

WORLD WAR II - DR VAN RAALTE

200 take 1

Q: The first thing I'd like to talk to you about is um at the very beginning of the war in May 1940 what were your feelings when the war started and in the Germans arrived in Holland?

A: Well I was a soldier by then in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam and of course we were very much upset, as a matter of fact I was on the phone watch the very night and heard about um well I think 1 o'clock in the morning that er there were some planes coming from east and we had a faint hope it might be meant for England and just crossing the Dutch borders but er after hour or so ~~was~~ it was clear to everyone that it was landing in Holland itself because there came rumours about the crossing of border by ground troops too. And um well what we boys in our battery thought about it - we were upset and we worked very hard at our guns and all that and then we had the first skirmishes about um I think 6 o'clock in the morning when they were bombing Z.... (name) and we were in the neighbourhood for the defence of ..... (name)

Q: Did you um were you aware ~~was~~ straightaway that it represented a particular and special danger to you because you were Jewish.

A: Yes of course, of course there hadn't been no doubt about it about ever since in 1933 um we'd read what Hitler said and so the Jews had a firm belief in what he'd prophesied, I actually believed that yes. He would do away with us I believed that.

Q: And after the, after the fighting had stopped did your life then go back to normal or did you start to think about escape or what happened then

A: Well personally/<sup>I</sup> didn't make a move in a direction because my wife was ill at the moment, very moment, she was in the hospital but um my Jewish captain tried to escape with his Jewish wife. He didn't succeed he afterwards succeeded and actually reached England, I think in '42 or '43 may be '41 I don't know, but I didn't try to escape but if I had had the chance I would have.

200 take 1 cont

Q: And then what were the first measures that really sort of looking at it now um which were the first measures the Germans took that really seemed to stick in your mind, <sup>to</sup> /be a really bad measure for you personally that they start<sup>ed</sup> /to take against you

A: In the beginning there were ~~BYXX~~ all those Jewish suicides <sup>that he was</sup> you may have heard about and then came .....(name) and -/quite a scoundrel and, nearly such. He made some speeches and if I recall well the first one was that you needn't worry we simply daren't think of attacking individuals or er aiming at the groups of people or individuals, I don't recall exactly the date but then we had to register - oh, and you had to tell whether you had one or more Jewish parents and er to recollection at the beginning.

Q: Now can you remember when you first had to wear the star for instance what affect that had

A: I'm sorry

Q: When you first had to wear the star

A: The star it was much later, April, May 1942.

Q: And what was the affect of that on you, did you feel that was an indignity or did you in a sense react in the other way

A: No not an indignity but um an extra danger. The Germans didn't recognise Dutch Jews as such, for instance I've got blue eyes so they didn't even notice on the street, but er I was stopped of course even they could recognise me and that was the danger. You were recognisable for everybody. For instance when I escaped later on in September, October '42 by train of course and I was standing a tram, train together with German people, and didn't even notice.

Q: Yes can you tell me how it was that you came to go into hiding what the circumstances of that were.

A:

Well I don't reference @ushmm.org for further information about this collection that um I promised some friends of mine to do my best to out live Hitler and in the Summer of '42 I went to .....(name) the camp from where the transport of Jews eastward er departed/<sup>from</sup>and there it became absolutely clear that this was actually the end and definitely so. Patients, sick people, babies er very old people all on a voyage so as to work, you cannot believe that, I could not believe that my friends were there could not believe that any town in this world could take in such a population in such a short time, so we figured that they were going to kill us and I promised my wife that er if there was any imminent danger I'd try to escape. And a friend of mine actually did, I did not. Of course we had some horrible experiences at ..... (name) but then it happened that I um I was jailed for helping Roman Catholic Jews and after that Jewish Commanders. They felt/<sup>for</sup>themselves were pretty cross and er wanted to do away with me - I was a bore, I was a nuisance as actually I still am. And well I think I blackmailed / I said to one of them if you ~~don't~~<sup>then</sup> don't let me go home I'll put you into trouble. God knows how. So um I got my ticket to go home and then I fell ill, measles and um I was terribly ~~er~~ ill at that age of course and after being recovered well there was not the slightest doubt what to do, of course go into hiding

Q:

So now was it at that stage that you in fact gave away your child

A:

No that was much later the child wasn't born

Q:

I see

A:

Um .....(name) was born daughter well that's quite another story, might be interesting, I've always been a great admirer of the French Revolution and um hope I would get a child on the 14 July - now a cousin of mine actually got a child on the 14th July so I went to see her, congratulate her, said you're spoiling my statistics, I was er

CUT.....

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11' 00

VAN RAALTE: Well I'll try ..... was born, well some 8 months after we went into hiding in 14th of July '43 and eh she stayed with us only for a couple of months ..well.. 'til the 2nd of December. Em our situation had changed then. We had had to leave the farm where she was born as I had been in fact(?) and em after that we came sort of drifting along and you couldn't do that with a child so there were two possibilities either my wife should get to the surface with the child and I should remain in hiding - it was possible my wife doesn't look as Jewish as I do and at that time you could get any papers, any false papers you wanted to have or we could do away with the child and stay together and the decision was my wife's. We did do away with our child on the 2nd of December '43, I remember that date.

Q: What in fact did you do - you gave the child to somebody else?

VANRAALTE: Er well... we had a liaison officer V..... (NAME) all the time, and we asked him how to manage it, and he came with a girl friend, with a farmer who had a cart and horse, and they came that morning the three of them and took away our child to.. we didn't know, they didn't even know themselves. They went to Amerstdam and there it stayed with friends of ours. Another friend of ours .....(NAME) you may have heard her name, quite a famous photographer, took some snaps that were sent to us. Of course we recognised the surroundings. Well and after that, the real cut was broken with the child. They didn't tell us, our friends made believe that our daughter was in Amerstdam, doing very well and being very healthy and eh resembling her parents very much. We only became aware of her disappearing after the liberation 12th of May '45. Well we had been liberated for six weeks already and with a friend we went on a motor bike to Amsterdam and of course I knew where to go and eh.. there were quite a few of our friends who had survived and eh suddenly one of our best friends exclaimed .....(DUTCH) which means as much as of all people, why he, and now, and eh well it wasn't a welcome, I had ah waited on .....(NAME) and she had fooled us about the child, she didn't know where she was our ..... and now she had to come aware of the bare facts, as she did of course, and she had to .....(DUTCH) to recognise that she didn't know where the child was, and that she couldn't possibly know of this find out where she was. Well it took some weeks, the beginning of June Van came back from ..... NAME or something like that two

VAN RAALTE CONT.... Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection  
 wife and I had been, so I went back this time on push bike and one morning I think er just a year after D Day, the 6th of June, it might have been the 5th, I went to the village and .....(DUTCH)there mentioned a name , the blacksmith there, and I opened the door,I stood at before a staircase, and on top of the staircase was a nice little girl,almost two and there could have been no bloody mistake. (I'm sorry LAUGHS)

Reel 2

1700

Q: Tell me about the time that you were actually in hiding, can you tell me something about the conditions under which you lived when you were in hiding - what it was like. We talked about ..um if you could describe for me the room, how many people there were, what your life was like at that time.

VAN RAALTE: You call that a life ? No - it wasn't just living it was being lived. We were in a small room, I think smaller than this one..um.. say er.. well should I put it into meters or into yards - er well some 4 yards, 5 yards well that's I think with nine people I think sometimes eleven. And er people from other surroundings. We hadn't to do a single thing - peeling potatoes, that kind of thing that you could do, reading books from the Christian library er other any books anyway but Christian books well ... and I played chess with my wife, I studied chess with the books my friends sent from Amsterdam, but eh it was horribly like hell itself, as .....(NAME) puts it in .....(NAME) sitting together with people who you get to dislike more and more every minute of the day, with all tensions and only one way of escape is get to sleep. Well em.. you remember what L..... after the French Revolution, they asked him what have you done.....(FRENCH) I've survived. But what have you done <sup>j'ai</sup> <sub>where</sub> ..... FRENCH I've lived. And well that's it. That is the main farm/~~we~~'ve been. Then: from the last month of the war from the 1st of November '44 'til liberation, that was the 31st of March '45 for us, there was more room it was further away from the road and the railway, so we had more opportunity to move about, and to come into fresh air which hardly ever happened in the first farm. Of course the guvnor there was very cautious <sup>took</sup> every precaution. Well he managed to save our lives but at what cost.

Q: You couldn't physically move around

VAN RALLTE: No

Q: During the time?

VAN RALLTE: No

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

Q: So you sat...

VAN RALLTE:                      Well sometimes at dark or dusk er we did walk  
in the orchard for instance.

CUT

VAN RA LTE:  
 conditioned.

That's the way I have been, and we have all been

INTERRUPTION

VAN RA LTE:

You asked me how we got the strength and energy to survive and to live our own..er under all these hardships and em I didn't even describe hardships because we had a very quiet life, too quiet a life. For instance we were never told we were in the way, and it gave you an intense feeling of guilt knowing that you were in the way, that you were a nuisance by, by mere being and doing nothing about it. But then I think it's quite natural in our Western culture, ~~xx~~ <sup>that</sup> you want to survive, that you want to live. The other day I read in the paper about the Japanese, that they killed so many Europeans because they thought that those Europeans must be awfully ashamed of having been ..well.. er taken as a prisoner, that you should rather die than be taken prisoner. And not us - we want to live. Now the Nazis tried to want us to die and em the strain was very, very hard indeed and for some people it came as a great relief when they were arrested. But we wanted to live, we wanted to see our friends again, we wanted to go on living with our child, we wanted to find her back. We knew that my parents-in-law were somewhere in hiding. Our best friends were somewhere in hiding. We hoped that we should have tasks to fulfill, after the liberation and that is the way we are conditioned, that's our input.

Q: You said to me that it had got to the point where you were living on fantasies of hatred, which I think was the phrase that you used. Where did it turn to that, where did that hatred come from?

VAN RA LTE:

Where does that hatred come from?

Q:

Yes

VAN RA LTE:

Well .. isn't that a quite natural thing when you are so pestered about, by people you see every day, and you can point at them and you should take that for granted, you had to hate them, of course you do and eh.. as a matter of fact, the hatred died. What remains and for life is a row, and it's very hard to have to live with rows because you harm nobody by it but yourself.

Q:

Would you - can you remember in 1944 when D Day happened, and you were in hiding - what were your feelings on that morning, how did you first learn of it?

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VAN RALTE: I think about twelve o'clock on the BBC and eh.. well our hearts jumped of course. But we realised at the same time, it would take quite a few months if not a year, to go on to reach us and we realised that the battle would be hard and there would be more than one battle. But it was the beginning of the end, the beginning of the liberation, we felt that very clearly of course.

Q: Um now you ~~have~~<sup>had</sup> a second child, did you?

VAN RA LTE: Yes.. after the war. After - it was born on the 24th of June '45.

Q: Uh uh uh uh . I think we've got all that we want.

VAN RALLTE Good

CUT