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Eline Hoekstra

Interviewee: Eline Hoekstra in Portland, Oregon
Interviewer: Eric Harper for the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center (assistants Susan Newman and Lanie Reich)
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Harper: Could we begin by you telling us your name, your maiden name, the date and place of your birth?
HOEKSTRA: My name is Eline Hoekstra. My maiden name is Dresden, like the city in Germany. I was born the 4th of January, 1923, in The Hague in the Netherlands.

Harper: Who made up your household growing up?
HOEKSTRA: It consisted of my parents, two brothers, and a sister. I was the youngest. I had a sister who was six years older, and two brothers who were seven and eight years older than I, so I was a latecomer.

Harper: Tell me something about your parents.
HOEKSTRA: They met in Amsterdam. They were both children of people who were in the diamond business. I think they were not necessarily diamond traders; they were cutters. So they knew each other's families, grew up together, and met and married. They didn't have children for four or five years. My father studied in Delft, which was a technical university. When they got married they went to — I think my father's first assignment was in Prague or something, then they went to Switzerland, and then they came back to Holland and settled. He worked for a machine factory in Hengelo in Holland, and they started to get a family. By the time I was born, he was a professor in Delft, where he had studied turbines. I was born there while he was teaching in the technical university in Delft, and we lived in The Hague.

Harper: What was his name?
HOEKSTRA: His name was Daniel Dresden, and my mother's name was Meintje [laughs] — it's a very Dutch name — Meintje Stralitski, so they were obviously from Russian descent on her side. I don't really know how many generations ago. It was probably two or three generations. And my father probably was from East German background. We were in The Hague for several years. I moved from there when I was five to Utrecht, which is in central Holland. My father then was president of a factory of turbines and other big machinery. From there is where we ended up in the Holocaust situation.

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Harper: Do you remember your grandparents?
HOEKSTRA: Very much. Yes.

Harper: Can you tell me a little bit about them? Where they were from? What they did for a living?
HOEKSTRA: My grandparents both were in the diamond business, mainly cutters. One set of grandparents on my father's side, the Dresdens, lived in Amsterdam when I knew them. His name was Abraham and her name was Sarah, I think. I'm not sure. They were rather jolly people and not very religious. They had some traditional types of things they did, but I don't believe they were traditional. My parents, however, married in shul because they wanted to make it possible for their children to be able to be members. Now I don't think that's even necessary, but at the time it was.

My grandparents from my mother's side, the Stralitskis, were tiny people. He was a frustrated artist. He would have liked to be a painter, but his father and mother thought he should be in the diamond business, so he was. Later, when he was in his early 70s, he had a little place in the house where he painted billboards for cinemas. At the time they had billboards instead of the normal lights, advertising they had. My grandmother was very artistic also. She sang. She played the piano. She had rheumatism, so her hands were all cramped up, but she played the piano anyway. She was a fun type of person.

They lived in The Hague when I knew them, so from Amsterdam they moved to The Hague. They later lived with us, when the Germans had occupied Holland. We were able to go to Utrecht, where we lived at the time, instead of having to go to Amsterdam. For several months it was kind of a postponement of the misery. So they lived with us in our home for a little bit. Then they had to go on a transport, and we didn't see them.

Harper: Tell me exactly how your family supported itself financially?
HOEKSTRA: The family of my father?

Harper: Your immediate family.
HOEKSTRA: During the war? Or my family?

Harper: Before the war.
HOEKSTRA: I was still living at home in my parents' house. My father at the time was president of that machine company and lost his position, of course, immediately after the Germans came in, within half a year.

Harper: He was a president of a factory?
HOEKSTRA: He was the only Jew there and had to step down. Then we lived off of some money that he had. Most of the money, of course, was taken by the Germans.

Harper: Would you say your family was working class?

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HOEKSTRA: I think they were a little bit more on the intellectual side, and that will come up later in my story. They were upper middle class.

Harper: Did your mother work?
HOEKSTRA: No, my mother didn't work. It was not only that *she* didn't work, but in general, women in those years in Holland did not work. You lived on the income of what the man made, and if you didn't make that much then you saved money in the house and you made your own clothes, that kind of thing. My mother never really worked; she volunteered for things, which was common to do.

Harper: Like what?
HOEKSTRA: Now you would call it victims' assistance. She visited some victims, and she also visited the perpetrators in jail, and then they tried to make them better and make them all happy and all that kind of thing. It was kind of amateur psychological work that she did. It was not uncommon for the women of the upper middle class to do that kind of thing, to volunteer their services.

Harper: You said your father moved the family. Was that because of his job?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, he taught in Delft since 1923. I was born there, in The Hague. Then in 1928 he repeatedly insisted on having his own laboratory for his graduate students. They said there was no money. He said, "Okay. If I don't get a laboratory, then I'll just move. I'll go away." So then he accepted the job of the machine factory in Utrecht, which meant we had to move to Utrecht.

Harper: So part of his position was being the president as well as being a teacher?
HOEKSTRA: No. At that time he left the technical institute and went to Utrecht to take the position in private practice as the technical director of that factory. He kept that position until the Germans made him step down. He survived the war, both of my parents did, and he came back and then accepted another position in Delft, again with the technical university, in the quality of an aeronautics engineer. So he came back to academia later.

Harper: Was your family active in the Jewish community?
AIGNER: They were. As a matter of fact, my father did some work for Palestine — at the time it was called Palestine — they had some problems with machinery, and he advised them. I was quite young at the time, wasn't that involved. I went to Purim and things. We as a family were not active; it was mainly that he was active as a technical advisor to Palestine. I remember that they sent an enormous crate of beautiful oranges because they were so grateful he did that.

Harper: Do you know how he got involved doing that?
HOEKSTRA: I don't know how he got involved. Probably through his technical function and the fact that he was interested in the Jewish life, but they were not religiously educated very well. In other words, we didn't have Shabbat or anything like that at home. We were very assimilated. Many of the Jews in Holland were very assimilated. Particularly if you go into the intellectual area, there usually

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was assimilation to a great extent.

I was *aware* always that I was a Jew, not only by the fact that I know that my father did things for the Jewish community and Palestine, and sometimes we did something for the Jews called the Jewish *radt*. How would you say? The Jewish community type of thing. He was a little active in that by gifts and some volunteer work. I was aware through that, that I was a Jew, but mainly also because in school they still — I wore glasses already. You were always kind of pestered, and they called you a "Jew with glasses" or whatever. There was a trend of antisemitism always there, but it was more or less on a joking basis. They didn't beat you up at the time.

Harper: Beyond your father helping some organizations, was he an actual member of any Jewish communal organizations?
HOEKSTRA: Not to my knowledge. No.

Harper: How about your mother? Was her volunteer work with any Jewish organizations?
HOEKSTRA: Not particularly. It came down to the fact that there were probably more Jews that she tried to help than others, except that the Jews usually weren't much in the area of crime. There weren't as many Jews that were in trouble, but yet her interest was towards that type of thing. Maybe because somehow you are just drawn, for some idiotic reason, to Jews; you feel a kinship. Even now I have this. I can always pick out a Jew, I think, and I feel some kind of a common thread. It's very hard to define what it is. I think many of their friends were Jews, not because they wanted Jewish friends, but that's how it came out.

Harper: You said your family wasn't very religious, but . . .
HOEKSTRA: No.

Harper: But what did your religious observance consist of?
HOEKSTRA: The biggest influence that I was under was the one from my father. My mother was very interested in all kind of religions. She used to have several Bibles on her nightstand, and she found it all very interesting. My father was mainly the one who gave me my feelings about what religion is all about. It was very simple. He promoted the idea of the Ten Commandments. That was what he lived by, or tried to, and that's how he taught us children, to live by the Ten Commandments as much as you can. He said, "If you have any energy, or if you do it all perfect and you have energy left over, then go and love your neighbor. But if you do the Ten Commandments, then you have done well." That's something that's permeated all of my life, and that's the kind of thing that I got mainly from my father. I was more drawn to that attitude than the one of my mother.

Harper: Was your family members of a synagogue?
HOEKSTRA: No, they were not.

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Harper: Did you ever go to the synagogue?

HOEKSTRA: Yes. I attended weddings. Some of the other members of my family, cousins in Amsterdam, children of my father's brothers, they married in the shul, and so I went to that. And I went to some other observing kinds of things, more because I went with my friends rather than that I was a member at all.

Harper: I remember you telling me your father's parents weren't religious, but were your mother's parents religious?

HOEKSTRA: No. But they always had matzahs with [laughs] Easter, and I do still. They didn't eat pork, not particularly because it was so much against the religion, but probably it was a leftover of their parents who maybe were religious. It was a style of living they had, but I don't believe they were religious. I wouldn't classify them like that. No. They felt very Jewish though. People never understand what you mean by that. They felt Jewish, but they were not religious.

Harper: Can you tell me a bit about your neighborhood?

HOEKSTRA: The neighborhood I lived in? From The Hague I remember vey little because I was five. By the way, I didn't go to Jewish schools; I went to Montessori schools. That was a typical thing everybody loved. That was a big mistake, in my opinion, because we were all very much individualists, and so they didn't have to activate that very much [laughs]. I went to Montessori school in Utrecht, and I absolutely didn't fit in anywhere else. Neither did my brothers. They went to Montessori school until it was high school time. This is side information. We went to Utrecht, and they were, as I said, older than I was, so they were high school age. There was no high school Montessori education, so they came in high school and they absolutely didn't fit in. They were kicked out of school. They didn't do their work because it didn't fit in their schedule, and they didn't agree with the fact that they had to do history because they much rather would do math. Basically, the education was too much individualized. Now what was the question? I got sidetracked.

Harper: If you can't remember The Hague that's fine, but can you tell me . . .

HOEKSTRA: Utrecht I can remember.

Harper: Do you remember the name of the street you lived on?

HOEKSTRA: Yes. Burgemeester Reigerstraat. That's a very long name, but I can spell it later for you. I've been back there several times. We lived in the Burgemeester Reigerstraat, which was a beautiful street lined with beautiful trees. It was a huge house, just huge.

Harper: It was a house?

HOEKSTRA: Yes. It was huge. It had marble hallways, parquet floors, four stories, and all that. There was a den downstairs. It was a very big, comfortable house with a big yard. Unusual. Definitely upper middle class at the time. We lived there

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almost until the war started. I think in 1938 we moved from that house to a newer home — this was rather old — in a park, and that was by the Koningslaan, very close in the same area. It was modern. It was a little bit smaller but much more convenient. The first house had a big stove in the middle of the downstairs lounge, and that went with a big pipe all the way through the roof. There was a stairway that went up, a spiral staircase.

And we had personnel; we usually had two live-in maids, and then there was one that came only in the daytime. It was a very comfortable life, but I definitely was not raised to be the type that dropped your clothes in the morning and leave all the junk for the help. I was taught to clean up my own mess, and the work was done by the people who stayed with us. One of those women that stayed with us as a day and night live-in maid helped us tremendously during the war, was one of the righteous people. I'm trying to get the records of that. So I would say that I grew up in a very comfortable way. Twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, we had a seamstress come in to make clothes. It was not rich living, but comfortable.

Harper: Did you have vacations?

HOEKSTRA: Yes. We went to vacation usually to Italy or to Germany — not Germany [laughs], God forbid. We went to *Switzerland* or to Italy. My father had this idea that we shouldn't spend too much money, so we had a car — a big, beautiful, open touring car — but he only insured it during the vacation months. The rest of the time it was sitting on blocks. He bought used cars, and they usually were *miserable*, so we got stuck with a broken axle in the middle of Italy, and we had to put the whole family up for three days in a hotel. He could have bought a new car for what he spent, but he thought that was too luxurious. It wasn't very smart, but we had a lot of fun. And we camped usually. It was not a vacation in hotels; it was always camping, which we all enjoyed. We hiked and did all kinds of things.

The last vacation we had was in '39. We had a heck of a time getting home because they start closing borders, and we then realized it was getting pretty sticky. I also had vacations, although I had only one — my brothers and sisters had many more because they were that much older — but as teenagers we were sent to Switzerland, usually for 14 days, to ski. So they did that with me because I was 14, 15, and that was the last time I ever did that. That was just before the war.

Harper: Were you close with your family?

HOEKSTRA: If I was close to my parents?

Harper: Did you have a close family?

HOEKSTRA: Definitely. It was a close-knit family. With the problems that many families had, but it was a close-knit family, yes.

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Harper: Was your neighborhood Jews? Gentiles? Mixed?
HOEKSTRA: Mainly gentiles. Utrecht was not a very high concentration of Jews. The majority of the Dutch Jews lived in Amsterdam.

Harper: Do you know how many Jews lived in your city?
HOEKSTRA: No, I have no idea. It's a very wild guess — between 2,000-5,000 at the most.

Harper: Do you know how many synagogues there were in the town?
HOEKSTRA: I think there were no more than two. That was it. Not very many.

Harper: Can you tell me now about your schooling? From your first schooling until your last?
HOEKSTRA: The Montessori school to begin with.

Harper: You started at the Montessori school?
HOEKSTRA: I started at Montessori when I was about three or four. I hated school because they made noises. They brought me home on my birthday; they sang a birthday song, and I was in tears because I didn't like all these noises they made. I didn't enjoy that. I enjoyed school itself. Then I went to a regular grade school where, of course, I didn't fit in. I was always sent out of class. I was talking before I was asked something, and I didn't stop and giggled and — I was a very difficult student.

Harper: This was a public school you're talking about?
HOEKSTRA: That was a public school, yes.

Harper: Did you go to the public school after you moved to Utrecht?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, that was a public school. There was no Montessori school in our area, so transportation was too difficult to go to another one. Then from the grade school I went to high school. Basically the idea was to go to public high school, to what they called at the time a gymnasium. That isn't to do exercises, but it's where they teach Latin and Greek and the whole thing so you will be prepared for college, for whatever direction you want to go. I flunked the entrance exam for some reason. They all were at the same time, so any other public school was out for me. Then I did an exam for a private school because those were done later. I think they caught all the people that flunked the other one. They caught them. I passed that with flying colors. I don't know why I didn't pass the other.

So I went to a high school where they did *not* teach Latin and Greek, but prepared you for college in general. It was a five-year education. The majority were boys in those kinds of schools. I would think that 85% at least were boys. I was kind of a tomboy. I enjoyed that; it was fun. It was a very non-traditional school. It was a private school where they usually picked up the kids that didn't do well in other schools — in the sense that they were difficult children, they were disrupting classes — and I fit totally in that picture. They also had kids there that came in the middle of the school year from the colonies. That was a

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typical curse we had in Holland. Indonesia was a colony. Suriname was a colony. People came with furloughs in the middle of the year, and the schools didn't accept them, but this school did. They were all oddballs they had there, as a general thing. I enjoyed high school very much; it was fun. I graduated in 1940, *after* the Germans had invaded us.

They attacked Holland the tenth of May, 1940. We were overrun in five days, or four days actually. We surrendered in four days. We had this wonderful idea of stopping the Germans by the old methods that we always stopped enemies with, but that was hundreds of years ago. We inundated the land, picked the dikes, and poked holes in them. We thought, "*That* will keep them from coming." Of course, it didn't; they dropped their parachute troops right over the line. Then not only were those troops there, but they started bombing Rotterdam, and they said, "If you don't surrender, then we'll start bombing Amsterdam and all the other cities." We had absolutely no weapons to speak of; we couldn't do a thing. So we kept them out for four days, and maybe we saved something. It was just enough so they couldn't quite cross the channel to England and do that. We held them up. It was the 14th of May, I think, we surrendered [it was the 15th].

As a matter of fact, we slept for two nights in the factory of my father because we were evacuated from where we lived. They were setting up the cannons in the park. It was a little bit amateurish [laughs] type of stuff. Since everything is so close by in Holland, we saw the burnt paper and everything from Rotterdam that came down in Utrecht, which is about 50 miles away. The wind just carried all that stuff, so we knew things were going on.

After we surrendered, they said everything would stay the same — the government would still be in total power, and nothing would change in our daily lives — which of course they always said. For a while it didn't, and since I graduated from high school I went to college. I wanted to become a doctor, so I enrolled in medical school in 1940.

Harper: In what city?
HOEKSTRA: In Utrecht. It was a big university, medical school.

Harper: In high school were most of your friends Jewish or non-Jewish?
HOEKSTRA: Most of the friends were Jewish. It was just a couple of them. We had kind of a Jewish diagonal in the class, and that was the troublemaking diagonal. I was sitting in the middle of the class, and in the left rear was a girl, Rachel. I forgot her last — I think it was Rachel Cohen. She sat left, and my future husband was sitting in the front on the right side. He was half a Jew.

All three of us always made trouble. We asked questions. We were difficult students, but we were all good students, so they couldn't really do much with us except send us to the principal and give these things home that said, "She was

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difficult again and she really should behave," and all that kind of thing. But we did all right on our final exams, which was a written exam of a week and an oral exam of a week. The final exams were not like you graduate here. You had to prove your knowledge. It was the same thing as the entrance exam to the university; that was accepted as the same thing.

I studied medicine for almost a year in a normal way, but during that year the Germans already started restricting the education of the Jews. You couldn't be in the university buildings; you couldn't attend classes. I think you could still go to high school. You could not go to any kind of a higher education. My husband, being a half a Jew, was allowed to go to an education that you might equate with a junior college. But he actually went to Wageningen [Wageningen University], which was forestry, engineering, and he was kicked out of there at the same time that I was kicked out of the classes in the medical school.

When I was kicked out, I was on very good terms with the professors, and I felt much more at home in the university setting than in the high school setting because it was much more free. They were very nice. They allowed me to study in their offices after hours so that I could still keep up with the studies, thinking, "This war will not last very long. I will catch up, and I will just go right back in with the other students." One thing I remember is that it was very spooky because it was kind of dark, and there was this skeleton standing there — they allowed me to study the bones and all that — but it was really spooky. That lasted for a while, but later they didn't dare to do that anymore. If they caught you, of course the ones they were going to punish were the profs. So the education stopped.

In the meantime, we were kicked out of our house. Within 24 hours we had to be out of our home, one of those all-of-a-sudden things. They stood there with SS by the front door, and a dog and guns, and they said, "You have to be out of here in 24 hours." And it was a big house.

Harper: So what date was this?

HOEKSTRA: It was the end of '41 probably. I have a date somewhere, but I don't know exactly. We were kicked out, and we were allowed to go to another place in Utrecht. We were so optimistic to rent a place, which was Hoswater Street, that we didn't right away have a place. So we stayed with people who we knew were Jews because we couldn't stay with non-Jews; that was already prohibited. We had everything out of the house in 24 hours, but we could not rent a truck — it was very difficult to do that — so all these friends we had, so-called friends, came to help us and said, "I'll take this home for you" and "I'll do this." They had some of the cars or carts or something from the factory. They looked and said, "Oh, I'll take this lamp." "No, that doesn't fit in our house." "Well, I'll take that one." In other words, they were kind of picking things out they liked, and we never got them back. Those were very wonderful friends.

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Harper: Can I interrupt you?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, sure.

Harper: I want some more detail here. When did you first hear about Hitler?
HOEKSTRA: We knew about Hitler since '34, '35. I have to interject that we definitely had some contact with the Jewish community even though we were not so active. We had two little girls in the house in '38, '39 that came from Poland. They were put on a train by their parents, hoping and praying that they were coming somewhere where it was safe. Jewish little girls. I think they were either six and eight, five and seven, something like that. They were somewhere in a Jewish orphanage, and people were asked if maybe they wanted to take them in. So we took these two girls in, and they were with us for maybe a year, not quite a year. It must have been late '39 that we had them because we had them for maybe a half a year. Anyway, the Germans took Holland and then very quickly decided those kids couldn't be with us, and they had to go in an orphanage again. And from the orphanage they started sending those kids away very quickly.

We were very well aware of Hitler because many, many German Jews came to Holland for refuge. As a matter of fact, they came to Holland and we had a camp for them — which was the camp I ended up later in — which was called Westerbork. That was made in order to catch and provide these people with some housing, so there were barracks. From there they were then sent to families, or maybe they got a job, but that camp was originally built to help these refugees. So we were very well aware of Hitler. Many of my family, the brothers of my father and a sister, were all living in Amsterdam, where they were much more aware of the problem than in Utrecht, where there were very few Jews. In other words, you didn't contact that many of your friends and say, "Did you hear this?" There was much more fear and upheaval in Amsterdam, and they were debating whether they should maybe go to the States, because they had some family in the States.

Harper: Your parents were?
HOEKSTRA: No, my family. Brothers of my father and a sister. And the typical thing happened there like in many of the places. They had a comfortable living situation. The Germans were not in Holland and we never thought they would be, and they said, "If you leave, you have to give everything up that you have here and disrupt your family. It couldn't be that bad. Let's see how things go." Of course, then by the time things were really bad they couldn't go, which was a very typical thing that happened.

Harper: Did your family ever discuss leaving?
HOEKSTRA: No, they didn't because my father had a very strange optimism. He never thought the Germans would be as bad as other people said they would be. Then when we were already occupied by the Germans, there was hardly a way to get

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out. He always had the idea that it wouldn't be very long. The war would be over in a year. Especially after Pearl Harbor, he said, "Now it's a matter of months. You'll see."

He had been in America many times, in 1914 as a matter of fact. I almost was born here because he had a job offer then. Sent my mother a telegram to come over with the other kids who were born earlier, but she never got the telegram, so he decided that she probably didn't want to come to the States and came back home. But he thought America was really the place to go. So he contemplated, "If America will be in it with all their might, it will not take more than half a year. These Germans won't be able to do anything." Of course, it took years after that. He never really had the idea of leaving, and by the time he would have the idea of leaving, in fact you couldn't get out. As a matter of fact, one of my aunts, his sister, was at the harbor in Amsterdam to get out, but they didn't make it. They were just too late.

Harper: The refugees coming in, what did people think about their stories?

HOEKSTRA: They thought they were just a little too scared. Many of them you didn't meet because they were in this camp that we built in order to help them, and many of them who were then sent to families ended up in Amsterdam, and we didn't have many contacts in Amsterdam, so we didn't talk to them much. While they were there, the Germans came in, in 1940, so you didn't have much contact at all. You were just thinking that they were maybe overdoing it. It probably was bad, but maybe not *that* bad. We thought they were actually seeing spooks kind of. It wasn't all that terrible as they thought it would be. That's what we all thought. Nobody ever had the idea how horrible it would be.

Harper: You said your husband. Did you get married at this time?

HOEKSTRA: Well, it's interesting because he was a half a Jew. We were engaged in 1940, right after we graduated, and wanted to become married. Then we found out you couldn't marry because a Jew could only marry a Jew. Half a Jew could not marry a Jew. It was against the — they wanted to keep that all clean. The half a Jews couldn't marry the non-Jews either. They were kind of all by themselves. If, however, you already were married before that time, as a half a Jew to a Jew, you were considered to be a Jew. It contaminated you to the fact that you became a Jew.

So we didn't get married. However, I was pregnant, and my oldest son was born in 1942. He was born the 28th of April, and in the hospital — this was already when we were living in the house that we rented because we were kicked out of the other house. So we were in that house, which was close to a hospital, relatively close, half a mile. I got our oldest boy. I went to the hospital — they did let us go to the hospital, but you could not have a taxi or anything. You had to walk, so I had to walk to the hospital when I started. He was born in the hospital the 28th of April, and the first of May was the rule in effect of wearing the yellow star. When I came out of the hospital I had to go home with

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a coat that my mother had prepared with the yellow star on it because that was the rule as of the first of May.

He got the name of my husband. We were not married for the courthouse type of thing because it was against the law. We didn't know at the time that they didn't let the marriage go through because he was half a Jew. He had a "G" on his ID card, "G1," and I had a "J," so by notary public in the hospital my oldest son got his last name, which we thought was much safer because Hoekstra doesn't sound very Jewish. It isn't. My father's mother was Horn, and she was the Jew. As a matter of fact, her grandfather was a rabbi. Nobody could figure that name out as being Jewish, and he was blond, so was the baby. So he was born in April of '42, and we were just not officially married at all.

Harper: Just for knowledge's sake, can you describe the Nazi invasion?

HOEKSTRA: In Holland? Yes. As I said, we surrendered after the bombs, and we heard over the radio that we had — and by the way, then the queen left, which was very much a blow to the Dutch population. They were in safety, but what it amounted to — they abandoned us. That's what it came to. So we were at the factory of my father, as I said, and I think we went back to the house because the guns, of course, were not sitting in the park anymore. There we saw the Germans come in, and they were as you see them in the pictures, clean shaven, and the uniforms were pressed to the hilt, and they were just marching beautiful like they always do, and they came through the streets as the ones that captured the country. The streets were lined with people. I watched them too. We were absolutely disgusted; there was no welcome of any kind. They were so much in the numbers that we just saw there was no way to even protest or do anything. It is a very small country, and there were lots of troops, and of course they didn't have to fight very long to get in either.

So we all thought, "Well, it probably won't take very long." That's the first idea we had, like my father also had. Then once when they penetrated in all kinds of way of life and took our house and made regulations within a couple of months, about the Jews particularly, we saw that it wasn't going to be a very easy time. We realized that they were totally having the power over everything. They started to steal the horses from the farms, and the cows. They just plundered the country for everything we had, and it was a pretty rich country. They had the cheeses and the milk and everything, so very soon things were rationed, within maybe three, four months. We saw our lives change terrifically, not only as Jews but in general, the whole population.

Harper: What are some of the specific changes that affected you and your family?

HOEKSTRA: As Jews?

Harper: Yes.

HOEKSTRA: To begin with, I think the very first thing we had to do was hand in our bicycles. Now that doesn't mean much to you maybe, but that *is* the

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transportation in Holland. I went to school on a bicycle, work on a bicycle; you did everything on a bicycle. You limit people if you take their bicycles away, especially when you are prohibited to use public transportation. That means you're isolated. You can't go anywhere. So the first thing was the bicycles.

It was interesting because the typical style of the Germans that they did everywhere was they had this horrible new rule, and everybody was upset, but then after a week or so you see you can survive without a bicycle. You just walk, you don't walk as far, or you take some more time to go places. Then once you are accepting this as something that isn't the worst thing of all, they make the next rule and they take your radio. And you think, "My, that's awful. They take the radio. We don't even get in touch with anything." Then after a while you hear the news from somebody else. You say, "So I can live without a bicycle, and I can also live without a radio. Is that the worst they do? Big deal." So they systematically go and *narrow* your life and make *more* rules. Then you can't have the non-Jews coming to visit you, you can't visit your non-Jew friends. It isolates you a little more.

Harper: Did your non-Jewish friends go along with it?

HOEKSTRA: Most of them were scared enough to go along. Definitely. So then the hours of shopping were restricted to between 3:00 and 5:00 PM in the daytime, so you had to be at the store between 3:00 and 5:00 PM to get whatever you needed. Not only was it very inconvenient, but things were on rations. When they got a certain shipment in, by the time it was 2:00 PM usually they were out of stuff, and by the time *you* come between 3:00 and 5:00 PM it's gone. So it affects your life in all kinds of ways.

Harper: Were you living with your family at this time?

HOEKSTRA: Living with my family. My husband was in Amsterdam going to this junior high school [college] type thing, mechanical even though he was in forestry, but this was the only thing that was left for him to do. He lived there with his brother. His father and mother were not in the country. His father was a minister and he was in Suriname, which was a Dutch colony, and of course there was no contact between the colonies and Holland anymore because Holland was taken. He was left by his father, and the older brother was left, for education. In Suriname at the time there was no high school. It was customary for people who worked in the colonies to send their children to the motherland for education, and then usually they went home to that colony maybe once a year. Of course he couldn't go home, so he was with his older brother together and roomed in Amsterdam. He had no other family there.

So he could more or less finish his education, except that a couple of months after our son was born they raided Amsterdam because some important man, Seyss-Inquardt, was murdered. As a reprisal they took all the young men that they could find out of bed at about 5:00 AM in the morning, young men between let's say 20 and 22 — and he was one of them — and they brought

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them to a very nasty camp. He was actually the first one to end up in a camp from the whole family, but he was not picked up as a half Jew, he was picked up as a reprisal young man, picked up and lifted out of bed. He was there for about five or six weeks.

Harper: What camp?

HOEKSTRA: Vught [spells out]. It's a Dutch camp. It was a very nasty camp. So then the churches protested quite a bit. They did that in general. They didn't have much power, but the Germans were a little bit afraid of the churches, in Holland. It was not Germany; it was Holland. They didn't want the whole population to be standing up against them, so usually they kind of reacted a little bit to that and made it a little bit sweeter. They then let some people go. Some of these hundreds of people they picked up, let's say 20 or 25, were sent home as a kind of a gesture, "We don't really mean all that bad. We will let some go."

So he came back, my husband, or my husband-that-should-have-been-my-husband-but-wasn't. He came back from the camp and was very sick with the blue measles. It was very interesting because he came to us, and I luckily got it too when he stayed with us, so we were quarantined, and the Germans were very afraid of contagious diseases. They didn't like that at all. We were in the meantime already told that we had to move. We were already told that we had to report to a camp, not Westerbork but Barneveld, and since we had the blue measles they couldn't let us go. It gave us about six weeks' time. That was a little later. "Maybe six weeks will help," we thought.

Harper: Just to keep the chronology, was your son born at this time?

HOEKSTRA: Yes, my son was born then, and he already was in hiding in the — no, before my husband came home I had him in hiding at night, because there were raids at night. For Jews. To pick up Jews. We had heard that from some friends, from inside information, "Just be careful because they will raid homes in Utrecht." In Amsterdam it was much, much worse, but it started to happen in the other cities also. So in order to be relatively safe for my son, I had him only there in the daytime, and not at night. At about 4:00 or 5:00 PM I went with the little buggy with all his belongings so there was nothing left that showed there was a baby in the house, and he went to one of these women that used to work for us that couldn't work for us anymore because she was a non-Jew. I took a walk, let's say three blocks, and she took a walk, and she went home with him. In the morning we did the reverse. He came back home about 9:00 or 10:00 AM, so he was home in the daytime.

Then after a couple of weeks we heard that they were also going to have raids in the daytime. We had to decide what to do, and we decided to let him — we called it "he dived under." He went underground, that's what happened. My father had very good friends who had very good friends — and all of them were non-Jews — who said they wouldn't mind having him. He was by that time a good three and a half months old, which was a wonderful age because he couldn't talk, couldn't reveal his identity. He happened to be blond and blue-

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eyed, and most of these Germans thought that you had to have a hooked nose and dark hair, which of course is not true. Their story was that this little boy, his mother died in the bombs in Rotterdam, and his father can't have him, but he can visit him. So he went underground, and my husband was able to visit him. He could still go and travel on the train as a half a Jew. We couldn't do that. He saw him on a regular basis for a little while until my husband was picked up again and was sent to Germany in the work force there. So he was able to see our son for about a good half year after he had been underground.

The whole idea of sending him underground was very interesting. I can talk about it very clinically, and I still do that in a clinical way. We decided there was no other way to do it. To let — see? I have repressed feelings, so that I had to stop. There was no choice; you just had to get rid of this location for him. It was very interesting because my husband had a feeling that there might be things going wrong with that relationship someday after the war. We had these grand ideas that after the war, which will be soon, everything will be wonderful, and we will all get together and — but there might be problems because if you have to let your baby go that's pretty bad. So he went to a very well-known psychiatrist in Utrecht, one of the best ones, and said, "If any problems will arise, will you be willing to treat my wife or my son, or both?" And the man said, "Well, yes. Sure." He thought it was kind of a strange request.

But at the time I had him go, I had to pack a suitcase for him, and he was lying on the bed after I fed him for the last time, and he was crying for some reason, like babies do. I was sitting and trying to get that suitcase all packed with all the things he had to have, and the darn thing didn't close. He was crying, and it made me nervous because he had to go within ten minutes. I was sitting on the suitcase to close it, and the more I tried to close the more he cried, and he drove me crazy because he was so difficult. I finally found his pinky was in the suitcase, so I was pretty sick because of that. Anyways, its one of those little side things that you will never ever forget. You get sick to your stomach.

So we let him go, and we got him back after three and a half years, and that relationship never has been normal. I have a wonderful relationship with him. He's 52 now and everything is fine, but there's a total hiatus from the time I let him go. I never ever got the motherly feeling back for him, at all. I didn't allow it. I would have not survived probably if I would have been breaking down at the time, so I stuffed it away very, very far. Right after the war, as a matter of fact — I'll come back to that.

But we were liberated. My husband walked from Berlin where he was liberated in jail by the Russians. He walked while he had pneumonia, all the way back to Holland. Hitchhiked. He saw that the Red Cross had lists of the camp that I was in — and I had typed that list — and he came with a truck that brought coal from the south to the north, met us in the camp where we were liberated, and

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we stayed there a couple of months to be cleared because they had to know that we were what we said we were. So we got twins immediately after the war. I got pregnant in the camp, and I thought, "Well, now this all will come back. If I get another child, that all will come back." But it never came back. So I never tucked him in, my son, never kissed him goodnight — but very nicely took care of him — didn't ever have the relationship with him like I had with the others.

And later, I indeed went to the psychiatrist, who told me to go to a child psychiatrist, and the child psychiatrist decided that the boy really wasn't hurt very much. He said it like, "The Indians grow up with the Indians, and that's how it is." He had very good care during the war, had wonderful people, so he was taken care of very well, but this relationship was difficult. I remember that the psychiatrist who my husband had asked to treat me had the first interview and then referred me to this other man.

He asked me what the problem was, and was very nice and very pleasant, and then asked me, "Why do you want to do anything about this?" I said, "It's not very good for a child to grow up not being tucked in and being three and a half — it's just he doesn't have a mother really. He said, "That's very nice that you want to do this for your son. Of course, it doesn't hurt you at all." So I quivered a little, and he said, "I didn't want to hurt you. I just wanted to make sure there is any hope for you." He wanted to find out whether there were any feelings at all. Later we decided with the other psychiatrist — by that time I had three kids and the fourth one was on the way, and I functioned. He said, "I do not believe that it pays to break you all the way down and try to build you all the way up while you function. This is a scar from the war for both of you, and that's the way it is. Just leave it at that." And we did. I think that it was probably a very wise decision to do that. So that was a very strange affair.

Anyway, my oldest son, as well as the twins and other ones, went always on vacation to the people where he was during the war. Wonderful people. And it was very nice because they had a lot of food there too. They were *very* rich people. The house he was in is now a courthouse in the city. They were very well-to-do. They had their own greenhouses and their own chickens. He wasn't short on anything at all, and they were wonderful to him. There was a regular contact between those people and our family all through the years after the war. It was a very fortunate thing that he had that place to go.

Harper: If we could go back to . . .
HOEKSTRA: Yes. It's difficult to have to because so many things are in between.

Harper: You were explaining some of the anti-Jewish measures. When did you have to start wearing the yellow Star of David?
HOEKSTRA: The first of May, 1942. That was right after my son was born. I went in the hospital in April, came out in May, and I had to wear the star. And that, of course, caused tremendous restriction in your movement. You had to wear that at all times when you were outside of your house, and in those years the

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milkman came to the door, and the vegetable man with the cart, and the meat man, and every housewife went out of the house to look at the radishes and all that. At that time you had to wear a star, and if you just were caught going without a star to the milkman to get your milk in the little can, you had no chance. They just picked you up and you were a goner. You never came back.

So we devised this fashion thing [laughs]. It was kind of interesting. You know those vests they have now that they wear, the kids? Well, we made those. They were called boleros. We made a couple of those so that you can have that over each dress because you didn't get that many stars. They were also rationed. You had to buy them, you had to pay textile points for them, and you had to sew them on. But in order to *always* be covered with that star, you had a couple of vests, and you put them on over each dress. When I saw this fashion I said, "This is handy. You can wear your star on the top." You had to be very careful to have that on.

Now if you had them on, you also had to risk that they picked up Jews and you were picked up. But if you *didn't* have it on and they suspected you to be a Jew and they asked you for your ID, which you had to have on you at all times — and there was a "J" on it — then you didn't even go to Westerbork, but you just went right straight through. I had several friends that were picked up, not wearing a star, having the "J" on their card, and we never heard from them again. They were gone. Neither one of the ways you were protected, but it was better to wear the star at the time, we *thought*, than not to do it.

Of course, by then many of the non-Jewish friends who already were not allowed to come in your house or to have you in their home, they were more shying away from you than ever. They didn't want to really be seen with you because then they were collaborating with a Jew, so it more and more isolated you in society as a whole.

The funny idea of the fact that we even were registered as a Jew has never been clear to me. When they told us to register as a Jew, which was of course before we had to wear the star, we just went there as lambs to the slaughter bank. We were in a way almost proud to be a Jew, and if we had to say we were a Jew, so we will go and be a Jew. Some people didn't want to do this, but they were afraid because they thought somebody else with the same name might register, and what if they find out about all this? Which of course is very unlikely, but they could.

So we actually just plainly obeyed these orders. You had to go and register, so you registered. You had to go and get a "J," so you got a "J" on your ID, and you were marked. We were so stupid to walk in that trap somehow. Some people didn't, but many of them didn't get away with that either. Now I went in hiding for a little bit — after we had to wear the star, after my son was already in hiding — and I was such a nervous wreck that I couldn't take it. It was

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impossible for me.

Harper: Where did you hide?

HOEKSTRA: I was hiding a couple of blocks from the home where I lived with my parents, the rental home that we took. Non-Jews, second floor in an apartment building, a wonderful lady, with help in the household that was with her for 20 years. Single lady. They said, "You're welcome. You can stay with us." There were quite a few very nice people that really put their life in danger for that, but it was the second floor so we had to be careful. If they weren't home — and she worked, and then the lady went to the market to buy vegetables — there was nobody home officially, so I couldn't flush the toilet. We had to remember what we couldn't do. I shouldn't walk in front of the window because it was a narrow street. You could see movement across the street, and they didn't know whether they were Dutch collaborators. There were a lot of them, collaborators.

There were a lot of restrictions of what you could and could not do, but they were very nice to me. She said to me, "Why don't you read a book?" But I was such a nervous wreck that I didn't dare to read a book because I thought, "What if the book falls on the floor? Then the people below hear a noise. I can't do that." Then she had some wool that was all messed up. You know how you have this wool and it is all messed up and knotted up? And she said, "Why don't you just take this apart?" So I was sitting there all day pulling the wool, different colors, and getting them all sorted out, because if that falls it doesn't make any noise. And then of course, just don't answer the phone, don't answer the door, there's nobody home. Well, the phone rang and I got heart palpitations. All I had to do was not answer the phone, which I didn't, but I was scared to death.

Then at one time, I caught myself under the couch, scared to death, almost peeing in my pants because the phone rang and the doorbell rang at the same time, and I just couldn't take it. I was so scared. I thought, "I can't take this, I'll go crazy here." So I left and I went back to this house where my parents were, which was a matter of three, four weeks before we were taken away. And I thought — because we never knew any of the horrors that were going on — "They will probably let us work hard and work us to death and all that, but I can take that better" — because I was very strong and very physically healthy — "I can take that better than this because I will go crazy. I can't take this." So I didn't hide for more than two and a half, three weeks. I was unable to take it. For some reason, it just was something I can't do.

Harper: This may sound like a strange question, but why exactly did you go into hiding?

HOEKSTRA: Because I thought that maybe they won't find me, and I can hide and survive just like my son survived.

Harper: Did you have an inkling of what . . . ?

HOEKSTRA: Well, we were wearing the star already, and we were told that pretty soon we

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will have to go.

Harper: Go where?

HOEKSTRA: To Barneveld, which was not the camp I was liberated from, because we belonged and that's where — it's a good thing you asked me that because by the time that our oldest son was born, just before that there were these lists. Germans love lists. And these lists all explode because they were all "until further notice," which we didn't realize. There was a list for diamond Jews — and of course what they did was they took all the diamonds from the Jews and promised them they could go to Palestine or whatever — and there was also a list for baptized Jews, and there was a list for intellectual Jews — and they were going to be treated different than all the other Jews. They wouldn't have to go being evacuated. They could stay anywhere.

We were on the intellectual Jew list. There were 400 people on that and about 400 on the baptized, about the same amount of people. Mainly professors and doctors and that kind of thing, and their children, so I was on that same list as my father. My grandparents, by the way, we couldn't get on that list. That didn't work. And the other grandparents from my father had died, so luckily they never even went in this misery. But my mother's parents in The Hague could not be on that list because they were in-laws. Being on that list meant that we didn't have to go anywhere, except then of course that changed because it was until "further notice," and for our own safety we had to go to a castle in Holland which was called De Schaffelaar. It was in Barneveld. But we would . . .

Harper: Sorry to interrupt you, but who took you to that castle?

HOEKSTRA: The Germans were supposed to tell us when to go, but they only said we will have to go sometime to that castle for our own protection. We said, "That isn't so bad, you know? These castles are nice places" [laughs]. So we knew that someday that had to come, and I didn't trust it. My father did. My father never thought it was all that bad. I thought, "Well, castle or not they will isolate us," and I thought there was a big danger in that. That's when I decided I'd rather hide. Then I couldn't hide. I came back home and within several weeks we got the notice — I think it came in the mail, or some German delivered it — that we had to report to such and such place where the busses would bring us to the castle. And they did.

Harper: Now at this time had your husband already been arrested?

HOEKSTRA: And he had been sent back again. But he was not arrested yet to go to as a labor camp. So he was back in Amsterdam, and he knew that we had to go. And we could have visitors there, and it was all very nice, and there were trees. Indeed, my husband did visit us there, in Barneveld. He could come there and visit once a week or something.

Harper: I'm sorry. Can you tell me exactly what year you went to Barneveld, and can

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you spell . . . ?

HOEKSTRA: Barneveld is spelled [spells out], and the castle was called the Schaffelaar and that's spelled [spells out]. *The* Schaffelaar, that was the castle's name, and it was in the city Barneveld. That's where the chickens are from; the Barneveld chickens are from that city. Brown chickens. He could visit us there, and while I was in Barneveld, which was about a half a year, four or five months, he was taken away as a workforce, German.

Harper: This place, Barneveld, can you tell me what it was like, what you . . . ?

HOEKSTRA: It was awful. It was absolutely awful.

Harper: Were you in fact in the castle?

HOEKSTRA: It was in the castle, yes, but it was terrible. The castle was so that — the narrow, small rooms in castles, plumbing was out of date, and they had about four families in one room, four families that never had seen each other. Young families with little kids, with babies, and they were all nervous, and they all had diarrhea, and there were no restrooms. You lived in a castle, but it was substandard living. It was terrible. Everybody was nervous, everybody was scared, there were fights, people didn't sleep well, and it was an absolute disaster. And it was a bunch of intellectuals, which were even more hard to live with because they were analyzing everything and they were arguing like heck, which was very typical. So it was an absolutely miserable kind of living.

The one place that was not so bad was the place that we ate. That was a separate barrack that they built on, and that's where we could have company if they came. That all looked fairly nice, looked like a cafeteria-type thing. The food was substandard, but it wasn't that you couldn't survive on it. You could even have the visitors bring you something, so in that sense it didn't sound so bad. It was fenced, there was a big park around it, you could walk outside, and gosh, except that everybody drove you crazy, it wasn't all that bad, we thought.

Harper: How many people were in this camp?

HOEKSTRA: About 800.

Harper: Just intellectual Jews?

HOEKSTRA: And the baptized Jews. They didn't like each other all that much either; it was very strange. And they had no entertainment of any kind. We had a couple of people who brought some chess boards and some other little things, but in general there was nothing to do other than just arguing and being afraid and trying to take care of little kids and big kids. We tried to arrange some kind of schooling for kids who were six, seven, eight, nine years old, but that was very difficult and there was no place to do this.

After a while I was able to get a permit to go to the eye doctor — for some idiotic reason they gave you permits for that. For this one day I could go on the train and go to Utrecht to the eye doctor, where I then met my husband. That

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was very nice. I think I had twice a permit and that was it. Then they narrowed those things down; you couldn't get a permit anymore. You couldn't get the visitors anymore.

Little by little they kind of isolated you there, until one day —I had an older brother who went with us also, and I had a sister who in the meantime already had been out of our home to begin with and was in hiding in a convent. That's where she was in hiding all through the war, and she made it through the war. I have another brother who was in the States; he went in 1938, for educational reasons, so he never went through it. And my older brother was with us in this castle. He didn't trust it either, and neither did I. My parents were more optimistic about it than we were. We were more suspicious that things would not go right. So all of a sudden one day we were told that we had to gather around in the yard.

Harper: What year was this?

HOEKSTRA: Courtyard. That was also the end of '42, so we were there not very long. Then we heard a bunch of dogs — German Shepherds and Doberman Pinschers — and the SS, and they surrounded the castle and loaded us into the train. You could take your suitcase; the rest of the belongings they would send you later [laughs]. It was the typical thing. So we all went, like lambs again, in a regular train with compartments, not a boxcar. We didn't know where we were going. I decided this is the end of it; I will never come back. This is it. I had no idea where we would go. And of course, the SS was yelling. They love to yell, "*Schnell! Schnell!*" They make you just nervous wrecks. They love to do that to unsettle you.

We went in the train, and somehow my parents and my brother and I went in the same compartment with a couple of other people. My brother had prepared himself. He had falsified papers. He had a little attaché case and was very wise, never told anybody anything, because as soon as you tell anybody anything then it's not a secret anymore. While the train was going very slowly, in some kind of an area where they had the couplings — they go on another track — it was kind of dusk, and he jumped out of the train. My mother was ready to scream because she was rather hysterical, and my father put his hand over her mouth because that's to draw attention if you start screaming. Much later we found out that he indeed made it. What he did, he jumped out of the train, but he saw there were no bushes or any place to hide. It was very open country, just heather fields, so he went under the train, and since it was dusk and the SS are not stupid they had these flashlights and they looked if people were hiding. He was smart and figured they would do that. He pulled himself up on the undercarriage real high so only when you would go on the floor would you see him, and they didn't see him.

When the train started to gain speed again, he let himself drop and put his arms like that [gestures] and put his attaché case over his face and his chest, hoping

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there was no low-hanging coupling. There wasn't, and then he got up when the train left. It was a clear night, and he walked on the stars in the direction he thought he had to walk to get somewhere, and he did get somewhere. He had a Gillette with him to shave. He looks more Jewish than I was and he had a very dark beard. He thought, "I'd better shave and look as normal as I can." He came to a little station, which was close to where the train had been, and he met there — it was 6:00 AM in the morning by that time, and he met there the SS that had accompanied the train that we were in, with the dogs and everything, and so it scared the hell out of him. But he thought, "Well, what do you do early in the morning in a small station somewhere in the middle of the country? You just start a conversation." So he said, "It's a nice day today." He was able to do that. I would never have been able to do what he did; he was very cool. So he had a little talk with them and then read the paper, bought a paper, and he traveled back to Utrecht.

He had gone to school in Utrecht for many years, to the university. He was a biologist. He decided to go to the sister of a girlfriend he had. The girlfriend went back to the colonies. It was close to where we used to live. He tried to decide whether he should take the bus or walk, and he thought, "If I take the bus, people can recognize me. They're pretty close to me, and I've lived here many years. If I walk, however, I will see more people." He gambled and took the bus, was not recognized, and went to this girl. He was in hiding all through the war at her place and did marry her later. So he made it, but he died when he was 50 of a heart attack, and I'm pretty sure that all of this was very hard on him in many ways, psychologically. He had three kids and died very early, much earlier than most of my family. But he made it, and we got word that he made it in the camp.

The train, by the way, did bring us to Westerbork. Do you want the spelling? That's a pretty well known camp, the only lousy camp in Holland. I can spell it for you if you need to.

Harper: Sure. Just for the tape's sake, why don't you?

HOEKSTRA: Okay [spells out Westerbork]. It's very close to the German border, in the north of Holland, and it's quite isolated, around heather fields and things. Very open. There was not much of a chance to hide if you wanted to get out of there. It was basically a transport camp. Twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays transports went back east somewhere, many of them to Auschwitz, Dachau, Mauthausen, wherever. 2,000 a day on the days of the transport. You knew when the transports were coming. If the date changed, let's say from Thursday to Friday, you knew because then you smelled pea soup. They always had pea soup when there was a transport. If I make pea soup today, I'll always think about transport. Pea soup is better than what we got there, but — so it was basically a city.

Now that camp is the camp that they built originally for the German Jews that

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were coming, so there was a German-Jew population in that camp that had been there for quite a while. They were usually the people that did the normal things that people do in the city. There were water towers and sewers and everything a city needs because this was a city. And it pulsated, the population, from maybe 15,000 to 40,000, then 20,000, and then it was 50,000, depending on how the transports came in. Most Dutch Jews went through Westerbork.

Harper: Can you describe your arrival in Westerbork and what happened that first day?

HOEKSTRA: It was awful. It was awful because we already were scared to death, and we didn't know whether it was the end point or not. When we came out of there, of course it was again the dogs and the SS and the yelling and the pushing. You had to go fast, and you had a gun thing in your back, and — just to make you unsettled. They're very organized, like you see in the movies. They had tables set up, and they had everything administratively perfectly all right. You had to stand in line, and you had to be registered with your name, and then your papers. Then they let you drop off your luggage and you would get it back later, but you didn't.

I remember it was probably early in the evening when we came there, and we had to stand in line all night. You had to stand up, and if you didn't stand, if you sat down, you were yelled at and kicked and you had to stand up anyway. Some people fainted, and then they were taken away in a wheelbarrow, and whoever fainted had a husband or a wife and they were all miserable. It was all night that we were standing there. Then you were registered alphabetically and you were assigned a barrack number, so we all came in the same barrack. I think it was 85.

Harper: Your family was all together?

HOEKSTRA: Yes. All the intellectual Jews and the baptized Jews all came in the same barrack. Then we were given a ticket to get coveralls to wear, and wooden shoes, which nobody ever wears in Holland except for the tourists. They show wooden shoes; you weren't used to wooden shoes.

In Barneveld we had two-high beds, and in Westerbork there were three-high, metal-type things with hardly any mattress. Everybody was mixed up. The people with diarrhea were on the top thing, and then it would dribble down on the other bed, so you got a pretty good idea of what camp life was going to be when you arrived. Nobody slept that night, and of course we had to then go on the field in the morning and be counted and the normal thing that people do in camps. Then you were assigned some kind of work. That was my salvation because many of the people that were in this group, either the baptized or the intellectual — in the first place, there were a lot of old people, relatively old, and there were a lot of young people. Neither one of those groups were very good in any kind of work.

So in the middle group were the people who would be useable for labor, and

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many of them thought — and I don't know how come they thought that — that they were pretty well protected by this list they were on, and they wouldn't maybe have to work all that hard. My father used to tell us years ago, the difference between an optimist and a pessimist, and it's still with me. It's like these frogs that sit on the edge of a milk pitcher and they both fall in. So one said, "Oh, my God! I'm going to drown! This is awful. I fell in the milk; it's terrible," and he drowns. And the other one said "You never know what happens," and he sits on the butter. That's the optimist. That stuck with me all my life, and so I thought, "Well, if I work real hard they'll need me, if I work real hard."

So you were detailed to some kind of work, and I liked the outdoors to begin with, and besides, it was outside of the camp. You were always on the guard from dogs and the SS and all that, but there was work to do. There were ships in the canal that was about a mile away, and they brought the rubble from the bombed towns. The road was covered with that. You had to hammer that and all that stuff. I was on an outside detail; you had to work in the woods. It was all very heavy work, and I've seen people collapse while they did this, but I was in my 20s and extremely strong, and luckily apparently a strong constitution altogether. That's why I worked, and I worked very hard.

My mother was a Red Cross trained nurse during the war, and so she was working in the hospital. She was also a hard worker. My father [laughs], as I said, was a professor in aeronautics, and so they put him on the tools. He had to sharpen the axes and do all that kind of work, be a mechanic, which was for me very nice because I always had a sharp axe to chop the trees. It pays to have contacts, even in a camp. So that was basically what we did; we had to work. I had a cousin who ended up there who was a professor in philosophy and French literature in Leiden, and without his wife he would have never survived. He was not a hard worker and he was totally unpractical, but his wife was the opposite. He worked in the sewer — it was excellent work for him — and they survived in the same way.

At the very end of the war time, after spending years in Westerbork under the most miserable circumstances — and I had all kinds of sicknesses, but survived them all somehow — that list that we were on, the list of intellectual Jews and — it exploded again. So the whole camp was empty, and we all had to go to Theresienstadt. We were told to go.

Harper: I'm sorry. Before we go to the second deportation I want to get more information about life inside Westerbork.
HOEKSTRA: Life inside Westerbork.

Harper: Do you want to take a break?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, could I? Does it matter?

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TAPE STOPS AND THEN RESUMES

Harper: I wanted to talk about Westerbork. Were there schools? What was the housing like? Religious observance? Health care?

HOEKSTRA: No schools. There was a marvelous hospital in the sense that they had wonderful surgeons. They were all the cream of the crop who were there at the time, but they had nothing to work with. Neither had the nurses. They had no blankets, no sheets. They had a bunch of junk. The only thing they did have was some kind of antiseptic like Lysol. They loved that kind of stuff. But no medication, no gauze. It was all ripped-up kind of cotton things that they had. They had to work with very little. There were a lot of nasty diseases like scarlet fever, dysentery. I had all those diseases already in the camp before, which was lucky — in that castle I was sick — luckily I didn't get those in Westerbork because there the work was even more important than in Barneveld, so I was able to work all the time.

My mother was very hurt; she had an infection in her finger, and her whole finger swelled up, something like that [demonstrates]. To illustrate what medical care there was, like I said, they were very skilled people, but they had nothing to work with. They had nothing to get that infection down except the practical thing of taking some cotton and making slits in her finger here, here, and here, and then every ten minutes they came and pulled that through and got the puss out of it. It was just a horrible thing. I don't know how she survived it, but she survived it and her finger didn't come off, and she didn't get a blood problem all through her body.

The hospital was — in general, there were single beds, but sometimes they were also two or three high. Everybody was in between everybody else, so the infectious diseases were between the people who had appendicitis and some others. In the meantime, there were children born in between all this mess. The food was deplorable; it was very, very poor quality. We had potatoes with the peeling on, which was fine, but also the straw and the mud. They loved to punish collectively and cut down on the food. Let's say something happened and they asked, "Who did it?" Of course, most of the time people didn't say who did it. They said, "Okay. You'll all be collectively punished. We'll leave out the bread for tomorrow." That was the typical thing, how they tried to get you.

One of the horrible things in the camp was the lack of hygiene. If you had any free moment you would try to catch all the fleas you could, or the lice. Most people were able to catch several of them, and the next day they had just as many. We had one toilet for 400 people in the barrack, and you were only allowed to use that at night because there was a curfew. You couldn't get out of the barrack at night to go to the outhouse. The outhouse consisted of a big house with a plank with about ten holes, and you were sitting there next to each

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other. It was a good place to visit, and that was all it was good for. It wasn't allowed to visit, but you did.

This one toilet had a curtain in front of it, kind of a cotton type of thing, and there was always a line, all night long, for that toilet because everybody had diarrhea or they had to throw up or something else. They said, "Hurry up! Hurry up!" to the one who sat on the toilet, which was terrible. It's a terrible thing to say, but it shows the lack of dignity, the level to which you were reduced. You were just nobody; it was just miserable, there was no privacy. Everybody stinks, that's another thing. You didn't wash. The women, of course, were in a terrible situation hygienically. However, some people didn't even have their periods. Some people did.

I remember that one of the ladies in the camp, in this particular barrack, in the daytime went to that toilet. Now my father was the leader of the barrack — they had declared that he had to keep order in the barrack — and you were not allowed to do that in the daytime, so she went to this toilet and my father had to tell her something. She was a lady in her 60s, very dignified lady, and he said, "I'm terribly sorry, but you cannot use this toilet in the daytime." She said, "Professor, I didn't really use it." He said, "I saw you go there." The whole idea of the conversation was just bizarre. She said, "Yes, but the aggregate was not what you think it was." That's how she tried to explain that she didn't go there and go potty. It was just a matter of having air, and she didn't want to do that in public. So there is professor so-and-so talking to some very educated and nice, sophisticated lady about whether or not she should use that toilet and what she did at that toilet.

The general feeling was a total lack of dignity in any way at all, and you had very much fighting between the people about food. Somebody maybe left a piece of bread somewhere and it was stolen, and you didn't know who did it. You had some people who were sick and stayed in the barrack in the morning, but then of course the SS came and they were looking how sick you were. If you really weren't very sick, and that was determined by how high your fever was, then of course you were not treated very nice. Maybe they just hit you a couple of times and pushed you out of the door and let you stand there for hours in the cold to teach you that you really weren't sick.

If you had a fever, maybe they would bring you to the hospital, and somehow some people thought they were safe in that hospital because if the transport went, usually the sick people didn't go on the same train out of the hospital. But sometimes they bet on the wrong horse because they thought, "If I'm in the hospital maybe I don't go on that transport tomorrow." Then they changed their ways, and the next day instead of the regular transport, all of the hospital would go. So you bet wrong. You don't know where you have the bets and whether you are right or wrong. It was a gamble.

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The patients were washed with warm water, supposedly. The water we had to get from the big water tower and water plant in big tubs. By the time you carried that tub all the way to the hospital, which was like 1,000 yards, you were not really in step. Half of the water *klotzed* out of it, and it was cold by the time you got to the patients. Then you had to wash them, and you had one little bowl, something like for the French king in times, a little bowl where you can wash these patients. You couldn't do anything more than maybe refresh their face and their hands. That was about it.

Generally, the people who were in the hospital didn't make it. Period. Most of them did not recuperate to a point that they could go back to their normal work, and if they couldn't, then of course they were doomed to go on a transport one day or another. When they died, they were cremated, and one of the tasks that also the outdoor crew had, to which I belonged, was cremating the people. You had a burner, and they were single ovens. It was not a mass death camp, but they did burn them, and it was very scary because they move. I'm sure you never have burned somebody. They were dead, and you knew darn well that they were dead, but they go in the single oven, and by the heat they kind of move like this. It is real, real spooky.

And of course they knew that was spooky, and they knew that was a very hard task, so they had special rations. They gave you a shot glass of gin if you had to do this, and a piece of liverwurst. So if you had to do this it was wonderful. In my case, I had my parents there, I could kind of give them a little piece of liverwurst, like a little sliver. Of course, they knew how come I got liverwurst, so it didn't feel very good. But still, it was something you could eat. I had to do this maybe three or four times all through the years that I was there, so not very often, but you know what it feels like. Most of the time the people that you had to burn had died because they were sick or because they wanted to escape, or people said they tried to escape, which maybe was not the case. Maybe they just ventured too close to the fence, and they said you were escaping, so they shot you.

One of the very strange things was that — you have no power in this camp at all. You're a nobody, and you're just trying to survive and hang on. Yet you do all kinds — I particularly did things that I risked my life for, seemingly for no reason at all. I knew I had to survive. I knew I had to do this. And yet I took chances with my life that made it less possible to survive in some ways, however, psychologically gave me the strength to survive.

For example, I stole onions. Of course, you had lousy food and all that, but I was on the outdoor crew and there was a train and it came in with onions. So I thought, "I'll steal an onion." Of course, you had no way to stuff it somewhere; you had a coverall. So I was hiding this onion behind the wheel of a boxcar and thought, "I'll come and pick it up later when it's dark." It was actually curfew hour, so I went there and picked up that onion and came home, and it was a

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triumph. It was wonderful. You just have this onion, and somehow it means you have some *power* that you could use. You fooled them. You stole from them. And yet, it was a stupid thing to do.

I did the same thing with bread; I stole three loaves of bread. Then they found out there was bread stolen — I was not the only one; some other people did this — and they said, "Who stole the bread?" I said, "I stole two loaves." Well, they punished us and then we had to work many more hours, and we had to come in the morning and stand for two hours before you had to go to work. But I had that one loaf left.

Harper: You came forward?

HOEKSTRA: I came forward that I had one. I didn't tell them I had three. I told them I had two that I stole, so it was a tremendous triumph. I had this loaf of bread, and I was able to get it later in the dark.

Harper: Were you personally punished for that?

HOEKSTRA: Not personally, but collectively punished. That was the style, collective punishment. So I had this one loaf of bread. It was a fantastic thing to have. And somehow I derived some feeling of control because of that, knowing very well that I took a big risk because sometime, depending on who was the one that found out — because it could have been an extra nasty one. He could have shot you, or had the dog go after you or something.

Close to the end of the war I was out in the field, and we had to plant peas — you put three in a hole; I don't know if you ever planted peas — it was all under control of the SS and the dogs and all that. And so you do three in a hole, and then you push with your wooden shoe, you close the hole. We heard artillery fire, and we saw the airplanes come over, so we knew it was coming to the end of the war. It had to be. Or at least they were coming close to the camp.

I thought, "Why should I put three peas in a hole? I'll put two in. There will be one that comes up." And after I was doing that I was thinking, "Heck, before they'll come up, the Americans or whoever it is will be here." So I just put nothing in. Every other hole I kind of left empty. It was tremendous fun. I came home with all these peas that I had a hard time hiding, and we ate them raw. There was really no reason to do that because there was not that much nutrition. It was just fun. Indeed, after the war when we were liberated, I saw that field come up and it was pretty bare. It was maybe four weeks before we were liberated when I did that kind of thing.

The situation in the barracks usually was — there was a lot of crying, but there was no protest. There were no people that really effectively fought or disobeyed orders. There was just a general sadness, and sometimes they made jokes. It was the only way to survive, to joke about things and tell funny jokes about Hitler or something else. We made little games — we made a chess game —

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and we tried to keep ourselves occupied at night, if you had any time at all. When they were coming in the barrack to control — and sometimes they just liked to come in the middle of the night to disturb everybody. You get them out of bed, and you make everybody nervous. If they found any of those games you made, they confiscated them, and you got punished by it one way or the other.

You didn't get coffee in the morning, which was brown water anyway. They tried to undermine any kind of a feeling of self-worth that you possibly could have, that was the idea. You had to jump up and go out of the bed and stand in front of it and stand straight up. If you didn't stand straight up because you were sick, they yelled at you a little harder. One of their styles of doing things, if a father or a mother protested because one of the children was handled too rough, then they didn't punish the person, but they punished your loved ones. That was the tactics they used, and it was very successful. So in general you didn't see many people protest at all, because they know that it boomerangs on the people they want to protect. It doesn't work, which is the bad part of it.

Harper: Were you aware of a black market?

HOEKSTRA: No, not at all. I stole things, but I was not aware of a black market at all. In the camp, no. I don't believe we had that at all. I would have been aware. I was there in '42 and was liberated in '45, so I should have known. No, I don't believe there was a black market at all. There was another thing that I wanted to say about the liberation, which may be out of the chronological order.

Harper: I was just going to say, if you wanted to save that for later . . .

HOEKSTRA: Yes. You can ask me some other questions. That's fine.

Harper: Okay. You mentioned your father kept order . . .

HOEKSTRA: In the barrack.

Harper: Did he have a title? Did he have to wear a uniform?

HOEKSTRA: Barrack leader. No. Barrack leader and he had no uniform, but he had one of those things to talk to people. They look like a funnel. He had to take care that the people were out of the barrack in the daytime and didn't use the toilet. He had to be sure that everybody was in at night, that kind of thing.

Harper: The Germans assigned him to do this?

HOEKSTRA: No. The German Jews that basically were originally in that camp, they were the ones that had the lead, and they had . . .

Harper: So they administered the camp?

HOEKSTRA: They administered the camp. Yes.

Harper: And they selected your father?

HOEKSTRA: They selected father to do that kind of thing. I don't know why they took him. He was kind of a leader to begin with, and so that's why they thought it was a

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good idea.

Harper: Did he receive preferential treatment in any way?
HOEKSTRA: No, he did not because of that at all. And it was in the preferential group to begin with, the group of intellectuals and the baptized. They were the only ones that were in the barrack.

Harper: So this group that you were . . . ?
HOEKSTRA: Stayed in the same barrack, in Barrack 85, all the time.

Harper: And you feel your group was treated preferentially?
HOEKSTRA: No. Preferentially in the sense that they were not transported until the very last transport that went. The last transport they all went, except that we didn't go because — this is what I mentioned. We had worked very hard, and there must have been maybe another reason, which never was very clear to me. In the first place, they were a little bit afraid of the Dutch government, and the churches — a little bit, not all that afraid — and they knew that it came to the end of the war. They were not all stupid, the Germans, they saw ahead a little bit, so they transported all these people to Theresienstadt, which we didn't know. They didn't tell us where we would go, but that's where they ended up. The majority of these people survived, so indeed that group somehow had a better chance than others, but several died because they were sick in Theresienstadt.

So 15 of the baptized Jews and 15 of the intellectual Jews they kept behind as a gesture to the government. "See, we don't really transport them east, but they have to be evacuated for their safety. To show we don't mean anything bad, we'll keep 15 people from each group." And the 15 people were usually chosen by a matter of how well can they work and how valuable are they to keep the camp as a city going. Because by that time we were left with about 500-600 people, that was all. Since the troops were retreating, the German troops, they felt that they wanted the camp — which was a city with a hospital and all that — they would like to keep that going so it could work, and maybe they could get some of their troops in the hospital or wherever they were. As a city, they wanted to keep it intact, and they needed people who could do the kind of work that the city needed, either hospital or tools or outdoor troops like we were, and unloading trains and loading trains and ships. So we were with the 15 people that survived, which was a very lucky thing.

That was the time that the Battle of the Bulge was there. The Battle of the Bulge was in the south of Holland. It looked like it was the end. But the British and the Americans were pushed back. They didn't make it. So the south of Holland was liberated, but the north was not. And at the time that the south was liberated, that's the time they emptied the camp, basically, from most Jews. Then it took another half year before finally the Canadians and the Americans were able to liberate the north of Holland.

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In that time, the population in Westerbork — I don't know exactly the figures — went from about 600 people who were there to keep the camp going as a city to about 900. The people who were in hiding and were picked up were sent to Westerbork, but they weren't sent any further because the railroads were bombed and there was no way to get a train out of it anymore. It was just in time to not be able to get people out of that camp to go east again.

The only thing that we were afraid that they would do, and they didn't do, was put us at the very end of the time that the war would be over, and they would be caught on the field and mow us down. That's what we expected them to do, and they didn't do it. They fled in the middle of the night, the Germans, because they were afraid for their own life, and they just left. Like we saw in *Schindler's List*. You can shoot them all, but they'd rather leave. So we were left alone overnight, and the watchtower was empty, there was nobody there, and we heard shooting, and we heard tanks. That was when we were liberated by the Canadian Army.

Harper: And that was in Theresienstadt?

HOEKSTRA: It was in April. No, that was in Westerbork. We were in Westerbork. That was April '45. The Canadians came down the road with the tanks, and it was an unforgettable type of thing. You get goose bumps thinking about it. The whole ground kind of vibrated when they came up. They came up from the canal that they had crossed, and they were under cover from airplanes, but the war was not over. They were just on their way to another city. They then circled the camp with tanks that stayed behind, and we were under no guidance at all, except that my father then also took over the guidance and said, "Nobody better leave because they will never make it through." Some people just couldn't take it. I think four or five just couldn't take to stay one more hour, and they left, and they didn't make it because they were right in the middle of the fighting and the front.

Harper: Can you tell us what the food situation was like, what you had and what time? Describe a typical day, what you did from the moment you woke up, what time you woke up.

HOEKSTRA: You woke up at about 5:30 AM, and you had to be counted first. Then you had to go back to the barrack, and you had some kind of a breakfast, which was brown water and maybe a piece of bread. Then you were going to your work detail. Usually that was signed off on a card, where you would go that day, and in my case I was always out in the fields. It was just like [inaudible]. So I was outside of the fence, which was a very good feeling.

You couldn't leave, but it was still outside, which was kind of funny because there was one day when the camp was shot at by Americans. They apparently didn't know that the camp was there. They just strafed it with a whole bunch of bullets, and some people were hit. We saw that from the outside; I was about a mile away from the camp. I saw these airplanes come down and strafe the

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camp, but I didn't know who they killed or why they did it. I don't know.

You usually went out on a detail and stayed out all day, and you came back towards dark. One day maybe you worked ten hours, and the other day maybe 12 hours, depending on the length of the day. You came back by dark, you had to be counted again on the field to know that everybody is there, and then you went to the barrack. You couldn't get out of the barrack after — as a matter of fact, I think when it was good and dark, you were not able to get out, so that time changed. There was a curfew hour. Always.

Harper: When did they feed you?

HOEKSTRA: They fed you when you come back at night. Sometimes at lunchtime, when they felt like it, they brought some food out to the field where we were, and sometimes not. At one time, I think when I worked in the woods and we had to chop trees and bring them out, I think we got extra food. At lunchtime they came with a truck, and we had some kind of porridge-type thing that they brought out in the middle of the day. So actually you got less food than the people in the camp, because they had a lunchtime, but you were outdoors and I preferred that very much.

In the very beginning I worked in the hospital for about four weeks, and I just couldn't take it. It was not my kind of thing to do because there was nothing you could do for these people. You could just be nice to them and that was all. There was nothing of any kind of a comfort you could give them, physical comfort. But when you worked in a hospital like my mother, she got one egg a month and two little cubes of butter, extra, for this hospital work. I don't know why they did it, but it's extra food they got. You had no way to fix the egg either — that was very nice — so you had to eat it raw somehow [chuckling].

In the very beginning, when we were transferred from Barneveld to Westerbork, we were able to get letters in and out. You had a double sheet. You could send a letter out, and there was another part to it, a perforated part, and that perforated part they could send back to you. So you were able to have communication with the outside world. That stopped very soon after we came. Maybe two or three months after that, that was just cut out. You couldn't do that anymore. The same thing with a package of food, which you could get in the beginning when we were there, first month or so, of a certain weight. It went through a kind of a control-type thing, and they opened it up. Most of the time they stole half of it, at least half, and then you got it, and you had a certain little tag that you could send back for the next package. That was also changed after three or four months. That was the end of that. So in the beginning it looked like you had some decent communication, but it stopped very early.

When we did have communication, we usually had a code, which we never had arranged beforehand. We used jokes that we used to make to tell people what was going on in the outside world. For one thing, they told me my how my

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brother made it out of the train and made it home. In some kind of a code-type of way we figured that he did make it home. One time my future sister-in-law sent us little pancakes in this package that we got. Obviously she had put some messages in them, but we didn't know, so we ate the pancake. We never got the message; we ate it up. So it was kind of very weird things. And one time my brother-in-law was able to send two packages. I still have the little tin. It was a hexagon, and he sent four eggs in it. They fitted just exactly in that little tin. I was able to save that tin all through the years that I was there, and I took it home and now I have brown sugar in it. So that's my concentration camp little thing [laughs]. There were weird things that you are able to save.

So after we were liberated, by the way, it took us a long time before we were home, several months before we were let out. While we were liberated, or in the same couple of days after liberation, a bunch of collaborators mixed with us in the camp; that was a very scary time. The war was not over, but we were liberated by Canadians, and we were under Canadian supervision, and we had all these people that we didn't know. They said they were caught in crossfire, they didn't know where to go, and they saw this camp and they thought maybe that's a place to be. The Canadians didn't trust it. We didn't even catch on. The Canadians thought they must be collaborators that didn't know where to go, and of course they go to where the Jews are. That's a very safe place.

So they told us to check them out, and we did that. There were girls that said, "I don't know. I was so scared. There was all this shooting." And it turned out that in their bra they had the little insignia from the SS friend that they had, sewed in, which was very stupid. They were so dumb to hang on to that kind of thing. And in their purses they had sewn in a picture of their boyfriend in SS uniform. We then knew that there were several of the collaborators among us, and we had to be very carefully checked before we were let out of that camp. You had to be able to make contact with the people outside who testified who you were, that you had a place to go, and things like that.

It's very funny — when we came in the camp, they took our luggage and we had to leave it in one certain barrack. We couldn't take it. Then they dropped everything out, and they took any kind of a valuable, and you saw them having this fun of torturing you, actually, that way. They took your belongings; they just took it away and they laughed. It was very much fun.

Now when we found out that these collaborators were among us, we had to check them, and I was among the people who had to sit there and check them out. You undress them and find out what's going on, and you get very smart in finding out whether or not they had anything to hide. So you cut the purses open, because between the linings they did this, and then you found whatever, this incriminating thing you found.

And I still remember that feeling, what it felt like. It's very funny because it's a

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very ugly feeling, but I enjoyed every minute of it. And that's what's so ugly about it. It was *fun* to do this. You outsmarted them and you caught them, being nasty and mean, and yet it was a very unenhancing feeling as a person. In other words, you feel that this hatred which you can have, kind of lives in everybody if you feed them the right way.

There was a book that was written in Dutch called *It Lives in All of Us.* These nasty things anybody can do if you are driven to do this, and of course, it makes you understand how people who are from the beginning taught that Jews are rats and terrible and they are this high, and they tell them that, they get these feelings. You can train many people to be feeling — even though those people probably personally had no experience of something done to them, which we had. But it is the same feeling, the same very ugly feeling. I wouldn't want to do it again, but at the time I kind of enjoyed catching them because they were the ones that were the bad ones.

Harper: In the camp, who were your friends?
HOEKSTRA: I had no friends.

Harper: You didn't have any friends?
HOEKSTRA: No, no friends. You didn't attempt to make friends; it was too dangerous because they leave most of the time. I had some people that I played chess with once in a while. I met a couple of people that were in the same camp, in the same barrack, and who I vaguely remember. We met in a kibbutz last year in Israel, two women. We knew about each other, but we were not friends. We were not *not* friends either. You were just a capsule, by itself. It's interesting you asked that. I even didn't have the desire to make friends, and I don't know why that is. Maybe it would cost too much emotional effort to make friends and hang on to them. I think maybe that's what it is.

Harper: Did you have an emotional support network at all? Of people?
HOEKSTRA: No. Maybe my parents in a way, but I think they didn't have anything left over to give either. You just don't have it. You just barely make it on your own and that's about it. What you do, you try to help people, like in the hospital you try to help people, and things like that. I never thought about it to that point, but you're right. I did not really have any friends. At all.

Harper: Did you notice any religious observance in the camp?
HOEKSTRA: Very little. Now I don't know if it has to do with the fact that when I was in the camp I was mainly either working, or in the barrack. The barrack was the baptized Jews, of course, and the intellectual Jews, and I think that in general the intellectual Jews were not very observant Jews. They were very assimilated in Holland. And the baptized ones probably were — well, they certainly were not observing the Jewish religion, and I think that they probably didn't do anything much with the others either. So I didn't see it, no.

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Harper: Did you know where the transports were headed?
HOEKSTRA: No. Never.

Harper: Did you have any idea of what was going on in Poland?
HOEKSTRA: None. I had absolutely no idea, but I knew somehow, intuitively, if I ever leave here I will not come back. I won't make it. Which wasn't true because most of this group went to Theresienstadt and many of them survived. But I had a feeling that if we come out of Holland, it's not going to work, because they wouldn't even attempt to make any effort to make it seem like it wasn't all that bad. I figured that as soon as we are over this border they will either kill us right away or they will torture us. Something will be very wrong.

That's one of the reasons I think that — in the first place I was grown up with the idea the harder you work the more chance you have to be successful in whatever you do. Along with that I had the feeling as long as I can stay healthy and be valuable somehow I maybe can stay here. That's probably the only way I will survive. That was my feeling. The funny thing is that it would have been a lot easier to be in hiding because I wouldn't have to work that hard, but I couldn't do that. I could work hard because it feels like you are not passive, and you are actively trying to accomplish something, which is not a guarantee at all.

My father probably would not have survived if it would have been a little longer. He was just drained emotionally and physically. However, it was very funny, he had a very serious ulcer before the time that we went to the camp, and he had no problem with the ulcer at all. It was overruled by other things. Some of the people that had certain sicknesses, they just vanished under the pressure of other problems, strangely enough.

Harper: When did you find out about what happened to all the Jews?
HOEKSTRA: Much, much later.

Harper: After the war?
HOEKSTRA: Yes. Much, much later after the war, and not directly after the war either. It took *months,* maybe half a year before we knew anything at all, and probably even longer before we knew about the gas chambers. Of course, we knew from other people within a couple of months who were coming back from Dachau and Buchenwald. There were some people that were surviving, and they were found by the Americans and finally made it back. So they told us about the torture and the horrible things they went through in all the other camps because — I don't know how many camps were there, over 100 camps — Dachau, everywhere, Mauthausen. So those things we found out fairly soon, within maybe several months, because they had to repatriate to Holland, and they had to come and they were sometimes so sick they couldn't even leave the camp. But the gas chambers was much, much later.

Harper: In Westerbork, did they shave you or tattoo you or anything?

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HOEKSTRA: They did not. No. Only when you were punished in a certain way they might shave you. They punish you and take your hairs off. But no tattoo and no number. I've never understood. The only number that I know, the only numbering was done in Auschwitz. And I never understood — I've seen survivors that had their number taken off, and I would have *never* taken it off. I can see in a way it's a fear because it's a very obvious sign of what you are. I had a doctor in Eindhoven after the war. He was my doctor for my fifth child. He was in in Auschwitz. He survived. His wife didn't make it. His son didn't make it. And he did have his number.

Harper: Tell me more about liberation. You were liberated again when?

HOEKSTRA: By the Canadians. I think it was the 14th of April; I have the dates somewhere. 14th of April in '45. So that was before the end of the war. By the Canadians. It was very interesting because, as I said, during the night the Germans had left. They left us without anybody and we were afraid, but we heard the shooting and then the tanks drove up. It wasn't on the map, the camp, for the Canadians, so they all of a sudden saw these ugly-looking people. They were not washed and they were not particularly attractive looking, and so they were putting the tank, the cover on because they didn't know what it was. They finally found out, coming closer, that we had stars and all that kind of thing. Then the majority of those troops went on to the main city to conquer — Groningen, which is a big city. They left a contingent of tanks around the camp. Every 400-500 feet there was a tank.

They didn't talk much with us at all, didn't communicate very much, and we were very scared after a while because — in the meantime we saw some Germans that didn't do anything to us. It was German army, no SS or Green Police or anything, just army people. There were a couple of old people — now I say old, but they were probably like maybe 55 or 60 — men with bazookas on bicycles, or 14-, 15-year-old boys. That was all they had left. They had no fuel, nothing. They were reduced to nothing, that army. Some were on the roads, and they didn't even — they were oblivious about the camp. They probably were away from their units or something.

So when the Canadians came, and they put those tanks down there, didn't say much to us, they started digging holes, quite a big hole — not very big, but maybe a four feet across — and then they threw gasoline in there and they ignited it. And all of a sudden we were scared to death that they were not Canadians at all, but that they were Germans in Canadian uniform and were going to burn us. You know what that was for? It was for the afternoon tea [laughs], the most bizarre thing, particularly bizarre because the Germans had not even any fuel to run anything, and they just put it right in the ground and they had to have their afternoon tea.

Then after a while I think the Canadians had some kind of an official high general or something who was head of the camp and started to make the

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regulations so that people could be identified, who they were, and be registered as whatever they were. Of course the war was still going, so they didn't do a heck of a lot of effort to do anything with the Jews there. They just kept the camp, and then we were on our own organizing how we would live. It was a city, so we just went on being a city, and then it was quite a bit later when the surrender happened, actually. And then we had to stay several months there.

We went home on a big truck. My brother who had jumped out of the train, somehow he got hold of a truck somewhere and drove up to the camp and took us home with a bunch of other people that had to go to different cities. So we went back to Utrecht, and from there we went and got in touch with our son. My husband came to the camp after he was liberated, so we all went back home basically together, but we had no home anymore. It was the place where my future sister-in-law lived. It was an apartment.

Then we went to see our son in the place where we knew he was. I never knew the place where he was; I never wanted to know. People say, "How come you didn't want to know?" I say, "Because I couldn't tell them." They say, "But you would never tell them where your son is." I said, "How would I know? They might pull my nails out, pull my teeth, and then I'll talk. I probably will talk." So I didn't know, but my husband knew where he was. We went there planning to stay there for a couple of days and have him get used to us a little to take him home.

The first thing I remember very well, the girl — he was in a family where there was a girl about 23 years old that took care of him. She was a kindergarten teacher, very nice girl. Her mom had the supervision because she [the girl] never had a child, so she kind of supervised what she did. And the girl said that she couldn't take that. She said, "I wished you would have never come back." I can see now why she said that, but it didn't feel very good [laughing]. "We hoped you just never would come back." Because they had that boy a good three years; he grew up there. Then we told her what our plan was, and they said no, "I can't take that. You'd better take him home right now." So he was hiding behind somebody's skirts, and he just felt terrible because there was all these strange people.

We took him home to Utrecht in an apartment, third floor — while he had been in that mansion, with beautiful gardens and all that. He still loves lilies of the valley. They had lilies of the valley a lot. The girl went with us, the girl that took care of him, to bring us all there, and then she said, "I'll be back for you tonight." So he had been sitting there in front of the window until 3:00 AM at night, and she never came back. He was pretty miserable. She didn't show up anymore. It was a pretty rough thing. He had no place to go, no place to play, and we had no home either. We had no house. We then rented a floor from, I think it was a minister, and he had some part of the house that he rented out. That's where we went with him, and my future brother-in-law. Then we got

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married, within three weeks. We walked up to the courthouse and just got married there.

My husband was the first one to get a job, from everybody. He got a job for the railroads, semi-railroads, because all the railroads were bombed, and he got his diploma from that junior college. He hadn't been there the last half-year, but his performance was so that they just gave him the diploma. They said, "We think that you're a valuable student, so here. You graduated." So he got a job, and he was the first one to have money. Nobody had money. All the money was declared worthless at that time, so nobody could buy anything in the whole country for about a week. He got a paycheck, so we all lived off of his paycheck.

We rented this place where he got the job. It was on a canal, and there was a house with it, so we were very fortunate. There were no windows in it because they were all shot out by artillery, and so many of the people we knew gave us little pieces of glass from the pictures they had. We had wood, and a piece of glass, and wood. So we had some light in the house. That's where we started to start living again, and we got the twins within eight months or something like that and started a more or less normal life.

The funny thing is that I think that picking up your life somehow seemed like it wasn't such a big deal at the time, but it got to be a bigger deal. The longer it was a go, the more like spooks from the past came to visit you. Immediately after there was too much to do. You were so occupied with somehow making a life that you didn't think about it all that much, but more and more you started thinking about it. And of course in this day and age with all the horrible things going on with ethnic cleansing, which makes you ill, more and more it means more to you what happened. You said at the time, "This will never happen again." Of course, it's not true.

Harper: So in other words, gradually you began to feel uncomfortable living there? Is that safe to say?

HOEKSTRA: You mean in the very beginning?

Harper: It strikes me as odd that you were able to pick up with your life after all this had happened.

HOEKSTRA: It was odd, but it seemed that at the time you needed all your energy to start living. And you had a family; you had three kids pretty soon, and my husband had his job. And you had nothing. There was nothing that you got back from anything we lost. My father again was in Delft, like he was years before, and started living there. We tried to pick up and start to be normal and feel relatively comfortable because at the time everybody was so upset what happened to you, and everybody was so happy to see you back, and we were happy that it was over and we were liberated. Everything seemed like it was just a bad dream you could forget, which of course wasn't true because that bad

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dream came to visit you little by little. And as soon as you were not totally occupied by trying to make a living for your family, it more and more came back to you again. So we very soon decided to go to the States and be very far away from this area because we never trusted that the Germans wouldn't do the same thing all over again.

Harper: What do you feel towards the gentile Dutch people?

HOEKSTRA: For some of them we felt not particularly very pleasant, some of the so-called friends my father had who took all these things that they could use in their house. Many of them said, "Oh, how wonderful you're back! I'm so glad that you made it alive. But we have bad news. You know that linen that we had from you? You have no idea. We had this maid, and she stole it. Now it's awful, but just be glad you're alive." Well, I think one of their daughters got married, and the linen was right on the table. So they just [laughs] — it wasn't particularly very nice.

Many gentiles also, during the time before we were caught in the camp and they couldn't visit us in our home, they didn't even contact us anymore. What they said was, "We never see you." "Yes, but we can't visit, and so maybe we can see each other in a park" — in the time that there was no curfew. They said, "It's so terrible. We just hate to see you in this misery. We just can't see you that miserable." The point was that it made them miserable to look at us. So gradually you found they weren't really much of a friend. They just didn't want to see you because it made them feel bad.

It turned out that you found out very much who your friends were. Like the woman that worked for us for many, many years who helped us hide our son was wonderful. She also was hiding one of my uncles who was married, with a mixed marriage, and so they didn't take him but it looked like they would, and so he was staying with her for a month in her house. She had a husband and three kids. She took all that risk just to hide him. He was under the floor in her house. She had a boarding house for students.

They came in, the Germans, and they said, "You must hide a Jew because there's more milk used in this house then normal." You had to watch all those things. She said, "I don't know what you're talking about." She had a poker face. They said, "Oh, no? He's probably under the floor here. That's what people do." She said, "I don't know." So they took this machine gun and rattled the floor, didn't hit him, and she just never, never moved a muscle in her face. She died five, six years ago. My uncle did survive and was at the funeral. He was in his '80s.

There were a lot of those people that put their life in danger, and those were usually the friends that were not necessarily your circle of business friends. Those didn't turn out to be very much good, at all. I think we felt more Jewish after the war than before, more isolated.

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Harper: Surely you knew of the destruction of the Dutch Jewry. This is a difficult question, but how did you feel knowing that the vast majority of the Dutch Jews didn't make it?

HOEKSTRA: We felt, in the first place, very blessed that we did, which is very egotistic, but that was — very nice [facetiously] — the first thing you think about. Then like I said, the first thing you felt was, "We better get out of here because they'll do it again." So we put to immigrate to the States.

Harper: What year was that?

HOEKSTRA: Right away in '46, and we got out of there in '58. It took that long.

Harper: So you stayed . . .

HOEKSTRA: The contingent was closed, and then they said we couldn't get this, and then there was another restriction — which they did quite a bit in America — so we stayed there for many, many years. '58 all of a sudden the papers came. We almost had thought it wouldn't go through anymore, and then we got the papers. It was very difficult because we had five kids at that time. The oldest one was sixteen, the youngest was six, and my husband had a pretty good career at Philips Electronics. We had to make the decision, "What will we do? Pick up now with five kids to America at this age?" We were in our late 30s. We thought about it and thought about it. Then there was this uprising in Hungary, and that kind of gave us the feeling we were right to get out of here. We just had to get out.

We talked about it for another three days, and finally he said, "Let's take a walk." We took a walk, and we made lists of the pros and the cons of going, and the risk of going here without having a job and no health insurance with five kids. There was this total balance. One thing was risky. The other thing was risky. So we finally said, "We have to go on gut feelings. It's the only way we have." The gut feeling was, "Let's do it." And we did. I've never been sorry.

My husband said he's sorry, or my ex-husband. He knew very well that he had to take a cut in his position, that it was a setback in his career. It was another language and very much another style of living. For one thing, the hierarchy was hard to recognize here. He was in middle management, and the director of the factory, you don't call him by their first name, you say Mr. So-and-So. You know exactly your position. Here it's, "Hi, Joe! Playing golf tomorrow?" And yet he's your boss. So it's difficult for a man in his profession to know his place in that structure, and he knew this all intellectually very well, but he didn't figure out how hard it would hit him. He felt that it set him back too much. He didn't know where he was, and it was difficult. I think he would have been just as miserable in Holland for that matter, but we knew we had to get out of there because we just didn't trust the whole situation.

We felt, particularly after the war — you said, "How did you feel about the

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Jewry?" I think, like I said, that I felt more of a Jew after the war than before. I felt a little closer to the other Jews, the few that were left. I also realized much more that there was this more-or-less latent antisemitism in Holland. They fed this flame during the war. In other words, many of the people now were obviously antisemitism, but before the war they would not have shown that, so there was more of an isolation after the war.

Now my parents stayed in Holland. They were older. My father was a very well known man in the technical world and worked for the government and the technical institute in Delft. As a matter of fact, there's a plaque there for him in the technical university. I think the fact that most of the Jews were gone from Holland was something that we — I think the effect it had on us was more that of being very grateful that we were there, and being very well aware of the fact that this was done to Jews and it will be done again somehow. Even here I feel not that comfortable. Do you? In Eugene they shot at the synagogue.

I have a brother in America who came to the states in '38. The day we arrived he picked us up from the airplane, which was very nice. When we came to his home, he had people visiting, and they asked how it was in Holland, and if we went through the war and how it was with bombs. I said, "I don't know because I was in the camp most of the time." He [the brother] said, "I wish you wouldn't talk about that." I said, "Why? That's much of my life." He said, "I've lived in New York, and it's not so pleasant to tell everybody you're a Jew."

And he really doesn't want to know that he's a Jew. He's very much a Jew though [laughs]. He somehow almost denies it and makes me feel very uncomfortable. We're very close in a way, and yet we're not. I don't know whether it's guilt feelings he has or plain fear. When he was in New York and in that area, there were many places he wasn't supposed to come, some clubs he wasn't supposed to be in. There's a lot of antisemitism here too. I don't know how much worse it is on the East Coast, but I guess it is worse.

Harper: When did you come to Portland?

HOEKSTRA: In '58. We came directly to the West Coast. My husband had actually a job back east; he was promised a job in a factory. That was how come we could go, because you either had to have a sponsor or you had to have some money, which we didn't have, or a job. They were very nice. We didn't want to go to the East Coast. We wanted to go to the West Coast. We studied the climate, and he decided that the West Coast was much more like Holland than the East Coast, and it was less populated, and he had studied economics. He said, "I think we're better off on the West Coast, so let's go there." We had the job on the East Coast, so they were very willing and very friendly to hold the job for two months on the East Coast. If we would not be able to find a job here, my husband would go back to the East Coast and then we would come later. He did find a job here within two months at Omark Industries, and so we settled here and we're happy to be on the West — we decided if we did go to the East Coast

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first, we probably wouldn't make another move with five kids at that age. You probably get settled and then you don't do it again. We wanted to end up on the West Coast.

Harper: Were you at all involved in the Jewish Community here when you moved here?

HOEKSTRA: No, not at all. Not at all. In the beginning, not in the Jewish community, but we actually used the contact with the Jewish — my oldest son, who is the one that was in hiding, had problems to adjust here, and then he wanted to go in the Marines but he didn't do that. Anyway, we had some problems, and we thought we'd better get help. Having grown up in a circle of people that go to psychologists if they have a problem, or to a psychiatrist, we said, "We'd better find somebody to help him because we think it's time." So we sent him to a psychologist.

He was always very open with me, amazingly so. We have this special contact, and yet we have this hiatus in our history. He was telling us this doctor did funny things, and it turned out that this doctor was a homosexual who attacked him during the sessions. I felt, "Heck, this is terrible." So I told my husband, "We got in a terrible situation, and instead of helping him we got a problem here." I said, "What are we going to do?" Because we found this man in the yellow pages. So my husband said, "Let's go to a rabbi. Maybe he can do something" [laughs].

So we went to Rabbi Rose and told him what happened, and said, "The fact that he's homosexual doesn't bother me, but he somehow attacked our boy. So instead of helping him we got more problems." And so Rabbi Rose said, "I'll take care of it." I said, "I don't really want to have this man hurt in any way, but I do want to have this stopped." He said, "Do you want me to handle it, or don't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "And I will." Well, the next day the office was closed and the man was gone.

In other words, when we were in trouble we went to the Rabbi, but we haven't been involved in the Jewish community as such. Now that I got older, I had more of a feeling of, not particularly being involved, but I felt that I should go to Israel for quite some time, and I waited until I was retired to do that. To do something for somebody who survived it, and many of the older people are the people that could have been my grandparents or parents or whatever. So I'm glad I went there, and since I had been there, I feel a little bit more — not particularly close to Jewish community but maybe a little bit more involved. Of course, I've met more people. David Bluhm was the one who organized [inaudible] to go.

By the way, all our children are married to non-Jews, so that makes it a little bit more difficult to be very much in the Jewish community. However, they all feel quite Jewish, and the granddaughter that Sylvia met is very Jewish. I don't know where she gets it, but she can be more of a Jew than I am in a way, so it

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must be in the genes somehow because she hasn't been exposed to anything more than what I am.

The kids, of course, in the Jewish religion or in Jewish tradition, are all Jews because I'm a Jew, so they all should be Jews, and they're three-quarters actually. But they don't feel Jewish that much. They feel related to it, but they're not really religiously a Jew. Since I was brought up with the Ten Commandments — my husband, whose father is a minister, he was kind of a hypocritical man, and so he doesn't believe that much in that either. The Ten Commandment style, which was the Old Testament style, was the style of living we had, but it wasn't very much involved with the religion.

What's very funny, when my oldest boy joined the Marines Corps, he was the only one in the Marine Corps who was not circumcised, and he's the only Jew. We on purpose didn't have him circumcised. We thought it was very tricky because in Holland it isn't done, only by the Jews. We thought that was one way they could recognize him as a Jew, so on purpose we did not have that done. But it was very strange here. So he sent the Jewish Bible to my house, and it was very interesting.

I've been a couple of times to the synagogue here, and I have a man on the end of the road who is a landscaper who is a Jew, and he kind of came back to the Jewish religion through the way his life went. He's about in his 40s, I think, so I went with him a couple of times, and I do not feel necessarily *not* at home, but I don't feel at home. I don't feel the need to join the religious part of it at all, but I do feel very much a Jew somehow.

Harper: Have you been back to Holland?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, several times.

Harper: Do you have any message for the future generations who may be watching this tape?
HOEKSTRA: The main message is to be very much on guard for any discrimination for any group of people. Like this yucky guy, this [Maybom?], who tries to, in all kind of nasty rotten ways with double sentences, to get people into voting for something that they really don't even know what they're voting for, but basically discrimination. I think they have to be very much on guard for anything like this. I think that's the main message, that you shouldn't discriminate for any reason at all, for race, or creed, or any of those kinds of things, and being very much aware of how sometimes this is very much hidden in some political way and you have to watch very much what you do.

And in general, be aware of what goes on around you. I think that this feeling that you kind of — what was the name of the man? Gideon. You know how he hired his soldiers, Gideon? We had a little cat we called Gideon. There were several tests he did. He asked them how good a fighter they were, and then he

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let them drink out of the stream. If they were drinking like this, he didn't hire them, but if they were drinking like that, he did. So they should have to be aware of their environment, of what goes on all the time. In other words, be on guard of what's going on around you.

Sadly enough, I always refused to be a bitter old lady, and I don't think I'm bitter, but I'm not necessarily as trusting as I used to be. At all. I think that's part of what you get, and I think that's part of what I would like to leave as a warning. It's not a very nice thing to do because it means that you will not grow up with very much faith in mankind. But I think people aren't all that nice in general, so we have to watch them, and that's kind of a sad message actually. But it's probably maybe very much of a survival thing, I believe.

Harper: Thank you. I don't have any more questions.
HOEKSTRA: I have a heck of a lot more things that I want to tell. I can't tell it all, but I can tell you some other stuff.

Female Voice: I have a question about the children in the camp. You mentioned that if somebody was being punished, they punished their loved ones. Were they punishing the children?
HOEKSTRA: Yes. They were scaring them, and they were herding them up in a group, and they couldn't play, or they couldn't go out, or — I think you asked, Eric, if there were schools in Westerbork. I haven't seen much of a school. Some people attempted to maybe have a little class for singing, or maybe embroidery if she can get hold of some thread or something. And if we had any of those things for kids, they weren't allowed to do that anymore, or they had to stand there for hours in a certain position. Any kind of a thing that would give any pleasure, or anything that could make their lives bearable, was taken away from them if they wanted to punish the parents. So the parents quickly decided we'd better lay low; otherwise, they're going to get the kids. There weren't that many kids because they tried to get rid of kids, see? Because the kids were not workers. Other than in our group, which was this Barneveld group or the people of intellectual Jews, there weren't very many kids in the camp because the kids go on the train.

Female Voice: They deported the kids?
HOEKSTRA: The kids. And of course, if the mother protested, "I don't want my daughter to go." "Then you can go with them." And they probably did, or voluntarily went with them. The main people they kept in the camp were the workers. It was not a place where you saw many old people or many kids because those were worthless for maintaining the camp, or maintaining order or whatever it was. So they went through the very first time when they got a chance. And if they had two transports a week you can get rid of them very quickly, which they did.

Female Voice: Were there many children born in the camp?
HOEKSTRA: Not many. A couple of them, and as soon as they were born, of course, that was

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a death born too because the mother and the baby went. Now I had a cousin who had a child that was born in Bergen-Belsen. They both came back. Miraculously so. I said, "How did you do it? She said, "I don't know, but somehow I . . .." I said, "Well, what did you do just for diapers alone?" She said, "I don't know. I had a rag. I went to the fence, and if the wind was right it clung to the fence and it dried up." I said, "Didn't they take the baby away?" She said, "Most of the time we were hiding it." You see this in some movies; they try to muffle the sound. Somehow the baby survived. She came back with that baby to Amsterdam. The first thing she did was go to the pediatrician and have the child checked over. And he asked, "Did this child have any contact with people with tuberculosis or any other disease?" She said, "Oh, doctor, I don't know. It played all the time on this pile of corpses, so I couldn't tell you." And she survived. Her husband didn't survive, but she did and the baby did. Somehow it must have been a very healthy child. It's amazing. It was about seven months when she was liberated. And Bergen-Belsen was a pretty nasty camp. It was terrible.

Female Voice 2: Did you have contact with the family after that, when you got back to Utrecht, with the family that had your son?

HOEKSTRA: Yes, because they went every vacation, my oldest son as well as my twins went there and stayed at the place, which was very nice. In the meantime, the lady died, and as a matter of fact, the younger lady died also. That was several years ago. But they had contact all the time; they were wonderful people.

Female Voice: Going back to before you were in the camps and they were raiding people's houses. Were they targeting children or infants?

HOEKSTRA: When the raids came? Not particularly children. Any Jew. If they found you and a child, they took both of you. Since we knew that the baby certainly wouldn't survive, we decided to hide the baby because I had the feeling — I didn't know anything about camps, but I knew that they wanted you to work. I knew that. And so I decided with the baby you can't work, and babies don't survive on their own, so you have to get rid of the baby somehow and have them in hiding. But they targeted not just the kids, no. Everybody. All Jews were targeted when they raid at night, and you never knew whether they would come to your house or some other house. You just don't know.

They came into our house one time and scared the heck out of me, asked for me *by name.* It turned out all they wanted to have was some fun. They went through the house, took all kind of things they liked and left, and said, "Oh, we just wanted to have some fun." And while they were asking for me by name, I tried to run to the neighbors over the fence, which was a solid wooden fence. I clambered up there, and finally when I was up there I looked in the face of the SS guy. He said, "You must have a guilty conscience because you're trying to get away." He put a revolver in my back, and I thought I had it, but they were just playing games. So they had some fun and left with a couple of clocks and some other things they wanted, but they could have done something else. You

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just don't know. That's the main thing; you never know. You are constantly in fear of what they do. And they enjoy doing those things, very much.

Female Voice: How did you negotiate having your son in the gentile household?
HOEKSTRA: Through my father. My father knew some very important people, and they knew other people. They heard about it, and they said, "We are willing to take the baby." So I said, "Fine." They were very nice people, and they had a good place, so we said, "That's fine." Because we didn't have much time to think it over, who would take it.

Female Voice: They weren't attempting to adopt?
HOEKSTRA: No, they were just taking him in hiding. After years, of course, they got attached to the boy, and that's how come this girl said, "We wished you would never have come back." Which didn't make you feel very good. They were very wonderful to him. He was probably spoiled there too; he was the only baby. And it was very safe because he was blonde, couldn't say his name, didn't know who he was. I had some little cousins that survived and were in hiding. They were like five and eight. They had to wake them up several weeks in a row, every night, to rehearse what their name was, where they came from, so that if any time they would be questioned, they would know that they were not who they were. We didn't have to go through that.

Female Voice: You talked about how the Germans would slowly take away one thing, and then you would get used to that, and another . . .
HOEKSTRA: Step-by-step.

Female Voice: Right. Do you think that if they had taken away everything all at once, would there have been more conflict, more resistance?
HOEKSTRA: I think so. But that was psychologically very well done by the Germans, and they had that tactic all over the place. It was very smart. Little by little. Then they kind of let you go, and you sleep a little bit, get comfortable with it. It's not all that bad. Then they jolt you into something else. You were very upset for several days, and then it kind of subsided, but little by little — that's why I always thought it's going to get only worse, because every time again they would do something else to you. Every time a little bit worse, but it was so subtle that it was very hard to recognize. And I think it probably was true; they probably would have had more resistance.

Female Voice: Do you think that the Dutch gentiles would have resisted more if they . . .
HOEKSTRA: No, I think the Jews themself would have maybe fought. I mean, we never fought. The gentiles in Holland were not very cooperative. In Denmark they were, very much so. They tried to safeguard them and get them in boats to Sweden, but Holland was not very marvelous in that sense at all. The gentiles were not very cooperative. They felt all very bad, but they rather turned away from it. They kind of looked another way. They didn't want to see the misery, that's all, except some very special people that did wonderful things.

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Female Voice: I was thinking about when you were talking about the registration when you got off the trains, and they set up the stands . . .
HOEKSTRA: Yes, they stand in line.

Female Voice: They're writing down your name. Did that make you feel more safe, in terms of your name was on something, or did it make you feel more marked?
HOEKSTRA: No, it made you feel more — like you said. That was another psychological, very smart thing. It made you feel that at least they keep track of things, and you thought that was a positive thing, but it wasn't at all. It's a typical German attitude. They like all these records; they're very good record keepers. That's what I found at Yad Vashem. They had these death books with the time, with the date when they were born, the date when they died, and the place where they died. They liked to keep those things. But to us it was more like, well, you know they keep track of things. It's organized. So it didn't make you feel *good*, but it certainly didn't make you feel any worse. Not at all; it wasn't more dangerous that way.

Female Voice 2: Along those same lines of the way they worked on you psychologically, what you said was that if you could feel that you had some sense of control [inaudible], and that was towards the end. But do you feel like your ability to survive was because you had that kind of quality from the very beginning?
HOEKSTRA: I think so. Eric and I talked about how I went to a psychologist because I had some terrible anxiety attacks. I choked, just like that [snaps]. They did all kinds of things, laryngoscopies, and there was nothing there. So I finally talked to him, and we talked about the camp. I said, "I don't know if there's any thought particularly about the camp that I think about." That was in connection, I thought, with the divorce, which it wasn't. He said, "You have survival skills." And I said, "Yes, I think I got survival skills through surviving this camp." He said, "As a matter of fact, I don't think so. It might have enhanced them, but you must have had these survival skills to survive the camp." Which is not a guarantee. There were people with survival skills that got pneumonia, and they didn't make it. And I was very sick, but luckily I made it.

But like Eric said, you probably have an innate quality somehow to survive that way, and maybe that control issue is an issue. You can even control, in a neurotic way, yourself. Like stepping on the blue stones, typical neurotic type of thing. I must have some of those qualities, and sometimes they come in very handy because it's almost like a ceremonial type of thing, a ritual. Like I thought if I touched my one finger with this finger, then I could have some control, that kind of thing. That control issue, I think, is important in that type of thing.

Female Voice 2: And they were systematically taking away your sense of self.
HOEKSTRA: Yes, you had nothing. You had nothing at all.

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Female Voice 2: And I think that's where taking away little by little, it constantly wears you down, your sense of person down.

HOEKSTRA: Yes, and so if you don't find that in yourself somehow, or with discipline of certain thoughts you should have, or a discipline of a certain type of ritual you should do before you go to sleep or when you get up. Something that they cannot take away from you that way. You're right, it is that control that makes you probably survive a little easier, and maybe a sense of optimism because of that. I don't know.

One of my little granddaughters has this compulsive type of control thing. She liked horses and she liked birds a lot, so my daughter made her a little pillow with a bird on one side and a horse on the other. They went camping, and my daughter said, "Everybody puts his own stuff over there" — I think she was five or six years old — and "You can all take one little toy." She had her pillow there. She [the mother] said, "I'm sorry, but we can't take that pillow. We just don't have the room." "I need that pillow!" She [the mother] said. "You can't take it. There's just no way." She [the girl] said, "But I don't know how to leave it here." She [the mother] said, "Put it on your bed." She [the girl] said, "But I don't know if I should put the horse up or the bird, because every night I turn them." So she [the mother] said, "I don't care." She was busy; she had three kids. She said, "Just leave it somehow." And she did. She came home, and the first thing she did was go to her room and turn it the amount of times of nights that she had been away, so the right thing was up.

She has that kind of compulsive, neurotic type of thing, but it is a control issue. She's a fantastic runner; that's another thing of control, I think. She's a long-distance runner. She's now 16, but she still has that quality. If you steer that the right way, I think, you can survive things just because you make it that way. You fabricate it one way or the other.

I can show you a couple of the things that I have, that I brought, if you want to. Okay. On the corners of the camp, where they usually were standing there with machine guns, and so they — and they had the lights over there, so at night they can shine the light and see whoever comes close to that wire.

Female Voice: And when did you make the drawing?

HOEKSTRA: That was after we were liberated and waiting, not while we were there. Let's see. Yes, that was interesting, but you can't photograph it. You asked me, I think, Eric, whether I was involved in the Jewish community. We were not, but somehow I guess maybe in connection with the fact that my father . . .

Female Voice: Can you explain those [inaudible]?

HOEKSTRA: Yes. Now this was in connection probably with the fact that my father had done quite a bit for Palestine at the time, helping them in technical ways. We were placed on that list to go to Palestine in 1943, and we got that notice while we were in Barneveld, in the first camp, in 1943. Of course, that list exploded,

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never anything came out of it.

Now that's the ID we had to have. I can put both things on there [she seems to be going through items and taking them out to be photographed]. That's the "J." You had a stamp. Everybody had to have an ID card with a fingerprint, but only the Jews had a "J." I can put two things on there if you want to.

Female voice: That's your picture?
HOEKSTRA: That's a picture of me, and that is the star. I don't know where to hang the star.

Harper: Why don't you put it against the white?
HOEKSTRA: That's a good idea.

Female Voice 2: That's what you had on the vest, that star?
Female Voice: You made a vest?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, like these nice little vests that we have here, that the kids have. It's very fashionable. We did that because you had only a few of those, and you had to have them on at all times. If you didn't have them on you were stuck, so if you had another dress on you could put . . .

Female Voice 2: So you sewed it onto a vest?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, so you could change that. You had to figure out how to do that.

Female Voice 2: Is that a felt?
HOEKSTRA: No, it is cotton. You had to buy them, and you had to sew them up yourself, and you had to pay textile points for them. You see all these same things, and the interesting thing I never realized, but now I do — I saw the ones with the "*Jude*" and the "*Jode*" in different languages, but the letter type was always the same, and it reminds you of a Hebrew type of letter. That's probably on purpose. I never realized why they made them this way; that's not how you normally write your "J." Now that's one of the cards, but you can hardly see that. That's in Westerbork, the card when you go out in the field, the time is stamped on that.

Harper: It's a time card?
HOEKSTRA: It's like a time card, yes. It's a labor card, they called it.

Harper: Can I get the [inaudible]?
HOEKSTRA: Sure. That is one of those letters that we could receive. It said, "Antwoord Brief Mode [?]." This was perforation. You send the letter out of the camp, and that enables you then to get this part, which was blank, sent back to the camp, and that was allowed.

Female Voice: Is that Dutch?
HOEKSTRA: This is Dutch. So you can't really see it. That's my — do you want this on there?

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Female Voice: Yes.
HOEKSTRA: How?

Female Voice: You can remove one of the others.
HOEKSTRA: Okay. So that is addressed to us. That might be . . .

Harper: Can I lay these back?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, put them there. That's no problem. I don't know — there are many things here that are Dutch. It doesn't mean a thing to you. It would not be very explanatory at all. These are copies that I had made. I'm trying to hang on to these things like iron because I want to — this is a cute thing. My father made that after the liberation. There's the date. Yes, the twelfth of April is when we were — that was another one of those materials from the airplane.

Female Voice: Why don't you just hold that one?
Female Voice 2: You were liberated on the 14th, did you say?
HOEKSTRA: On April the 12th. The date and the month is reversed in Dutch, so it's a different thing. This is interesting. Partly in Dutch, partly in English. It's after the war, to show that my father is needed for the mines of something, so that he could get out of the camp. It was in a military command of the Canadians. That enabled him to get out of the camp before we were liberated, before we could go home, because they needed his expertise for something, I don't know what for.

Now this — you asked me if I was involved somehow. I was to a point. That was the *Judenradt* for Amsterdam, that is the Jewish Community, and on the other side it is an ID card because I taught some embroidery to those kids that were in orphanages. That was very sad because you had 12 kids and the next week there were ten. Little by little they just left. But that's what I did for the Jewish deal, and that's a German proof that I was allowed to go there. We had to have all these "nice" things. You want this probably.

Female Voice: Yes, why don't you just . . . ?
HOEKSTRA: I take it off?

Female Voice: No, that's okay.
HOEKSTRA: I can take it off. I never do. Everybody asks me how come I don't wear a Star of David instead [laughs]. Of course.

Female Voice: Can you explain this again, please?
HOEKSTRA: This is a machine part. It's called a truss bearing, and it's out of a . . .

Female Voice: You have to stand back farther, sorry.
HOEKSTRA: Here? It's a part of an airplane. American airplanes. They were shot down by the Germans. We had a whole heap of those things in the camp, when they

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dismantled the airplane and melted the metal they needed. So after we were liberated, I just took four of five of these for fun, to remember things. I hung them on a necklace. I wore three of them out, and this is my last one. Strangely enough, it's a machine pipe, but just hanging on a necklace and going back and forth all the time wears them out, and so I just have one left. Maybe I can . . .

Female Voice: And you wear it instead of a Star of David?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, I wear it all the time.

Female Voice: Do you know why?
HOEKSTRA: It's kind of a talisman-type thing. It's control again kind of, you know?

Female Voice 2: It's a reminder.
HOEKSTRA: It's a constant reminder, which you need somehow to do these things. Let's see. I think that many of these things are just not particularly for this . . .

Female Voice 2: It kind of transforms it.
HOEKSTRA: Yes, it does. Let's see.

Harper: That one has the signatures of Asher and Cohen. They were the leaders of the — make a photocopy of a few things? Or let's bring them back, and I can make . . .
HOEKSTRA: Yes, I can make a photocopy of the things that are interesting enough. Anything Dutch probably is uninteresting.

Harper: For example, I want a copy of this.
HOEKSTRA: Yes, because those are all the wires they had, different colors . . .

Harper: Is it a belt?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, he made a belt for me. And it was a big one of those things, real big, that I had as a closure. But it was after the war. We had to wait so long, and so we just made all these things.

Female Voice 2: Canadians liberated some of the camps?
HOEKSTRA: Yes, the Canadians liberated the north of Holland because the Americans were in the south. They were south, and they went into Germany from there.

Female Voice 2: Have you had any contact with them?
HOEKSTRA: No, absolutely not. I think they were told probably, by their commanders, to not have contact much, not personal contact. They made it very much of a point, "Do not talk with these people."

Female Voice 2: Because they didn't speak Dutch probably, either.
HOEKSTRA: No, but we spoke English somehow; you could make yourself understood. But there was very little contact. I think that was part of their policy to not do that, to come close. Now if there would have been Canadian Jews, maybe they

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would have, but I don't believe there were. Now there were quite a few *American* Jews that liberated the camps, and they had more contact.

Female Voice 2: My father actually did, but not in Holland, He was in . . .
HOEKSTRA: Where did he go? Germany?

Female Voice 2: In Germany, yes.
HOEKSTRA: And he liberated camps? How wonderful. Where did he? What did he liberate?

Eline Dresden Hoekstra Bio

Eline Dresden Hoekstra was born in The Hague, the Netherlands, in 1923. She describes her life before the Nazi occupation of Holland, her years in Barneveld, a concentration camp in the Netherlands, and continuing her life after the war.

Eline was an outgoing and independent child living in Utrecht with her parents and brother and sister. Before the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, she remembers living a well-off life with dreams of becoming a doctor. She had her first son during the occupation and remembers walking home from the hospital with her newborn son and a new Star of David stitched onto her coat. She had to put her son into hiding when he was just a few months old. Soon after, Eline and her parents were sent to Westerbork transit camp with other "intellectual" Jews. From there they were transported to Barneveld, where she and her parents survived the war and were liberated by the Canadian army. After the war, Eline never felt safe in Europe again, and in 1958 immigrated with her husband and four children.

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