

When and where were you born?

I was born in Germany, Hamburg, in 1928. And we stayed there till 1938. And my father was taken to prison on account of his business. It was taken away from him. And he was put in prison for about, I would say, nine months. And then he-- let him go. But he had to leave Germany right away. So he went to Sweden. And we wanted to emigrate, my-- but ah.

And my mother was during the First World War in Holland because her uncle was in Holland. And she loved Holland. So she only wanted to go to Holland. So that was our mistake that we went to Holland instead of to America. But anyway, my father didn't come back to Germany. He went on to Holland. And my mother did all the work for the immigration. And we left in '38, went to Holland.

Let me just go back for a few minutes. You mentioned that it was due to your father's business that he was taken into prison.

Well, of course, he had a very large import-export firm. And the exact reason why he was put in, I don't recall. But probably, he was Jewish, and he had a very big business, and they wanted to take it over. Well, what they did, a Gentile was put in the business. And they-- he had to give it up.

You were 10 years old at this time.

Yeah.

Let's just go back a little bit. You started school when-- in about 19--

In Germany, I went to the three grades, first three grades, in Hamburg, in the Talmud Torah. Was the only one Jewish school for boys.

Was that by choice that you went to the Talmud Torah? Or was there already the--

No, all the Jewish boys went there. Is not-- I don't think that in Hamburg, they went to any other school than--

The Talmud Torah?

Talmud Torah Schule.

Do you remember while you were in school any incidents happening to you? Or do you remember any feelings that made you feel different because you were Jewish?

Well, I recall, when we walked to school, other Gentile boys were hounding us-- Jews, Jew. But still, it did not bother us that much. I mean, we knew something was going on. But it was not yet in full--

Full swing.

--in full swing.

Do you remember any discussions at home of your parents being frightened?

No. No. My parents were still very old-fashioned. They never talked with-- when the children were around. See, I did-- we didn't even know that my father was in prison. My mother told us he was on a business trip. So we didn't even know that he was in prison.

Well, were--

This is-- the only thing we found out is that my mother said, we emigrate to Holland. We have to leave Germany. So I had no notion at all that my father was in prison.

When your father was taken to prison, this was before Kristallnacht?

Yeah, yeah. The Kristallnacht, we were in Holland already. That was in November.

So this was early in 1938.

No, I would say, it was--

'37, no?

--perhaps '37.

Yes, it was already '37, your mother said.

How did you-- when your father disappeared, how did you react to this?

He was always on a business trip. He was not home that often. So for us, it was normal that he is away.

While-- during this time, towards 1938, let's say between 1935 and 1938, when you were in school, was there ever any discussion in school about what was going on in Germany that you remember?

No, of course, actually, it really started after the Kristallnacht. Between '37, '38, there were just a few incidents, but nothing-- they didn't destroy the synagogues before that.

Did you ever witness any parades, Nazi parades?

Well, you couldn't miss it. But they were all over, the parades. So for us, it was still-- you watched it from the window when it went, they passed through the street. But without the-- you still could not actually feel that they were against all of us. There's just-- well, no incidents which I really can remember were of such an effect that left an impression on me.

Did you have any non-Jewish friends at all?

They were in the Talmud Torah--

No, I was-- no, not non-Jewish--

--school--

No, no, no.

--which was a Jewish school.

Anyway, my parents had Gentile friends.

Was there ever a change in that friendship between your parents?

No. No. Not those-- those friends were still friends after the war.

OK. When your mother told you that your father was imprisoned--

She didn't tell us that.

Oh, she didn't tell you until afterwards?

I only found that out afterwards. She told us, he's on a business trip.

How was your mother able to handle the emigration?

Well, my mother is a very tough cookie. It's amazing how she did, even a few months before, she fell down the stairs from the consulate. And her legs were in a cast. And she still managed to took out the furniture. I mean, we took-- the whole household, we were allowed to take along, without any restrictions. We took everything along.

You mentioned, if I remember, that she had been in Holland earlier in her life.

Yes, in the First World War.

And she wanted to go back to Holland.

To get to Holland too.

Did she have any relatives or friends?

No, no, but just wonderful memories.

Of Holland.

Yeah.

And during this time that she organized the emigration, your father was--

Was away, was already out of the country.

He was in Sweden.

He was in Sweden.

When you got to Holland, or when you left for Holland, how did you feel about leaving Germany on that day? Did you know why? No, we just were told that we have to go. We have to leave Germany because-- that we would go to Holland. Everything will be OK. I mean, the-- they didn't go into specifics.

And as children, you don't question. When the parents said, we will leave, same when you move, you don't question it. The relationship between the parents and children were not as it is nowadays, that the parents discuss with the children. No.

That is completely-- the parents-- we didn't see much of the parents. We had a maid for the-- to cook and a maid for the children. And when my father came home, the children had to disappear. I mean, that is-- have you heard that before, the kind of-- we seldom-- we had no close relationship with parents.

Of course, there is-- children don't question the parents. And you just have to obey orders. And the father is the boss in the house. And if he's not there, you have to obey the mother. And that is actually it.

But you realized, when you left for Holland, that it would be permanent, that you weren't going to come back to Germany?

Yes, yes, yeah.

When you came to Holland, were you all reunited?

Yes, then my father came. He came a few months or so before and to arrange that we rented a house. So when we came with the furniture, we just moved in. So he made some arrangements. And he started a business again.

He did start it?

Yeah.

What type of business did he start in Holland?

The same he had in Germany-- in animal hairs-- in animal hair-- horse hair.

Animal hair? OK.

Animal hair.

Right. And this was an import-export type in this animal hair?

Oh, yes.

Did he have connections in Holland before he left Germany?

He probably must have had connections because he started the same type of business.

And where was this, in Amsterdam?

In, Amsterdam, yes. How did you find life for you in Amsterdam?

Well, we-- the minute-- one day after we went to Holland, we had to go to school, though we couldn't speak the language. But children, you pick it up like--

Did you go to a Jewish school?

No, no, no.

You went to the--

I go to regular public school.

Do you remember the first day you went to school?

I think I was very shaky because I always was little-- I was a shy. And you don't speak the language. But the children-- you pick it up. I want to see there with-- after a while, it is just-- there were very few Jewish children. In our school, my brother and I were the only Jews.

In the whole school?

In that particular neighborhood.

Yeah.

There was another neighborhood-- as a section of the city, there were quite a few. But in that section, we-- they go by

district. Where we lived, we had to go to a certain public school. And there, were we only two. So we had no trouble at all. In Holland, never was any religious persecution.

Was there any-- even though there was no anti-Jewish feeling--

There were anti-Germans.

--was there any-- I was going to ask.

Oh, yeah, that we were.

--was there any anti-German feeling?

Oh, yes, yes. That we had always when we went to school-- my brother and I, we had always a bunch of Dutch children-- rough guys who called us German. Not Jews, but German. But somehow, they knew, probably the way we dressed, the way we acted they saw. And they hounded us.

I was going to ask, after having been called Jew in Germany, and now being called German in Holland--

We felt it much worse because we were always little frightened with those guys. There was one bunch of guys who always saw us. And they're calling us dirty German. So we found that-- I remember that more than the time we were in Germany.

How did you manage to get yourself-- children can be cruel.

Oh, yes, yeah.

How did you manage to get over that teasing?

Well, after a while, they stopped. We took another route. We found another way to go to school where we didn't meet them. So since that, was OK.

Do you remember any of the children questioning you about what was going on in Germany-- or any of the teachers?

No. Not to my knowledge. Probably, they must-- they knew we came from Germany. But the children-- children usually don't question, not in that age, in that age group.

When the war broke out, how did the-- well, when the Germans marched through Holland--

It was in May 1940.

So you were there about two years, something like that? You were already in Holland?

Well, we were-- we emigrated in 1939.

'39.

'39. And in May '40-- and my grandmother also was-- came over. She was-- she came in 1940 after the Kristallnacht, my mother's mother, she came to us. And she lived with us.

Did-- were there any other relatives that you left in Germany?

Oh, yeah, most relatives-- uncle and aunts. And only the closest family-- my parents, my two brothers, and my grandmother--

Came to Holland.

--came to Holland. How did the Germans marching through Holland affect your family, the German takeover of Holland?

I really-- we were stunned, naturally, that the-- but we didn't do anything. Many tried to flee and left as soon as they jumped. But my parents didn't-- the reaction was well, what can happen here in Holland? Was always good. And we just didn't make any move--

To leave.

--to leave. I mean, we had a pretty good-- we got adjusted. And we had a pretty good life there. So you didn't-- when the German soldiers came in, I remember, they were in our street. And we talked to them. And they were-- those were the soldiers. So they had to go, young boys.

So we had no-- they had nothing against. They-- the Jews or so, we didn't even talk about. We talked with the German soldiers. They were cooking in the street in those big field kitchens, where they set it up in the street. And we talked to them and-- like there was nothing. I mean, you cannot compare the average German soldier which was enlisted to compare with the SS or the SA, which are volunteer.

But then slowly, after Germans were settled and the-- the German soldiers left, actually, because we were occupied. The war was over. Then they started slowly. At first, all the Jews had to register. Now, all the Jews went and registered.

And then they had to start-- you have to register all your valuables-- gold and silver, your rings. So all the Jews went and registered. See, that is the amazing thing. The Germans were very clever when they did it. First, they set up a Judenrat. In other words, Jews from high position--

Within the community.

--like Asscher and Cohen were the very famous diamond people. They had the buy a diamond [? bursar. ?] Those people were head of the Judenrat. And all Jewish people were in that Judenrat, they sent out forms that all Jews have to register. Nothing will happen, just go to register. And slowly--

The forms came from the Judenrat?

Everything from the Judenrat. And just you give up all your silver and your gold. But you had all your valuables. And you had to tell all the furniture what you had. But slowly, not in one day, but gradually-- and all the Jews went like lambs, actually. Of course, you didn't think about it. They went and registered.

And I-- now, it's been easy to say. If that-- if the Jews would have not done that, the Germans wouldn't have had a chance to kill. Of course, on the streets, they cannot see who were Jews. But slowly, they went.

Once they had all the names and they knew all the furniture, whatever you had, one day, you got notification that all the Jews outside Amsterdam had to leave the house, to take a suitcase with clothing, and had to go in a ghetto in Amsterdam.

You were living outside of Amsterdam?

Yeah, outside, in the suburb.

Do you--

Now, the first-- now, I have to go back a little bit. Then the Jewish children were not allowed to go to public school. So

we had a little congregation. We had about 100 people there, Jewish. They started in the synagogue-- we had a temporary school that we went to for a couple of months.

On the day that you found out that you couldn't go back to school, how did-- that must be very-- have been a little bit difficult.

Yeah, but the children, like the grown-ups, they took everything-- well, OK, we cannot go to school. As a child, you're happy if you don't have to go to school. So you take everything. I know, they did it so clever, the Germans, that you accepted it.

It's a good point.

That, you accept. And that is amazing what now, especially you hear sometimes the Israeli people say, how can they go like lambs? The Germans said, go there, they did it. Germans said, register, they did it.

Do you think--

I think that is amazing. Now, sometimes, you wonder, if this would happen now, for instance, here in America, if they suddenly started, all the Jews have to register, whether the people who went through that-- I don't think they would do it again.

But do you think the fact that the instructions came from the Judenrat made the difference?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Because your own people told you what to do.

When you went to this temporary school, the 100 children or was it 100 families?

No, no, no, these are 100 families. So we were about perhaps 20 or 30 children. So we had a Jewish teacher, who was not allowed to teach in the regular school. So he came to-- went to us. And we were all classes together. And we had the instructions for a couple of hours. But they didn't-- this is a funny thing. You accepted it. That's all I actually can say.

And how did this-- how did the occupation affect your father and his business?

Well, he had to-- in the beginning, he used to do business, but then he had to stop too. Because then when we had to leave out the suburbs, well, we-- then first, we had to wear a star. All the Jews sew on the stars on the clothing.

Again, that came from Judenrat?

Yeah. Everything came via the Judenrat. Because they-- they had to register there. And they had all the papers. But naturally, they got instruction from higher up. But it started. You didn't deal directly with the Germans, you dealt with your own people. And that is, naturally, very clever. If your own people say, do this, you do it.

Now, once everything was-- we had-- in one morning, we had to pack our suitcase and leave the house. Everything standing there, and they sealed up the house, and they all went to the railroad station, and went to the ghetto of Amsterdam. Now, Amsterdam is-- that section, the Jewish quarter, is surrounded by water. And only bridges connect it with the next part. And all the Jews-- were big signs, only [NON-ENGLISH]-- Jewish quarters. And there, we lived with the whole family in one room.

Who was--

Then, naturally-- then I didn't go to school anymore because that was finished then.

How old were you at this time?

Well, it was in 1941.

13?

1941.

Who assigned you the room and exactly where you went to live?

I think, either my parents found it or it could also that the Judenrat assigned those. That was like a boarding house, huge houses, with many, many rooms. And they assigned families to rooms.

Do you remember your parents' reaction at all on that day when you left your home in Amsterdam?

You see, again, the parents never talked to us. That is a funny thing, that you had no contact. You followed what your parents say. You followed. There was no-- naturally, was probably sadness. But there are no-- never discussed it with the children.

But sometimes, you get the impressions anyway, even without words.

Even when we had to leave our home, we still didn't think, well, what is the next step? We had no fear. That's the funny thing. And then they started-- for instance, they started, the Germans-- they needed so many young men to work. It was the first call up. And many Jewish boys went. And those were the first that went to Mauthausen. And I heard about it by friends of my brother. And those were the first when they were killed. And then--

This was from the ghetto, from the Jewish [NON-ENGLISH] that you were living in, that's when they started from?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

While you were living there in the Jewish quarter, how-- what-- how would you describe the circumstances in which you were living, the conditions? Were you were you in any way restricted?

Oh, yes. Oh, we were not allowed to go-- you cannot-- were not allowed to use the trolley cars. We were not allowed to go to restaurants. Were all big signs, [GERMAN]. But we had our own-- I now remember, when we went-- we lived all close together. We had our own parties.

We had our-- so even then, you didn't miss it. You know you were not allowed to. So you did not-- you didn't make any attempt. Because you had this star on. So we just stayed with your own-- you didn't go out. You just stayed there. And then they started slowly with razzias, they started pick up the people. And I remember that I still-- the first razzia, that people were throwing themselves out of the windows.

When you say razzia, how are you--

Razzia is when the Germans came and picked up people-- they went through the houses and picked up people.

Random, at random?

Yes. Well, first, they picked up the young people who were able to work. Because they said, they go to a work camp, beautiful, nothing, you just have to work. First, they tried on a voluntary basis. Then amazing, thousands went to the railroad station and left. And then if that didn't-- when that didn't work anymore, voluntarily, then they started to call it razzia.

Then they start-- went to the houses. And once, they went through our apartment house-- in our rooming house, they picked up young people. We just said, my parents were not there. But we were there with my brothers and my grandmother. So we were too young or too old. So they left us there. So they picked up only young people.



By this time, was it-- was the intent clear to you? I mean, did you know what was going-- what would happen?

Well, what would happen, they said, you just go to in-- you have to work in a-- and the Jews will have like the Germans had in a lager. But you have your own. And everything is just beautiful work camps. This is what they said and what the people still accepted.

That's what I was asking.

Yes. That's what that we accepted. Nobody could foresee. Or they thought-- because you didn't hear about Auschwitz that time. So you only had the camps. You heard about Mauthausen. There, we know that young people got killed right away. But otherwise, those other camps-- Bergen-Belsen, you didn't hear about it.

How did you know what was happening in Mauthausen?

Because when-- the first time they start, we knew that the boys went to Mauthausen. And the parents got notification that their sons got killed. In fact, we found out with the-- how they died, we don't know. But then slowly, slowly, the-- it came through that those first bunch of young boys who were-- they were killed came through. But still, we said, all right, it is probably an exceptional case.

In other words, you weren't hearing it on a wholesale level.

No, we-- people whose sons or fathers were sent to Mauthausen and then they got a notification that they died, that sent back-- the belongings, they sent back, then naturally, we started to realize, something must go wrong.

Well, was the Jewish quarter crowded?

Well, all the Jews-- we had in Holland, there were about 100,000 Jews in Holland.

Dutch as well as emigrant?

Yeah, probably right. And the funny thing is, too, the Dutch Jews said, well, nothing will happen to us. They only will pick the German Jews. And we had a large Portuguese--

Jewish community.

--very large. And the Portuguese said, us, nothing will happen. We are Portuguese. So the Dutch said, nothing happens to us. We are not afraid. We don't go in hiding. And the Portuguese said, nothing will happen to us. We are Portuguese Jews, who were first in hiding or tried to turn by the German Jews. Because they had a feeling, probably, what might happen to them.

Well, one day, it was in the summer of-- late summer of '42, we just were told, take off your stars, my parents. And we take a little trip. And a gentleman came, a Dutch Gentile came. And we walked without our stars and went to the railroad station. And we left.

What made you go with him?

Well, my parents arranged it through the underground.

Oh, OK. I see.

His mother is quite-- was always quite a person.

Yes. And she said, we made-- they made--

She must have not given all her jewelry and everything, written it down. Because I mean, she still had quite a lot. So she must have been the one who saw-- I mean, the-- they didn't speak to the children. And the children didn't know about anything. But his mother must have gone through with open eyes. And from the beginning on, she must have--

And the other thing what I just remembered too--

--seeing different from--

--before we gave up our good furniture, we had some Gentile neighbors. And do at night, we took the good furniture, gave it to them, and we put some junk furniture in there. And the living room is still the living room. It's just the-- there's a bookcase and the chairs, the Chippendale. We still have it.

This was while you were still living outside of the ghetto?

That's why I say, his mother did not follow exactly the way the others did. I mean, she always tried already before.

Also a lot of silver. And so we left some junk there. So my mother was very clever with that. So we did save some furniture, which we still have now, my mother still uses-- with the Gentile people. At night, we moved it out and put junk furniture in there.

I was just going to ask you, in terms of when your father's business was [NON-ENGLISH] or taken over in Amsterdam, what did you do for money while you were in the-- I'll call it the ghetto, but the Jewish quarter?

Well, I know, my father had money outside. He had a lot-- a huge stamp collection, which he sold to the-- that we could survive the years. So we got papers from the underground. Well, let me go-- so when we-- [AUDIO OUT]

--and like, I mean, I have here is the Rosenthal china and everything, which was from there-- them, which he all managed--

To what?

--before they had to leave Amstelveen, which is a suburb, right, which she all managed to give away to Gentile people.

Gentile people in the--

--and which they all-- which she got back afterwards.

Tell me, one question--

No, no, that's why I say, his-- I mean, he went like a lamb. He didn't know. He did everything what his parents said. You know but he did not talk to the children you know that was it typical old fashioned German way of doing it you don't discuss I mean we saw that children you know but the mother but the mother was the clearly there. I don't think it was your father your father never would have done it it's the mother who saved the whole family really

Well, in terms of that, transferring furniture, or selling the stamp collection, or whatever, to your knowledge, were most of the Dutch-- how did your parents find Dutch people that they were willing to put their trust in?

Oh, the Dutch people were terrific. When they-- after the first-- when the Jews had to wear stars, for instance, there was a big railroad strike. The complete-- everything stopped. But then there was already an underground. And the Germans killed a few underground Gentile people. And naturally, how long can a strike last?

So they--

Tried. The Germans broke the strike. But the Dutch people, that-- they hated the Germans. They still do. So the Gentile people did help the Jews, well, you can see, they took furniture from us and a lot of other possessions which we swapped around.

When you sold, or when your father sold the stamp collection or whatever was sold-- Well, I-- that-- see, that, I know that because he must have had the money because we survived through the war. And you had to pay.

That's where I was going.

You had to pay those people you know where you stayed.

When you were in the Jewish quarter, did you have to pay rent?

Oh, yeah, they paid rent.

How-- was it easy for you to get food at the time? Was it rationed?

It was rationed. You got-- you have ration cards. And got still ration card. And the food was not terrific, but you could live on it.

Was there SS in the Jewish quarter? Were you under surveillance?

Well, when they start picking up, that were not German soldiers. It was the SS. Or GrÃ¼nepolizei, you call it, all kind of those special troops they picked up that-- and you had, naturally, all of a sudden, Dutch Nazis-- but very few compared with the--

The rest of the--

--rest of them.

How would you describe morale in the Jewish quarter?

Well, the Jews were always optimistic. I remember, once, the young people that got the order to go to the railroad station, young people, they left. They just took one rucksack, put some things in, and they left to the railroad station to go to a work camp. So of course, the Jews don't-- they did not realize what was going to happen. Because nobody could visualize what happened. So when the Germans said, it's just a work camp, many volunteered to go. And then when they didn't get enough volunteers anymore, then they started picking up. Then they start picking up.

But anyway, one day, we just left the city. We took off the stars and we were also-- we prearranged. First, I was a while alone. My parents and other people-- my one brother went to another home. It was outside this-- in Hillegom. That's where the tulip bulbs go, in that area. And we had false identification papers, all arranged by the underground. And all those stamps, food stamps-- the underground stole the stamps from the Germans. And they gave it to us. So the people which were-- which we were in hiding, they got the stamps, naturally. And then my father had to pay for the basic-- for the expenses.

Did grandmother go out with you?

Well, my grandmother was also in hiding, but not with us, in another house. And she was caught. And she was sent to Auschwitz.

One thing before-- I want to go back to your grandmother. But were you prepared when you left the Jewish quarter and went into hiding? Did your parents prepare you for this?

No, they just told us, now, it's time to-- we don't want to go-- to be shipped out. We had to go to hiding. We got

instructions what to do.

From them?

Oh, yeah, yeah.

How did you-- you said that you and your brother were split away from your parents. And were you and your brother together?

Oh, later on.

But in the beginning?

In the beginning, I was alone for quite some time with people.

How long?

Oh, for, I would say, a good year. And then my parents were always separate because you couldn't have four people.

How far away were you from each other.

We were all in the same area.

Did you see each other at all?

Yes, at night. At night, we were allowed to, when the moon was-- when there was no moon, it was dark, then we visited each other.

Somebody wrote a book entitled *Other People's Houses*, which is about living in hiding. What was it like to live in somebody else's house--

Well--

--in hiding?

--wasn't always pleasant. Some people, I mean, they did hide us. But they got frightened too sometimes. And they weren't always too nice for us. But we just stayed in the house, were always quiet. We only were allowed to-- we did a lot of reading. And we have to watch out for the neighbors because you never knew what the neighbors are Nazis. But we adjusted to that. We got so used to that routine.

Where did you stay in the house? Did you have your own room?

No. No. Well, we had-- sometimes, in the evening, we could stay in the living room. There were various types of houses. And sometimes, we were upstairs in the attic, where we stayed there most of the time. But you had a regular routine. I mean, for a while, I was stationed-- I was in hiding by a teacher. So my parents arranged that I have regular lessons there. And they gave me lessons. And that became a regular routine.

When you were not with the teacher, when you say a routine, you had to stay inside all the time.

Yes.

What filled your day? How did your day become a routine?

Well, we had to do some household chores. I know, I had to peel potatoes, sometimes whole pails of-- well, that kept us

busy. And we slept a lot. And you had to-- in the beginning, I had to study because I was with a teacher. And we cleaned the house. We just tried to help out the people for a while. Then when it became too-- if you stay too long with a certain people, they became-- they had enough, or they were-- became frightened. So then I was with my brother together with a shoemaker. So we repaired shoes in the workshop.

Was it easier when you were together with your brother?

Yes. It was more pleasant than alone. But sometimes, you got on each other's nerves too if you're so close in quarters.

What about that in terms of when you lived with strangers? Were you very-- did you get on each other's nerves?

Oh, yes, yes, yes. Sometimes, we had no-- that's why we had to change. Sometimes, it became too much. And so we shifted around. I went to three or four different people, Gentile families. And the same-- my parents, they didn't stay always the same. But they always were together, my parents.

What kept up your morale during this time?

Well, the-- in the hope it will be over soon. And we had radios, which were hidden in the attic. We will listen to-- from England. So we followed this, the whole--

The war.

--the war. And then in 1944, when in Arnhem, when the English and the Americans were there, landed there, we figured, it will be all over soon. But then they were defeated. I know that. Did you see the movie--

No, I didn't see

--A Bridge Too Far? Well, my oldest brother, who was not with us-- he was with farmers in that area-- and he was picked up by the Germans, not as a Jew, but all the Dutch young people, they had to register for working. And at that time, then, in 1944, the Dutch Gentiles were in hiding too, the young people.

Because they wanted to avoid that?

Right. So my brother was picked up at that time, but not as a Jew, as a Gentile. And he had to work in that area, where the British landed. But then we were cut off completely that winter. See, Southern Holland was liberated. And Northern Holland was completely cut off. Then we had no food, no water. They cut off the electricity. But then we were in hiding that time by an auto mechanic and on his attic he built, we had a bicycle. And he connected it with a battery. And my brother and I, every morning, for a couple of hours, we had to, with the hand, the pedals, we had to fill up the battery.

Oh, with--

This-- by-- he took one pedal and I took the other pedal. And for hours, we were loading up the-- so through the whole house, he had little dogs. And so he said-- he had light there. And water-- we had no water. But at the end of the street was a pump. So they carried pails of water to the house.

Did you go out of these houses at all?

Only at night, only at night when it was dark.

There was no fear of the SS prowling around at night?

Well, the fear was there. And then we started-- naturally, there was the fear. And once, even, while we were in hiding, they were looking for radios, the Germans. And luckily, they were German soldiers. They went from house to house. And we were-- my brother and I were in the house. But we were young boys. So the German soldiers didn't look at us.

They didn't look for Jews. They were looking for radios. And they just went through the house, and passed by, didn't see the radios. And they left again. So that was the only really close contact.

You mentioned that your grandmother was caught.

Well, she was caught the very beginning. She was in hiding too. But the people-- she got caught. Either-- we never found out the exact story.

You mean, whether she was betrayed?

She was betrayed, probably. So then she was sent to Westerbork. And we never heard about it.

Speaking of Westerbork, was there ever any time in which you might have been sent to Westerbork from the Jewish quarter? I mean, were they taken from the Jewish quarter to Westerbork?

Oh, yes, right. But we-- as soon as they started picking up people at random, then we went in hiding. It was in late summer '42.

Did your mother-- do you know how your mother contacted-- I assume it's your mother--

The underground?

--the underground.

No, no, I don't know how they contacted them.

I just want to go back for a minute. During that time when your mother and father decided that you were all going to go into hiding, how did they prepare you in terms of do you remember their instructions to you?

No, they just said, we're going to leave now. Take off your stars and just behave normally. Don't get nervous. Just go with that man. And then I think we started to grow up a little bit and found out, well, that's-- the only way is-- we didn't want to go to a camp. So I think there's a natural instinct.

But you realized what the consequences were?

Yes. But even while we were hiding-- so everything becomes so natural. You acquired all the-- you don't shout, you don't-- it's really amazing, actually, how young you accept things. People accept they went to the camp out of free will, they accept everything. And like this, we accepted too.

When you saw your parents at night sometimes, when you--

Yeah, or they visited always was it.

Can you remember-- I call it-- can you remember it being a gripe session in the sense that--

No.

--you vented your complaints?

No, no. No, we were happy, actually, to see them. And sometimes, we visit them at night.

Who made the arrangements for you?

Well, that we knew. We talked about it when it's dark and the moon is not out. Then we will visit each other.

Where did you visit?

Where we were in hiding. Or we knew where they were hiding.

And the people were receptive to doing that?

Oh, yes, yes. I mean, there, people-- the Dutch people were wonderful.

Where-- were these people that you were in hiding with paid?

Yes. My father paid them for the upkeep, for the food. And they gave the stamps we got from the underground. And one funny incident-- here is my mother, doesn't look like Jewish. She's blonde, blue eyes. And we were with-- mostly with Catholic people. And those people insisted that Mother goes with them to church.

So one day, she went to the church. And she lost all her papers, all her identification papers. And a day later, the police came and said, we found your papers. So I mean, the police-- the Dutch police, they knew that the people were in hiding. And if they felt something was coming up, they went to the people and warned them. Or if they found out that the German authorities or the Dutch Nazis knew somebody's in hiding, the Dutch police came first to warn them. And then you had to--

And then you had to-- was the--

I mean, the Dutch people were really terrific.

And the underground sounds like it's true to your papers.

Yeah, and my mother got the papers back. My mother got the papers back because the Dutch police in the city knew where all the Jews were in hiding. Speaking of the fact that you were with Catholic families, did you ever-- was there ever any-- as you said, your mother was asked to go to church. But you were young boys.

Oh, yes, yes.

Was there ever any attempt?

Yes. We were in hiding. There's one family, where one of the members of the family was a priest. And he lived in Limburg. So that's all the way near the Belgium and German border. And once a year or half a year, he came to visit us. He brought a lot of food along because that section they still had food. And he brought all kinds of literature along. And he talked for hours. He wanted to convert us. That is-- they tried to. They tried to.

Well, they took for profit, but not the people.

Well, they took for profit, no.

But not the people you were.

But the people that we were--

They didn't take it for profit, this is what I want to point out.

And they put their own life--

They just covered their own.

They did it out of--

That's the gentleman that-- where my husband said-- the auto mechanic. That was done two years ago. That's my husband's father. Oh, yes, we go-- I mean, we go every year. Every time we are there, we go there.

First-- when we go to Holland, the first thing is I go to visit those people.

The first thing is we go to see--

Those people still.

I mean, even last time, I told you, my mother-in-law was so sick, we didn't see anybody. But we made it a point to go up there and see him.

Oh, sure, sure. I mean, this was one person we did go to see. Otherwise, nobody else.

No, my mother and brother, every May 10, they make the whole round to visit all those people.

But this year, we will be there. So we will do it too again.

Yeah.

May 10 was the liberation? Oh. When--

OK, now you have it out.

No.

No, no, I have it on OK. That's all right. Where were we? And talking about Catholic--

So some tried to convert us.

Since you were so young at this time, wouldn't it have been a possibility? Didn't you-- didn't the thought ever cross your mind that I might be better off not being Jewish?

No. But we never thought about converting. I mean, that is-- we knew all the prayers. And before dinner, we had to make a cross and all that. Some-- my brother was even more than I was. But we knew all the prayer, but it never crossed my mind-- only to speak on myself-- to convert.

But you-- in other words, you did some of the things pro forma just to please--

Please those people. And then actually, like I said, the priest came always. And he really-- he tried to convert us. When-- go ahead.

Yeah, no were you going to?

I was just going to say, as the time went on, how long were you living underground?

Well, from that-- from late summer '42 till '45, till May '45.

So you were about 14 to 17. For a young boy, teenage boy, do you think that being so restricted made a difference? How did you feel about being so restricted at that time?

Well, then once you became in the routine, and you knew you had to, then we realized we had no other choice. Either



we stick to the rules and survive-- because then we know that, first, all the Jews were out of the ghetto were finished. There was no ghetto anymore. All the Jews were gone. So then we realized-- started to realize to fight for your life.

Well, how did you know that all the Jews from the ghetto were gone?

Well, you heard-- you heard it from Gentile people. I mean, that went around. I mean, that you cannot keep secret. If 100,000 Jews suddenly-- if the ghetto's emptied out, I mean, that you heard through the through the grapevine.

Yeah. Did you know that Westerbork was a transit?

Oh, yeah. That-- then you start-- and Westerbork was already before the war, where the Dutch people, when the immigrants came and they had no-- not all the papers ready, they were sent to Westerbork. They were not as a concentration camp, but as a transit camp. But then slowly, it started to filter through. And naturally, like I said before, we listened to the radio, to the underground. So then slowly, you heard all kind of stories.

All of these people that you lived with were all contacted through the underground, were all basically volunteers?

All volunteers. They were all volunteers.

Through the underground. Once 1945 came-- well, let me ask it this way. How were you liberated from living underground? Or when were you?

Well, let me first say, after the South Holland, after the Arnhem fiasco, North Holland was completely cut off. And we had no water, no electricity, no food. We ate tulip bulbs-- very tasty, very sweet.

There was no food. There was absolutely-- people at night went to the those-- during the say, they went to the grain fields, which the farms around there, and what was left from the ground, they started to pick up. And in order to get heat, they, from the railroad, with the wooden beams, they cut up the beams--

Railroad ties.

--railroad ties and stole it. And you tried to-- whatever meager food there was, the Gentiles suffered as much as the people who were living with them. We tried to manage somehow.

Were you running a risk by going out during this time?

Well, we didn't do it, but the Gentile people did it. But we didn't. We never ventured during the day.

Outside.

That we never, no. We always were-- all the time we were in hiding, we were always inside. We never ventured out, except when it was very dark.

When the-- how did you manage during those-- well, how long was it that the Northern Holland was cut off?

Well, from '44, when it was in Arnhem-- I mean, that was the-- we never went out anyway. But during the last-- after the invasion from Southern Holland, that was the toughest year because there, even the Dutch people were dying on the street--

Of starvation and the famine.

--starvations, oh, yes.

During that time, was there ever a question of-- were you living with a family at that time?

Yes.

How did they-- when hardship sets in, did they treat you as a--

It was this family.

Yeah, yeah. That was the--

Did they treat you as part of the family?

Oh, yes. Those people were especially nice.

They were special.

They were.

Those were special people.

Yeah. But also were-- my parents were all those people-- most people were really-- they did it not to make money, but out of belief. The most of them were religious people. Religious people, and they did out of belief. Sometimes, I'm wondering whether it would be the other way around-- whether the Jews would have done the same. I'm sometimes wondering.

There's all kinds of-- as you say, there's all kinds of people.

No. Because they knew. And many were caught hiding Jews. And they were sent to the concentration camp and died.

Did they realize? Did the people that you were with, did they ever talk to you about the risks that they were running or about their own being fearful?

Well, they didn't show it to us. But I'm sure they had many thoughts about it. But they did it out of human-- how you would-- what is the right word for it--

Compassion?

--compassion.

How-- what happened toward the end of the war, when you were-- after Arnheim?

Well, after Arnheim, the Northern Holland was completely isolated. And we just hoped every day, that is the last day, that's the last week. But it still went on for quite some time.

When did the last day come?

I think it was May-- I think May 6 or 7. And we heard over the radio that the Germans capitulated. And then we went out on the street. And the first thing what we did, took the Germans-- the girls who went to German soldiers, and grabbed them, and shored their hair off-- well, just to the hair off and put red paint on it.

It was out of craziness. But not only we, but the Dutch people too, they were so-- there are many who collaborated with the Germans. So we-- many Dutch Nazis were beaten up. And like girls who went with German soldiers cut off the hairs and put that red paint. When you paint something metal, you put first the undercoating, that kind of special paint, very hard to get off.

Yeah, the stuff that they use on the fire escapes. I know what you mean.

Right, right.

Petroleum.

Yeah, it's special, so out of craziness when we were liberated. And I remember, the food came down from the planes. They were sending down these parachutes of food.

American planes?

American planes are sending down food-- those biscuits, those big cans that dropped. Of course, we were starved.

Can you remember that first moment of going out?

Oh, yes. It's hard to describe. Because now, after all these years that you can go on the street, you don't have to be afraid anymore.

Were you sure that it was real?

Yes. Once-- well, when we heard that was over, the war. I mean, that's-- it's very hard to describe. I mean, was just-- we'll be able to go in the daylight. We don't have to be afraid anymore.

Can you-- if you can remember, can you describe what-- the sequence of what happened to you from that first moment that you heard that the war was-- that the Germans had capitulated? Did you go and look for your parents or your brother?

No, but as we were all in the same area--

Not your oldest.

My oldest wasn't. He was--

You didn't know even if he was alive or not, right, that time.

Well, we still had contacts.

You still had contact?

To the farmers, through the farms they were.

Oh, so you knew that he was taken prisoner as a Dutch?

Yes, because the son of the farmers--

Was too, I see.

So we knew that my brother was caught. But he was caught with the son of the farmer Gentile. And he was caught as a Gentile, not as a Jew.

So that he was all right.

Right, right. So that he was all right. I think we knew. And were you all together on that first day, your parents, and your brother, and yourself?

Yes, except my brother who is in other part of Holland.

Yeah, but I mean the two of you.

Yes.

But--