

And we knew that was happening. You must help. Some place I'd like you to-- remember what you said here, how you felt. At some point, maybe toward the end--

Tape is rolling.

So when those people went away, you can understand how tense we were. And we were tense for four years, because in the whole neighborhood where I lived, there were about 200 people living there. And I am not sure, but I'm almost sure that we were the only ones that did have Jewish people in the house. And of course, nobody was supposed to know that.

But we did have very, very good neighbors, and we told them, because somebody had to know in case there was a raid, so that they could bring our little boy to my father and mother, and later, our two kids. If something would happen, if they had a chance, they would bring the kids to my father and mother, if they would take us. And of course, had they found those people, then they would have taken us too. But thank god that didn't happen.

And so also, before the war started, the people didn't go to church hardly. The churches were empty, and there was not-- there were not very big churches with a lot of people. But we did have, when we were younger. And then, the longer the war was going on, the more people went to church, because they probably felt that was their only way out.

And then, when it was the last Christmas, we wanted to have a service in the church, and we did have a real big church. And all the people would come in the morning. But we wanted an evening sermon so bad.

And so they asked the farmers to bring their stable lanterns. And we had about 10 or 12 stable lanterns in that real big church. And that's not very much light. But we did sing all the songs what we knew by heart.

And the people were even standing outside. That was the Christmas before we got freed. And that was a wonderful experience to be there with all those people.

And then, in February in '45, Lisa, the mother of this little girl, she decided she wanted to go to a fortune teller, because she wanted to know if her little girl was still living. And we knew already then that the war wouldn't be that long anymore, because half of Holland was taken already. And we were in the half what was still under the Germans.

So she couldn't go on the street by herself. So I told her not to do it. But I did, because I didn't really believe in it.

And she said, well, I'm going. I am going to do it. You tell me where I can find one. I said, no, I'll go with you.

So I went with her. And of course it was always walking, about half an hour with her, to where the fortune teller was leaving. And when we came there, we didn't talk to anybody. It was only she and me. And there were two other people in the room. But we didn't talk.

And when we came in there, this man looked at her, and he looked at me. And he didn't know me. And we sat down. And he said-- for a while he was quiet. His eyes closed.

And then he said, I see a little girl about seven years old, and she is jumping rope. And Lisa almost jumped for joy, because she was still living.

And then he said, and wait. I see a man. And he is in a carpenter business. And then she was even more happy, because her husband and her girl were still living, and hoping that it wouldn't be too long anymore before the war was over.

She went home, and she was so happy. She cried, and she really believed.

And I said, Lisa, maybe it is not so, and just don't have your hopes too high. But she did have her hopes high.

And then, in May, it was so far, that we were so hungry. Everybody was really thin. And we were really on our rope end.

And then, the Americans came. And I will never forget that. I will forever be thankful to the Americans for doing this, because we went outside, and we saw all those planes. And they dropped those big packages down. And there was white bread in there, and dried eggs, and milk, and everything.

And we just couldn't believe it. And it was wonderful. It was really, really wonderful. And up till today, I always think about that time, and about all the lives the Americans gave for us in Holland.

And of course, then we came to America, and we are Americans now-- proud Americans, and very happy to be an American.

Then we got, after a couple of years-- well, a couple of years-- the one Dutch lady, the one Jewish lady, Meita, she went to Israel. And she had this-- she sent us this. And she had a tree planted in our name, which was very nice of them to do that.

And just a couple months ago, I got this note. And I cannot read it very well, but maybe you want to read it for me, because this--

"Dear Mrs. van Schagen Proper. I have the pleasure to inform you that the special commission for the designation of the righteous at its session has decided to confer upon you and your husband Cees its highest expression of gratitude, the title of Righteous Among the Nations. This honor entitles you and your husband to a medal and a certificate of honor, and the privilege of having a tree planted in your name at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. These awards will be subsequently forwarded to you at a later date.

Please accept our congratulations and best wishes." And it is signed by the director of the Department for the Righteous of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, Israel.

OK.

Roland, I'd like to insert just one thing for her. Can she say it now, and then it'll be-- you'll do it? Or should we just--

Pause tape.