture and so on, but was an adult, would have reacted to



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what was happening to them, as an adult, with the defenses that an adult can have.

So, I think that that is also as a result of that first conference, that this thinking has – has developed as people got together, and share their stories.

A: Right. Oh, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my brother, who as I said before was only eight months old, he – he was in his pre-verbal stage, and he has – he – he – it was separation anxiety for him, on – on several different levels, as he moved from one family, and then from his, you know, birth family, to his hiding family, and then to a new life in the **United States** with a grandmother that he didn't really know, and – you know, and a couple of other instances in his life where that happened.

Q: So, how old were your parents when they were murdered?

A: My mother was 22, and my father was 27.

Q: They were so young.

A: Yes, they were.

Q: They were so young. So your father had been born in – sometime in the teens, is that the case?

A: Yes, my – my mother was born in 1919, and my father was born in, I think, 1915.

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Q: Okay. What happened to his father, and his brother and sister?

A: His sister, **Rosemarie**, and her mother, went – **Lizzie**, the mother's name is **Lizzie Israels**. They escaped to the south of **France**. And – but there, they were captured, I-I don't know an-another word, and also were deported then, to **Auschwitz**.

Q: I see.

A: And the brother, I think he went to **England**, and he died well after the war, of – of other issues.

Q: Okay. And his name was?

A: His name was **Stefan**(ph).

Q: **Stefan**(ph). And your grandfather on your pa – father's side, your paternal grandfather's name was?

A: My – **Samuel**. I had two grandfathers, both by the name of **Samuel**. He lived –

Q: So this was **Samuel de Kadt**?

A: **Samuel de Kadt**. And he died bef – in 1938. I know that my parents married rather in a hurried fashion, because he was ill, I believe with cancer, and they wanted his father to see them married, so they rushed the wedding a little bit.

Q: How did they meet, your parents?

A: I do not know.

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Q: Okay.

A: I do not know.

Q: You don't know how the families –

A: But they were in the same circles.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, they were in the same circle in **Amsterdam**, and they went to school there. I don't know if they went to the same schools or not, but they – they did, they met through mutual friends.

Q: Were both families well-to-do?

A: I believe – yes, they were, they were fairly well-to-do, yes.

Q: Okay. And – okay, so we're at the train station, and you're given away to your grandparents. What happens then? What happens to them, to you? How do things, step by step, occur?

A: Well, I don't have direct memory, but –

Q: Of course.

A: – they went – they took me back to the house in the ghetto, and then they saw that it was really, you know, it was time. So they placed both my brother and me with hiding families.

Q: How did they find them?

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A: My hiding family was the sister-in-law of my grandmother's seamstress, and – and they were Catholic. And my brother's hiding family were also mutual acquaintances, I don't know the – the networking they had – that they had to do for that, exactly, but – and they were Protestant. So they – they were both Righteous Gentiles.

Q: Okay. What's your brother's name? I don't –

A: My brother's name is **Maarten**.

Q: **Maarten**.

A: Spelled the Dutch way.

Q: How would that be?

A: **M**-double **a-r-t-e-n**, like the island that everybody likes to go to.

Q: That's true. So –

A: And we were both hidden in **Amstelveen**, the same little suburb outside of **Amsterdam**, but in my two year old mind, it could have been **Australia**. I didn't realize he was that close. He was very, very close in distance.

Q: Do you remember being – do you remember being with your grandparents, and then not being with them any more?

A: No, I don't. I don't rem – as I said, I don't remember how that transition took place.

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Q: Okay. And what did your grandparents do?

A: My grandparents then were deported in 1944. So what they did in the interim of those – let's say, year and a half or so –

Q: Okay.

A: – I don't know.

Q: What happened to them?

A: My grandmother survived **Bergen-Belsen**, and my grandfather did not.

Q: They were deported to **Bergen-Belsen**?

A: Yes.

Q: Amazing.

A: And my grandmother i – was a very strong woman, and she lived to the ripe old age of 93, but that was in a – in a – I hope I have her genes – that was in a nursing home, because she did suffer a stroke at the age of 86.

Q: Oh, so her last seven years were not easy.

A: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A: Right.

Q: However, how old was she when – when this deportation happened? If your mother was so young, then your grandmother must have been quite young –

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A: Yes, everybody got married rather young. I don't – well, we can go back, my – they – my math isn't great, but my grandmother, by the ti – in 1946 – well, she was born in 1895.

Q: Okay, 1895, which would have made her about 50.

A: Yeah, in – in her early 50s, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because, when she survived **Bergen-Belsen**, she was very ill, she was hospitalized for about three months, while she recuperated, and then she regained her strength, and then she came to retrieve my brother and myself.

Q: I see.

A: And so she started a new life in th – in **America**.

Q: And why **America**? Why not stay in the **Netherlands**?

A: Because my aunt was in **America**. My Aunt **Ella** whose now 97. And she lived in **Queens**, my aunt did, who had married herself – you know, she has gotten married in the interim, and had two sons. Housing was very short after the war, with all the immigrants, and that's when you hear that, you know, a **Levittown**, out in – had to be built.

Q: That's right. That's right.

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A: So – but they were able to secure an apartment, directly above their apartment, and in those days, in order to do that, to secure an apartment, it had to be livable. So there was some furniture that had to stay there, and so we inherited some furniture from – from that. And – and we – we continued to live there, and went to school there, etcetera, for a good 20 years.

Q: I'm trying to imagine, and I c – I can't imagine, but the losses that your grandmother suffered, were enormous.

A: They were. And that's what I wanted to say, she was a single parent at the age of 52, with a generation missing.

Q: Yeah.

A: Before the coin – single parent was coined – before the name single parents was coined –

Q: Yeah.

A: – she was a single parent. Of course, she had my aunt and uncle as support, but that's not the same. You know, support is good, but yeah, it was difficult for her.

Q: And she had lost her own daughters.

A: And her husband.

Q: And her husband.

A: Yeah.

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Q: And –

A: And various other people. Yeah, it was.

Q: And she never spoke about these things? She never spoke? Did she tell you about who your mother was, and what kind of person [indecipherable]

A: Yes, she did. I remember she sat u – she sat me down when I was about 10 –

Q: Okay.

A: – and explained sort of what happened, in – in a – not – without too many details.

Q: How did she do it? Was it something that was, now it's time for you to know, kind of thing?

A: Basically, yes. She sat me down one afternoon. It was a difficult afternoon for her.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about it?

A: Well, I don't remember much about it. She just sat me down and – and told me, and there were tears, and – and so on. And I – I know that my brother wasn't told at the same time.

Q: Had you had questions about where's my mom, where's my dad?

A: Nnno – well, I guess I did. But I know that there is – when we first came in 1946, that we were told, and I guess it was part of the denial process, that we would



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go back to **Holland** in a year. And we were hoping, as young children, that we would go back to – i-in a year, to go to our mother and father, which was our hiding parents. An-And my grandmother was hoping that the memory would fade, and I guess at the time she thought a year was a long time. But – and I'm sure that the – and the memory did fade.

Q: Well, that was my next question; did the memory fade, of having been with another family?

A: Not entirely, because I still have memories of those war-time years.

Q: We'll talk about that, but now we're –

A: Okay.

Q: – we're on this thread.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah. So, but right now, when you're already post-war, and you're in the **United States**, did this desire to go back to the **Netherlands** recede?

A: Absolutely, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: They – they Americanized me. The first thing that one of friends of the family did was he gave me my nickname, **Willie**, because it was American. And – and that stuck.

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Q: What language did you speak at home with your grandmother?

A: English. She was very much an enabler. She wanted us to speak English, because we were both ready for school, and in school we had to speak English, so she – she spoke English to us.

Q: What kind of personality did she have, your grandma?

A: She was regal. I remember her as being a regal woman. She was – oh, she wouldn't like it if I said this, but she was a bit of a snob, because of her upbringing, and she was controlling, I think. Very Dutch. And – but she wasn't very emotional.

Q: Did you miss that?

A: Well, as you said before, I didn't know what I was missing. So –

Q: And your Aunt **Ella**, was she part of your life?

A: She was, yes, she was. She was part of our life. But, she had her sons to – own sons to worry about, and that's part of the story, too. So – and there was some conflict.

Q: Between the two?

A: Between my grandmother's allegiance to us, the poor, motherless children, and my aunt's children. And that –

Q: Ah. And being the grandmother to these other children.

A: Ah, to b – yes, being grandmother to all four.

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Q: Yeah.

A: So –

Q: And did you remain in this apartment, above your aunt, for –

A: I remained there til I was beyond college, til about – I went away to college, I felt the need to get away. I remained there til I got married, basically. Cause I went to college and came back, got a job in **Manhattan**, and I – my other college friends at that time, oh they all got roommates, and apartments in the city, but I felt I couldn't do that, I had to keep my grandmother company. But – so I lived with her til I got married in 1963.

Q: That's a long time. I mean, that's 19 - 20 years or something like that.

A: Yes, it is, and – but in the meantime, I did go away to college.

Q: Okay. What kind of a – can you describe the apartment to me, what it looked like, you know, how many rooms there were? Just – just a little bit of a description.

A: Well, it was very – I won't say Victorian, that's the wrong word. But it was dark. She had dark velvet maroon drapes, but that was only in the winter, which she changed out, and just ha – kept the sheers in the summer. It was two bedrooms. It was a big apartment, by today's standards. She had her own room, with a little bathroom, and my brother and I at first shared a bedroom, but then as we got older, there was a partition built betw – so that it divided that one room into two. And

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think he s – probably still very vividly remembers that I got the big half, and he got the small half, which was determined by the window placement.

Q: Those things matter when you're a kid.

A: Oh yes.

Q: They matter.

A: Oh yes.

Q: And – and was it in a – an apartment building?

A: It was in an apartment building, a six story building, which was very – in a nice neighborhood, a very – I think – a Jewish neighborhood. But, it was near a park where we could go without having to cross the street, and play. And our signal, as many kids of that era, when the streetlights turned on, it was time for you to come home.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And – but there was a big city park forest, basically, nearby – well, across the str – that was across another street.

Q: What's the name of the neighborhood?

A: **Kew Gardens.**

Q: Oh, in **Kew Gardens**, okay.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Okay. It's a nice area of **Queens**.

A: It is.

Q: Yeah.

A: It is.

Q: Now, one of the reasons I ask is – is – is to find out, did your grandmother ever get any restitution?

A: Yes, she did.

Q: Okay. How did that happen, and in what form did that –

A: That happened – I was not privy to those details, but my grandfather had a partner in **Manhattan**, whom we called Uncle **Jack**, who did the American branch of this diamond business, and he saw, with legal means, that my grandmother had – got restitution in the form of a monthly check, I believe, for the business for – for some years.

Q: Okay. Did she have to go to work at all, when she was –

A: Yes, she did. She did. She got a part-time job. The only thing that she knew was diamonds. So she got a job, first at home. She learned how to string pearls, and she did that at home.

Q: Okay.

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A: And I remember her working way – she was a night owl, too, as I am now, she worked at her – at the dining room table, cause this apartment had a living room, a- and a dining room, which the dining room was very dark, with a fire escape outside of it. Long into the night, and whistling under her breath to wq – with **WQXR**, on in the background. And then she got a job at a jewelry firm in **Manhattan**, where she went every day, but abbreviated hours, and strung pearls for them, and continued her little cottage industry, so to speak, at home.

Q: Did she have wa – I mean, clearly the – the material aspect of life was nothing like what she had grown up in, and was used to.

A: No, but it was very important to her.

Q: Okay. So my question is, did she still have money worries, or was this okay?

A: Always.

Q: Okay.

A: She always felt she had money worries, and we were, I think raised a little bit as children of the depression would have been raised, with – very frugally. But, yes and no.

Q: Okay.

A: Because I remember in that apartment, she entertained lavishly.

Q: Did she?

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A: Dinner parties for her friends. And the dinner parties were – I mean, they all outdid each other, they were in competition, she and her friends. So she would have a woman come in and help her in the kitchen, and she would have hors d'oeuvres, and by the time you finished with the hors d'oeuvres, you had no room left for dinner, but then you knew there was this real heavy dinner coming, and – which she prepared for for a week in advance, at least.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: With the good linen, and the silverware, and so on and so forth.

Q: Why – why do you think there was such an attention to this? Why do you think this became the way it did?

A: I think it was status, symbolic. And – and she – I think it was she wanted to do it. But that was all motivation for her to – you know, to continue as much as could with the way of life that she was used to, despite the fact that she no longer had the nanny for the children, and the – the cook in the kitchen, she did want to continue as much as possible, but now she was restricted.

Q: Was she a storyteller?

A: Not really. No, because we didn't ask her many questions. Both my brother and I somehow knew that we didn't want to hurt her, by drawing out mem – painful memories.

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Q: So, I mean –

A: We avoided the whole topic.

Q: Oh ho – I mean, I would have wanted it – I can't imagine this kind of loss, because I have a mother, but I would have wanted to find out, what is my mother like? Was she a happy person, did she have hobbies, did she like doing this, did she like going – reading? What kind of books did she like?

A: No, we never asked those questions, although I do remember my aunt and my grandmother. My aunt came up after – you know, after dinner, my aunt and uncle would come up to our apartment, and they would have coffee or something, and spend an hour or so, chatting. But I do remember on occasion, that they would sort of reiterate, you know, that – the gesture that I made might have been similar to one my mother would have made, that sort of thing. But no, we didn't – we didn't ask.

Q: And you asked – and you didn't, because you knew it was painful. Somewhere, you knew –

A: In part, and – and because I was too young to even realize, and as you said again, I didn't know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – any different.



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Q: Yeah. Did your grandmother ever go back to the **Netherlands**, after she came to the **United States**?

A: She did, and we went back with her when I was 12, and my brother was 10, so that would have been in the early – in the late 1949, 1950.

Q: Pretty early. Pretty early after the war to go back.

A: No, it's – maybe it was – maybe it was later. No –

Q: Mid-fifties, or –

A: Yeah. No.

Q: No?

A: It was around that – I remember just – I was 12 and he was 10.

Q: And what was the reason to go back at that time?

A: It was during the summer, it was vacation, I – I think she wanted to go back and maybe take care of some business details, that I'm not – I'm not sure about that at all, maybe that's not even true. But she visited her friends and – and we went with her, and we sailed over, and we sailed back on the **Holland America Line**, the **Noordam**. And there was a big storm one night, and I know that I was deathly ill. Seasick.

Q: Oh, no cru – not – not a cruise experience.

A: No, not at all.

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Q: Do you have memories of that visit in the **Netherlands**?

A: Yes, I do, because she introduced me somehow or other to a girl that was about my age, a little bit older, who was a Girl Scout, as was I by that time. And we went to Girl Scout camp for a couple of days.

Q: You still spoke Dutch at that point?

A: I think so, enough to get by, anyhow.

Q: And, did she go back at any other time?

A: Not to my knowledge. Not to my memory. She may have, but not to my knowledge. At least not with us.

Q: Now, if not speaking about family, and the losses, and the people who are no longer there –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – did she ever talk about the war itself? Did she ever talk about the Nazi occupation? Did she ever talk about the more distant things that were historical, about this time?

A: No. She didn't go there, basically. I think she did let us know that she was very sick, but I can't honestly say that we talked about it very much at all. That was – and I don't think I'm – whether I'm unique in that, as a hidden child. I don't think so.

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Q: What about her own girlhood, and her own growing up, that was pre-war.

A: She talked about her siblings, and her life in **Amsterdam**, but not all that much.

Not all that much.

Q: That might have been painful, too.

A: Yeah.

Q: Because it was the world that no longer was.

A: Right. She had – she had a sister in **Amsterdam**, who, now that you mention it, there was – I do remember some sort of a transition between the house, the second hou – the ghetto house, and my hiding house, is that we stay – no, that was when I was older. The – being taken away from my hiding parents, and transitioning to **America**, we stayed with my grandmother's sister in **Amsterdam**, for a few days.

Q: Okay. What year did your grandmother die?

A: She died in 1988.

Q: Wow.

A: She was in a nursing home for six years.

Q: What did you call her?

A: **Oma**.

Q: **Oma**.

A: That's what my grandchildren call me, **Oma**.

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Q: **Oma. Oma.** So she never became like mom. It – you know, sometimes –

A: Oh no, no, she was **Oma**. Definitely grandmother.

Q: Okay.

A: And my children called her **Oma**, even though she was their great-grandmother, but because she was so young, you know, and just going around, about town and so on, many people thought she was my mother. And my children, I believe, never really thought of her as their great-grandmother, but rather **Oma**, which is German, Dutch.

Q: That's right. For grandma.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Yeah. Let's break at this time. **[break]** So, before the break, we were talking a lot about your grandmother, and what was she like, and how she soldiered on, and the way she did it, you know, and how she brought you and your brother up. I want to return back now, to a part of your story that we haven't really touched on. And that is, when you were hidden, as this young toddler, in the **Netherlands**, and what was involved with that. So, let's go back to that point where your grandparents realized that it's time to disappear, or at least have the children disappear. What do they do, and where do you go?

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A: Mm-hm. Well, I went to a very strict Catholic family in **Amstelveen**, not far from **Amsterdam**. And they had two biological daughters, and they squeezed me into their home, even though I thought it was palatial. But that was not the case, after I came back some years later. And I became part of their family.

Q: What was their name?

A: The parents, he was **Jan Van der Zaider**(ph), and she was **Cornelia Van der Zaider**(ph). And the two girls were **Anka**(ph), the older one, and **Corrie**(ph), which is a nickname for **Cornelia**. They were – **Corrie**(ph), I would say, is about five years older than me, and **Anka**(ph) is eight years older than me, or so. I'm not sure of their exact birthdates, and I'm in touch with both of them.

Q: To this day.

A: Well, more **Corrie**(ph). She is the more computer literate. And **Anka**, unfortunately, I just learned six weeks ago or so, has just been – had to be put in a nursing home, because she had a fall, and she suffers some form of dementia at the – and which can only get worse –

Q: Yeah.

A: – not better.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – a-and those two ladies married brothers.

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Q: Did they?

A: So they have the same last name, and I think that's part of the whole story, that their worlds were very close. They did not – their circle was very close, so they married brothers. They are devout Catholics.

Q: To this day?

A: To this day. They both have four and five children apiece, who are very devoted, the children are very devoted to them. And they – **Corrie**(ph), anyway, raised – I'm sorry, **Mama**, I call her now **Mama Van der Zaider**(ph), they raised me as they would their own daughters, and I never knew the difference. I wasn't hidden, to my idea, not like an **Anne Frank** was hidden. I could go wherever they went, and do whatever they did, and I remember some outings that we went on, and I know I – I went probably – I don't remember being in church with them, but I'm sure I did go. I remember that during those war years, I remember blackouts. I remember being very fearful of anything in a uniform, whether it was the milkman or the postman, or so – or a Nazi, I couldn't discern, but when somebody rang the bell, and it had a uniform on, I ran and hid under the dining room table, which to my mind, was a safe place.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And I also remember going to sleep with my hands up in – up in the air in a surrender position –

Q: Oh my.

A: – just in case. So I do have those memories. I remember playing in a bombed out – I don't know whether it was bombed out, or just an incomplete foundation, that I don't know. But we played and we balanced – used it as a balancing beam, played, as children will, in that foundation. And I remember, because I was hidden with them during the winter of 1944, which was, in the history books, a notoriously bad winter. And that, coupled with the destruction of the infrastructure, many people died who weren't Jewish – and there's where I did some research, too; about 20,000 people died from starvation, never mind their religion, because there was no food. So I remember standing in line at the soup kitchen, where we got what they called was soup, basically very watered down broth of some kind, with a couple of cabbage leaves floating in it. I remember eating potatoes. One day we ate the potatoes. They say –

Q: Raw, or – or –

A: No, cooked.

Q: Cooked.

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A: But they peel – they save the peels, and the next day we – we would eat the peels. And I remember that we had to eat tulip bulbs.

Q: Oh, wow.

A: And that I don't remember personally, but I – I know someone said, that wrecked damage with your stomach. It wasn't good for your digestive track.

Q: Okay.

A: But that was all that there was to eat. So those are the sorts of things that I remember from – from the war years. But I also have good memories, playing in the street in the neighborhood, with the neighborhood children.

Q: Did you have another name?

A: No, I did not, but my brother did.

Q: So what – your name stayed –

A: **Wilhelmina**.

Q: **Wilhelmine**(ph). But your last name became **Van der Zaider**(ph).

A: **Van der Zaider**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I have a little book that I, when I was able to write, I wrote my initials,

**W.V.D. Zaiden**(ph).

Q: Okay.



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A: So I did take their last name, yeah.

Q: And your brother became who?

A: From **Maarten**, they – they changed his name to **Thys**.

Q: **Thys**, mm-hm.

A: **T-h-y-s**.

Q: Is that a typical Dutch name?

A: I think so, although I've not heard it before or after, but I think yeah, it was.

Q: Okay. And these memories that you have, they would be your earliest memories, if you only have sort of remembered your grandfather giving you sweets before, and – and no other physical kind of –

A: No.

Q: – image in your mind.

A: No, that's true, that's the only childhood memories that I have.

Q: What were those people like, the – your hidden parents, as you call them. What kind of personalities do you – did they have that you can recall?

A: Well, I don't think I could tell you their personalities, except that they were my mother and father. They were kind and loving and – and so what – he was a businessman, I think he was an accountant.

Q: Okay.

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A: And she was a stay at home mom. She had her hands full, and I – what kind of suspicion I aroused, because all of a sudden I was there – I think that – I think they said that a cousin had come to visit, or niece. Their niece had come to visit. And it was okay, I had dark hair, and so did my hiding father, he also had dark hair. Cause otherwise, you know –

Q: It could be a real discrepancy.

A: Yes, it could have been, yeah.

Q: Okay. And she was the sister-in-law of your grandmother's seamstress?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. And – and the – the sisters were my big sisters. And it's very funny because when I went just to see them without my family, without my now grown children, in, I think it was 2003, and one had me over for lunch. And they, besides marrying brothers, they lived very close, in geographical distance, to each other. So, we went to dinner at the other one's house, at **Corrie's** house. And when I said, can I help you? Oh yeah, she said, just like a big sister would, you can do this, and you can do that. So the roles, after all those years, continued.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember any incidents of playing with them, with the two girls?

A: Not per se, no.

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Q: No.

A: Although I'm sure I did. I must have.

Q: Do – were – did you have false documents? Were there any false documents that were –

A: I have no idea.

Q: Okay.

A: See, those are good questions. When your – your gon – you're giving me homework to do.

Q: It's just curious, because how does one hide a child, and – and how do you make it secure?

A: Well, the neighborhood knew, the neighbors knew, and they didn't betray me, like **Anne Frank** was betrayed, even in her hiding attic.

Q: Yeah.

A: And many people were betrayed. And – but – and I know that **Corrie**(ph) told me that there was one particular neighborhood who they didn't – neighbor rather, that they didn't quite trust, but that turned out to be okay. So, the neighbor –

Q: So, how did they – how do you know the neighbors knew? Did they –

A: They told me. They – **Corrie**(ph) told me, the hiding sisters told me, years afterwards. Yeah. And – and when I did ask them, why did you do this, you know?

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Q: Yes.

A: Why did you – because it was life-risking to do that, and they just felt morally obligated, and they did it because they felt they had to. So, as – as did a lot of people, even though there were – there was bounty on your head, if you were betrayed. People were betrayed by peop – by – even by Dutch policemen, who got money for it.

Q: Speaking of money, do you know whether or not there was anything that your grandparents gave to them to help them maintain you?

A: Yes, I'm sure there was, I'm positive there was. How much, how often, but I'm sure that they were pai – they were compensated.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: They were.

Q: An-And what about your brother? Now, you wouldn't have direct experience, but what was his family like, and who were they? You said they were Protestant, and they lived in the same town.

A: Yes. And I don't know exactly how, the connection to my grandparents, what the connection was, but they were, at the time, a childless young couple, who were

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willing to take my brother. And my brother had very close ties with them, long after he came to the **United States**. They – **Mika(ph)**, that was the man, and her name escapes me, it – it'll come to me. **Jolas(ph)**, were very devoted to him, and took care of him, and after he left, then they had their children. She had –

Q: Oh, so they did have children.

A: – she had – I think she had trouble conceiving, but I think **Marty** helped them, in – in his own way, with that. They had two daughters.

Q: Afterwards.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: **Lotta(ph)** was her name.

Q: **Botta(ph)**.

A: **Lotta(ph)**.

Q: **Lotta(ph)**. And their last name was?

A: **Jolas(ph)**.

Q: **Jolas(ph)**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you meet them?

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A: I did, yes, I did. Cause we went back – mart – **Maarten**, his daughter and I, went back in maybe 2002 or three, and we went to see the factory, as I said, and then we went to visit them. And they both lived well into their 90s, but that was – they have now been gone for a while.

Q: Okay. Did the two families ever meet? The two rescuing families?

A: Well, I'm sure they must have met, because my – my brother came to visit me in **Amstelveen**, although I didn't realize he was my brother; he was a friend.

Q: Really? So – oh, so they knew of one another.

A: They knew of one another, and they arranged an occasional, very occasional meeting, of which also I have some photos of him and myself sitting in a family group, with my hiding parents. I don't have any pictures vice versa, of me going over to their house, although I know I was there, I have a memory of being at their house.

Q: Do you? Yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's unusual. I mean, I think that that's quite unusual, that they would take enough care that you don't forget that you have a brother, and that he comes to know that he has a sister.

A: Yeah, but we didn't know we were – they didn't –

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Q: I know.

A: – re – know that.

Q: Yeah. But that you're in one another's lives.

A: Yeah, mm-hm. Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: Yeah. It sounds like a very thoughtful gesture, because you can't explain any other reason for it. Why would they –

A: Right, right, so –

Q: – why would they do that?

A: Mm-hm. I'm sure they both were compensated.

Q: And you were there from what time to what time? Now, you may not remember being there, but do you know the date, at this point?

A: Not the exact date, but I'm sure that if my parents were taken away in early August, that –

Q: Forty-two.

A: – in – in 1942, that we were placed not long after that.

Q: Okay. So it would have been that calendar year, and –

A: I'm sure, yes.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Do you know when your grandparents were deported from **Westerbork?**

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A: Into **Westerbork**?

Q: Yeah.

A: In 1944.

Q: So they stayed another year and a half or so?

A: Yes, and that's, I think also, because they were older, that they weren't taken earlier. And they weren't able-bodied workers. Or they were, they were able-bodied, but they weren't – the Nazis weren't interested in older people, because –

Q: That's so unusual, in – in some ways, because it would have been – if you were to take the logic that was – seems to have been exhibited at **Auschwitz**, when the trainloads came to **Auschwitz**, people of your grandparents' age would have been moved to the line that goes to the gas chambers. And people of your parents' age, would have been kept alive, to do have – to do labor, you know? And yet, it's the reverse that happened in there – in a sense that very young people, who were at the prime of life –

A: But I think it was – my parents were deported in '42, and I think that was the beginning of the mass murders, and there may be – you know, one trainload came into **Westerbork**, and they had to make room for more. So, one trainload went out to **Auschwitz**.

Q: Yeah. Did you ever have any contact with anyone from your father's family?



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A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: I have a cousin twice removed, or however that works, I'm never sure, who I am fairly close to. She lives in **Greenwich, Connecticut**, and she has told me more than one time, that if it wouldn't have worked out with my hiding parents, that she would have adopted us. But it, you know, even though – or i-if – no, if it wouldn't have worked out, if my grandmother would not have survived this concentration camp, she would – she and her husband would have adopted both my brother and I.

Q: And so this would have been – were they in the **United States** during the war?

A: No, they were in **England**.

Q: They were in **England**, okay.

A: And her husband has his own story about going – he was a diplomat, he was – went through **Sweden**, and escaped through there. Quite an interesting story that he has. But yeah, and she – she drove an ambulance –

Q: In **Britain**?

A: In **Britain**, yeah. In the **London** area.

Q: He was a Dutch diplomat?

A: Yes, yes. So –

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Q: But this is – so what happened with your grandmother and her daughter in southern **France**? What ended up being their destiny?

A: There was no daughter, i-it was – that was my father's side of the family.

Q: That's what I'm saying, yeah.

A: Okay, yeah.

Q: So, what happened with them?

A: My father's sister –

Q: Right.

A: – **Rosemarie**, and her mother –

Q: Your grandmother.

A: My other grandmother, that is true, but I never met – I – I never met her.

Q: You never knew her, okay.

A: No, never knew her. **Lizzie Israels**.

Q: Okay.

A: They went to the south of **France**, where a lot of people went, and some didn't make it, some were captured there, and they eventually ended up in **Auschwitz**.

Q: Oh, I see. So they were – they were killed as well.

A: Yes, they were.

Q: I see.

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A: But I bel – I know that **Rosemarie**, I – I think, in southern **France**, had met a French colonel, a Christian, with whom she had an affair, and a child out of wedlock. And when that – the danger came for the mother, the father took – I – I – I – I assume, he took the child, and – with him. So that my cousin, who now lives in **Paris**, whom we also met on that famous trip to **Holland** two years ago, **Jill** – my daughter's family, we all – **Glenn**, my son, and – and his family, **Jill**, my daughter, and her family, all went to **Amsterdam** together. And we did everything in **Amsterdam**, including visiting the hiding sisters together. But then **Glenn**, he went to **London**. And **Jill** and family, we went to **Paris**.

Q: To meet your cousin.

A: To – among other things, to meet my cousin. And because **Kaitlyn(ph)**, their daughter, was taking French at the time, in high school, and total immersion and – and all – she got as far as saying, **merci**, and that was it.

Q: But that also such a tenuous connection, but nevertheless, one that you follow up on.

A: Yes, because she's my first cousin.

Q: Yeah. The child that the –

A: The child who is sc – couple of years younger than I am.

Q: Okay. How much of her mother did she know?

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A: Not much. No, because then the colonel married – remarried, and – and the woman that he married, raised that girl, my cousin. And so that became her mother. That's all she knew – **Marie Louise** knows that woman, who is now deceased, as her mother. That was her mother.

Q: And your cousins name is **Maria Louise**?

A: **Marie Louise**.

Q: **Marie Louise**. And her last name?

A: Her married last name? **Kornbauer**(ph). A very French name, right?

Q: Funny how those things happen, you know?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And your father's other brother, who's – who is **Stefan**(ph), I believe.

A: **Stefan**(ph), yes.

Q: He ended up in **Britain**?

A: I believe so, yes.

Q: And did you ever see him, meet him?

A: No. I don't remember seeing him, but I know that he was married for about three times. And I know that a daughter that he had, my cousin also, lived in **Great Britain**, outside of **London**, in **Kent**. And she died recently. She was a bit older than me.

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Q: Okay. We talked earlier about reparations that were made to your grandmother from your mother's family. That is the – that is, from the business that they had on that side.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were any reparations ever paid to you and your brother, through your father's side?

A: We got reparations through the [indecipherable] is that possible? We got some reparations, yes, we did, and I have a record of them, but it's not on the tip of my tongue.

Q: Okay.

A: But they weren't – I – I mean, they were –

Q: And who would it have been from? The Dutch government, the German government?

A: The Dutch government.

Q: The Dutch government.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And would it – it would have been for whatever holdings, a-assets that –

A: No, I think pain and suffering type thing.

Q: Okay, okay.

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A: Yeah.

Q: So, there was no one that you could really learn from, what your father was like as a person. No one you could ask.

A: No, I c – I could ask Aunt **Ella**.

Q: Okay.

A: I asked her, and – and my cousin in – in **Connecticut**. And from **Ella**, was never fond of him, because I think he was a bit of a ladies' man. And also, he was in denial of this whole Holocaust that was about to befall him, and he aligned himself with a lot of Christian friends, thinking that's the way he could escape it. But he didn't.

Q: I see.

A: And **Mario**, my cousin – my relative –

Q: Yeah.

A: – in **Connecticut**, they were in the same social circles, because that's the si – you know, **de Kadt** family.

Q: Right. So, she knew him from that.

A: Yes, as a – growing up in – as a school boy, and he was always a live wire, and – and had a lot of friends, and so on.

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Q: So these bits and pieces of information that you got about – about either parent, are really fragments.

A: Very much so, yeah, very much so, yeah.

Q: Do you remember leaving your hidden parents? Do you remember when your grandmother came back, and now you're about five or six years old.

A: Six, yeah.

Q: Do you have any memories of that?

A: I have a vague memory. I'm sure there must have been tears, cause we were going on a trip, I think, you know, that's what they told us. And they took us in a car that had a back rumble seat, and I think that was more interesting to me than anything else.

Q: And you probably didn't remember this el – not elderly lady, but older lady, who was your grandmother?

A: No, I'm – I'm su – I know I didn't. That – that memory is very vague. And I – then I think we stayed in **Amsterdam** with my grandmother's sister for a few days.

I remember the airplane ride that we took from **Amsterdam** to **LaGuardia**, on a prop plane, and my – my –

Q: Wow.

A: Well, it was 1946, right?

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Q: Yeah, but you went back by boat three years later, or four years later.

A: Yes, but that was a vacation. This was more of a hurried –

Q: Yeah.

A: – type thing. And that my brother was running up and down the aisles, and – and that's – and that my – my aunt and uncle met us at **LaGuardia**, Aunt **Ella**, and Uncle **Dick**. And **Maarten** had to go use – go to the bathroom, and he was wearing a very complicated pair of trousers, that my uncle had a great deal of difficulty helping him to the bathroom. Like that's –

Q: These are things that are important for children.

A: – that's what I remember. And that I had my first orange at the airport.

Q: Oh, did you? Yeah.

A: Because having just gone through that hunger winter, we didn't – you didn't get to eat oranges.

Q: No, no. And when you – do you have any memories of how you felt about your grandmother at that time, or –

A: I don't.

Q: You don't.

A: I think so – psychologically, somehow I blocked it out.

Q: Let's go into the 1950s a bit.



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A: Okay.

Q: And you're now, you know, ensconced in the apartment in **Kew Gardens**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you – you've been to the **Netherlands** and back again, on this visit. And does your life turn entirely to American things, and growing up, and going to school

–

A: I think so.

Q: – and things like that?

A: Going to school, I remember being in the first grade, and the teacher at that time, did the first grade, and the second grade for the same kids. Who was a very kind woman, I even remember her name, Miss **Kroeger**(ph). She took me under her wing, and I think she was inter – instrumental in helping me learn English as quickly as I did. And I was a good student, and I skipped the third grade, went to the fourth grade, and to this day – of course, to this day, they teach the multiplication tables in the third grade, I skipped all of that. My math is still pretty bad.

Q: And you – you went to college where?

A: I went to **Colby College** in **Waterville, Maine**.

Q: Okay.

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A: And part of that was that I wanted far away from **New York**. And how my grandmother did that financially, I – I think her reparations partially helped her with that, and I know that she probably had some jewelry that she sold, to help both educate my brother and myself.

Q: Both of you have higher education?

A: Yeah, my brother went to u – University of **Pennsylvania**, and now he has a **PhD**. And – and I have a Master's degree, but that didn't come until quite a bit later.

Q: What did you study?

A: I – in – as an undergraduate, I studied French, and basically that was my grandmother's big influence, because she thought it was a beautiful language, and – French literature is what I studied. And he studied – well, he's – he's an economist, so he – he was toward – in that vein. And –

Q: When you think of your grandmother – and it sounds like you had a mixed relationship with her, from what you've told me, there were positive things, and then there were some things that were a little hard to take. I don't know if I'm accurate in saying that, or –

A: Yeah, I think she was a strong-willed woman –

Q: Okay.

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A: – and she influenced us a great deal, yes.

Q: That's my question, is how did she influence you in a way that stayed with you, as part of your life? That got integrated into your life?

A: Well, I think she influenced me by her perhaps a rigidity, which to this day I'm trying to play it a little more cool. And she influenced my way of entertaining, when I did entertain more than I do now, by you know, taking care of my guests, by the time the **hors d'oeuvres** were over. By her sense of order, and – and perhaps that's just a Dutch stereotype too, partially.

Q: But it's a model. You saw her do that.

A: Yeah, the northern European model.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And – and I don't know if she influenced me also, by her lack of showing emotion. I think maybe I hold that close to my chest a little bit.

Q: Yeah. She also sounds like she was a true survivor.

A: She was a tough one.

Q: Yeah.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Somebody who had endured many losses, multiple losses, and as you said, was a single parent, and forged ahead.

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A: Absolutely. To the very end, yeah.

Q: Yeah. Your own children – you have how many children?

A: Three.

Q: Three. You mentioned their – two of their names before, **Glenn** –

A: **Glenn** and **Jill** and **Andrew**, who lives a mile away.

Q: Okay. Did you tell them much about your life, about your parents' lives, about your family, your Dutch families' life? Did they express interest in these things?

A: They only expressed interest, I would say, in the last 15 or 20 years, because I – ag – again, I think that hinges on the **Marriot** conference in 1991, because I didn't know I was a hidden child, I had no label for it. And so, they know my story now, they know my full story, and it is of interest to them.

Q: And did they – but this was at – then again, when they were already more adult.

A: I would say so. Young adults.

Q: Young adults.

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: What were the ki – if you can recall, what were the kinds of questions that seemed to be the most important to them, to find out about?

A: They didn't ask that many questions, they just took what information I gave them. But – oh, maybe that's not entirely true, because when we went back to the

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**Netherlands** two years ago, and my son-in-law took a family picture of us near their – the original house, and I saw **Glenn**, who is now – well, he was 45, two years ago. And he – and h – and – and my son-in-law took multiple pictures, and this one is smiling, this one is frowning. But mostly everybody is smiling, except not **Glenn**.

Q: Oh.

A: So I asked him, what was – what was the matter.

Q: Yeah. Let's cut. **[break]**

A: So when I asked him, why wasn't he – why did he look – he didn't look angry, he looked pensive. And he was just thinking about all the things that went on. And I think maybe that was the first time that he really reflected up it, in that depth.

Because I think they too – because I didn't think about it myself, they had no reason to think about it either. I like to put it on the back burner.

Q: Do you think that these events, of which you have no memory, how have they impacted who you are?

A: I often think about that, and I often think, not to be egotistical about it, but – and for my brother, too, how come we turned out as well as we did? We're both highly edu – fairly normal. Although there was, on my brother's part, because he felt his separation anxiety –

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Q: You mentioned that, yeah.

A: Yeah. That there – there was some therapy involved there. But I often ef – yes, I often think about how it affected me. It must have affected me, but I think I'd have to go into therapy too, to find out exactly how it did, and I never saw the need for that.

Q: Do you have a way of articulating it, in what role this plays in your life now, in your identity now?

A: No, I don't think so, except that I am maybe a little close – keep things to my chest, also. Private.

Q: Okay, okay. You mentioned before that you're not particularly religious.

A: No, I'm not.

Q: Okay. Do you s –

A: Spiritual is the word they use now.

Q: It's a nice word. That's – it captures the essence, you know. Do you see yourself as Jewish? Is that part of who you are?

A: I – it's not a part of who I am, although **Glenn** used to joke, when he was dating, that he had the best of both worlds, because he could marry a Christian, or, because his mother was Jewish, that he could marry a Jew, as well. But no, I don't si – I don't consider myself Jewish. I have a lot of Jewish friends, and I sympathize

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deeply – or empathy – empathize is – may be a better word, with the anti-Semitism that still goes on, even –

Q: That is, the –

A: Even – and in – at their everyday lives, and then what you hear in the media and so on. And at Christmas, we celebrate in a very secular way, but we – and it's always been at my house. I took it over, and always – my grandmother always used to have Christmas at her house.

Q: Did she?

A: With a Christmas tree, and everything. She was an enabler. She enabled. You know, she wanted to make that transition. And so when Christmas and Hanukah are in the same time frame, we have the Christmas tree in one corner, and the Menorah in the other.

Q: Okay.

A: And I have cousins who are – who practice Judaism, and so – but myself, no. And I – I think I can speak for my brother, too. He doesn't – doesn't do any – although, he married twice, but – with a divorce – two Jewish ladies.

Q: And yourself?

A: Lutheran.

Q: Lutheran. So you have a mixed –

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A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Yeah, yeah. These are all very personal choices. You know, we live in a world where we can make those choices.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: In other generations, it was self-evident that you go by whatever – your destiny was preordained, almost.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Is there something that you'd like us to – that I haven't asked about, that you'd like people to understand, about what significance, this had – you know, this – these – these early years had on you, that came out after 1991?

A: It – it da – it allowed me to identify myself as a hidden child, and all the difficulties that are part of having been a hidden child, and going through all of that. And I – I call myself a survivor, too, just like my grandmother was.

Q: Yeah, yeah. I mean, a very vulnerable one. It was by a hair's breadth.

A: Mm-hm, right, right.

Q: Yeah. Well, I'd like to thank you for sharing what you have shared today.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: It is much appreciated, and I know it's not always easy, and so that makes it a double gift. If there's a last word, is there anything else you would like to say, for



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people to understand, about what we've talked about, before I conclude our interview?

A: I think that everybody carries baggage with them, and – and some are enabled, through biology, or just psychology, to deal better with it, than others. And so some are better survivors than others. And I'm grateful for being on the right side of the coin on that account.

Q: I appreciate that. Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

Q: And with that, this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mrs. **Wilhelmina Juhlin**, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in **Morristown, New Jersey**. Thank you again.

**Conclusion of Interview**