

Put in a new tape, and then go on again.

OK, oh, I wanted to make a tape of it myself. And my tape recorder is up there.

I thought you should be able to start and--

OK, let's begin.

Well, my name is Ann van Schagen and right now I'm living in Vandalia, Ohio. I was born in Holland. And in 1940 I was married, and I had a husband and a little boy, 1 and 1/2 year old. And then of course in 1940, the war broke out.

And we didn't expect it that soon. We did expect it in a little bit, but not that soon. And one morning, we woke up and then the airplanes were going over the house. And we run to the window, and we hear all the shooting, and saw all the planes and the paratroopers, what came down and was shot up, which was a terrible sight, of course. And from then on, we had a very, very hard time.

Because for five days, the Dutch people try to save the country, and they were fighting very hard. And, of course, the Germans were so much bigger, and so many more people that we didn't have a chance. And we still kept on trying for five days. And then after five days, the Germans said, well, if we were going to keep on fighting, then they would start bombing all the big cities.

And they started right away with the city of Rotterdam. And that's where I was born. And of course, then we had to quit, because that cost too many people's lives. And we just had to quit. So that meant that we were under the Germans. And this is very hard if you are a good Dutchmen to have to become a German, which is your enemy.

And at first, it was very hard. Because they took everything-- food and materials, everything they took away right away. And there was hardly nothing what you could buy in the store right away. And they also took all the food. They told the farmers that they could have about so much for each family, the stuff what they made, what they grow on the farm. And then after that, the rest was for Germany.

And of course, this was very hard. Because the people in Holland, they didn't get very much. And this went on for a couple of years. And it got worse and worse. And, of course, you couldn't buy any clothes. Everything was on stamps. And it was after two years, it was so bad that then they said we were going to have to bring our radios to a certain point in the city. And everybody had to do that.

The reason for that was that did not want the people to know what was really going on. But in England, that's where the queen and her whole family went to when the war started, they gave in Dutch all the news. But they, the Dutch people had to know. And the Germans didn't want us to know that.

But we just had a new radio. And my husband was very, very honest. And he will do anything. But he said that radio is not going out of my house. We keep it. And he hid it in some place. So once a week. We could hear all the news from what was going on. And then they told us several times that there were so many Jews going to be picked up and brought to the gas chambers.

And I felt so bad. Everybody felt bad about it. But they felt, you couldn't do anything about it. But my husband and I, we had a very wonderful life. And we had that little baby. And we really felt very rich together. We were very poor, because not of money, but you couldn't get anything. And I asked my husband. I said, do you think we can get maybe even one Jewish person in the house?

Because at least we can do something. And we did have a big house, so we could do it. So my husband said, well, if you want to do that, you have to realize that if you do it, if they find them, they take you, and me, and our baby. And you have to realize that.

And I said, well, I do. But of course, I was fairly young. I was maybe 23, 24 when this happened. But I thought, well, that we should do that. And so I had friends, and they were in the underground. And they came over to my house quite often. So one time, I told her, I said, you know. I think we would like to do something.

And she said, oh good. She said, well, I tell them. So then the next day already, a lady came over, and came to ask if we would like to take a girl. And we said, yeah. That we would do it. And so this girl came to our house. And she was a very beautiful girl, and everything worked out fine. But of course, you are in fear all the time. And after she was at our house for about three months, she got very sick.

And we had to have a doctor. But how can you get a doctor if you don't know if he is right. He might sympathize with the Germans, because that happened a lot of times. That's something you can't understand, how anybody can sympathize with the enemy. You know? But it happened. So but my husband went our own family doctor, and he said he was, thank God, he was a good person. And he said, well, I come. But I come in dark. Because otherwise your neighbors might think that you are sick or your husband. And nobody was supposed to know that we had somebody in the house.

So he came over. And she was very sick. She needed antibiotics. And so the doctor gave the antibiotics to us. And so when she got better, she said, Anna, did I talk. And I said, yeah, you did. Because she was very delirious before she got the antibiotics. And so I said, yeah. You did. She said, what did I say? And I said, well all kinds of things. I don't really know.

And she said, if this happens again, you have to promise me one thing. I said, what's that? She said, you have to roll me in a blanket, and put me on the back seat of a bike. And that was the only transportation we had, and bring me to the Canal, and drop me there. Because there was no route for a casket for anybody. But for Jewish people, especially you couldn't tell anybody.

So I had to promise her that. So we did. And shortly after that, one little boy in our street passed away. And the parents were so upset, and they were telling us if we should have a casket to bury him in. But they had to do the same thing. And of course, roll them in a blanket and put them under the dirt. And that must be the hardest thing to do.

And so we had friends. And they offered their mahogany cabinet. And then they could make, if they knew a carpenter that could make a nice casket, then they would give that cabinet. And we had two friends a father and a son. And they were cabinet makers. And they could make a beautiful casket, they said. They worked a day and a night. And they made a beautiful casket for this nine-year-old boy.

And of course, you can never give the life back. But at least it softens the sadness a little. And then after three more months, this first girl, her name was Susan, she decided that she wanted to try to go to England. And sometimes, you could do that if you paid a lot of money. Then somebody would help you to get in England, to England. But many times, they got caught. And later, after the war, we heard she was caught, and she never made it alive.

So then after she was gone, the next day this lady came again. And she asked, would we take another girl? And we said, yeah. That was OK. I was pregnant at that time from my daughter. And so she came in our house. And her name was Mata. And well Mata and my husband and I, we had a very, very good friendship, real friendship we built up. And she was there during the birth of my daughter. And then we did send out little cards that were birth announcements.

And so that's how it looks like. And we sent one to all our friends, and also the friends what were in the underground. And he got one, and his fiancée got one. And after my daughter was born then, about five weeks later, this friend of mine, Mimi is her name. She was in the underground. And she said, Anna, we can't find Richard no place.

And I said, well, maybe he's hiding because they are finding out that he is working for the underground. And she said, yeah, but then he could let me know. And I said, yeah, but maybe just let's wait a little bit. And well for weeks, we didn't hear anything. And then all of a sudden, I got a letter, or we got a letter. And there was a little note and it said. I found this beside the railroad. And thought maybe you would like to have this.

And because of the address, what is on this card, they send it to us. And on the back of this little card, it said dear Mimi,

I am on transport to Dachau. Be strong. I love you very much, Richard. So then we knew where our friend was. And she knew that, too. And of course it was a very hard time for her too.

So but then the time got so bad, because we didn't have any electricity, and we didn't have gas. We didn't have coal for two years. Just imagine, without coal. We were sitting with blankets around us, and we were going to bed early, and getting up late. Because it was cold, just like here in the winter, and no heat.

And, of course, you could do something sometimes. And like if you knew where a train stopped, sometimes those trains they make new fire in the tanks. And then they take stuff out. And then we went there. And then we tried to pick all the little coal up. And then my husband had made, and everybody else had that too, a 3-pound coffee can, more or less that size. And that open on the top. And it had little holes on the bottom. So then they would put a little paper in there. My husband would do that. And then put some little wood in there. And then we would cook whatever we would have.

In this case, I went out several times on my bike. And then we went to the farmers, say from here till Tipp City or Troy, and then ask the farmers if we could find some wheat, after they harvested, that we could pick up the wheat what was left. And sometimes they said yes. But sometimes there were so many people. And then they say no, we have enough. You go to someplace else.

Sometimes you have to go to five or six. But you always found something. And then you have to go very far for it, of course. And then we would pick all day. We would pick up, and we had a pillowcase with us. And then we would pick up the little wheat things, and put them in the pillow case. And then you had half a pillowcase full by nighttime. And then we would go home.

And my friends what was living beside me, she always went with us. And maybe you think why didn't her husband go. But if the young men, under 40 were on the street, they would just come around with a paddy wagon, and pick them all up and bring them to Germany. So I didn't want that to happen to my husband, and she didn't either. So we did all those kinds of things.

And then when you came home, then we would sit by the table. By the light of one candle, because that is the only light, we got a little bit of oil a month. And you had a little flutter in there. And that was all the light. But then all day and all night, we would pick out all the kernels. And then my husband would grind it through the coffee grinder. And from that we made our breakfast, put water on that little stove. And then that was boiling we would put wheat, the ground wheat in there, and stir it.

Now, they probably will put it behind wallpaper. But of course at that time we ate it, and we were happy with it. Because it felt at least you had something in your stomach. And you did hardly never have to cook, because we had to eat from the field kitchens. So once a day, you could get to the field kitchen. And you got so much for so many people.

And so--

But you were feeding more people than they knew about. You had someone else there that they didn't-- so you had to share it.

Yeah. Well, but if you did have one or two people, then the underground took care of it, that you got for that one or two people that much more. You see? But it was never enough, see? We got a half a loaf of bread a week, a portion. That was all you got.

Well, that is not very much for a whole week. And if you don't have anything else, not butter, no cheese, nothing. So that is-- you just can't imagine how it is. And then, of course, by using the wood for those little stoves, people all run out of wood. And we started taking-- everybody else did. We were not the only one, take the shelves out of cabinet, make little pieces of wood from that, and burn that. But that goes fast if you use it every day.

And when that was all gone, we went to take the banister off around the stairway. Well, whatever you could find, and you could do without, my husband made little pieces, and then we could use that. And one night, my neighbors just was

going to have a little baby. She got the baby. And of course, to go and get the midwife, because that's what you had there, you didn't go to hospital. Then he got a permit to go out during the night on his bike to get the midwife. And she would come on her bike to the house.

And I was supposed to stay with my friend. And then that baby was born by the light of a candle, because that was the only thing we had. Everything we had to do with the light of that one candle.

Stop right there.

OK.