

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga  
August 9, 2016  
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## PREFACE

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## **JACQUELINE HIEMINGA**

### **August 9, 2016**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mrs. **Jacqueline Hieminga**, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in **Nashua, New Hampshire**.

Thank you very much, Mrs. **Hieminga**, for agreeing to speak with us today, and to share some of your experiences during World War II. Before we get to that point, I'm going to ask an awful lot of questions about your pre-war life, so that we can become better acquainted with you. So I'll start with the most basic ones, and we'll go from there. So, my very first question is, can you – can you tell me, what was your name at birth, when you were born?

Answer: Oh on – ja – wasn't –

Q: Your maiden –

A: – ma – my maiden name? Oh.

Q: Your maiden name.

A: **Jacqueline van Westreenen**.

Q: Can you repeat that for me?

A: **Jacqueline van Westreenen**, as a wa –

Q: Jac – okay, **Jacqueline van Westreenen**.

A: **Westreenen**, yeah.

Q: Okay. And what was the date of your birth?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: August '76 – August '76, 19 – you have to help me dear.

Q: August 26, and what year?

A2: Twenty-two.

Q: 1922?

A: Yeah, is this month –

Q: Okay.

A: – that I will be ni – 94 years old.

Q: Well, happy birthday.

A: Oh, thank you.

Q: So, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

A: Yeah.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In **Rotterdam**.

Q: In **Rotterdam**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you si – grow up in **Rotterdam** as well?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: One sister, and one brother, yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: And were they older, or younger than you?

A: No, I was the oldest.

Q: Okay. Can you tell me their names, their first names?

A: My – my brother's name was **Gerrit van Westreenen**, and my sister's name was –

A2: **Francisca**(ph).

A: **Mosisca**(ph)?

A2: **Franfrisca**(ph) **van Westreenen**.

A: Yeah [**indecipherable**]

Q: **Francisca**(ph)? Was it **Francisca**(ph)?

A: Yeah, yeah, **Francisca**(ph).

Q: **Van Westreenen**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And do you – how much – who is the next one in line, after you? Who is the next oldest?

A: My – my brother.

Q: **Gerrit – Gerrit**.

A: Yeah, **Gerrit**, yeah.

Q: Yeah. And then came **Francisca**(ph)?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: How many years between you?

A: Well, with my brother was maybe two or three years, and with my sister, it was quite a –

A2: Thirteen.

A: – thirteen year in between.

Q: Oh, so you were a teenager when she was born?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. And your mother and your father, can you tell me their names? Your father's first name?

A: **Gerrit**.

Q: **Gerrit**?

A: **Gerrit**, same as –

Q: **Gerrit**.

A: – same as my brother, you know.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: **G-e-r-r-i-t**, **Gerrit**.

Q: **Gerrit**, **Gerrit**, okay.

A: **Gerrit**, yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: **Gerrit**. And your mother's name?

A: You want all the f – all the first names?

Q: All the first names, okay.

A: **Bartje** [indecipherable]

Q: Oh my goodness. All the – so how do I spell her first name?

A: **Bartje**.

Q: **B-a-r – t-h –**

A: **T – t-j-e**.

Q: **T-j-e**, ah, **Bartje**.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. And her maiden name was?

A: **Van Hattum**.

Q: **Van Hattum**.

A: **Hattum**, yeah.

Q: **Van Hattum**. And tell me a little bit about your parents. How did your – how did your father – I assume it was your father – support the family?

A: How you call what – what – what he was from – from – for the job?

A2: He was an – a metal former.

Q: A metal former?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A2: Former. In other words, if somebody has to make something, he cast it in bronze, or silver or **[indecipherable]**

Q: Okay, so he was a metalsmith?

A: Yeah, something like it was it –

Q: He was a metalsmith?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So your father was a metalsmith.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did he work in precious metals, such as silver and gold?

A: No, I think it was more – yeah, what was it? The metal was bronze and copper, and all that stuff, you know?

Q: Did – what are some of the things that he made with it?

A2: Can you cut it?

Q: Yeah, let's cut it. **[break]** So tell me, is this something that your father made?

A: Oh yes, he did.

Q: Aha.

A: And it is so funny, he was very sick, all – and I was not allowed to come on his house, because they didn't like me. And then I dropped it off there, so they could give it to him, in his bed, that he could see what my father did for him.



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Who was the him that did not like you?

A: My father-in-law.

Q: Ah, I see what you're saying, okay. So, at any rate, this is – this is something that your father made for your father-in-law?

A: For him.

Q: So, if I understand properly, your father made this for your husband?

A: Yes.

Q: And your husband was sick in bed, and you dropped it off at his home?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And he made it bec – the casting is what he did with it, someone else made the design?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Did he have his own business?

A: No.

Q: He worked for somebody else?

A: No – yeah, for somebody else.

Q: Okay.

A: In his firm.

Q: Okay. And your mother, did she work outside the home?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No.

Q: She was – she took care of the children and the house?

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me a little bit about where you lived? What kind of a place? Was it an apartment, or an owned house, how was it?

A: It was an – an apartment, I think, yeah. Though I am born in the gutter from the house. It was so very hot the day even I was born, they didn't know where to go with me. So between the houses, there was a gutter, so they put me in the gutter. That was the coolest place.

Q: In the gutter?

A: In the gutter, yeah. That's true.

Q: The day you were born?

A: Yes, I was born, yeah.

Q: Oh my goodness. So they told you this story?

A: Yeah, that was my mother told me that all the time.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And, can you describe your home to me, what – how many rooms there were, where – what part of town it was in, things like that?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, it was a living room, a dining room, three bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, and then a little garden. And then – what more was it?

Q: What part of **Rotterdam** was it?

A: A **Rotterdam** south, on the south side.

Q: Okay.

A: South, yeah, yeah.

Q: Was your – would you say your family was well-to-do –

A: No, no.

Q: – or poor?

A: No. It was working man, working, yeah.

Q: Okay, you were working class.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your parents as people, their personalities.

A: Oh my lord. Well, first I all – I'm not from a Christian family.

Q: Okay.

A: And my mom – my mother fought it. She hated it, you know? So I went to a school, and that was an Christian school. That was the closest by where I lived. So I had Christian girlfriends, etcetera, I went with them to their churches, and so. Well, that was not very ga – nice for my mother.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: She was – she we not religious, then?

A: Oh no, nothing, oh no. I was once in **Holland**, when my sister was very sick, so – and on Friday morning was the rin – program on the television, and that was – that – you can watch them, there was a pastor who spoke. He said, well, I'm leaving the house, now it is for you. She hated anything what is to do –

Q: Why?

A: I don't know, I don't – her – her mother was from – he was Catholic, but they had to get married, and my grandfather was Protestant. So and there's what already started, the trouble, because she was not allowed to come in – in the churches any more. Because, don't forget, was an whole different time –

Q: Yeah.

A: – then, than it is now, you know. And –

Q: So your mother experienced something of what it was in that time, to go against tradition.

A: Yeah.

Q: Religious tradition.

A: Ye – oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. And it turned her off?

A: Oh yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: And that meant she didn't want to raise her children –

A: No, oh no, oh no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: What about your father, was he religious?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: Did your parents have any political leanings?

A: Political leaning. I don't know what that means, leaning.

Q: It means were they – were they people who were more conservative politically, were they people who were more socialist?

A: Yeah, socialistic, yeah.

Q: They were more socialistic?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Okay, both of them together?

A: I think so, yeah.

Q: Okay. Okay. So I was asking about their personalities. So tell me a little bit about your mother's personality.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, she – anything what she says, that was law, you know? And was completely different on my father. He was a very quiet man, and so on. But many times she get trouble with it, because if I did something that should be on the left side, and it had to be in her book on the right side, then whole world are done. The wa – the war started again, you know.

Q: So she was strict?

A: Yeah, on one way. But her way.

Q: Her way.

A: That is it – that's it, you – and, well, she took ca – she took care of us, not

**[indecipherable]** but –

Q: Were you scared of her?

A: No, not at – I was not scared of her, no, no. Because she would not have the nerve, I think, to hit me. Then I would have hit back.

Q: So, you had a – you had your own will, even as a child.

A: Mm-hm, I had to.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: And, did you know your grandparents?

A: Oh yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: You did?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did they live close by?

A: Oh no, because they lived in – in **Z-Zalt – Zaltbommel**, and that was in the middle – middle from all around there, was a little town, and there they lived.

Q: I see.

A: No.

Q: But you visited them? Or they visited you?

A: Yeah, only on the si – the summer month, when the school was closed.

Q: Okay.

A: Then we went there for our vacation time.

Q: Okay. And, all three of you?

A: No, and – only me.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: And why was this?

A: I don't know, because I could help my grandmother, etcetera, you know.

Q: Did she live in a town as well, or out on the farm?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No, no, it was not on the – it was in little house, and my grandfather was a shoemaker. So reached you – when you come in, it was the – right away the – the smell from – from – from all the leath-leather, you know?

Q: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: And, in your neighborhood, where you were growing up in **Rotterdam** in the south – southern **Rotterdam**, southern part of the city, describe for me what the neighborhood was like. Were there many apartment buildings there, many different kinds of people?

A: Well, different kind of people, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: But I don't have many contact with the people. Excuse me (**coughs**)

Q: Bless you. Can we cut –

A: Because Friday –

Q: – for se – can we cut for a second? [**break**] So we were talking about the different kinds of people who were in your neighborhood. Tell me a little bit about the different – you know, the – your neighbors. Who were your neighbors?



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: The wa – well, that was in the – lady with a couple of daughters, because the husband passed away there, when we just mof – moved in that house, my father and mother. And that was very stubborn lady, the mother. She never said a word to anybody, never greeted anybody, so you – you stayed away from her.

Q: Yeah, it's a little strange.

A: Yeah, it's very strange, yeah. And I had mam – many more contacts with my Christian friends than this – the neighbors everywhere, because I – I rather walked over to their side, you know?

Q: Did you feel the same way as your mother did about religion, as you were growing up?

A: Oh no, never. And the funny part was that the Christian chil – the Christian school that was very close by our house, so that is why I was in the Christian school. And there I learned – well, all the things what have to do with it, you know. But – she did not like it, but too bad, I had to go there.

A2: Can you break it?

Q: Yes, we can cut. **[break]** So yeah, explain to those people who don't know much about the Dutch school system, was the school that you attended also run by the state, or supported by the state financially?

A: I don't think so. I – I don't know that. I don't think so.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Oh, you don't know that, okay. But was it a school you had to pay tuition for?

A: No, nothing.

Q: So it was free.

A: Everything was free.

Q: It was free.

A: Yeah.

Q: And were there also public schools that were run by the state?

A: Yeah, and they were free, too.

Q: And they were free as well?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay. Was the public school further away from your home?

A: Yeah, a little bit. Not too much, but – I don't know how that – why I get – got there. I don't know, I can't remember, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, tell me about your school life. Tell me a little bit about the kinds of things that you were learning.

A: Well, like everybody else, you said the **ABC**. And I – I liked the school very much, and the teachers sometime visited the parents, to let them know how the

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

pupils were doing. And well, it was always a good report, so I – I never have any trouble there. I did very well.

Q: And are there any particular incidents that you remember from your school years, that were – that still stay in your mind now, as you were growing up?

A: Yeah, they – I have to tell you about, there was there a girl, and w-we became pretty close together. And sometimes, I all of a sudden remember her, but she became a – not a nurse, but somebody who visited the people th – at home when they were sick.

Q: Okay.

A: And that is what she became [**indecipherable**] I came – I came to **America**, and I lose all the contacts.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, because –

Q: I see. Did your mother – did your brother and sister attend the same school?

A: My – my brother, I think. Yeah, not my sister.

Q: Okay.

A: No, no. So many years in between.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, that is what it is.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Yeah. Well, she was – she was a little girl when you were already –

A: Yeah.

Q: – becoming an adult.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: True.

Q: What was – I have a few questions about how modern the **Netherlands** was in the 1920s. Did your home have electricity, for example?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. And running water?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Did you – so I take – you had running water, you had electricity, how did you heat the home? How was the place heated? Was it with coal, was it some oth –

A: Yeah, with coal, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you have a radio at home?

A: Yeah.

Q: And was – were there favorite programs that the family used to listen to?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, I don't know that. I forgot. I don't know.

Q: Okay. Did your parents read any newspapers?

A: My father did, not my mother.

Q: Okay, what did he read?

A: The newspaper.

Q: Yeah, which newspaper would it have been?

A: Oh, what was the name of the newspaper?

Q: I know, what a strange question. The reason why I ask this is I'm trying to get a sense of, how did they get their information about the outside world?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: How did they find out about what was going on in the world. So –

A: Well, it must have – must have been from the newspapers. And it was quite a big – the newspapers were very heavy, lots of sheets to – to read, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were they active, socially? I mean, were they active as socialists?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: No. Did they have brothers and sisters? Did your parents have brothers and sisters?

A: Oh yeah, they did.

Q: Yeah.

A: My father was the oldest from the 12.

Q: From 12 people?

A: Yeah 12 ba – and it were all brothers, no sister.

Q: All boys.

A: Yeah, no sister. But I mean, and that was a very sad story there, because my grandfather came from a bit – a better bringing up than wi – than – than she was, than my grandmother was. And she was a drinker. So, many times, that is what we heard from my mother and father, she was sitting drunk, next to the caskets from the babies.

Q: Oh my God.

A: He had a – yeah, that was very sad, you know.

Q: So some of the children didn't survive?

A: Oh la – yeah.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Cause my father was the oldest, and he went to **Amsterdam**, where he learned the trades there, I think. And then, what he made on salary, that had to be right away in the mail, because Mother had – Mother needed her drinks, you know?

Q: That's a hard childhood for him.

A: Very sad.

Q: Yeah. And your mother, did she have brothers and sisters?

A: Yeah, she did. She has an – how many, I don't know [**indecipherable**] maybe five – five brothers, I think, and she was the only girl.

Q: And did you see your aunts, did you see your uncles much? You know, did you visit with your uncles –

A: No.

Q: – did you have contact with them?

A: No, not too much, but I mean, the – the men – the boys who grew up in – more like the – yeah, well it was not in – well, anyhow, they came all to our house in **Rotterdam**, where my father and mother were married, of course, to learn a trade. So, and they lived by us, so the whole house was filled with men, and smokers. And I hate –

Q: Smokers? Oh –

A: – oh, I hated it, you know.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Yeah.

A: But it was, in those days.

Q: That's what people did.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Q: Do you have any earliest memories as a child, no matter what they would be? So – some of your earliest memories, when you were little. What stays in your mind?

A: No, I don't think so. I can't remember anything. There so long ago, you know.

Q: I know, I know, I know. And it's very open-ended question.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: I – would you say you had a happy childhood?

A: Oh, halfway.

Q: Okay.

A: I – for – for my mother's side of it, there was always something wrong with me, always.

Q: That's tough.

A: Yeah, ver – yeah, very tough. Tough lady.

Q: Yeah. And your father was accepting, more accepting.



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Because I – if I know – if you think about fathers, and I think about my father, and his father, he loved my father. And it was so funny, you know.

Q: Okay. Your husband's father loved your father? That is –

A: No. He. My – ma –

Q: Your husband.

A: Oh yeah, my husband li – loved my father.

Q: Okay. So he must have been a special man.

A: Yeah, he was, absolutely.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me what made him special to you.

A: The way he thought about things, and if he wanted to know something – like, for example, one ta – time, I saw him reading all books, and that was **[indecipherable]** over **Russia**.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, that he wanted to see hi – hear himself what was going on there, and how the people lived there, etcetera.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: In **Russia**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: That is what I remember, the type of books he re-read.

Q: Those are pretty serious books.

A: Oh yeah, it was, yeah, for him, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: So he had interests beyond just his own work.

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, especially in his words, but he – he can tell you that sp – parts

–

Q: When you say his, you mean your husband?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, okay. And so, let's go with your father. Did you spend any – any leisure time with your parents, or were they always busy? That is, did your father or mother take you anywhere? Did they go on walks with you, or did they go to the cinema with you, or –

A: No, th – my father the – my father and I, we took walks together.

Q: You did.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Before that I was married, just that.

Q: Yeah.

A: And, with my mother, no.

Q: Okay. Would you – who would you say was the greatest influence on you, when you were growing up?

A: My father.

Q: Your father. What were some of his values, that you also said, these are important, I want them as my values?

A: Well, yeah, how do I explain that?

Q: Yeah.

A: Not too easy, you know.

Q: No.

A: Well, he was – he never se – said about something, you don't know what is the truth, so you better don't listen to these things. You have to look at the truth in life.

See I always – he said that always. My – my mother, that was a gossip. She – and that is what he hated, and I hated it, too.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. That can do enormous damage to people.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Oh, it does, absolutely.

Q: Yeah.

A: Even – even when we were going to get – we had to get married in the war, before the – yeah, before the war started. And it was an saying, if you are married, and you have a – sent to **Germany**, to work there, for the sor – from there, then you get – you could back – you came back in half a year home, to see your family. But, of course, was afterwards a big lie, because it will never happen. But they picked him up from – my husband up from the street, and then they picked, or brought you to a place where all the Germans were, and then you have to empty all your pockets, and then let us see what you have with you. And then, I had the friend who worked there by all the Germans, and a – a friend of me saw that he was picked up by the Germans.

Q: I'm a little confused now, about what you're telling me. But – because we were talking about your father.

A: Yeah.

Q: And we were talking about the importance he placed on truth.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And you were then going to give me this example, and I don't understand –

A: Oh, yeah –

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay, can you explain to me again what you – what you're saying about your father and – and his value on what is true, and to know what is true?

A: Yeah. Tha-That is the way he lived.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, it was – yeah. It was complete different.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about when you finished school, how many grades did you go through?

A: Well, the schools, I was finished in the sixth, eighth grade – well, I went – I think that I went 10 – for 10 years to school.

Q: Okay.

A: You know.

Q: And by that time it was what, mid 1930s? Was it like 1937, or 1938? When did – about when did you finish your school?

A: I can't remember.

Q: That's okay.

A: I can't. Don't remember, sorry.

Q: It's okay. But you say you were born in 1922, and if you started when you were five or six –

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: – then 10 years –

A: Yeah, it – yeah, those

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were then about 16 - 17 years old?

A: Sixteen years, yeah.

Q: All right. What – after you finished those 10 years, what did you do next?

A: To look for a job.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of job?

A: Well, I – I started in an bakery **[indecipherable]** yeah, first class bakery.

Q: Okay.

A: And then I g – there was there an – a business where I worked, and that was very particular. You have to be exactly dressed that they wanted be you – you know?

And if the re – customer came, and that was the little **[indecipherable]** well, anyhow. But you have to bow – to bow down for the – for the customers, and so we can – you know, was – really, I could – I – I go there really and **[indecipherable]** sight from what is – what was happening in life **[indecipherable]** my mother

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

[**indecipherable**]. Was very, very very – was very easy to grow up in. But then the war came, and everything was gone. So –

Q: Okay, but still, before the war comes, you learned – it sounds to me like you were trained –

A: Yeah, there – yeah.

Q: – by – by there – of how to behave with customers, and that one had to, you know –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – sort of greet them in a very honorable way.

A: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay, was it hard work for you, or did you like it?

A: No, no, no, no, no, was not hard work, no.

Q: Did you like it?

A: Yeah, I liked it, but I mean, well, then the war started, it was all over. My do – my business was gone, everything was gone, too. I –

Q: You mean the bakery no longer existed?

A: No, it was gone. Bombed [**indecipherable**] bombed down, you know.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. We'll come to that, we'll come to that. Right now I still want to learn a little bit more about what your life was like when you finished school. So you – you started – did you ever work anyplace else, or just at this bakery?

A: No, th-th – no, the different bake – different places, but it was more – oh, after th – after the war.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: I'm talking before the war.

A: Yeah.

Q: And when you fi – after you finished school, did you work in – just in one bakery, or did you work somewhere else as well, before the war started?

A: No. One bakery, I think, yeah.

Q: Okay. Was the bakery in your neighborhood?

A: Oh no, no, no.

Q: Where was it?

A: And I – I have to go on my bicycle to go there, you know, and it was heavy traffic, and –

Q: Was it in the town center?

A: Yeah, it was in – yeah, **Rotterdam** center.



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you get to know any of your customers?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, we don't talk about that, please. There was an old man –

Q: Okay.

A: – and he was apparently very taken with me. I don't know – you know, one time I was – I had the flu, so I was not working, of course. So, and he came every day to drink coffee, because it was so – and, where is she? Is she – no, no, she is sick. And then he found out where I lived. And then he came on the door with a big bouquet of flowers, and a li – bi – box of chocolate, and my mother said, oh no, you cannot see her, because you never know that you get it. Well, anyhow, well, he left it all behind, it was all some for me, and –

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Yeah. That was one that –

Q: That was one, okay. Any other memorable customers, then?

A: Yeah. I can te – but not that me – not that you have contact with them really –

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: – you know?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Were you exposed to a class of people that you didn't – hadn't known about when you were growni – growing up?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were you – did you meet different kinds of people a – who came into the bakery?

A: Oh yes, oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. Very sa – yeah, very nice.

Q: Was it – was the neighborhood where you worked a more well-to-do neighborhood?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: What kind of – where was that bakery located? When you're saying – you said it's in the center of town, and there was a lot of traffic?

A: Yeah, that was in **Rotterdam** –

Q: Uh-huh.

A: – the center of **Rotterdam**, yeah.

Q: So, were there businesses around the bakery?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Oh yes, oh yes, yeah. All gone, of course, after the war.

Q: Yeah.

A: Everything was gone.

Q: But before the war, there were businesses?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And so, were your customers mostly from the businesses, or from people who lived there?

A: Private people.

Q: Mostly private –

A: I think more private people, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And they – they live in mansions. They had plenty of money.

Q: Okay.

A: Because it was an expensive place where I worked.

Q: Was it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it? Tell me, you mentioned before when you were growing up, that – you mentioned it quite strongly that your f – mother was not Christian, but that you went

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

to a Christian school. The people in your neighborhood, were they almost all Christian?

A: Oh no, no. Some were Catholics, what I can remember, but no, it was not so –

Q: Who were some of the people who were you – who were in your neighborhood, the different kinds?

A: That was my – all working class people, you know? That is what I remember.

And – but the mothers all stayed home with the children, I remember that.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were there Jewish families in your neighborhood?

A: No, not in my neighborhood, no. **Rotterdam**, of course, it was all Jewish there.

Q: So, in the center of town, your customers, were they mostly Jewish, or were they

–

A: No.

Q: They weren't?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay. As you were growing up, did you meet any Jewish people?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: So, you didn't know any?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No, I don't – no, I don't remember that, no.

Q: Okay. And, did your parents have any contact with Jewish families, Jewish people?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Okay. Because you attended the Christian school, did it have an influence on you?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: In what way?

A: That was a big – I think that was a beginning for me, from – for the total different life. Not in – not looking at the way my mother thought about things, but – but there was – but there was a God, and we better – you know? And everything, and that – that is what I was taught there.

Q: So, are you a very religious person?

A: Yes, I – yes, absolutely.

Q: Okay. Were you practicing?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So not just that you felt it, but that you participate in a religious community, and services, and things like that.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah, but I – now, with all my trouble, that I can't walk so – you know, we s – we watch television on Sunday morning, and I saw five – five programs every Sunday morning. So –

Q: Wow, that's a lot.

A: It's a lot, yeah.

Q: It's a lot.

A: Yeah, but I mean –

Q: But after – but wa – after you finished school, did you start going to church?

A: Yeah, with the girlfriends, yeah.

Q: With the girlfriends?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Did your mother give you trouble for this?

A: No, my – my father, he made sure that my shoes were polished, before the door, and that was not what I remember, yeah – no.

Q: Can you tell me, what was the denomination? What – what – what religious faith did you belong to, before the war?

A: What was that name now on this? I cannot tell you.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, I have –

Q: So, it was the re – what was the name of your church?

A: I don't know.

Q: I may – mean, your religion. What was the name of your religion?

A: Reformed.

Q: Reformed.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: The Reformed church.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. How did you meet your husband?

A: That was a different story. I work in an business, and his sister worked there too, but she worked on the office side, and I was in the – in the – the – on the counter, let me say. And then it was the – the jubilee in from the queen. That's – it was 40 year queen, I think, or something like it. Well – and everybody, of course, had a date to go, but I didn't have a date, and I was much too young to do that. But I told my father, I told him, I said that I – I ha – I go with **Willy**(ph), and that was his sister's name. And then I – I – I see what comes from it. And my father said, okay, I can trust you, so don't worry. So, when I – then I met him, he came with his sister,

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

also on bicycle, and I thought, oh no, my lord [**indecipherable**] I – and – and then he – he thought the same about me.

Q: Oh yeah?

A: But we were al – alone, because she had the boyfriend, and so on. And there – well, it grew from there, really. But then, of course, with the ha – whole thing in between from the war, you know, you saw each other not many times. And if he came over, after a lot of trouble at his household, because he was not allowed to stay in my house, then I – then he came on a Friday night, or Saturday, and then he stayed over til Sunday night to go home. And then at li – at least, well, you co – could see each other, I know.

Q: So, let me step back a little bit. How old were you when you met your husband?

A: Sixteen.

Q: So, were you still working at the bakery store?

A: No, that was all gone.

Q: Oh, so you – okay. Okay. So, your husband mentioned that before the war started, when you were 16 years old, you left the bakery, is that correct? And you went to work in an office supply store?

A: Yeah, I was there before the bakery. So, of the – when I think about it now, I think, yeah.



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Oh, okay, so you worked at the office supply store before you worked at the bakery?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. And what was your job there?

A: Well, I was called the fluffy.

Q: What's that mean?

A: Yeah, I didn't know what it meant either, but all the horrible little things what the – you know, I had to fix up. And I had other people working behind the counters –

Q: Okay.

A: – but they were much older than I am.

Q: Okay.

A: So I was the youngest one, so I had to do all the miserable things. Make coffee, and bring it by the boss. Oh, and that boss, to tell you, that was a Jew.

Q: So, was this the first time you met somebody who was Jewish?

A: He was Jewish, yeah.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, I know that he must have been – when the war started, that's – he must have been gone, I think that he was killed, yeah.

Q: Okay. And, was this a large organization? Was it a large company?

A: No, no, no, it was –

Q: Just a few people that worked there?

A: Yeah, ye-yeah.

Q: And where was this place located?

A: **Rotterdam.**

Q: Also in the center of town?

A: Yeah.

Q: All right. And was it that your husband's sister worked there?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that's how you met him?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: And after that, is it that you went to the bakery, that you started working at the bakery?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. Why did you leave this place?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay. I mean, young people change jobs.

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Young people change jobs all the time. So you met your husband when you were about 16 years old, before the war. And you gave a sense that his family didn't like him dating you. Is that correct?

A: Yeah, because his father – his mu – no, the father and mother both were Christian Reforms.

Q: Okay.

A: And I was only Dutch Reformed.

Q: And it – what's the difference between the two?

A: Yeah, well if – if you can tell me, then – I cannot tell you, no.

Q: But this means that there must have been something significant –

A: Yeah.

Q: – within – within –

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: The religious business, you know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – oh, it's unbelievable. And they were – he was pretty rough on him, too. Not only on me, but on him, too. He had a –

Q: Your – your father-in-law?

A: Yeah, oh yeah. He came even at our house, and – to tell my father and mother that I could not see him any more, because he was going to the school where he goes at night, and he's – he would sit there til he came out of school, and going home, because then he cannot see me.

Q: That was a lot of control.

A: That was horrible, horrible tur – time was that.

Q: Yeah.

A: But, anyhow –

Q: But you were – you were both young, and it was before the war.

A: Yeah, he was 18 [indecipherable] was 16.

Q: Okay. Okay. When did you marry? What year did you marry, or how old were you when you married?

A: Oh brother, almost – I don't know. Tell hi – ask him, he knows everything, so –

Q: Okay, okay. Okay, we will. We will.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah, he knows everything.

Q: Okay. But was it after the war started, or before the war started? Did you get married before the war s –

A: No, in the war time.

Q: In the war time, okay. Now, you're a teenager, and it is the last years of the 1930s, 1938 and '39. Are people talking about political events in **Holland**?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: What were they saying? What were they talking about?

A: Well, first of all, we got all things in the mail, I think, that you had to make sure that all your windows were black at night, so that not light could shine out – outside, that was the beginning. And that was in 1930 – yeah, eight, nine. And then – so – and then pretty soon, we knew that the – that the Germans were dop – putting bombs down in different pla – store – places. So – and then we thought, oh, it is coming here, it is coming here. And one evening, I was laying in bed, and all of a sudden I thought, what is that noise, or this noise, and there they came, all the bomb.

Q: Was it an airfl – or airplanes that you were hear –

A: Oh yeah, oh, it was unbelievable what happened, and so many people died on – already, in the street, and everywhere. Yeah, that was a very sad time, I can tell –

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: So that was the very first night, you know –

A: Yeah.

Q: – when you're saying – the ver – when they invaded?

A: Yeah. That was the beginning of it, yeah.

Q: So, when you got up the next day, did you already see bombed out places in the streets?

A: No, not yet, not that – not so close by our house. But you know, my mother and father's house was here, right down on this straight line, on – farther up, there was **Waalhaven**, that it was called that way, and that is why they want to do – bomb – bomb, because that is a p – a place what they wanted for their – yeah, you call that to –

Q: What is wal – **Waalhaven**, what was it?

A: Well, that was in – in – **Waalhaven**, that was in – I can't remember. He knows. He knows.

Q: Okay. Was it – was it a particular facility, was it a port, was it a – a –

A: No, no. He – he – he knows it better than I do.

Q: Okay.

A: I was not so –

Q: Okay. So did – but it was a target. It was a target of – of the Germans, okay.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: And when – what did you see in those next couple of days, after the bombing started? What did you see? What could you –

A: Well, I remember that I said to my father, I said, how do I know if my business is still there in **Rotterdam** center? Now my father said, well, step on your bicycle, and I go with you. But then we come by the – the **Maas**, that is an river there, you know? And that, they had lots of bombs hit. So there were – this – the – the places were not [**indecipherable**] but it were little pieces of wood, and that was all put together, and I had to walk about it, to come to the center of town. And then I saw that my business was gone, and I knew the school where he was going at night, to study with something, that was gone, you know, and the – the – the – the people were hanging out the windows, dead. And the mo – most – mostly, I think that it were Jewish people. Because they right away were after the Jews, as you know.

Q: Yeah. So this was – this was after the first night of bombing?

A: Yeah.

Q: You already saw corpses of people –

A: Yeah.

Q: – hanging from windows?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah, yeah. That come – the bombs, they came, and we – the people the – they were maybe sleeping there, because it was a big hotel, and it was terrible.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Terrible, it was.

Q: When did you see the first soldiers?

A: At night already, when it – always – I can still hear that in my hea – in my mind, that boom, boom, boom, boom. The two next to each other, and they passed the houses, to see **[indecipherable]** ou-outside, like you know it was supposed to do.

Q: How did life change for you? How – tell me, how did life change for you? Did you have – clearly, the place you worked was no longer there.

A: No, no. I re – can't remember anything. You know, was unbelievable. This – there was nothing left, I – really. And then where in – where the time goes on and on where you don't have food, and you have no – nothing to drink, and you have nothing, you know.

Q: So the stores became empty?

A: Oh, there was fe – to-totally empty. The big trucks came for the door, and they empty all everything out, yeah.

Q: So, it was a – who were the big trucks from, the Germans?

A: Yeah.



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: So how did people eat?

A: Well, we didn't have something to eat. I mean, it was the craziest things. In the cellar from where we lived – oh no, I have to tell you first, where we married, we married at na – that I stayed in my house, because he was going to **Germany**, because he was picked up. But then, my mother was very smart in that way. I had the – the day after that we got married, I couldn't talk. So my mother la – the doctor came, and the doctor said, well, I think that there is something wrong with her there, so she cannot go to **Germany**, because she will infect all the people there. That was all –

Q: That wasn't true.

A: No. So – so – and then, he came home, the second day after that we were married, and he had erase the papers [**indecipherable**] somewhere, that he could not leave on Monday. On Wednesday we got married, and on Wednesday – no, of satur – Sunday, he had to go to **Germany**. He was picked up for that. But no. He said no, we are not going to do that.

Q: And is that – and did the doctor give you the reason why you weren't going, is because that you had a throat illness?

A: Yeah.

Q: And the doctor was saying that he could get infected?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes, that is ri –

Q: And that this ma – this had – there was some choice in this matter, then.

A: Yeah.

Q: Because some people were picked up on the street –

A: Oh yeah.

Q: – in different countries, and they were just shipped out.

A: Yeah, I know. That was with hi – it was with him too, one time –

Q: Okay.

A: – when he was already married, and he had a lot of money in his pocket, because he was doing a job for his father, and well, that is the way it was. And then somebody else looked on it, saw where they put him. So then I could go to that same lady of the gi – gentleman again. I said, well, we have to get him home. Well, but he – he – he spoke with his eyes [indecipherable] does not say anything, or it had to be German.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so it – he said, he will be home tonight. That was all the [indecipherable]

Q: So this was a guard? Who spoke with his eyes? Who was the person who spoke with his eyes?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: That was an – that was a Dutch man, where he was sitting between all the Germans, who [indecipherable] happen, I don't know, but –

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So that's later on. But those first days of the war, you see these terrible sights, and you no longer have a place to work. What did you si – do? Did you stay at home then, or did you find another job? What happened –

A: No, nothing to begin, because everything was upside-down, you know?

Q: Okay.

A: And when the Germans came, they came in the streets by all of us, a big school. And all this, the seats on – from the kids, were all thrown out in the s – in the – the back, I think. And [indecipherable] the truck came, with all the bedding in it, for the Germans, and they were going to live there. Well, the – and that was almost – that one was so close by.

Q: Is this your Christian school?

A: No, the –

Q: – or was this a different school?

A: There was not a scri – it was in the war, that – there's no school.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: I know. But was this the same school you attended, or was this a different school where they threw the chairs out?

A: That it was different school.

Q: Different school.

A: Yeah.

Q: Different school.

A: Was unbelievable, yeah. And, what it comes from, Father doesn't have cigarettes, and mother le – wants like a piece of chocolate, and we did not have it. So, the Germans had it, so what happened? The – the – that the girls and the boys there, of the girls m-met the Germans, and you can – as a – when I-I think back on that [**indecipherable**] by myself, the guys had all kids from themselves, in **Germany**, of course, and wives, but the way they lived in **Holland**, it was unbelievable. And when the war was over, you know, that the people – the pianos were standing in the street, that the people can dance there, and – and the war was over. But then there came a big, flat truck for the door – by my mother, for the door. And I was by – in her house, for one reason or another, and all the girls who lived with these soldiers, they were all picked up, and all on – on the truck. And the – all their hair was all cut off, a-and in the middle was a **hakenkreuz**, from – you know, and then –

Q: A swastika.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: – the swastika, yeah. Was unbelievable, the craziest things happen in wartime.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: But anyhow, that was their life.

Q: What happened in your family? Did your father still have work when the war started?

A: Yeah, because yeah, because that – his boss, that is a **[indecipherable]** who was more to the German side, I think, he had – for a long time, he had work, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. And then later on was the no – was no work, and there's nothing to eat, and – but we can – what to do, you have to do.

Q: Well, what did you do?

A: I don't know. He came tho – well, he has to walk from his house to our house, and that was at least – well, more than an hour. And then, when he came by us, and because – well **[indecipherable]** a long story, again.

Q: Okay.

A: There come no end from.

Q: That's okay.

A: In the cellar from the house where we lived, for – for five dollars a week, his father, he **[indecipherable]** that – that he could rent it out. And so, then the

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Germans came, and that was a big cellar there, was high. So when the – the trucks go drive in, and they dumped there all kinds of coal.

Q: And this was in your – the place you were living with your husband?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And they – so, and then you could not touch that coal, one – that was for if something happened, you know, that the Germans needed it. And it was that they put some powder o-over it, so that you could not touch it.

Q: So that means – was the powder so that it was bad for the human skin, or was it that they could see somebody had touched it?

A: Yeah, yeah, that's it, yeah. That's –

Q: Okay, what color was the powder?

A: White.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay, like flour.

A: Yeah, something like it, yeah. But yeah, we knew that so many people around us there, were starving, especially the kids.

Q: Yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: So what he – did he do? He dug under the coals, and he could bring back – backs, with coal that – with food for the kids [**indecipherable**] to – to keep them alive.

Q: So how – I mean, are you ti – did his – you get the coal –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and what do you do with it, you trade it for food?

A: No, because the people didn't have anything.

Q: Okay, so then how do you turn coal into food?

A: No, I don't know how th-the – but, well, he – he knows it –

Q: Your husband will be able to tell us, okay.

A: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: But that what he did.

Q: But your father – did your father come to your home, in order to also get some of this coal? Is that –

A: No.

Q: No?

A: Food. He – we had a – a va – a butcher, and a butcher we knew ver – he knew very well, and then he – he saved the – the grease from things, you know?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Yeah.

A: And then **Jan** brought that coal to the butcher, and then he got that stuff, and then he could cook with that, a little bit, but not much, but – and my father came then, and he could give him something to eat, because the man was like a stick.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know?

Q: What about your sister and brother? Your sister was still a little girl.

A: Yeah. But the war was already over, I think, and then my sister went to a f – swi – **Switzerland**, for her health, because it's – sh-she has bronchitis. And so, that is the way it went then.

Q: Was she malnourished during the war?

A: Yeah. But because of that she had that illness, she got something to eat up in a special place. And then, when somebody was not looking, she put o – th-the food in between her clothes, and she could give that to my father, when she came home.

Q: And what about your brother?

A: My – my brother was in – in – immediately in **Germany**.

Q: So how did that happen?

A: Ah, picked up from house, you know, they came my house, in the –

Q: And what – and where was he taken, in **Germany**?



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: I don't know. I don't – forget, I don't know.

Q: Did you get letters from him?

A: No.

Q: You didn't know what had happened to him, only that he was in **Germany**?

A: The only thing that we knew, that was when he was picked up, they were going in a big boat, with the – that boat that was, lots of water in it. So, he stood with his feet to here, in the boat.

Q: Oh my.

A: And that is why he got cancer from, later on at home, because he died from cancer. And that is all from that he, in **Germany** was.

Q: When did he come back, your brother, from **Germany**?

A: The – di – that same man – same man, where we had that contact with, he did always what he could to get my brother back – back out of **Germany**, to our own house. And so, it was not – not [**indecipherable**]

Q: Not – so it didn't – your brother was not in **Germany** for a long time?

A: No, maybe two – two years, I think.

Q: Okay. And did he tell you – when he came back, did he tell you what had – he had – what had been going on with him? Where he was, and things?

A: Yeah, then we heard it.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay.

A: But, that was the way it was.

Q: Well, where – where was he taken to work? Where did your brother go to – where did they put him to work, in **Germany**?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know. Well, it – I think it was making all the – the – not the bombs, ma – something what had to do with –

Q: Weaponry?

A: Yeah, weaponry, yeah.

Q: Okay. And your mother di – did she go outside the house to work once the war started, or she stayed at home, still?

A: No, but she had the – she had very funny ways, how she got little bit of mo – food in.

Q: Okay.

A: And well, was not the honest way, I think, but if you have nothing to eat.

Q: What did she do?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: I don't know. No.

Q: Tell me, when did you s – did you find another job, during the war, when the Germans were there?

A: Yeah, and that was also a place in a bakery.

Q: That's pretty lucky.

A: Yeah. But, it was very funny, all the Germans were sitting there on stools, for coffee in the morning.

Q: Okay.

A: I used to behind the counter, and you have to help them. But my – the boss there, that was a – was for the Germans.

Q: Okay.

A: So, and then he said, well, if you want to go in the back – I said, no thank you. And when my father found that out, he said, forget it, you don't go back.

Q: So, was – if I interpret this, the owner of the bakery was more or less saying that if a German wanted to go in the back of the bakery with you, it's okay with him?

A: And lots of, lots of ladies right there in the back with the Germans. Yeah, that was very nice. Well, the people were starving, from the **[indecipherable]**

Q: And, did you ever become active in any kind of anti – anti-resistan – or resistance movement, or anything like that?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No, no.

Q: No?

A: Him, not me.

Q: Okay. Okay. Did you see Jews being taken away?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, don't talk about that. When they first came, the Germans, and there were big, big **[indecipherable]** and the people have the babies in their arms, and they stood all in a lump **[indecipherable]** one after another. But if the baby started crying, the Germans grabbed him on the legs, on the little baby, and smacked them to the – to the trees.

Q: You saw these things?

A: Yeah, that's – yeah, and it was fla – just by where my mother lived, was a big, open field, and that is where they did these things. Was terrible. And then the screaming from the parents, I never forget it. They have – you left your babies there, and you are put in an – it was terrible, absolutely terrible. Yeah, it was life, you know. And all these things came back during the night, that I thought, oh yeah, I remember. Oh, remember, don't forget, don't forget.

Q: Yeah.

A: Mm.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Yeah. I know. I know. It is – there's so much – there's so many different impressions one can have, and in – in an interview, we never can capture all of them.

A: Oh, no.

Q: Don't worry about that.

A: No.

Q: That's okay. As long as we capture some of them.

A: Yeah.

Q: The ones that are the most significant for you, okay? So after – after you came back from the bakery, where the baker would have offered your services to the Germans, and your father said no, no way, what did you do then?

A: I think I stayed home. I think that there was nothing to get, you know, and there wa – oh **[indecipherable]** or another thing, that's true. I was on my bicycle, of course, and you have to put that in a kind of a garage, it was, and the bike – bicycles were low, and on a shelf. And the man who **[indecipherable]** your bicycle out, he was a very tall fellow. So – and there was an guy there, and he wanted to take with me, but I – he get – he got my bicycle. So I came for my bicycle, and the man said, your bicycle is already picked up. And then he made with his eyes, so it looked to me, and I thought, oh no, and I stood with my bicycle, and I had to walk for a long

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

time, talking and talking and talking to him. And then, of course, my – my German was much, much better to speak to him. And then I found out that his father and mother had an – an stocking fac-factory, and he was the only son. So – and when he came home, then he was going to work there again. But I could not get [indecipherable] to let them know that maybe that was not there any more.

Everything was bombed flat, the address as well. And that why the Dutch pe – th- the English people [indecipherable] and Dutch people, too. And they were overseas, all in **England**. And –

Q: This was a German soldier?

A: Yeah.

Q: He – and he liked you, so he took your bicycle.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so, his family owned a stocking factory.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you're thinking to yourself, it might be bombed by the British, and the Dutch, as well?

A: Yeah, but – but they did not believe that. And I said to him, said, now we go closer by my house. I said, please give my bicycle, except my father murders me.

Q: Yeah.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: And I – I – you – you – you could not say to him because he hates the Germans.

And in o – we – were called in **Holland**, we called them the **rotmoffer**(ph).

Q: **Rotmoffer**(ph).

A: **Rotmoffer**(ph).

Q: Okay, what does that mean, **rotmoffer**(ph)?

A: Well, that was – I don't know. Ger – German – Dutch word.

Q: Okay.

A: But anyhow, I – I'm glad that it was over. Finally I had my bicycle, and I could  
ri-rive – drive home.

Q: Okay.

A: And then I – I watched it, and he stood there, up until he could not see me far  
away, and then he turned around, and he had to walk where he had to go, I don't  
know.

Q: So, he had taken your bicycle so – as an excuse to meet you.

A: Must have been that, yeah, must have been something like it.

Q: Were you married at that point?

A: Oh no, no.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: No.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Did you – were you involved, at any point, with the rescue of any people? With the rescue of any Jews in **Rotterdam**?

A: No, not me. He – he was, but not me.

Q: I see. How did you spend the rest of the war? Did you work anywhere else, outside of that bakery?

A: No, no, no, no. And that not alone, you have no lights. So when it was winter, and it was four o'clock that it was dark, where do you go?

Q: Yeah.

A: So, and in the beginning, my mother had candles, and so on. But then there was nothing left, so most of the thing is – what you did, you went to bed.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. That's **[indecipherable]**

Q: Did you – did you ever meet people who were part of the resistance movement?

A: Oh yes. Afterwards for sure.

Q: After the war?

A: Yeah. And also during the war, yeah.

Q: And during the war?

A: Yeah. Well, and he – he **[indecipherable]**



**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. I understand. We'll talk to him. But who were the – did you get involved with any of their activities?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: That – that was all secret. Everything was secret, you know? No.

Q: But you knew that they are part of the resistance?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: How would you know, if somebody doesn't tell you? Or did they tell you?

A: I don't know how I knew it, but I knew it.

Q: You knew it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Are there any other memories of the war, that you remember, that you think is important for people to know about? Of what it was like to live in occupied

**Rotterdam?**

A: Well, first of all, we got – you did not have food. That was point one. And then second, sometimes there was not water. And then – I said to him, what are we going to wash our clothes in?

Q: You're talking about your husband? You asked your husband?

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah, when – when – when were we married. Well, we did not have soap, we did not have this, we did – so I don't know what we did. And we laugh about it now. He said, oh, maybe I changed my underwear. And you – and then I said no, you can keep it for so long. Oh, man, was unbelievable. That were the terrible things, yeah.

Q: Was there fighting going on in **Rotterdam** itself, as the Germans were losing the war?

A: When they were leaving?

Q: Yeah, when they were leaving.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was there fighting?

A: No, the people were much too scared from the German, because right away – the one time, was – they were looking at the houses everywhere, while we were already married.

Q: Okay.

A: And he had washed the floor from the whole building there, because there was a theater in that, where we lived. So in there, this Germans came, with those girlfriends, so [**indecipherable**]. But then somebody, they – they screamed at him, **Jan**, stop it, go inside. The Germans are on the way to pick you up. So anyhow, he

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

came inside, and what are we going to do now? They saying, you have to change your clothes, put your pajama on, and put a little pra – things by his bed. And I says, we – we wait and see what's going to happen. Well, not too long after that, it was out here that they knocked on the doors. But we lived on the top of a store. The bottom was completely empty, we had to go steps to go upstairs. And he said, well now what? They said, you stay here, we see what comes from it. And there I opened the door, and then the soldier was right away sent upstairs to check on the closets and blah, blah, blah and talk to him. But by me downstairs, where I stood, the other one had all the time his rifle on my head. Because if I would have lied, I was get killed there, on the –

Q: Wow.

A: You know? And – but the man came down, and he must have told him that – because what – what is the – the matter with him? He say, I have the **maagzweer**.

Q: So this is a stomach –

A: Sick.

Q: – stomach sick.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Or something. And then, when it was finished, he saw that all the people [indecipherable] over the stores lived, they were all picked up, he said, now look, all the people are going, I should go, too. I said, no sir. You don't go.

Q: The Germans said this to him?

A: No, I said that to him.

Q: Oh.

A: Because the Germans went house to house, and all these stores were empty, but the people lived on top still there.

Q: So they were emptying it out. They were empty –

A: Every, oh, yeah, oh, yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: Which army liberated you? Which army liberated **Rotterdam**?

A: I think, I think the e – the English, I think. Because the English also threw out of their planes, food. And the people were fighting over that food in the street everywhere.

Q: Did you ever catch one of those packets?

A: I can't remember. I can't rem – so long ago.

Q: When did you know that you were free?

A: On – on that – the noise from the people. You have never heard in your life so much noise, that everybody came out their houses, and the pianos [indecipherable]

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

the people there, they were sat in the street, and there was dancing, and oh, it was unbelievable.

Q: But how did you know? I mean, how did you know the Germans had left? Did a new army come in?

A: No, they came no –

Q: Did you see British soldiers?

A: No, no, there were no other, it was – no, I don't know **[indecipherable]**

Q: Okay. You just –

A: But we knew that we were free. But yeah. And now you have to wait, where me – when is the food coming, you know.

Q: And did it come?

A: Yeah, partly. Yeah, partly. Because, I remember in 1947, our oldest daughter was mar – was born. And there was a just a time that the bananas came back. And he said, can I have a piece of the banana? I said, no, sir, it's for the baby. No. No.

Q: So, many, many years before fruits like that appeared again.

A: Oh, yeah, they – long, long time.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, it was not so easy.

**Interview with Jacqueline Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add to what we've talked about today, that you think people should know about, about your experiences during the war?

A: The story is too long. Can you sit here tomorrow?

Q: I'll be happy to be here, let me tell you.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, he has what to tell you too, so –

Q: Okay. Well, in that case, what I will say is, this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mrs. **Jacqueline Hieminga** –

A: **Hieminga**.

Q: – **Hieminga**, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in **Nashua, New Hampshire**.

A: Mm-hm, that's it.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Well, you're welcome.

Q: Okay.

**Conclusion of Interview**