

Interview with Johanna Mantel, Righteous Gentile  
November 12, 1987  
Sarasota, Florida

Q: This is Muriel Nathanson, interviewing Johanna Mantel, a righteous Gentile. The interview is taking place on November 12, 1987, in Mrs. Mantel's home. First of all, Johanna, I want to thank you so much for being a part of this project. And, you do understand that we are planning to make tapes that can be used as curriculum in the high schools. And, we appreciate your contribution to this program. Uh...tell me a little about yourself. Johanna. About your family background, and how you came to be involved in harboring a Jewish family. First of all, tell us where you lived.

A: Well, I lived in Amsterdam, Holland. Our family consisted of four brothers, a sister and myself, of course. There were six children, and my brothers were a lot older than I was. So, I started working, I had my education and I started working when I was eighteen years old in a plant in Amsterdam and the name of the plant was Hollandia Fabriken Cotton Verk . It was a raincoat factory, where worked about 1,200 people. Most people in the plant were Jewish. I worked in the office and the management was all Jewish people. So, I had a lot of contact with quite a lot of Jewish people. Uh...I had a lot of friends with Jewish people--because in Holland and Amsterdam, there were so many, so you don't think anything about it. We had a nice time with them. You could have fun with them, when they had money, and when they were short of money, you still had fun with them, too. So, uh..I worked there for quite some years. At first, I worked in bookkeeping and later on, in purchasing. And, then, of course, do you want to start me with the war.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. We heard a lot in Holland about the Jewish people picked up and destroyed in Germany, but, still, we couldn't believe that. It was so close by. Germany is really so close by to Holland, but still you didn't believe it--what was going on. That they were destroying the homes and shops and everything like that. But, then, of course, one day it happened in Holland. Because they came in in May 1940. I still remember that so good, because it was 6 o'clock in the morning. A beautiful day. It was outside and all of a sudden, I was still in bed, and I heard noise in the street. Quite strange, because it was always so quiet. So, I went out of my bed and looked outside and people were talking, and everything like that. And, all of a sudden, we heard airplanes coming over, but not high, really, pretty low, and then we found out that the Germans invaded Holland. And, because, after three days, really, the war was over and really happened because they destroyed first Rotterdam, the harbor, the houses and everything like that, and then, they say, "when you don't stop and don't--then we will destroy Amsterdam

and the rest of Holland". So, that's the reason. That was the end of the war. And, that was the day, too, that all these Germans came in town.

Q: How did you and your family become involved, then, in hiding?

A: Well, it happened--my brother, he was married to a Jewish girl.

Q: Uh, hum.

A: And, so, in 1940 or soon after that, I think, they started to give the Jewish people a star. But, she never was wearing a star. So, like a kind of hiding. But, she just lived with my brother. And, because we knew so many Jewish people, you were involved really so much in it, because in the plant there were so many people working over there. So, then, soon already because they can start picking...first it went slow, of course, because...first no stars, then stars, and then they started picking up the Jewish people. So, we got more involved in it. So, at a certain moment then, it was, I think in 1942 or something like that...well, they started collecting all kinds of material and everything, and they started picking up the Jewish people already. So, then, the people were afraid, and they were asking a few things to say for them. Or, they were asking me, especially in the plant, because I knew a lot of people in the plant, too. I worked in the office, but I was always very much interested in the plant itself, what they were making, and sometimes we had to go in the plant, and I met a lot of people--Jewish people--in the plant, too. And, then, they were asking...a few people were asking me if I...when something would happen, if I could go to their houses and tell them what happened or anything like that. So, I promised and did never think it will happen, really. Then it was in...they were in hiding places...it is a little bit difficult to go back all of a sudden...and, yah, I think that started before the invasion...in the plant...so, the Jewish people, I had a contact with them. I came to their houses, more, really than before the war, because now we wanted to help them. Don't ask me why...you are just doing it.

Q: Your friends?

A: Yes, because I was not married, of course. I had...at that time I had a fiance, but I was not married. Didn't want to get married, either because it was too dangerous in the wartime. Because, when you do something for the people and they find out, they'll take you and shoot you, or send you away. So, that was the reason...one of the reasons...we didn't get married at that time. So, then I started going...people went in hiding places because they were afraid to be picked up.

Q: What kinds of hiding places?

A: Well, first I had...it was an older man, I very good remember. He was the buyer of the plant, and he went in a...staying with some older ladies. And, so he went out on the street many times, but for the rest, hardly really, but once in a while,

when it was dark, then he would go out in the street. But, still, we were taking care of it, bringing coupons or bringing some things what he needed. So, that's...then, my brother, he was very much involved in it. Really, he did underground work, so much. And, he couldn't come to our house too much anymore, because they found out he was doing it, so he didn't want to bring us in trouble. And he came to our house very seldom, with his car, just coming in the house, saying "Hi", and everything. And, if we needed something, and right away, out again. So, then I had another older man...Max Bullock was his name. I can mention it because he is not here anymore, with an older sister. And, they started hiding out in apartments, in a poor neighborhood, without the stars, so they could go on the street, and like that. Then I had a few more people. We would just go, bring coupons—you know, coupons for the food and everything like that...

Q: Yes. So, you really had several people that you were bringing food and coupons...

A: Not food, really. It was more.....

Q: Coupons?

A: ...coupons, yes. And when they needed something, we would bring that over. My brother many times was asking me or the people in the plant, the management in the plant who was involved with a lot of other people, asked me to do that. So, it happened in, I think, in 1942, that, one day, I wanted to leave the plant, and my boss told me not to do it, because the plant was surrounded by the polizei. I never forgot that day, really, because....

Q: Sometimes it's hard to bring these things back. Do you want to stop for a little bit?

Q: Now, you were saying that, in 1942, you wanted to leave and the S.S. had surrounded the plant...

A: Yah, and they came in and we...they came in and were shouting. "One side and the other side." So, first, we all had to come out, because I worked in the office. We all had to come out and stand in the hall and they were shouting, "One side and the other side." In the beginning we were thinking, the women on one side and the men on one side, and then they started shouting, "No, the Jewish people on one side and the other ones on this side." So, that's what we did. Meanwhile some of my friends who could say, "Can you go to my home when something happens?" so, I say, "Yah, it's O.K." So I (words missing in original transcript). I think, about an hour we were standing there, then we had to leave the plant. We could go out. Of course we didn't know what happened to the other people, but I went to almost a few houses of my friends, and that's terrible. Tell them what happened, and they started shouting and crying and everything like that, because

they were for sure that they wouldn't come back. Anyhow, we heard the next day, that they put trucks in front of the plant, and loaded all the Jewish people in them--with their families. They picked up their families and everything like that, and, altogether, it was 1,500 people. It is in the book, too. You can read it. They picked up...

Q: From the one plant?

A: From the one plant, yah. The company's--yah, the plant...only the management...a few of the management...got away because they went in the basement and were hiding between the material. And, then, a few people...I know for one boy. He got off the train because they were transported by train. He got off in a curve because the train was slowing down...that's what I still remember a few things, really. And, he got off the train, and he came, because my younger brother was working in the plant, too, and he came out and came to our house, if we could hide him. We couldn't do it, because we already...because we were planning to have other people in the house when something went very bad. So, he went somewhere else. My brother took care of that. Now, I forget to tell, really, that my older brother, who was the president of the sister plant, he wait...

Q: Weeso?

A: Weeso, yah...it was a small town, and close to Amsterdam.

Q: Uh, huh.

A: And, then the management didn't want to stay more as a president, because they were for sure they would take the whole plant, the Germans, when the management stayed Jewish. So, they made my older brother...my brother...his name is Joseph...he is not living anymore, either. They made him president of that plant at the moment.

Q: I see.

A: So, that's perhaps, one of the reasons, too, that he helped so many people.

Q: Um, hum.

A: So, they took all the people away. I think only a few came back.

Q: How did you...were your parents involved in this, too?

A: No, my...only my mother lived. My mother lived then, because it was really one of the reasons, too. We lived in an apartment house, first. And, then, my brother started asking me, "Could you..." because most times it was I who had to do it,

my mother was a lot older..."When we moved you to a larger house,...would you do this?"

Q: Oh, would you keep people in hiding, if they moved you to a larger...?

A: Yes, because we found a nice place and, that is, what I told you, in Patricia's house, upstairs...

Q: Yes.

A: "Would you do that?" I say, "Yah. It's O.K." I don't know why but I promised everything. I would take them. You are younger so you don't think about it, that they will shoot you. When something happen, you die. (good for a tape or for text--voice and content.) So, then we moved, and I think it was in '41. I don't know the date.

Q: Yes.

A: We moved to a larger house. It's not very important. And, so, this, yah...and later on...I say, "it's O.K.." in that house was a nice hiding place. Where we lived before, there was no hiding place at all. So, then, we started living in Amsterdam...on Standhardes Strade. I forgot the number. I think it is something with 50, but it is not so important, I guess. And, we lived in there, and I don't know exactly the date when two people, Jewish people, friends of my brother too...in the business...came to our house.

Q: I see, so there was a contact between your brother and these two people?

A: ...and these...yes.

Q: A man and a woman or two...

A: No...Yes...older ones...yah...and they...it was more a business connection with the two...yes. Good friends, too. Before the time...before they came to that house, I got to know them, too, because it was on my way from the plant to our home. And then I stopped, always, too. And, they wanted to prepare...they gave me some presents...They gave me some material to make a dress, and, that's the way I got to know them. They asked me many times to stop for a moment so they got to know me. I forgot in what year they came to the house. I can't remember that. I think when it got really bad, it was in 1943, so just after what happened in the plant. So, it must be 1943 or so.

Q: Um, hum.

A: And they lived in our house for about...for two years, until the end of the war. They never came outside. They lived on the third floor of the house and (words

missing in original transcript) in night. They lived. They were hiding during the night in the attic on a mattress. It was all very nice. I mean...of course, it was awful, because you had to crawl in this space and sleep there, when you are used to lying down in a bed. But during the daytime, they had a nice room. But, now, what happened, the polizei came to the house and, it was a house where you have to lock...you could lock it from the inside. I don't know if you know this, high up. And, it was scary when they came, so we decided because Rudy was not living at our house...

Q: Oh, Rudy was your fiance at the time, and now your husband?

A: Yes. My mother was living downstairs. I was living on the first floor where you have to open the door.

Q: Um, hum.

A: And then, you have my brother was more higher, and then, they had their room. So we decided, because that room looked as if it was lived in, and that was not good. So, we decided that Rudy would live in that room, and sleep there during the night, while they were gone upstairs. They could live there during the daytime.

Q: Um, hum.

A: And then, so they lived in that room, and once in a while they came downstairs. While during the week, they were eating downstairs with us.

Q: Um, hum. That was a risk, wasn't it?

A: Yah. But...of course it is a risk, but you don't think about it because, what it is, you could lock the door...you had to lock the door...of course, it was not necessary...with a key inside. So, when they ring the bell, then I would open a little, because everybody was scared helping in the war, was careful. You opened a little window in the door and you asked who is there, or something like that. And, you say, "Oh, I have to get the key from the inside." While you were going inside to get the key, we had an alarm really so they knew when there was something going on.

Q: I see.

A: Sounds perhaps a little bit complicated.

Q: No.

A: But, yes. So, they were down there. But the funny part, because you didn't...that is another story, really. Perhaps you are interested?

Q: Yes, of course.

A: Because...O.K....we lived in a we had a block of houses. Uh...then in that time you didn't have electricity any more. So everything was dark. So, you have to do it with a candle or anything like that. But, many times, you didn't have candles. But, what happened now, the Germans locked every box because they were living in that block of houses...the Germans, too. They wanted to have light, so they connected everything again, but then, they came into every house separate to lock...to make a lock on that box--electricity box.

Q: The electric box. The fuse box?

A: The fuse box, yes. But, then, what they did in ours, they didn't...or they couldn't...they didn't lock it really, and so, Rudy could open the box up, and made electricity. But, the Germans were making electricity certain hours of the day, like, for example, we had light from 8-10, and they turned it off, and then, in the morning, it started again from 8-10. So, we had some light. Now, what we were doing, of course, when we had that light. Everything was uh...I don't know how you call it?

Q: Covered?

A: Outside you could close it...

Q: Shuttered?

A: Shutters, yah. From the inside. And we were eating, and we had a little bit of light. But, then, some...so funny...we had a candle there standing, too. Now, a friend of my brother came over and knocked on the window that he was there, and we had to turn off the light, because nobody knew that we had Jewish people in the house, and all this. So, then he turned on the light in the candle again. Later on, after the war, he was asking us, "I always was wondering, you always had the same candle." You see. How this little thing really...

Q: Yes, you were lucky the Germans didn't notice that.

A: But then when they had a special day of Friday evening, they couldn't turn on the light. I think it was, so we had to turn on the light for them. And, then they wanted to eat upstairs because they were eating...I think the head of a fish, which they like...a horrible smell...yah, they stayed there for two years and their daughter stayed with my sister, but she didn't wear a star. She went outside...

Q: So, it was possible in Amsterdam for some Jews to remain through the war. They just didn't put the stars on, and no one betrayed them.

- A: Nobody betrayed them, but, you know Jewish people can have very Jewish expression, but you have Jewish people who don't have it.
- Q: Um, hum.
- A: So, these friends of mine, like Max Bullock and his sister, they were very Jewish-looking, so people betrayed them, and that's the reason the police came in, and, yes...did I tell you about that?
- Q: Yes, that they had the apartment.
- A: I don't think I told it here on the tape, or so.
- Q: Why don't you repeat it again?
- A: Yah, I think I didn't because this was the day...oh, yah...one of the management, Sven is his name, he asked me if he could bring some coupons and some other things to Max Bullock and his sister, who were hiding...in a hiding place. So, then, I told him, "I am sorry, I can't go tonight because I have to do the cooking. My mother is not home." I said, "But, I will go tomorrow night." He said, "It's O.K." But the next day, he told me, "No, Johanna, you can't go because the polozei came and they took them away because sometimes they were making noise when they were not supposed to do, you know. Because you have to be so careful with all this kind of things. But, the other ones I brought coupons to. You had to buy coupons from the black market of course, because you...
- Q: Where did you get the money for this?
- A: Well, that's my brother...yah, he tried to hide it...because it cost money, of course. Especially, because we had two people more in the house. Especially the last year of the war, it was so bad, because in September we got freed, but not Amsterdam and it's surroundings. So, we didn't have any food, or anything like that, but that February before that, I went to my in-laws to get some food and they lived in the East part of Holland. That's about 100 or 110 miles from Amsterdam. And, it was in the winter time. Do you want to hear that?
- Q: Um, hum.
- A: And I went on my way because the boys couldn't go. My fiance couldn't go. My brother couldn't go because they were picking up the boys from the street and sending them to Germany. So, I had to go and it was in February. It was still cold. On a bicycle. Lucky I had the bicycle with rubber tires. Many times there were no rubber tires, any more. We had wooden tires.
- Q: Uh, hum. Wooden tires?



A: Oh, yah, yah. Because there was no rubber, no air in that...a lot of people...I was lucky. Still I had that. So, I went to Hengelo. That's the name where my in-laws lived. That is close to Germany. On my bicycle. But, they said, "dress yourself warm, because it will be cold on the bicycle." And, because there was no food, nothing else, I got some...still some sandwiches, what we tried to buy on the black market. When you see the prices of the black market, it is unbelievable. But, anyway, we had some, and then, I went on my bicycle. But, it was pretty far when you drive.

Q: Uh, huh.

A: And, so, half way I wanted to stop. It was in Deventer, I still remember that place that was just over the Rhine. And, what happened, really, it started to rain before that time, and I had a short fur coat on...so I was like a cat...

Q: Wet.

A: Oh, and then I got an address in Deventer from a friend of mine in Amsterdam, and he said, "why don't you go to that address, and they will, you can sleep overnight and go back on the next morning?" so when I was in Deventer, I went to these people. They were bombed out too, and they didn't have a place for me to stay there. They say, "Well, I bring you to a hotel." Everything is dark. Of course there was no light or nothing. So they brought me to a hotel, where all the windows were out, and it was cold. I was wet and everything like that. They brought me to my room with a candle. But, they had to take the candle back again because

Q: ...he didn't have too many.

A: So, I was there, soaking wet and was in bed and then, all of a sudden, I heard a noise...a noise just terrible that was going on here. I really thought they were bombing the town. And, every time again, a lot of noise and then was gone again. And, then the next morning, I found it was the V-2s. You know they were shooting over Holland--from Germany, over Holland, to England. But, I had never heard them in Amsterdam, so I was...but the next day, I had the wind with me and I was drying off.

Q: It dried you off. So you bicycled 120 miles...110 miles...

A: ...so I stayed with my in-laws for a few week. So, my father-in-law, because he could exchange things. You will ask why...how come he had so many things. While he was exchanging his goods, he had all kinds of things, because he had a store with sheets in it and towels, and everything like that...could exchange it with other farmers. He went to the farm, so I brought back beans and rice and things like that, what you really could do something with and butter, but then, it was...I think it was March 1, they told us they would close the bridge over the

Rhine, and you can't go over it any more. So, I had to go back before that time...to go home. Well, I was...they put 150 lbs. on my bicycle, and they...150 lbs.--- I still think it is more here—Dutch pounds are more here than here the pounds.

Q: Yes.

A: Yah, on my bicycle. In the beginning, I was going from left to right and couldn't keep my balance, but my brother-in-law--he took me away about...

Q: It would have been 150 kilos.

A: No. 150 lbs.

Q: Yes.

A: So, I went over there, and I came...just before I came to the wasser and the bridge, and it took, I don't know exactly how many hours. They told us, the Germans are standing on top of the bridge, and "...they will take all the food away from you.' I had bags on the side of my bicycle, where we had put it in. But, for me, I had...there were people who were walking from Amsterdam up to the northern part of Holland to exchange things, with a hand cart, you know. Yah, walking all the way with everything on it. They came back with the food and they took all the food away from them. So, that was going on already, and the story was going on before I reached the bridge. And then, one man, he stopped me and he say, 'You know what you can do? I have a store here.' I still remember a batcha store. "And, we can go to the store, unpack everything, and just put a little bit in the bags. He will not hold you, and go over the bridge. I have family living there on the other side of the bridge. And, you put your things over there. Then you come back again, and do that...' Well, it took me until the evening to do this. Dog-tired, of course, and when it is evening, and so I could stay with the other people until the next morning. So, that was wonderful. Now, it always bothered me after that time, because I forgot the address. I forgot the name of the people--I never could remember it anymore....To thank them afterwards, you know. After the war. I never could remember that name or address.

Q: It seems as if people in...the Dutch helped one another, too.

A: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And, that's what they did. The next morning I went on, you see so many people walking, and flat tires and I got more and more tired. I had to be in before 8 o'clock, because there was curfew time. And, I got so tired, and then I was praying by myself, and I thought, "Oh God, please when I get a flat tire, let it be before my home.' And, then I was in Bussum. Bussum is about 20 miles to the farmhouse from Amsterdam, another brother over there lived over there. And, when I was there, I got a little bit sick. You know, my period started,

and I forgot his address. I didn't know his address and I was standing next to my bicycle and then a man was asking me, "Can I help you with something?" And I say, 'Yes.' I say, "I don't know the address of my brother anymore and I want to go to him." He say, 'Well, do you know his name?' I say, "Yes.' Because he has the same name as I have. He say, 'why don't you come in the house and we will call him.'" So, I called him and I went over to my brother and his wife and he started...and I could clean myself and everything, and they wanted me to stay for the evening, but I didn't want to stay, because they didn't have any food, and because I needed food myself. Otherwise, you are obligated to give something of the food too. But I couldn't do that because we had for so many people. So, I say, 'No, I am going home.'" And then, every bridge I met, I walked. I got...the funny part is that when the man tried to pick up my bicycle, or hold my bicycle, he fell down on the floor with it. It was so heavy.

Q: He didn't expect it.

A: Later on I could bicycle with one hand, really. So, then I then you don't believe it, but you can ask Rudy and you can ask my younger brother. They were waiting for me, because they knew I had to come back at that time, because the bridge was closed and everything like that. And so, they were waiting for me. It was just before...a little before eight and go on the sidewalk, and then I had a flat tire.

Q: Right in front of the house?

A: Right in front of the house.

Q: Somebody was watching. How long did you and your mother hide these two people. Man and wife?

A: Yes. Husband and wife. Well, that's what I don't know. I think it started in '43. I know it started after that accident in the plant. So, it must be '43--till '45. I think it was about two years.

Q: And, they never went outside?

A: No. After the war, well, we got married and we were tired of everything that has happened. So then we started again, because my brother...because we did a lot for him and he did a lot, really. He really worked in the underground. Went...he had a large boat and he went over the lake to the other side of Holland, and during the night, too many times, taking in food, bags of food and everything like that, yah, and distribute that when he came back home. Yes. And, so he did a lot for people.

Q: You mentioned a young woman to whom you gave your papers. Tell us about that please.

- A: I don't care too much to talk about that really, because it was a little bit ugly part of it, don't you think? So...use I think that.
- Q: But still, that's part of what you did.
- A: Yah. Well, Max Bullock, who was in the hiding place, he asked me before they picked him up, if I could save some papers for him and they were shares...I never know really what was in it, but still it was a big yellow envelope. I say, "Yah, it's O.K." so, I took home and I saved it for him. now, his younger sister asked me if I wanted to...could give my...how do you really call that?
- Q: The identity card.
- A: The identity card, what everybody had in Holland, because you needed it for the Germans. When they stop you on the street, they ask for it. So, you have to show it and you tell exactly how old you are, if you are Christian or anything like that. So, she asked me because she wanted to go to Switzerland. And, her name is Bullock, too, but I don't remember her first name. and, she asked me. I said, "Yah, it is O.K." and, so she left for Switzerland. I, myself, because I didn't want to give it up right away that I lost my...
- Q: You told them...
- A: Yah, I went to my in-laws in the East part of Holland, and when I came back, then I told the authorities that I lost my card in Hengelo--that is on the other side. And, they believed me, and so, they gave me another one.
- Q: But, if she had been picked up with your original card, what would have happened?
- A: They shoot you...or they put you in a camp. Like, for example, too from the Jewish people...too...when they find out that you have Jewish people in the house, then they take the whole...everybody out of the house, and then they shoot you in front of the house. Now, we were lucky at that time really, because we had...I mix it up...
- Q: That's all right.
- A: Because when the polizei came in, they came in during the night once, and I had to open the door, because I was sleeping on the first floor, and they came in...five of the seizurheit polizei...greuni polizei is all the same thing. And, they came in, and they went through the whole house. They never found the Jewish people because...yah...because they were upstairs in the attic.
- Q: And, you said that there was a panel that didn't...

- A: Yes. It was in the attic...was a panel with all this...
- Q: With the boards...
- A: Yah, with the boards. It really...it was a piece of wood...a strip of wood...you know, like this...
- Q: Yes.
- A: Yah, and it was a strip of wood, so you couldn't see it, and you could open this up, and they were sleeping in that. They had the mattresses in it and they were sleeping during the night.
- Q: In other words, you were able to open that panel, and there was a mattress behind it, and that's where they slept during the night. So, that...
- A: Because they were not supposed to sleep in a bed or anything like that, because it was too dangerous. Because they came...the Germans came in once during the night--at 12 O'clock, during the night...So you were never sure what time they were coming in.
- Q: Uh, hum.
- A: But, then I want to go back to the girl again, O.K.?
- Q: Yes.
- A: So, she went to Switzerland, and I had these papers. I never heard from her, but, after the war, because Max Bullock--they took Max Bullock and his older sister away--and we never heard from them, so they passed.
- Q: They had taken the apartment in the poorer section?
- A: Yes, uh, huh...so they passed--they died, really, and so she came back after the war. We never heard anything from her, but only from her lawyer. And, her lawyer asked us to set the papers up. So, that's what I did, really.
- Q: After the war, did you, or your mother, or your brother hear from the couple whom you had hidden?
- A: Oh, yes, because my mother...we were tired...we...Rudy and I married after the war, and we left, and we saw them occasionally, because my mother was still in that house, too. And, they were in the house, and so, they were very nice for my mother. Yah. And, for the rest, we moved out of Amsterdam. We went to another town, so we didn't have too much contact with them. We heard, of

course, through my mother and my sister, too, because my sister was more in contact with them, because she took care of the...that girl for years.

Q: Tell us about that. About their little girl.

A: I don't know too much. My sister lived about ten miles from Amsterdam.

Q: Uh, hum.

A: More in the suburb. Now it is close together, because everything is built in, but, at that time it was the suburb, and the little girl--she was not little anymore, I think--I think she must be about 12 already.

Q: Uh, hum.

A: And she lived with my sister for a few years.

Q: While her parents were in hiding?

A: Yes. And, once in a while she came to our house to visit her parents, but it was very emotional, so they didn't do it too much. No.

Q: It was also very dangerous, I would think.

A: All this kind of dangerous. That's the funny part...it's not so funny, but you don't think about it, really. You don't think about all this kind of things when you are doing it. Because, that's the reason, too, that we didn't want to get married. Because, when they...when we had the people in the house, when something would happen--they would bring you outside and shoot you.

Q: Uh, hum.

A: And we didn't want to...at that time, when you marry, you are supposed to have children. Now, it's different, when you don't marry. So, we didn't want to have children, or anything like that.

Q: Uh, hum.

A: So, we waited until after the war.

Q: And, then you left Amsterdam for a while?

A: Oh, yah. After that, we started living in that houseboat.

Q: Your brother's houseboat?

- A: Yah. Because there were so many house destroyed. And, during the war, too, they took all these woods out of the streets, too, because you didn't have heating. You didn't have food. And, so, near the street cars, and you had wooden blocks in the street car, between the rails. They took that out. When you rent an apartment, when somebody lives upstairs, third floor, they took all the steps out. Wood--to have some fire going on. So, Amsterdam looked terrible, really, at that time, and you couldn't rent a house, buy or anything. Nothing like that.
- Q: Um, hum.
- A: We could do it once, in '44, that was before the end of the war, and we could go and rent an apartment. It was a nice apartment, but, my brother, he say, "I ask you not to do it, because, otherwise, we couldn't take care of the family." Because my mother couldn't do that. My mother was sick too. Diabetes. So, she couldn't do it. So, I helped her out.
- Q: That was quite an experience.
- A: It was, yes, and I...uh...there are so many things more that happened, but had nothing to do, really with the Jewish people. But, many times, you had to go to the Black Market for coupons, for ourselves, and to have more coupons for them, too.
- Q: Uh, hum.
- A: Because, that's what they always paid for--when you had to go to the Black Market and buy the coupons and everything for food, they always--these people always paid for it.
- Q: They had brought money into hiding with them?
- A: Oh, yes. Yah. Weinberg...their name is Weinberg. And, they have always, when they...we didn't have to support them. No. Never. They have, when they wanted food or coupons, or anything...everything like that...we can't really, because when you buy one quart of milk, you had to pay ten dollars. I don't figure out really guilders or dollars, because equivalent of money really, what you can buy. Because, for a bag of potatoes, you pay one hundred dollars. The price is crazy...really silly. So, we never could have done this. Because I didn't have a father. My mother...yah...so, no...they paid for every food what we had to take extra. They paid for all of this.
- Q: Uh, huh.
- A: But then was the trouble, of course, difficulty to get this, the coupons and everything like that.

- Q: And then to get the food.
- A: Yes. That's the reason, I say I went to my in-laws. So, we were sharing it. When you have potatoes, you have to count your pieces...yah...it
- Q: It was a very difficult time. And, it was fortunate that you made it through without being caught.
- A: Yes. We don't realize it...at the moment, you don't realize it.
- Q: Uh, hum.
- A: And Rudy helped, too, out. Yes, and my youngest brother.
- Q: So your whole family was really involved?
- A: Yes. Yah, because, I don't know. I think we would do it again when something like that happens. But many times, people think, "Oh, nothing can happen, really, like this anymore.' But, you see it happening all over the world.
- Q: It can happen.
- A: Uh, hum.
- Q: I had asked you this before. But, apparently you and your family have not been acknowledged in the memorial in Jerusalem at Yad Vashem?
- A: I never heard about it, really.
- Q: Uh, hum.
- A: But we really were not...after the war we really were not interested in it...nothing anymore...we were so tired of five years of war, and then we moved out of Amsterdam. Later on, we lived in Utrecht and we lived on the houseboat and then everything like that...and, one thing really, you want to forget about it.
- Q: Yes, I would think so. And, then you have these souvenirs--the story of the plant and the story of the war years in Amsterdam.
- A: I think it is a coincidence, really. About November 11, 1942, when it happened. Then I got a new letter from Amsterdam about a month ago, telling them that they were having an anniversary this year, and it was yesterday.
- Q: The anniversary was yesterday?



A: Yes, Yah. And they will put my letter on the desk over there, and then, the people who know me--I think they will read it, and, perhaps I hear some more from them.

Q: And, you have heard...you said that, in the book, there were some names of people you didn't know had come through the war.

A: Yah, yah. That was nice to hear.

Q: Johanna, I want to thank you very much for this. This is a very important part of our learning about what went on, and I hope it hasn't been too hard for you.

A: O h, no. It's hard. Later on, perhaps you think, "Oh, I know more." When I find some more interesting, I write it down and tell you about it.

Q: I would appreciate that. Thank you.