

OK. It's September 18, 1984. This is Benjamin Lewitt, and I'm conducting an interview with Alice Meilof. Who is a Righteous Gentile who saved some Jews during the Holocaust. Could you tell me your complete name?

Yeah. Alice Prviksma Meilof.

And where and when were you born? I was born in Borkum in Friesland in the Netherlands.

And your experience with saving Jews, who initiated it?

Well, I was not married at the time. So my father knew three Jewish people, two brothers and a sister, whom he took care of. And I just helped him with bringing messages around and doing-- doing yeah, how do I say that now? Messages from the Jewish people to their relations. Because there was one brother who was in the Jewish Council. And those were not-- they didn't have to go in hiding. So I brought messages to them and all that.

How old were you during the war?

I was 14 when it started, and 19 when it ended. So the last three years I was in the underground with my dad.

You were as a messenger or in the underground?

Well, in the underground as a messenger and warning people, warning if there were razias or raids, as you call it.

And was your whole family involved in rescue?

No, just my dad and me. My mother was involved in that way that she knew about it. But I knew she was a silent partner. And my brothers were too young to be in there.

And did you know what was happening to the Jews?

Yes. Yes, we knew. But we didn't have very many Jews living in the lower village where we lived. We did not live in Borkum. We lived in Balkbrug, which is in the province of Overijssel. And those three Jewish people that we took care of lived in Ommen, which is in the province of Overijssel. You want their names?

Oh, please.

OK, they are Carol, and Leo De Haas, De Haas plus their sister Martha. Carol, Leo, and Martha De Haas, two brothers and a sister. And we also had two Jewish families living in the little village where we lived. And we asked them to help them find a place to go underground. But they didn't see any danger really. And they thought if it has to be, well, we'll just go.

So nobody could convince them that it would be better for them to go underground. So we never heard of them again. And those people's name was Lehman. L-E-H and then MAN. But then, anyway, there was brothers, the two brothers and sister, my dad found a place for them. Because we could not keep them in our house because of the close community we were living in. It was not safe. Because across the street was a German living.

So plus, my dad had his own business in the house. My dad was a butcher. So the butcher shop was there and where he slaughtered the cows at that time, was all in the same house. So we absolutely couldn't have the people in the house. Dad always took care of finding places for those three.

Where exactly did he put them? Did he move them from place to place?

Once in a while, if it was not safe at one place at one farm, because of you never knew who to trust. Then he would find out a place. So then the last year of the war, they had to get away from the farm through one reason or another which I

don't know. My dad would know. But he died. So I'm talking for my father whose name is Peter Pruiksma. That's P-R-U-I-K-S-M-A. Peter.

Because he was really the one that did all the work. Anyway, they could not stay at that farm at that time. They were laying in a haystack, living in a haystack. It was in the winter. It was raining and cold. And they had to go to the bathroom, and the sister was there too. They were in the bathroom, they just had to go outside. So they were getting wet and cold, and they sent a message to my dad that Pete, they said, we cannot stay here no more. We are going to give ourselves up.

Then we better go to Germany to the camp, because we cannot live this way. So my dad said, oh no. You're not going to. So he found another place for the two boys. And he found a place for Martha. But Martha had to go over a bridge, across a bridge. So one night, I had to go and pick her up to meet her at 7 o'clock. And you had to be in the house at 8 o'clock at that time.

And Martha was late. She had a bike. I had a bike. So we finally met. And I said, well, I'll go ahead, and you follow me, just a little behind me on the bike. We had to cross the bridge where Germans were always standing, you know? But we made it across the bridge late. We had to go to a swimming pool, an outdoor swimming pool. And a man was going to meet us there. But seeing it was so late, the man thought we weren't coming no more. We came there. There was no one there. We said, now what are we going to do?

Martha said, I don't dare to stay here. I said, well, you better stay here. I know who the man is. I will go. So I went to the man's house. And I said, well Martha is there. Oh, he said I waited and waited. But I thought you weren't coming no more. So anyway, he said, I'll go pick her up. I went home.

I come by the bridge. It was 5 after 8:00. And the German takes off his-- what you call it-- rifle. And he pulls the--

The bolt. He cocks it.

Yeah, the bolt, whatever that to shoot. I thought, there I go. And then he started laughing. I was a young girl, so maybe that helped me out. I've never been so scared in my life, never. So then Martha, they found Martha. Martha found a place there. And then the last couple of months of the war they went to another city, the two boys. And that's it.

Have you seen them since?

I did not. But Carol, the oldest one, I think he was the oldest one, got married sometime in the '60s. I don't remember the exact year. It was '63 maybe. Because my dad died in '65. So it was before that. My mom and dad moved to the United States in the meantime. And they got an invitation to come to the wedding. And they went to the Netherlands. And they went to Carol's wedding.

And my mom and dad were in the second car, not in the first car, behind the bride and groom, kind of as parents, which we really appreciated. Now, then my dad died and my mother is old and very forgetful. And we lost contact with them. But I know Martha is in Israel.

What do you think motivated your father to save the Jews?

Well, in this case for my dad, it was easy because my dad was a butcher and those boys were butchers. They knew each other from way before the war. So when they needed, see, we didn't have any Jews except those two families that did not want any help to begin with, not from anyone, not only my dad, but not from anyone. My dad, he didn't even think about it. OK, you need help? We'll give it to you. No questions asked, no oh, should we do it, shouldn't we do it.

We were not only involved with the Jews anyway though, because there were a lot of boys that had to go underground, who either worked in the underground, or had to work in Germany. And we always had boys in the house. Those boys we had in the house, off and on. Not for the whole winter or the whole summer, but off and on, to bring them to other people again. Or if it wasn't safe by a farmer, they would come by us. We had a hole in the floor.

So every night, if there was someone in the house, every night the carpeting would be rolled up a little. And the thing would be open. So they could just go in the hole and absolutely couldn't see it that it was there once they were in it, see? So we were always prepared if there was anyone in the house, which we had a lot of off and on through the years.

What was it like inside the hole, inside the hiding place?

Oh, nothing. There was just nothing. They could just lay down. So it wouldn't be a place to stay for two or three days. But they could breathe because you would get a little air from underneath. But nothing like a chair or so. That wasn't there it was just if something would happen at least they had a place to hide.

Did the Germans ever come to inspect the house, to look for a hiding place?

No, the Germans stopped once in front of the house, because of my dad of something that happened to him. And they were kind of suspicious of him. And they stopped in front of the house. And we thought, well, this is it. But they went away. They never came in the house.

So up to this day, we really don't know why they didn't come. It was providence or the hand of God.

Was your family religious at all?

Yes we were Christian Reformed, or [DUTCH] in the Netherlands. Yeah, we had a Christian upbringing.

What was your church like, your church going and everything?

We went to church twice on Sunday. And we believed in God and in Jesus Christ as God's son. And I think that's-- we were brought up with, if you do something good you don't get-- if you don't do anything good, you get punished. If you do something good, that's normal. You don't get praise. Because that's, oh, that's what you have to be.

And I think that helped us in doing things for other people.

So do you think that motivated you?

I think so, yes. Absolutely. Was your mother part of this religion?

Yes. Yes.

But why was she, as you said, silent?

Well, I mean silent. She was in the house. Now my mother knew whatever was going on in the house. My mother had a hip operation in 1940 right after the war started. She couldn't walk for two years. So she could not go out of the house. She couldn't even hardly walk. But my mother was the type, especially in the last year and a half, two years of the war, we got a lot of people from the big cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam. And my mother had big pots and pans full of potatoes and vegetables.

And anyone that came by the house and asked, can we please have something to eat, we are so hungry, she would have food ready at all times. So I don't mean that she was silent in the way that she didn't care or anything. It's just that she didn't go out and bring messages around or things like that. She was a housewife.

She worked where she could.

She worked, yes. That's what I meant with being silent, not agreeing with anything.

Did you save any other Jews who you didn't know?

No. No, not that I know of. There were no Jews by us. There were hardly any Jews where we lived. See then, you have to go more to the big cities. But where we lived was mostly Protestant.

You had ration cards and everything. How did your mother get big pots of vegetables and potatoes?

From the farmers. We lived in a farming town. We never had any problems. The farmers did-- anything you grow grew on the farm went across to Germany. Everything was stolen, cows out of the fields, horses that they needed. The farmers didn't even have horses anymore. The Germans took everything. Do you think that the farmers wanted to do that? The farmers were, OK, here's a cow. It's not too good no more. Germans are not going to get it. We slaughter it.

Now, my dad was a butcher to begin with. So we always had enough meat. We could trade meat against potatoes. There was no problem with us with food concerns.

Did you have to get them identification papers?

We did, yes.

How did you do that?

We didn't have to do that. They were issued. Oh, you mean the Jewish people? They were supplied by the underground.

Did you have connections with the underground?

My dad did, yes. My dad was commander of a region. But now remember, I was quite young. And he sent me with messages here, and messages there. And if they knew there was a razia, you know what a razia is?

A raid.

A raid. They would call. Or one or the other way would get a message toward us. Then he would tell me. You've got to go there. You've got to go there. And you've got to go there. And you tell the people, be careful. If the kids are in the house, send them into the fields. Let them lay in the ditches. Because we can have a razia any time. That's what I had to do. My dad would get a message. He would send me.

Then we knew those trains. We lived close by the German border, not too far, maybe 20 miles. And there were a lot of trains going into Germany with food and ammunition, and all this, everything. So there's one day, my dad knew that there was a train coming. And he sent a message from underground to underground, you go by channels. And he wanted them to send a message to England that this train was coming, then and there, such and such a time. He found that out first.

And there was a message on the Radio Oranje it was called. It was in England. And we heard a message that night that it was being sent through. And the next night, the train was gone. They bombed the train. See? So by channels, you find out what's going on. But you don't talk about it in the house. Everything goes by letters or whatever, not verbal either, because maybe someone would hear it. And we would hide our messages wherever we could on our body.

So your father did much more than save Jews?

Yes.

He was involved in the underground.

He was involved in the underground. Yes.

How did he get involved in that?

That I don't know. How did anyone get involved in it? One hears it from the other. And you don't talk about it, but you know. You know who is saving. You know who isn't. A couple of friends would talk, would talk to someone else again, absolutely people that you trusted.

Did other people help you in the rescuing effort, neighbors?

I don't even think the neighbors knew. The neighbors didn't know. We didn't tell anyone. You don't. Just the people where you would bring a person to would know. But that person wouldn't even talk about it. See? You couldn't, because we were talking about that this afternoon in the conference yet. They would sit in the churches, in the bars, in the trains, in the stores, were always people that were listening to find out if something was going on, so they could go to the Nazis and tell them.

So we never talked about anything, never.

Was the fear of getting caught always around?

No. We didn't have fear. Not, that's not the right word either. Of course, yeah. Fear, no. You were concerned. Fear, no. But don't ask me if I want to do it again. Because I don't know if I could do it again. If I know now, now that I know now what I didn't know at that time what could happen to you, if you would be caught. But you didn't think about that. Because those people needed you. You know what I mean?

Yeah.

Yeah. It's very hard to explain, very hard to explain. Scared we were not. Concerned we were.

So did you manage to keep these three Jews moving between farmhouses and the haystack?

My dad did. My dad.

Your dad? So your dad did most of it.

My dad did most of the three Jews, yes.

And how did they arrive at that haystack you were talking about before?

I think someone brought them there. They must have brought them there. But my dad didn't talk in the house about what happened, only what you had to do.

He'd just give direct orders. Go here.

Yes, do this. Go there. Like we had a whole network of stations where you would bring messages. Now if I live in the middle, I went about six miles one way, about six miles the other way on our bikes to bring messages to a certain place.

What happened after that, I don't know. I know it was going further, through the whole network. But that was not my concern. And I shouldn't know about that either. That's the way they work, very quietly. I don't know if you understand what I mean. It's hard to explain. And don't forget, it's 40 years ago. And I was 18. See? And if my dad was alive, he would be here. But he's not.

The people who you helped, you said your mother was always ready to hand out food to other people?

Yeah.

Who came through the town?

Oh, those are people from the big cities that were in search of food. They would take, yeah. That's so hard to explain. But OK, they had those ration cards, right? But there was no food in the big cities. They ate tulip bulbs. And whatever they could eat, they ate. Because there was nothing. They ate their cats. And they ate their dogs. There was no food. So those poor people would come with a buggy or a little cart.

They would walk at least 70, 80 miles, some of them, walk to the farmers in the northern part of the country, to get some potatoes, or some flour, or something like vegetables or so in order to just have something to eat. They would take their silver, their gold. And a lot of them were really not mistreated in the way that they would get hit. But some farmers would take everything. You know?

Oh, you got gold. OK. Well, I'll take that gold ring, and you get like 50 pounds of potatoes, something like that. But a lot of people would help them out if they could. See? And those were the people that came. Then they had to go back home. And what often happened they had to cross a river. There were always Germans there. And I bet half of the people that walked all that way for a little bit potatoes, the Germans would take it again. That happened so often, so often. And those were the people that would come by the houses, and especially by the farmers and the people who had a store or so. Because at least there was a little bit yet.

And we knew that. So my mother would always have plenty of food to eat. So if someone would come, till it was gone, then the next day again. See? That's the way we did it. Were the people who were walking out for food, were they mostly Jews or Gentiles.

No, no, no. Those were just regular people, no Jews. Because they were not around no more at that time. This was especially the last winter, the hunger winter, '44-45.

So basically it was and your father who helped in the rescuing?

Yeah.

And how did he relate to your father in those days?

Oh, very good. We were a very happy family.

Was he like an officer?

No, no, no. Nothing. My dad was just a butcher, just plain people.

On one hand, you say he's just a plain person. And on the other hand, he's putting his life on the line to save these Jews. And he's calling-- he's calling the shots for an air raid from London.

He's well suggesting. He's not calling the shots. He's suggesting if I would find out that there is a truck, in the war I mean. If I would find out that there was a truck with ammunition standing somewhere or going through somewhere, I could do it. You could do it. Anyone who is concerned could do it, if you knew the right channels. See?

Now my father knew that train was coming there. But I don't know who told him. Maybe he got it from somebody else again. That's the way it worked through underground channels. And not too far from us in the woods was the underground.

The headquarters?

The headquarters from the underground, from part of the underground. There were different groups in the underground. You see? And my dad was in contact with the underground there. But through channels, he would not go there, because he didn't have any business there. See?

It's very complicated when there is a war on. You get to do everything on the sly. It's very, very sneaky. That's what we were, sneaky in those things, not in living. We would live right. You try to live right. But in things like that, you would work against the Germans. There was one farmer whom they didn't trust at all. Now my dad did not have anything to do with this.

But he lived not too far away from us. And you could not trust the man, because he was always sneaking around and looking around. And so the underground decided, we have to get rid of the man, and they shot him when he was riding his bike. I mean that's how sneaky you have to be. See?

He was an informer.

The man was an informer, yeah.

How did your community react to the Germans coming in and being invaded?

Terribly, terrible. They were shocked just shocked. But what could you do? The day before they said, yet, we will never invade the Netherlands. And London radio warned the night before, it was May 9. Now watch it, because there is a German regiment or what you call it, I don't know, what you call it.

An army?

An army, not the whole army. But a part of it's going towards the Dutch border. But Hitler said, we're not going to invade the Netherlands. They were not going to invade Norway. They were not going to invade Belgium. They did anyway. So you're shocked. Very, very unhappy, very angry, and very helpless. And that's the worst feeling, the helplessness.

Did any of your neighbors make a conscious effort to fight the Germans?

No, no. They were not in the-- they were not in the army, you mean?

In the army, in the underground, in any way possible?

We don't know. Because you don't talk about that. A friend of ours was. But I don't know who was in the underground and who was not. I knew a few people, but not everybody was. Oh, no. And there were quite a few who were sympathizers, who would not do anything against you, but who wouldn't do anything for you either.

How did you regard those people?

Pardon?

How did you regard those people?

Yeah. Not everybody could do it either. Not everybody is in a position to do it. Not everybody is brave enough to do it, not that we were so brave. I think you have to have the personality for this. I don't know. I don't know how to say. This that's very hard to describe, how a person-- but what would you do if the Russians would come here? I mean you would be awfully angry, right? That's what I tell my kids too. But what could you do?

I said, you can be just as angry as can be, and you can say I'm going to shoot them all. But in the end you are helpless.

Did you feel helpless?

Well, when the war came I was 14. So for my feeling, I felt angry, not helpless. I felt angry. My dad cried. He was so mad.

Did you feel patriotism towards your country?

Oh, yes. Of course.

And you felt that it was violated by the Germans?

Sure. Sure. We were a free country and that's what we-- OK.

[AUDIO OUT]

How did the way you fought against the Nazis and saved the Jews, how did that affect your religious beliefs?

It did not because, yeah, you wanted to know when the Germans came in and so on. And God gave you the freedom to work, to think for yourself, to do what you wanted to do in the right way. And you knew when the Germans came, that was not your country. That was not your people. And it was an invasion of privacy.

And the Dutch are used to being a free country. And I think that you felt deep in your heart there was something there that was eating in you away, something eating away something.

How about the way it affected your political beliefs?

Oh, I was too young for that.

My dad was a Christian Republican, I would say if you had to compare it with America. He was he was a Christian Republican. And that's what he stayed all his life.

You had very-- how did you relate to Jews before the war? Well, like I said, we didn't really have any Jews in our neighborhood. But we were very friendly with the De Haas family, with the old parents and then the three children. They were older than I was at that time already. But we would go there every so often, and we would have coffee with them.

So there was no problem there. My dad sold cows and bought cows. Every Friday he would go to the market. And there is a hotel. This was in Zwolle which is in the province of Overijssel. There was a Hotel Weinberg. Those people were Jewish. And after they are done trading cows and buying and all this, then they would go into Hotel Weinberg and pay or receive money.

So he knew those people very well. They also had a son about 18, 19 years old. And all those farmers that always came there said, boy, you got to go away. You've got to find a hiding place. Because one of these days they're going to pick you up. My dad tried to convince him. He didn't want to go. So this one day, my dad took him home. And he said this is Jan. It was not his real name but I had a smaller brother who was about 9 or 10 at that time, 11. So we didn't want to say he was a Jewish boy.

So my dad said this is Jan, and he's going to stay with us for a while. And he stayed with us for about 10 days. And he said, I can't stand it no more. My dad is busy in the hotel and I have to go home. And my dad tried to talk him out of it. He went home again. And he was picked up and never heard of again. So I mean that's how my dad-- and through my dad and my mother, as children, how we regarded Jews, as you or me, as people.

Did anyone ever threaten to turn you in to the authorities?

No, not that I know of.

Did anybody know?

No.



They did not, not that I know of.

So you are very careful to be extremely cautious?

Very, very, very. You did not tell your friends what you did. I think my girlfriends to this day don't know what I did or what my dad did. You didn't talk about it. And after the war, you didn't brag about it. Because it was something that had to be done. That was just all there is to it.

Did you mention it after the war?

No. No, we didn't.

What about the other families that you worked with to help house the Jews because you couldn't keep them in your own house?

That I don't know. That's what my dad took care of. So that I cannot tell you. I can't even give you the names. I know a few people that they stayed with in regular homes. But those were living in our little community. It was a small village, and they were living in two different people's homes for a while. But those houses were-- I don't know if you have never been in the Netherlands. But those houses are all like this.

They couldn't keep them. There was no way that they could keep those people. That's why they had to go back to the farmers.

So were you living in a farming community?

Yes. Yes, kind of. Around the village was all farms, yeah.

Was there anybody in charge of the rescuing effort or was it just your father?

Just that's all individual. I mean not it was not a group that my father was in charge just of those three boys, whatever else, I don't think he took charge of any more Jews. There were organizations in other parts of the country where there were more Jews that they had a network, but not where we lived. It was too small and no Jews. You know what I mean?

What do you think you would have done if some Jews had asked for help?

Oh, find a place, of course. Keep them in the house if we had to for a while, if there was no place to be at that at a certain time. You don't know how many people we had in the house at times, some 10, 12 people, not Jews, but people who had to go underground, stayed for a couple of nights, moved on again.

But if it was not safe, they would come by us, stay a couple of nights, move on again. We had five policemen in that house. They escaped from a concentration camp. They came in the middle of the night and we heard a noise. I woke up. And I look out of the window and I see a cap, a policeman's cap. And we sure thought they were Germans because it was pitch dark. That's the night we were scared.

But then they said, they were good people, good people. He said, good people. So then my dad went down and he knew the one policeman from years ago. Before he was married, he knew him. And the guy knew that we were living there. So he said to the other four, we'll go there. We put mattresses on the floor, and some blankets, and they slept for two nights. Then my dad found bikes. My dad found clothes for them. And one after the other, they disappeared.

Had you seen them since?

Yeah. I have seen him after the war, once or twice. But then we came to America. And that was the end.

Did they tell you what was happening in the concentration camps or how they escaped?

No, they had escaped. And I haven't heard any. But this was not a-- this was in the Netherlands, a concentration camp in the Netherlands. See?

Why were they put in the camps?

Oh, they refused to eat the transport Jews or transport people that had to go underground and record, transfer them to some kind of camp by train. They refused. And they stick you in the camp. Good people.

Did you know what was happening in the concentration camps?

No, not in the beginning. Later on, we did, but not the first couple of years. Of course, the first couple of years was more in Germany than in the Netherlands. Because they started picking up the Jews about in '42. The first two years wasn't too bad yet. I mean they had to have the star. They were not supposed to go in swimming pools, libraries. We knew that.

But not like Bergen-Belsen or Dachau, so we didn't know that in the beginning of the war. No.

Did you know what was happening to the Jews, when you knew that as you said, before that they couldn't go into the pools or the libraries or public places?

Well, then you start thinking. Then you start thinking. You think, oh there is something wrong there. And that's why my dad helped him too. Because he didn't want that to happen to them, not to anyone, Jew or non-Jew. It didn't make any difference what religion you were, not to us.

What did you think about Jews in a religious sense regarding the first and the second Testaments?

No, nothing much. Because I think you should leave your religious belief to the individual. You would like everybody to believe that you believe. But you can do that.

Have you seen these people after the war?

I haven't, no. I haven't. My dad did. I did not. They moved away.

I shouldn't say that either. My brother worked for them after the war for a couple of years. So my brother saw them yet. I did not.

What happened? Did you have people in your house or under your control when liberation came?

Oh, let me think back a minute. I don't think we had anyone in our house at that time, or it could be that we had a couple of boys. But that I don't know. That I don't know. I remember that we could see the church in the next village which was about three miles away. And we saw the red, white, and blue flag on the church tower. They were liberated. We were not.

And in my bedroom, you could see the red, white, and blue flag. But we were still under the Germans. Then I remember. That was really something. That was something. Then that was sad. We saw the red, white, and blue flag. And that night, I don't know how you call that-- a group of-- we were liberated by the Canadians. A group of Canadians would make a breakthrough kind of.

A parade?

No, like ahead. The Canadians, when the army, Canadian Army came, there was always a small group that would go ahead to see how many Germans there were. OK, so they came in that village. And the red, white, and blue flag was out. And that night the Canadians pulled back a little. And the Germans went to that town that was three miles away from us

they picked up 12 people, got them out of the house. They just went through to the houses picked up 12 men, took them to our village. Three of them escaped while they were being transferred by us.

They shot all nine of them, just because the Canadians were there. They had a flag out. Canadians pulled back. Germans pulled up. Took 12 people.

Were these random?

Random, yes, very [INAUDIBLE].

Was there any logic behind it?

No, not at all, not at all. This was the last day.

And did you know the people?

One man was a colleague of my dad. And I tell you that is something when you see that. That is my brother saw them. I didn't go. My brother saw them. He said, it's just terrible, just awful. And they were just regular army, it was not even SS or Gestapo.

I don't know why. You can't. There's no reason. If it's hatred or-- I don't know. My mother cannot stand the Germans yet after this. Just I think we are a little bit more forgiving. I don't know. But she cannot forgive or forget. And that's something to live with. But if you see that, for my mother's side, I can see that. We were younger. I think we forget more.

What happened when liberation came to your town?

Oh, we danced through the streets with the Canadians. It was just unbelievable, unbelievable. Unbelievable. You can't describe that either. It's just like there we are. You know everything fell.

Where were you exactly when it happened?

Home. I was at home. Just at home in Balkbrug. And we saw the Canadians go past us in a Jeep. And we couldn't believe our eyes. And we just flew out of the house and danced in the streets. But those were just a few Canadians. The next day here came the whole kit and caboodle, you know? Not the whole army, but yeah, more troops. Yeah, more troops.

Did they parade through the town?

No, no. They just rode in big trucks and Jeeps and tanks, and what have you.

Music?

No.

Bands?

No. No bands, no music.

Flags?

That was-- flags, all kinds of flags. Now a couple of days later, we had music and all that. But not that first day, no. It was just silent things, silent. Yeah, happy, silent things. It was really unbelievable. And a couple of days before, we saw the Germans go, on bikes, on wagons. They didn't have hardly anything left. They tried to get ahead of the-- see we got

liberated by the Canadians through Germany. They went around the Netherlands. And they came from the east into the Netherlands from Germany.

So the Germans could not go into Germany. The Germans had to go north in the Netherlands, try to escape that route. They never made it. But that's what we saw. Germans on bikes, and wagons, and horses. And just poor, poor people. You have to feel sorry for them.

The soldiers?

The soldiers, yeah. You really have to feel sorry for them. There they went defeated. Not sorry in the way that the war was over, but sorry in the way that therefore, but for, boys, 17, 18 years old, and old men, 50, 55 years old. And in between, everything was gone. It's very sad. And what for?

Loss of life. Loss of Jews. Loss of Dutchman, Frenchman, everything. It's sad. But that's war. And we'll always have it, you know? We try to keep peace and I don't know. I don't know. And I don't think people will ever learn.

This is September 18, 1984. And this is Ben Lewitt, concluding an interview with Mrs. Alice Meilof, a Righteous Gentile.