

--With Mrs. Blom, a rescuer from Holland who helped Jews by risking her life. I would like you to tell us in your own words about your rescue activity. Because your story is so important, I will be making notes as you talk. And we will also record your story so we can be sure not to miss anything.

OK, we know the Freidenburgs-- V-R-E-E-D-E-N-B-U-R-G. I worked for Dr. Freidenburg in Amsterdam before I was married as a dentist assistant. We got married in '37 and stayed friends all those years until 1942. By the time of '42, we heard that on Monday the 12th of July, they were going to start picking up Jewish boys from the age of 16. But we were not sure that maybe the parents were also picked up.

Now, Mrs. Freidenburg's sister had a boy of 16. So I was very worried about him. And on Sunday, the 11th of July, we went to the Freidenburgs to visit and ask them what Johnny Veth-- V-E-T-H-- was going to do. She said, my brother-in-law says maybe it will be just work camps. Maybe it will be good for the boy.

And I said, how stupid can he get because we have several people that said they are destroying them. So they said, but what can we do? I said, well, we have a home, a downstairs living room, dining room, kitchen, and an upstairs four bedrooms and a bathroom. Why don't you come over to our place?

Now, don't forget, at that time, Churchill said, over our hidden radio, because we were not allowed to have radio, that in the fall they would come and liberate us. Fill your bathtubs with water because your water might be closed off. So we all thought it was maybe a question of six weeks. And this became, instead of six weeks, it became merely three years, from the 12th of July 1942 till the 5th of May 1945.

In January 1945, there was a razzia. And he lived in a suburb of Amsterdam called Tuinsdorp Oostzaan-- spelt T-U-I-N-D-S-D-O-R-P Capital O-O-S-D-Z-A-A-N. And they singled the dykes, the Gestapo, and came into our village. And in the meantime, my husband had to hide also.

Now, in our homes there were no attics. I'll show you a picture later on. But he took the ceiling out of one of the closets. And the Freidenburgs as well as he went upstairs. He had made a 6 by 6 piece of wood. And they sat there from 8 o'clock in the morning till 5:00 at night.

The Nazis came-- the Gestapo. One went to the garage. One went upstairs with a big German shepherd dog. And one stood by me guarding me with a rifle.

You mean the Germans?

The German, the Gestapo.

How many people you had in your house?

Well, we did have a three-year-old boy. And we could not make it known to him because he called him Tante and Oom, which means aunt and uncle. And he knew their names. So we told him that he had been sleepwalking. And we put a hook and eye on his door at night when he went to bed.

Now, in Holland, kids go to bed at 7 o'clock. And at 8 o'clock at night, it would be [NON-ENGLISH], curfew.

Yes.

And after 8 o'clock, they could come downstairs. Now, they were always walking in slippers, crocheted slippers. They never made any noise. They never had any heat upstairs because in Holland the houses are just warmed in the winter time in the living room. But they had little wooden contraptions that you could put some coal in to warm your feet. That's all they had.

Now, Mr. Freidenburg spent his time painting pictures. He even painted on a pillowcase for me. This was from van

Gogh. And he himself painted a Bruegel and a Rembrandt and a Vermeer for himself for later on because his house had been broken into after he had left, and he had nothing left. Everything was taken out of the apartment that they had. They had a 12-room apartment.

Who took it out?

The Germans. There was nothing left. After the war, Mr. Freidenburg had lost 82 relatives. And Mrs. Freidenburg had lost about 45. She only had one sister left who had been hiding in a Christian nursery school on the attic also.

So you had Mr. Freidenburg--

And his wife, Marianne--

--and his wife. And who was his three-year-old boy?

My three-year-old boy was Bert-- B-E-R-T.

That was from your other family?

No, that was mine.

This is your own child.

They had a boy, Max. And they had a servant girl until January. But then the Germans said a Christian girl cannot work for Jews. So she worked for a Christian doctor. But she said the minute they are going into hiding, I am going to take Max, the Freidenburg's boy.

And she went at first to her brother's house in northern Holland. But later on, it was too well known that he couldn't go to school. And she took him to a farm of my mother's cousin. And he stayed there for eight months.

Then there was a razzia over at that farm. And so they had to disappear. And she asked me in a letter, what can I do? And I said, well, go to my mother's old bookkeeper. And here's a letter. I said, help this girl.

And that's what he did. He sent him to the most northern province, Drenthe, by a Christian head of a school, an elementary school. The man himself had six children. He adopted a Jewish boy whose parents had perished at the bombardment of Rotterdam.

Yes--

The Sunday afternoon that we were visiting them, they didn't know where to go. And I said, well, why don't you come to our house. And I already said, we all thought it would be over in six weeks because that's what Churchill had said. And they said, well, do you think you could do that? And I said, well, I have a guest room with a twin bed. So I have to order another bed. They said, no, don't do that because your neighbors will see it. And then they will say, what do you need another bed for? So they slept in a twin bed for three years, the two of them.

Now, in the beginning, it was not too roomy. But after the war was ended, I weighed 80 pounds. She weighed less than 80 pounds. He weighed 90. And the dentist weighed 93 pounds.

You did not have enough food for them?

No, because-- well, that is-- let me tell later because that is from the last part of the war, you know.

When they came on the bicycle, they came with their raincoats on with the Star of David on there. And on the ferry to our house, you had to go over the IJ in Amsterdam. That's the big canal all the big ships go through.

On the ferry, they took off their raincoats and put it on the baggage carrier with the star folded inside. So then they wore a suit without a star. And they came close to dark and quickly put their bicycles in our hallway-- we had a long hallway-- and disappeared upstairs.

My boy was already asleep because this was not curfew time yet. And he was asleep. And later on, the servant girl came to pick up one of the bicycles because that would be too much, you know. They would see that we had another bicycle.

They disappeared upstairs at first. And, well, they said to me, well, I-- he said to me, I gave Marianne 55 guilders, which is dollars in our place, household money a week. I said, listen, I don't want that. My husband doesn't even make that much a week. I said, I want \$15 a week. I don't want any more. I did not do it for money.

Just to cover--

I did it because I had worked for them. They were human beings. They were friends. They were good to me. When we had practice on Monday night, I could sleep there. I did not have to bicycle home the 9 kilometers, 12 kilometers, 9 miles, back home at night.

So I did not want anything to happen to them and neither did he because-- well, he became friends with them too. And so-- well, I used to call them Mrs. Freidenburg and Dr. Freidenburg. But the minute they came in our house, they said, well, just call us by our first name, Sam and Marianne, which is not done very much in Europe. You know that. But that's what we did.

They went upstairs. And in the daytime, she studied graphology, you know the handwriting. And she used to work for the Department of Justice about handwriting. And he did study with her.

We played a lot of chess when my boy was in nursery school. And we read a lot of books. I would go to the library and pick up French books and German books, Ludwig Klages, as you know, Max Pulver, all kinds of books about graphology. And at night, we would play chess.

At night, when my husband was not home, because he was a commander of a fire department in Amsterdam, at night when he was not at home-- and our homes were like condominiums, built together-- we had to whisper. And it so happened that I was in a store one time and ordered something by the butcher. And I started whispering because I was so used to whisper.

And in the long run, I got Jewish way of talking by answering questions with a question. And Marianne warned me. She said, you're getting to be more Jewish than we are.

But over all the years, we had a very good companionship. After the war was over we visited each other all the time. On the 5th of May, they came every year and brought us a present of a chicken or something else, you know.

Then we left the Netherlands in 1950 for America. They gave us a big dinner before we left. And after we came back in '58, they took us to Paris for an, you know, trip. But I wanted to tell you that in '44, we expected a baby.

This was the second baby.

No--

That was our second--

Yes.

Yes.

You had a three-year-old boy already.

Yes. And he was in the meantime 5 and 1/2. And one time, Mrs. Freidenburg needed a doctor so bad, but she didn't dare, you know. But I said our doctor is good. I know you know what we meant by good.

So she saw his handwriting when I had some letters from him for my little boy to go to a specialist for his asthma. And she saw his handwriting. She said, he is good.

So he came over cured her cystitis because she had very bad cystitis.

What kind of doctor was this Mr. Freidenburg? Dentist.

He was a dentist, yeah.

They were the two people whom you rescued.

Yes.

Some other people came later on?

No.

Or no? This one family.

He was in the underground army. And he has rescued some other people that he brought to different parts because he was in the underground army. But we did not have him in our home.

Uh, huh. Referred to some other places.

Yes.

Your husband?

Yes. Quickly interview with him also maybe?

No. It's not necessary. She knows all the particulars. And--

Now, my mother was the only one that knew about it because she came often. She was a widow all by herself. And she came often to our place and would stay overnight. So she had to know. But we knew my mother was good.

His parents, we didn't even want to bother. They would come and visit. But while they were downstairs, and they would stay upstairs and would be very quiet. And they never knew.

Did they go out?

No. Never in three years, they have not been out.

You did not try to get for them false papers?

They-- we all had [NON-ENGLISH], identity cards.

Yes.

And they had Js on there because of Jew--

Yes.

Jood in Dutch. And they had the Js taken off. But it was such a botched up job that they did not even trust it.

She once in awhile was so desperate, and he had taken along-- a dentist has arsenicum because of root canal treatment--

Yes.

And he had taken along arsenicum. But one time, she was so desperate she wanted to take the arsenicum and go into the fields and make an end to her own life. And I locked all the doors because we had the dining room door to the garden, a kitchen door, and a front room door. And I ran to that doctor that I talked to you about. And he gave her a shot. He came over and gave her the shot.

And he knew that they are Jewish?

Yes.

They were friends?

And he was very surprised that we had them already for eight months. When he finally came to our house, she said I know of so many families that are hiding Jewish people, but nobody told me that you were. I said nobody knows because it was too dangerous.

Yes.

I will show you a picture. Maybe you can--

Now you haven't been afraid that your little boy is going out on the street and he is going to tell?

He has never seen them.

He never saw them?

No. Except for the night we ordered-- about 4 o'clock the school goes out. And one time, the school was let out early because of air alarm. And he came. And she just came downstairs with a chamber pot, because that's what they used upstairs, to empty it in the toilet.

And he came in and he said, hi, Tante Marianne. I haven't seen you in a long time. That was nearly three years, you know. And he ran right away outside.

And she said, yeah, I'm helping your mother do the spring cleaning-- because this was May, you know, beginning of May. It didn't bother him at all. He thought it was just normal. But that's the only time he saw her.

Yes. Some people came into your house during these three years?

Oh, yes.

It's a long period of time.

I was sick one time. I had flu. And we didn't have the antibiotics that we have now. And I was sick for a whole week. And my neighbor is starting to get worried, you know.

Now, since the time we had the Freidenburgs, it happened that in that same neighborhood ration cards had been stolen.

So everybody kept their doors locked. But also, this whole neighborhood had keys that fit on every door practically.

And one time, Marianne was getting downstairs to the kitchen to get some water for me, to get my medication. And she heard somebody on the lock of the kitchen door. And in Holland under the sink, we never have a door because of the pipes. We always have a little curtain. And there's a little basket with dust cloth and then, of course, the pipe is there. And she crawled under there.

And so two neighbors came in and went straight upstairs and came to my bedroom and said, we haven't seen you. What's the matter? And I said, oh, I've been so sick. You better go away right away because I have a terrible fever and I'm afraid you will get it. And she was sitting in this small cubicle under the sink. But they did not see her.

What did you feed them?

Well, the first couple of months, they bought ration cards-- 390 guilders a card. Then he had a cousin who had married a Jewish boy. And they lost a little boy by drowning. And when we were at the funeral, somebody in the underground that he worked with said to him, if you happen to know some Jewish people that are hiding someplace, he said, come to me because I can get ration cards without the identity cards.

And he said, well, I happen to know that a friend of mine has friends that are hiding Jews. And he said, OK, I'll take care of the cards. Just give me the numbers.

So he didn't know their name. And from then on, we got ration cards every month for the two of them. But I had to shop in two different stores because otherwise they would say, how come you have five rations of bread, in the beginning, or five rations of cheese.

Now, the last part of the war, you remember Montgomery and the Battle of Arnhem? And then the queen of the Netherlands was in England. And she declared a railroad strike. And from then on, all the railroad men were hiding also.

But the west-- Amsterdam was in the west-- did not get any food except sugar beets. We did not have electricity. We did not have gas. We had a potbelly stove that our neighbor had cut down because he worked for the shipbuilding company. He was able to do that. And then later on, he made a small kind of a tin can with a grating in it. And a handful of wood, you know, would cook the sugar beets. And the pulp of the sugar beets, I would make pancakes from, you know, a dry pan.

So Mrs. Blom, you hid these people for three years. And you told us before that because they were so nice people and they deserved to be safe. But what was actually what motivated you to do-- from what kind of reason except that they were so nice? What dictated for you to help these people?

I would have thought it terrible if they had to perish, you know. And so would he.

So what was the reason? For what kind of reason you believe? From humanitarian?

Yes.

For humanitarian reasons.

Yes.

And did you recognize the danger what you were going to take them?

Oh, yes, the first couple of days, you know, my hair stood on end when the bell rang. But little by little, you get used to everything. And there were several nights-- but because he was in the underground, he knew always when there was a razzia coming.

And so one night we had what we call spiderweb night. And everybody was alert. And they were hiding in the attic you know. Otherwise, in the daytime, they were in the bedroom. But if there was any danger, they were in the attic.

And like I told you, the 23rd of January '45, he was also in the attic and sat there from 8:00 till 5:00 at night--

Because--

--and was hiding with them on the 6 by 6 foot platform.

--looking for him.

Mm, hmm.

So can you tell me that how was the apartment divided? How you--

This is the house.

This is the house.

This is the front room. This is the long hallway. This is one bedroom. That was the master bedroom. This was our boy's bedroom.

So you were saving these people. Do you think that you took a big risk saving them?

Yes. There was a lot of danger because I know personally of a family, Lefevre, and they had a friend of Samuel Freidenburg, Joe Zwahlen was his name, and his 80-year-old mother. And the mother was kind of childish, you know. And she would run in the garden. And people saw that. And the Gestapo picked them up. And they both perished in gas chambers.

Really. You think no one of your neighbor knew that you were--

No.

--hiding these people?

The night before the liberation, we heard over the radio that we would be liberated by the Canadians and Americans the next day. And then they came out with me. And it was his day of work at the fire department 24 hours.

And we went outside in the streets. And everybody was outside. And we went to our neighbors. And then they said who they were.

And some of my next door neighbors knew them because they had been visiting before the war, you know. So they knew about them. And in fact, during the war, they would ask, have you heard about the Freidenburgs? And I said, no, I'm so afraid something happened to them.

So what would happen to you when they would find out?

Shot.

Shot. And your husband too.

Yes.

How many times did the Germans come sometimes to search or to--

Just the one time.

--in your house.

The 23rd of January 1945. And he had to hide also because they came then not for Jewish people, but they came for men to dig trenches. And they came for boys over 16 until 45. But he was hiding. But the German soldier, the SS, that stood with me downstairs and guarded me with the rifle, he said, where is your husband? I said, well, he's at the fire department, which wasn't true. It was his day off. But I showed him his ausweis.

He had to hide because he was working with the underground?

Yes.

And also he took part in the strike when the-- the middle of the strike in Holland?

Well, the strike--

No, not the strike.

No, the strike was only the railroad strike.

Only the railroad strike.

Yeah. Not the fire department. Fire department was not on strike. They were not allowed to strike, too dangerous with all the bombing that went on, you know.

Yes.

We were bombed many times.

Yes. So what else would you like to tell?

Not much.

So you say that someone knew about your rescue activities.

No. Except my mother knew it because she so often stayed with us, you know, overnight. But at that time, my mother's village on the beach, North Sea beach, was evacuated. And she was with her family in the eastern part of the Netherlands. And she heard how bad it was in Amsterdam.

And she went by the farm, you know. And she got, well, some lard, some eggs, some meat, some apples, some rye. And she brought it over to us. And she was 90 kilometers on the bicycle to bring it to us.

And my mother was a nurse. So she came in nurse's uniform. And when the Germans took her in the little boat over the IJssel-- you know, the River IJssel-- they said, what have you all in that suitcase? And she said, those are my uniforms. I have a job to do. There's a baby girl to be born. And I have to work there.

Did you have some other people also, let's say, for a very short period of time?

No.

The underground did not refer--

No.

--anyone to you?

No.

Could you-- I mean did you think about it that maybe you could save some more people?

We did not have room for more people because one-- those were small bedrooms except for the master bedroom. The bedroom was 9 by 10 feet. And our boy's room was maybe 6 by 9 feet. And my mother's, when she stayed over, was maybe 6 by 9 feet. And that was all the room we had.

Is it running?

Yeah, it is running.

Yes. And when the war ended, the people went back to their home? They did not go back to their home because they had emptied the whole apartment. And they went in a motel, a hotel, for about a month.

And then next door, one of the collaborators of the Germans had been picked up by the underground. And that house came empty. And they could buy that house. And that's what they did. They bought a house. And that's where he made his practice again because by that time, he was-- let me see-- 41 years old.

Have you been in contact with them immediately?

Yes. We stayed from '45 till '50 that we left for America, we were there, oh, let's say, every two weeks. Or they would come to our house. And every birthday, we would be there. We would go out for dinner. They would take us out to dinner, which we never could afford from his salary to go.

Yes.

But after the war-- I mean when we went to America and came back after 8 and 1/2 years, they took us five days to Paris, the two of us and our son, Ed, who was born in the war. He was 13.5 and came with us to the Netherlands.

When you came to America, how life treated you? How did you--

I had relatives here. I had a cousin who was married. And it was-- what do you say, sponsored us. And, well, I stayed with another cousin on the farm with my two boys. And he worked in Royal Oak, Michigan.

And, well, it took us nine weeks to find a home to buy for \$500 down. We couldn't take any money out of the country, you know. Each of us got 90--

So you had quite a hard time to settle down.

So it took us nine weeks to save up for a \$500 down payment and buy an old house.

So you have two children.

No. In '56, when we were 19.5 years married, we got a little girl.

Oh, beautiful.

So now our boys are 46 and 40, and the girl is 28.

This is beautiful. They all studied--

Yes. Yes. The two boys are engineers. And the girl works as a secretary for the board of education.

And I went around in all that time in maybe 40 different schools and circles and churches and talked about Holland in war time. And that's how I met the two teachers that I was sitting with. And they asked Sister Carol to come to that meeting in the class because I told one of the boys that we were bowling with, you know. I was treasurer of Hollandia Society, a Dutch club. But we also had a bowling--

League.

--league. And I was secretary of the bowling league. And one little 17-year-old boy joined us, you know. He had nobody else to join. And he was reading the story of Anne Frank. And I said, how do you like it, Dave? And he said, oh, I didn't know all this happened. I said, well I knew Anne and her whole family because they were patients of my dentist.

And he said, that's impossible, you know. He said, would you come to my class and tell us about it? And that's when the girl I was sitting next to, Barbara Demlow and Rose Siegel, they took their two classes together in one room. And I told them about our war experiences. And they had invited Sister Carol. And Sister Carol was the one that made sure that we got the medal last October.

You get a medal from the Yad Vashem?

Yes. And Sister Carol also planted our tree last year.

Beautiful.

Yes.

Aren't you proud of yourself?

No.

Why?

Not proud. I am only thankful. And you know when we were the most thankful, see, the one boy that they had, when he got married to a Jewish girl who also had been hidden somewhere, and they had a little boy, that's when I was the proudest because they were able to have a grandson.

Beautiful.

Don't you think that's nice?

Yes.

I mean that was for me the most thankful moment that they can perpetuate their family and not be annihilated, you know.

Beautiful. And how you children feel about it?

Oh, they like the story. They all know the story now, of course.

You guys are doing some more speaking.

The neighborhood where you live with, Mrs. Blom, they were living many Jews in this neighborhood?

There were many Jews living in this neighborhood. And I was talking about this doctor that we needed during that time. And he even kept a mother and seven Jewish children in the village by sending in little slides of diphtheria and saying this family cannot go to a camp because the Germans were awfully afraid of scarlet fever and diphtheria and all these other sicknesses. So he kept him in their own home all that time, a mother and seven--

This doctor who came to--

--to, yeah, see our--

Now, the people who were living in your house, they never get sick?

Yes, that's when she got--

How did you manage it?

--cystitis. Well, that's what I said I will go to our doctor. And she said, well, I'm afraid that he would tell. And I said, no, he is good, what we called in the war good, you know, that-- and when she finally saw his handwriting, because she was a graphologist--

Yeah, you have been telling--

--and I needed to go with my little boy to the allergist. And he had given me a letter to the allergist. And she said, oh, now, I see what you mean. He is good. He is very good. And then she finally decided that he could come over and treat her.

And that's how he became friends. And this doctor died this spring. But until this spring, Dr. Samuel Friedenberg. And Dr. Fasseas Heffer, Leo Fasseas Heffer, has been playing chess every week one evening.

Can you tell a little bit about your husband, how much he helped you, because we are not able to interview him at the prison, how much you have to you in this rescue activities, what kind of man he is.

Well, he helped in the first place, when the first couple of years, you know, he went for miles and miles on the bicycle without tires, on the bare rims, to go to farmers and try to get some food, some fruit, something that we did not get on our rations. He went one time by train for a whole day, from early in the morning till late at night. And he came home to visit their little boy, to see that he was all right.

So they had connection with this little boy?

Yes.

Through your husband.

Yes. This servant girl that had taken him wrote letters to me and would say that her little boy was all right and told little stories about her little boy. But it was not her little boy. See, while he was there was this Christian school teacher. He called her mother because he--

They were good to me when I worked for them. And I could not see them perish. I just wanted them to come to us. So we really did it only for humanitarian reasons.

Yes. OK. You said they had one child. But you were not able-- I mean they did-- they were sending him to-- I mean he was staying--

To a farm.

Yeah.

And then later on to a Christian school teacher.

Did you rescue her-- did you do your rescue work alone or did you work with others?

No.

He worked with other people in the underground. He has taken a Jewish couple to the eastern part of the Netherlands to an underground.

Your husband.

My husband. Say that your husband because you don't know who is he.

Oh, my husband is Maynard Blom.

So you did not work here. You worked alone but you did not work alone because you worked with your husband.

Yes.

And the husband worked also with the resistance, with the underground.

Yes, mm, hmm.

But this particular rescuing you did it with--

The two of us.

Husband. Members of your family, yes, family has husband.

And three-year-old boy.

Three-year-old boy did the [INAUDIBLE].

No. [LAUGHING]

Did you rescue any people who were not Jewish?

No.

You say that you knew the person before the war because you worked for them.

Yes.

Yes.

And they were close friends before the war also?

Yes.

Or just acquaintances?

No, close friends.

When you decided to rescue, was this a quick decision?

Yes.

Did you think about it for a long time or did--

No.

--or--

On the spot.

On the spot. That Sunday afternoon.

When you made the decision to rescue, how much did you-- how much risk did you feel you were taking? A great deal of risk, some risk?

We didn't think about it.

You didn't think about it.

But you have to give me some kind of--

We knew there was a big risk.

It was a--

But they said they would keep quiet. And I said, well, in that case, I don't think we would get into too much danger.

So you took about two things, what kind of risk do you take?

Now, the risk was the same for everybody. I mean, if they had--

Yes.

--with that razzia, if they had found them--

Yeah, because some people--

My husband as well as me would have been shot.

Yes.

We were somewhat concerned that there was a chance of being detected. OK. But we were all grown-up people. They were 39 and 40. And we were 26 and 28. And we could keep our mouths shut.

How did your rescue activity begin? Were you asked for help by person rescued [INAUDIBLE]?

No, they did not ask.

So you offered your help?

Yes.

In what month and year did you rescue activity first begun?

The 12th of July 1942.

For how long did it continue?

Till the 5th of May 1945.

It was the end of the war?

Yes. That was our liberation day.

At any time, did anyone put pressure on you to stop your rescue activities?

No.

Did any anyone praise your rescue activities during the war?

No.

No.

Did you receive any compensation for your rescue activities?

No.

No.

What kind of-- oh, sorry-- were you or the person that you rescued ever arrested?

No.

Did you have contact with the person you rescued after the war?

Yes.

And are you-- with all of them, yes?

Yes.

You gave the names. I mean-- I have the names.

Yes.

And he told us also that you are still in contact.

Yes.

With the people. OK.

Almost 40 years we kept in contact.

Was there ever a time when you gave aid to someone and later regretted it?

No.

No.

Did you discuss your rescue activities with any members of your family?

Except my mother.

Yeah.

My mother.

And what was her feeling?

Well, she knew the family also. And she was glad that we were trying to save them.

[AUDIO OUT]

So were you involved in bringing Nazis to justice after the war?

No.

No. How much influence does your religion have on the way you live your life at the present time? Does it have a great deal of influence, some influence? Religion.

Religion? Yes, some influence.

Are you involved in helping activities in the community, such as volunteer work with charities, schools, churches, or anything of that sort?

Yes.

Yes. And what kind of things are you doing?

Well, our church circle makes blankets and sends towels and--

Money.

--money and different things for kids, glasses, empty pill bottles.

Yes. And what is your part in it? I mean what you are selling it or you organizing it?

No, no, organize it to get it together and make it into packages and make blankets and then to the needy countries.

And what-- and what-- send goods to needy countries?

Yes.

Yeah, sure, kind of care package.

Care packages.

And what else?

Well--

In church or in school somewhere, you don't--

We talk about--

Yes--

Helping-- helping activities in communities or in your community.

No. No more.

Some kind of voluntary work?

No. No except lectures in churches and schools.

That comes up after. Have you spoken about your own experiences in any public places?

Yes. For a couple of women's clubs.

When was that?

Oh, from the time I came here in 1950, in the northern part of Michigan where I stayed with my cousin, in Ellsworth-- in Ellsworth, Michigan, and later on in Boyne City.

And then when we moved to Royal Oak and bought a house, I have been to the Royal Oak Women's Club. I have been to the Pleasant Ridge Women's Club. I have spoken to the Methodist Church Circles. They had 15 or 17 at the time. They all had me.

I spoke to the junior high class of my oldest son. I spoke later on to the junior high class of my youngest son. Then different teachers started to call me and ask if I would talk to their class.

I told you that we had this boy that was in our bowling league. He read the story of Anne Frank. And I said, I had known the whole family. And so I talked to those two teachers, you know. They took the two classes together and also invited Sister Carol.

Yeah, you told me before. Do you have any children? You said you have two boys?

Yes, two boys and one girl.

Yes. How much do you children know about your rescue activity?

Quite a bit.

Do you believe that your children have been influenced in any way by what they know about your rescue activities?

I think so.

In what ways?

They know-- they help also their friends when they are in need of them. I think that's the example we gave them.

Now, overall, do you think that your children strongly approve or somehow approve what you did, your rescue activities?

Strongly approve.

Do your present neighbors know about your rescue activities?

No.

No? Not now?

No.

Do they-- what would you tell to the young people if a party with goals similar to those of the Nazis came to power today? What would you say?

Well, I would tell them about the example of the last world war and what happened.

So what did you do?

That's why I tell the schools about it because neo-Nazism is springing up. And I would not like this to happen again ever.

So what would be your message? To the children.

To be aware of the fact that we should not have Nazism ever again.

Yes.

They do be aware of the fact that will not be having fascism ever again. They should be aware that totalitarianism is a bad state of--

Affairs.

--affairs.

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your rescue activity?

I think we covered it quite well. Don't you think so?

If you think so.

Mm, hmm.

We would like to begin by asking some questions about you and your family during the time when you were growing up. First of all, in which country were you born?

The Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, both of us.

Can I put it Holland?

Yes.

In which city or town were you born. And please tell it after.

My city was Almelo, spelled A-L-M-E-L-O.

A-L--

M-E--

M-E--

L-O--

L-O.

And my husband is born in Amsterdam.

No, we are talking about you.

Oh.

And that was a town?

A small town.

A small town,

20,000 people.

Yes. Where did you live for-- where did you live for the longest period of time when you were growing up? The longest.

You mean Almelo?

No. What place was where you lived the longest period?

Oh. Amsterdam.

When you were growing up.

Oh, first Haarlem.

Haarlem.

So we chose the place.

Amsterdam. Amsterdam, the American say but, we say Amsterdam.

Amsterdam. And it's a city. Now, you have a little booklet in your hand. And I would like you to look on page 1. And please answer me, did you live in a large city, a small city, what was it?

It was--

Amsterdam.

--a large city.

Yes. In the page 2, please look at the page 2. And how would you describe the neighbors when you were growing up? We're talking about the time when you were growing up. Were they very friendly and helpful, somehow, somehow--

Yes.

--friendly. Where would you say?

Very friendly. Number 1.

Yes, very friendly.

What was the month and year of your birth?

My birth was on October 16, 1915.

Excuse.

Now, I would like to make a list of the people who lived in your household during the time you were growing up. I don't need their names, just their relationship to you and their ages when you were 10 years old. And that was in 1925. Yes.

When I was 10 years old I lived with a foster father and a foster mother. The foster father was 39 years old. And the foster mother 38 years old. After that, I lived in 17 different foster homes.

OK. So this includes everyone in the household in 1925. Who was the head in this household when you were 10?

The foster father.

He was-- he was the main wage earner?

Yes, a builder.

Would you describe the relationship between members of your family when you were growing up? Would you say your family was very close, somehow close, not very close, not at all close?

With the foster parents I was very close to the ones that I have stayed four years with.

Yes.

In fact--

And your real parents, your biological parents?

My biological parents divorced when I was two. And I have seen my father only back when I was 23 for one day and when I was 33 for another day. And that is all. My mother died here in Michigan and is buried when she was 74. And that's 26 years ago.

Very unfortunate. Now, would you see in page 4, before the war, was your family very well off financially, quite off financially, neither rich, nor poor?

Not very rich, not very poor.

Before the war, on page 5-- turn to page 5, before the war was your family thought of as being upper class, middle class, or--

Working class.

Working class. Who was the person in your household who had the most influence on you when you were being brought up?

My foster mother.

Your foster mother. So the next question refers to a person in your household who had the most influence on you when you were brought up. What kind of work this person did when you have been growing up?

She was a housewife.

Did she learn any kind of profession?

No.

No. She had been a store clerk before her marriage.

Did your foster mother attend elementary school?

Yes.

And did she attend high school-- did she attend high school?

Household school in Holland.

Household school. What was the religious affiliation of your foster mother? She was Protestant?

Protestant. Protestant. He was Catholic.

The foster father was--

Catholic.

No, but we are talking now strictly about you foster father-- foster mother, sorry. Now, please, look the page 5, how much influence do you feel that her religion had in the way you-- I mean your foster mother lived her life?

She had a great influence on me.

Oh, no. Not on you. On the religion, had a great influence on her--

Religion itself.

Yes. Religion itself. Yes?

She sent me to Sunday school and Sunday church for children.

Yes.

And overheard my Bible lessons.

On the page 7, did she felt that people from other religions were very different from herself? Or--

No, because we lived--

Somehow different--

They-- we lived right between-- no, there were very different neighbors.

Yes. But the religion?

Their religion was Jewish.

No, no, no. Probably you did not ask the question. Did you foster mother felt that people from other religions were very different from her religion or from herself?

No.

Or somehow different? Or just about the same?

About the same.

Did you ever-- did she ever talk to you about the Gypsies?

No. Where is that?

Did she ever talk to you about the Jews?

Yes, because we had Jewish neighbors.

What did she tell you?

They were good people. She was very close to them.

What do you think were the most important things you learned from your foster mother?

To be thrifty.

Thrifty?

Thrifty.

Yes.

To be clean. To be industrious.

Yes.

And in the first place to be an honest person at all times.

And what else?

And to be good to other people.

Now, please, move to page 8. And the list of qualities on this page, and for each one, please tell me whether you feel

you learned this quality from your foster mother. Did you learn to be self-confident?

Yes. I learned to be self-confident.

To be independent?

Yes.

To take responsibility?

Yes.

Take chances?

Not too many.

To make your own decisions?

Yes.

To be adventurous?

Not too much.

To help others?

Yes. Very Yes.

Now looking at these qualities on the page 9, please tell me whether you feel that when you grow up, you were this person. Self-confident?

Yes.

Independent?

Yes.

Able to take responsibility?

Yes.

Willing to take chances?

Yes.

Able to make your own decision?

Yes.

Adventurous?

So-so.

Helpful to others?

Yes.

OK. Now during the Second World War, did your foster mother ever help Jews in any way?

No.

No. Before the Second World War, was your foster mother a member of a political party?

No.

Had she some kind of sympathy with some party?

No.

No. After the war started, yes, when the war started, did your foster mother belong to a group that opposed the German Nazis.

She did not belong to a group. But she was very anti-Nazi.

Now we are talking about you. Now, I would like to ask some questions about you during the time you were growing up. Did you attend elementary school?

Yes.

What kind of elementary school did you attend? Was it a Protestant, Catholic, nonsectarian?

Nonsectarian.

Did any Jew attend your elementary school?

Yes.

Were there many Jewish students?

Yes.

Some Jewish student, what would you say?

I would say a third of the class was Jewish.

So some. Did you attend gymnasium or high school?

High school.

Or Lyceum?

High school.

High school. What was it a Catholic, Protestant, nonsectarian?

Nonsectarian.

In which year did you graduate from high school?

In 1931, before I was 16.

Yes. Did any Jews attend your high school?

Yes.

On the page 10, please, were there many Jewish students, some Jewish student, or a few Jewish student attending your high school?

About a fourth of the class in high school.

So what we would say, some, many, what you would say?

Some.

Yes. Did you attend university?

I went to teacher college. In Holland, that's not a university.

Yes. So that it is comparable.

Yes.

It's equal probably. What subject did you study teaching?

Elementary school teacher.

Teaching in an elementary school. What years did you attend university?

In what city?

What years?

What years?

1931 till '34.

Did any Jews attend your university?

Yes.

And on page 10, were the many Jewish students, some--

Some.

Did you ever apprentice in a trade?

No.

What was your religious affiliation during the time when you were growing up? Were you a Protestant, Catholic?

Protestant.

On page 11, please, during the time you were growing up, how much influence did your religion have on the way you lived your life? Did it have a great deal of influence?

Yes, a great deal.

You look in that book, the answers, yes? On the page 12, during the time you were growing up, did you have many close friends--

Yes.

--some close friends? What would you say?

Many close friends. When

You were with your friends, were you usually a leader or a follower?

A follower.

Total leader.

No.

Were any of your close friends very different from you in terms of religion or social class?

Yes. I had Jewish friends, Catholic friends.

During the time you were growing up, were any of your close friends Jewish?

Yes.

Or did you know Jews?

Yes.

Yes. During that time you were growing up, was there a particular person that you admired very much and wanted to be like him or her when you grow up?

Yes.

Yes. And who was it? What-- oh, no, sorry, what were the qualities that you admired in this person?

This was our psychology teacher.

What were the qualities?

Yes.

Yes. I admired him because he was knowledgeable. He taught a very good lesson to each of us. And he tried to be making human beings out of us.

So what were the qualities?

His humanity.

Humanity.

Knowledge and humanity.

Now, we are interested in your feeling about various groups of people before the war. Did you have any feelings about people with educational background different from yours? Please turn to page 13. Yes or no?

No, I thought, well of people that--

Yes or no.

Yes.

How did you-- now, using the 7-point scale on this page, we have numbers from 1 to 7. And you have to put it on which point you want to put, you thought well of this first number and did not think well of it, the 7th. Where you would like to put it on the scale?

You mean the teacher?

No. We are talking about the about the knowledge--

In other groups.

Yes.

Who were different from you in education. And you say-- now, the previous question was, before the war, did you have any feeling about people with educational background different from yours? And you said, Yes.

Yes.

Now, using this scale, what means--

Let me say 6.

You did not think well of these people?

Do not think well is that 7? No, I thought, well of them.

Yes. And so where you would put it?

Yes. Put it on 1.

Number 1, yes. You have also here the scale. During the war, did you feeling about people from different educational background change?

No.

OK. Now page 13, using the same scale, please tell me the number that comes closest to the way you felt during the war about people from different educational background, where you would put it.

I thought well of all people, except of people that are collaborators.

We're talking about education now.

Yes.

Education.

Before the war, did you have any feeling about people of nationalities different from yours?

No.

No. Now on the page 13, when you look, what number on the scale comes closest to the way you felt about people of different nationalities before the war?

I saw thought well of all countries.

OK. During the war, did you feel about people of different nationalities change?

Yes, about the Germans.

On the scale again on page-- please tell me the number on the scale that comes closest to the way you felt during the war about people of different nationalities. Different nationalities can be the Jews, can be the Germans. So you thought of probably--

From the Germans did not think well at all.

And the Jews?

Very good because they always have been friends of ours.

So this is the 7 for the Germans--

And 1 for the Jews.

OK. Before the war, did you have any feelings about people of religions different from yours?

No, I have friends in different religions.

What number on the scale come closest to the way you felt about people of different religions before the war?

I thought well of people of different religions.

During the war, did you feel about people of different religions change?

No.

What number of the scale comes closest to the way you felt about people of different religions during the war?

I thought well of all different religions.

Before the war, did you have any feeling about people from social class different from yours?

No.

No. What number on the scale come closest to the way you felt about people of different social class before the war?

I thought well of all kinds of people.

During the war, did you-- where you would put it? So please tell me the number on the scale that comes closest to the way you felt during the war about people of different social classes.

Yes. Put it on number 3.

OK. Before the war, did you have any feelings about Jews?

Yes, they were my friends.

What number on the scale come closest to the way you felt about Jews before the war?

Well thought of.

During the war, did your feeling about Jews change?

No, I felt well about the Jews.

What number on the scale come closest to the way you felt about Jews during the war?

1.

Before the war, did you have any feeling about Gypsies?

I haven't known any Gypsies. There were no Gypsies in the Netherlands.

So are you going to leave it out. Before the war, did you have any feelings about Nazis?

Yes, very against.

What number on the scale come closest to the way you felt about Nazis before the war?

7.

7, I didn't think well of them.

During the war, did your feeling about Nazis change?

No, it got worse.

What number on the scale comes closest to the way you felt about Nazis during the war?

7.

OK. Where were you living for the longest period of time during the war, in which place-- in what place and country?

Amsterdam, Holland.

What was the largest-- was it a large city, small city?

Large.

Large.

Page what?

No. I tell you when you should refer to them. Did you live in a house or in an apartment?

House.

House.

OK. How many stories--

2.

--did the house have?

2.

Was there a cellar in the house?

No.

Was there an attic?

Yes. Well, he made it.

Did you own your own home or pay rent for it?

Pay rent.

Was there a cellar in the house?

You already asked me.

Yeah. No. Sorry. I told you I'm sorry. How many rooms were there in your home, not counting the bathroom?

Six, seven, plus kitchen.

There were other families who were living in this house?

No, except for the Jewish people.

Before the war, were there any Jews living in the community?

Yes.

Were there many Jews living or some Jews or a few Jews?

Many.

Many?

Mm, hmm.

Did you have a sense of belonging into this community?

Yes.

Now, again, you have to-- now I would like to make a list of the people who were living in your household before the war broke out in 1939. And I don't need their names, just their relationship to you and their ages in 1939. Yours-- who else?

Husband.

Husband.

Yes.

Child.

And child, boy.

Boy. Son?

Yes, son.

And he was the head of the family, your husband?

Husband.

And then how old was he in 1939?

25.

25. And you?

I was 24.

And your son?

One year old.

The country where they were born?

Where he was born? Holland, Amsterdam.

All of you, yeah,

All was Holland, yeah.

And what your husband did?

Fire department.

Fire department, commander of a fire department.

Commander?

Yeah. Post commander.

So this includes everyone in your family. Now, on page 16-- you have the page 16? Before the war, were you very well off financially or quite well off? It's mean around 59.

Number 3.

Number 3. On page 17, before the war, did you think of yourself as being upper class, middle class--

Working class.

Did you get married during the war?

No.

No. We got married in '37.

In what month and year did you get married?

February 25, 1937.

February 20?

26.

26. 1, 19--

Oh, no, it's 25. I got mixed up.

OK.

It's 25.

25. And?

1937.

1937. In what place and country was your husband born?

Holland.

Amsterdam.

And what was-- Amsterdam was the place?

Yeah.

And did you have any children during the war?

Yes.

Yes. One boy in '44.

How many children? One boy?

One boy in October '44.

And how old was he?

When he was born, he was born.

In what year was each child born?

19-- October 1944.

October 1944.

Yes.

OK. Did he live with you?

Yes.

What kind of work did you do just before the war?

The same.

No, you.

I was a housewife.

Housewife.

And before I got married I was a dentist assistant.

Yeah. What kind of work did you do just before the war. What was your title or position.

Housewife.

Should have had a day book.

Uh, huh. During the war, was your major different than the one you have been just discussed or was it the same?

I did not hear the first part of your question.

I was asking what was your profession before. And then during the war, was your main job different?

No. No. The same.

On page 18, please, during the war, did you have some close friends?

Yes.

A few. Close friends. What you would say?

Number 1.

Did your husband attend elementary school?

Yes.

Did your husband attend gymnasium?

No, trade school and after that, architectural school.

That wasn't in university?

No. That's called architectural school.

So trade school, right? I'll put trade school.

First trade school and then architectural school.

In which year he graduated?

He would have graduated in May '45. But during the Battle of Arnhem, the college was demolished.

Yeah, but when--

Trade school I was-- I graduated.

In what year?

In what year?

And you were 15-- it's 1929.

29.

1929. OK. He didn't-- he did not attend the university, yes?

No, I didn't.

What was the religion affiliation of your husband? Was he Protestant--

Protestant.

On the page 19, how much influence did his religion have on the life he lived?

Not--

Not very much?

Not very much. His parents were not very religious.

Which number would you say? Did they have a great influence on you, your parents-- or the religion?

No.

No, not very much.

Which? Which? Which?

4.

What was your husband's main job during the war?

Fire.

Fire manager--

Firemen.

Post commander of the fire house.

That was during the war, yes?

Yes.

What sort of work did he do? What was the title?

Fireman.

Fireman.

Had some title as a fireman?

Yes, post commander.

Fire post commander. Were any of your husband's friends Jewish?

Yes. Scarborough.

Yeah.

Before the Second World War, were you a member of a political party?

No.

What were the things you like-- oh, after the war started, yes--

Yes.

Did you belong to a group that opposed the Nazis?

Yes. He--

No--

You.

Oh, I did not belong.

What was the name of the group? So you know-- no, sorry, it doesn't apply. On page 20, if someone needed your help, would you be more likely to help someone you know or someone you don't know, or would it not make any difference?

I would maybe first help someone I know.

OK. During the war, did you ever help any Jews?

Yes.

What kind of things did you do?

Hide them.

What else?

Well, took care of them, gave them--

Shelter.

Shelter, nourishment.

Food.

OK.

Encouragement.

Wow, that is--

Was there ever a time when you wanted to help a Jew but felt that you could not.

No.

No.

During the war, were there any leaders that you admired?

Yeah, Roosevelt.

Roosevelt.

Yes. What were the things you admired about him? Yeah?

You mean, Roosevelt?

What you admired about them?

Their leadership.

OK. Before 1939 and 1945, were you ever unjustly treated by any government official?

No.

Was anyone you cared about ever unjustly treated by the Nazis?

No.

Did you ever witness mistreatment of Jews by the Nazis?

Yes.

What was that and when was that?

Well, in '42, we saw people rounded up. 1942, people were rounded up and sent in cattle cars to concentration camps.

Jewish.

Jewish people.

And so you say--

And people being shot.

Did you ever witness mistreatment of anyone by the Nazis, anyone else, not a Jew?

Yes, that's what I said.

When was that?

That was in 1943 when somebody had burned down a house where Nazis were boarding. And they shot 29 people on the Weteringschans in Amsterdam and let them rot there for weeks.

On what occasion you became aware of the Nazis intent to do with the Jews?

In '42.

What was the occasion?

When they were supposed to be rounded up on the 12th of July by alphabet.

And they were rounded up.

Mm, hmm.

How did you feel the first time when you saw a Jew wearing the yellow Star of David?

Terrible.

What was the most stressful situation you were in during the war?

The razzia.

And what was your reaction to this stress?

Crying.

Well, afterwards, I was crying. But I kept very straight face. And I talked German to the German soldier that was-- in the house.

--in my house.

Can you tell me what the razzia, a little bit more about the razzia? We have still some time.

They started to surround the village, because this was a suburb of Amsterdam. And--