

ISAAC GOKKES

THE NETHERLANDS/CANADA

WORLD WAR II

Interviewed by

Renia Perel

&

Reva Hollander

(April 8 & 10, 1992)

Original Text Transcribed from Tapes

for

THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

INTERVIEWEE: Isaac GOKKES (G)

DATE OF RECORDING: April 8, 1992

FILE NUMBER: 23-2

TRACK NUMBER: P1 (Preliminary Interview)

(Refer D. Van Haren's tapes)

INTERVIEWERS: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

OBSERVER: Duifje Van Haren (VH)

Note to the Listener and Reader:

Through the second part of Mrs. D. Van Haren's interview, Mr. Gokkes felt compelled to recount his experiences immediately, even though the interviewers were unprepared at that moment to go into a second interview on that day. However, the unscheduled interview began and was completed at another date. This initial interview is referred to as P1 (preliminary interview).

G: And I have lived through the war because my wife was not Jewish. And it's different with her, the feeling that she gone, I didn't go through [referring to Duifje Van Haren's experiences]. You see. First of all I was married in 1934, and in 1935 my wife got a baby. So, and the baby, a boy, he saved our life, my life. Because in 1940 when the German's came in, I had a spare on my, on my pass... [shuffling of papers] on my, I lost it. Not lost it, I, I hid it and I [am] never going to find it back. And nothing, with a 'J' on it and that is my wife's passport, but I got the same thing, but with a 'J' on it ['J' for 'Jew'] and I didn't want to have that in my house so I destroy[ed] it. And then there are lots

of Jewish people without children, mixed marriage. They went to, to concentration camp. But because my son was there I was spared maybe, was it going farther after the war, not after the war in 19...if Hitler [had] really won the war. I [would have] had to go to a concentration camp too. You never know what happened. But I was spared through my son.

P: How were you spared by your son?

G: Because I had, first of all I was spared, I was diamond polisher. And they needed diamond polishers. So they didn't want me to go to a concentration camp. I was more, more, ah, suitable...

P: Valuable?

G: More suitable in Amsterdam where there was diamond polishing.

P: Um hum.

G: So they spared me. And because I had a mixed marriage and I had a child too, I was 'double' spared.

P: When you say 'they', who was the 'they'? When you say "they spared me," who do you mean?

G: The German.

P: The Germans, themselves, they knew that you were a Jew?

G: Oh ya.

P: And they knew that you had a German wife and a child, or son?

G: No, they didn't, they didn't...

P: They didn't know.

G: They didn't know.

P: That you were a mixed marriage.

G: No.

P: They thought you were a Jew, period.

G: Um hum.

- P: And they let you live because they needed you?
- G: No, they brought me first eh, that was in eh, '42, they picked up all the diamond polishers. Everybody what's [who was] working in the diamond industry, they picked them up too. And they had mostly at night, and they had to come to a place in Amsterdam and then they transport them in an, in an...
- P: So other diamond...
- G: Polishers.
- P: Polishers were taken to concentration camps?
- G: Ya.
- P: Even eh, whether they, they were Jew, because they were Jewish?
- G: Were Jewish.
- P: But you just...
- G: I was picked up, but my wife was not Jewish, and she can speak German. She was German. And when we came on the place where we had to come together and that...
- P: Gathering.
- G: Ya. There was an, an truck waiting for us to be picked up. And my wife was standing there, but she didn't wear a star ['Star of David']. I was wearing the star, she didn't. And that guy from, that Dutch guy, he was in, from the Nazi party too, but he was Dutch, a collaborator. And he said to my wife: "Where's your star?" and my wife said: "I don't have to have a star, I'm not Jewish." He said: "Then you can't go with us." So my wife went to the German who was with the truck, and it was eleven o'clock, and on [at] twelve o'clock, they sent it through, to Westerbork. And Westerbork is a concentration camp, in Holland. And she said, was talking

with that German truck driver, and he asked them to hurry up, so she can talk with, with one of those majors, because I was mixed-married and I had a child. And he did that. And when we came on the place where they transport you, that was the [not clear] in Amsterdam. And when we came there, the chauff...the chauffeur from that truck, he called a friend of him [his] and he said: "Here is a mixed marriage, send them over to..." That was that time, Aus der Fünten. Ever hear of Aus der Fünten? He was very well-know in Holland. And he used, maybe a year ago, he passed away. But I didn't talk with him, my wife talked with, there was another guy, 'Shellembear', that was his name. And they were both talking together and they asked me where my wife came from, and he said: "My wife come from the same place." So we were talking together, you know. Um, it was my son's birthday and the next day it was my birthday. So when I came in she talked with them and he said: "You go away, you go home, take your husband with you, and your child." So that was...So I'm not that time I didn't come on the street anymore. That was it.

P: Um hum. Do you want to spell those names that you mentioned, before like ah, all of the names that you said? The name of the person.

G: Aus der Fünten. He's in every book from, from, from, from...

P: It doesn't matter. Please just spell it. [writing] This is a T?

G: Aus der Fünten, ya.

P: This is a name?

G: That's a name, ya.

H: And who was this person again?

G: He was the head from the, from the S.S.

P: The head from the S.S. in?

G: In Holland.

P: In Holland.

H: F-U-N-T-E-N.

P: He was a Dutch man?

G: No, no, he was German.

P: He was German?

G: Ya, ya.

P: Aus der Fünten. And he let your wife...

G: And me go home.

P: To take you home. And the child was with her? Your son?

G: Ya.

P: Where is he now?

G: He's here in Vancouver.

P: Oh.

G: And my daughter, she lives in Denver.

P: In where?

G: Denver, Colorado.

P: Oh, so you have a daughter too.

G: She, she...

P: Would you spell your name. Isaac...

H: Ya, I have that.

G: She got that already.

P: Oh, ya you have that. Okay. So you were never bothered after that?

G: No. My wife hide me. Some guy bought, I make [built] under the cabinet in the kitchen a little secret place for me. And when the German came in, they sometimes, they came in looking

for Jews, you see. And my wife had a nephew, and he was in uniform, and we had a big picture from him standing on the buffet. So when the German came in they saw that picture right away. You see, and I was hiding in that little cabinet under the counter.

P: So you still had to hide?

G: Oh ya, for sure, to make sure that nothing [would] happen to me.

P: So how many years like, were you hiding like that?

G: About two and a half years, you know.

P: Till the war was over.

G: Till the war was over. I didn't sit all the time in that place, I was living, you know, at home.

P: When was the incident? Do you remember the date of the incident when they were taking people away to Westerbork and that the chauffeur released you?

G: That was on my birthday, on my son's birthday, the 29th of September.

P: 29th of September, the year?

G: Ah, '43, or '42, I really don't know.

P: Oh, okay.

G: I think '43 [probably '42]. And on my birth date, a day later, I came home.

P: Because it's two years you said that you were in hiding like, trying to avoid being picked up.

G: And I had to work before that time in 194-...

P: Did you work during that time?

G: In 1940...

P: As a diamond polisher?

VH: You know, they sent him to a work camp.

G: In 1940 I had to work on the coast. For the German.

P: As a Jew?

VH: Oh ya.

P: As a Jew?

VH: As a mixed marriage Jew.

G: Mixed marriages.

VH: Mixed married Jew.

G: All the mixed marriages had to go to the coast. But, eh, ya, that's all they take. You know ah, [shuffling of paper] that had to go in the water. And every time, in the middle of the night even, we had to stay, stay every week, every, every, for, for, every day there. You know, while I was in the camp. And every day we had to go by, by low water, we had to go...

P: Sailing you mean?

G: No, no, no...

P: What is this that you drew?

G: For cement, cement thing.

P: Triangle?

G: Triangles ya. We had them, and it were heavy things, we had to put them in the water. And they put mines on it.

P: Oh.

G: On the coast. They were scared that England [would] get through boats, boats and landed on the coast there. So we had to...

P: So the whole coast line was mined and you were working on the cement part?

G: On the cement part, ya.

P: I see.

G: They put that, those things it's in, in the water. You know, we had to. Do you know why you put your, in the old time, you had from glass of crystal, you had where you put your fork and knife and things on, on the table. Can you remember?
[mumbling in background] Ah, that was, [mumbling in background]. Ya, ya. That was where you put in, in, you put your knives on it. It was like that. You got it here? So, what things like that. You see.

P: And what was this for?

G: And then they...

VH: That's what you mean?

G: Ya, but [not clear]. Just like that.

P: Oh, to places like this?

G: Ya, ya.

P: What was this for?

G: And I had them on three...

VH: If you set the table, you put your knife and your fork in the dings, then you...your table cloth doesn't get dirty.

G: So you put your knife and fork like this.

P: Oh, like this?

VH: Right! (laughter)

G: You see. And then they put three together...

P: I see.

G: And one here, you know, so that, and then you had to, the, keep them over in the water from one place, then the other place, and the other place, in the middle of the water. As far as you can stand, till here sometimes. And sometimes in the middle of the night it was very cold in the water.
(laughter) But they were very good to us. The German.

Because they were standing on the, on the coast by the, by the bunkers, you know. And they were very scared that they had to go to Russia. So they kept us all the time there.

P: Oh, I don't know if we should maybe re-interview this, because...

H: Ya, it's a whole other story.

P: Because it's a new another story.

G: That's what I told you.

P: There's not enough time.

G: That is what I told you.

P: No, but we can meet. So that you can begin at the beginning from 1940. Like how the, the...

G: I got not much to say about ...

P: Well, it's much, because like... And there was some kind of a document that you wanted to show us specifically, so I think that today wouldn't be a good time.

G: You can take that, you can take that. And that, and that, and that, and that.

P: This is not for Jews, this is for the non-Jews.

G: That's for everybody. That's for everybody. Jews or non-Jews.

P: Jews too?

G: Too.

P: Those who were allowed to live, you mean, where given that?

VH: They gave those out in the beginning of the war.

P: In the beginning, I see.

VH: Dutch people gave those out in the beginning.

P: Oh, I see.

G: And that is...

P: We need to make copies of that, because this is Gokkes, Isaac.

H: Do you want this on?

P: Huh?

[Interview continued on Tape 1 and 2]

INTERVIEWEE: Isaac GOKKES (G)

DATE OF RECORDING: April 10, 1992

FILE NUMBER: 23-2

TRACK NUMBER: T1-S1

INTERVIEWERS: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

OBSERVER: Duifje Van Haren (VH)

P: We have the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Isaac Gokkes... Mr. Gokkes eh, was this family name eh, is this your original family name?

G: Ya, it is.

P: And what is your current address?

G: It is 109 - 8751 General Currie.

P: Avenue or Street.

G: I don't know.

P: That doesn't matter.

G: Road, road.

P: Road. And it's in?

G: Richmond.

P: Richmond. What is your postal code?

G: V6Y 1M3.

P: And what is your telephone number?

G: That's 278-3456.

P: Ah, what is the, the contact person, the closest relative or friend in case someone wanted to get in touch with you for clarification? Oh, then it's Duifje...

G: Van Haren.

P: Ah ha, so contact person is um, the telephone number?

G: 278-8856.

P: Thank you. And you are married?

G: I was married.

P: You were married, and now you are a widower?

G: Widower.

P: And ah, how many children were in your family, in your own family?

G: Two.

P: Two, and eh, what eh, eh, religion do you, are you Jewish?

G: I'm Jewish, yes.

P: Yes. And the place of birth.

G: Amsterdam.

P: Amsterdam. And your date of birth?

G: September 30, 1913.

P: And eh, what was your mother's ah, first and maiden name?

G: Rebecca.

P: And her maiden name?

G: Gerretse. That's G-E-R-R-A-T-S-E, wait a minute. i don't know. [Pause] Ya, two R's.

P: Just spell it.

G: G-E-R-R-E-T-S-E.

P: That's Gerretse. And what was your father's first name?

G: Jacob.

P: How do you spell that?

G: J-O-C-O-B.

H: 'J-O' or 'J-A'?

G: Jacob.

P: J-A.

H: J-A-C-O-B.

P: J-A-C-O-B. Right, and what was your occupation before the

war?

G: Diamond polisher [clear throat].

P: Diamond polisher. And after the war?

G: Ah, I was a working on ah, bookkeeping.

P: And what was your ah, level of education?

G: I was 'erlou', what is 'erlou'? 'Erlou'...

P: High school, and did you have any Jewish education?

G: A little bit.

P: What did you have? What level?

G: Oh, I don't know.

P: Did you study for a Bar Mitzvah?

G: Em, ya, I was.

P: Were you Bar Mitzvahed?

G: Ya.

P: Okay, so you had it up to the age of thirteen.

G: I really don't know. My parents were not that...

P: Do you know any Hebrew?

G: My father was not very religious, and my mother was not very religious either.

P: No, but they did sent you to...

G: I can read a little bit ... Hebrew.

P: Ah, ha.

G: But, ah, not that much.

P: Ah, so elementary, I will put down, Jewish education. And secular was High School. And ah, where did you live before the war? Just like, just before the war? In Amsterdam?

G: In Amsterdam, ya.

P: So that was still Amsterdam. And did you have any ah... position in the community? Like ah... did you belong to any

synagogue, or...

G: No.

P: Any leadership that you had, or ah, ah...

G: No.

P: Or Zionist organizations?

G: No.

P: No. And ah, you did not go into a ghetto, did you?

G: It was all ghetto.

P: Ah ha. Did you go into a labour camp, and if so give the dates, and where? And the name and the date. [Shuffling of papers] Mr. Gokkes is showing, is looking for documents now, he has brought some documents to show to us, to verify the time where he was incarcerated and for how long. Um, the labour camp that you were in you say is called Callandsoog and it's spelled C-A-L-L-A-N-D-S-O-O-G, and it's north of Holland near Alkmaar which is spelled A-L-K-M-A-A-R.

H: Not north of Holland, but in North Holland.

G: In North Holland.

H: Right?

P: Okay. In North Holland, ya. Alkmaar. And when eh, did you go there and how long did you stay there?

G: I had to go there on a Sunday, April 23, 1944.

P: April 23, 1944, and you stayed there till?

G: Till, it was I think July.

P: Till July.

G: Ya, something like that, July, ya.

P: You were released from there?

G: Not released.

P: No! Oh, you stayed there till July?

G: Ya.

P: 1944.

G: Ya, and then we took off. We, dis, we, there was at that time, there was a, a, talking about invasion in Holland, so...

P: Of the Allied invasion?

G: The Allied invasion, so everybody...

P: Escaped.

G: Escaped. We was not, we were not behind, how you call it?

P: Barbed wire.

G: Barbed wire, or something like that, we could walk free in the, in the town.

P: Ah, ha.

G: It was all mixed marriages at that time.

P: So, all the people who were in that labour camp were of mixed marriages?

G: Ya.

P: Ah, ha, so you were the Jewish partner in that marriage?

G: Ya.

P: Was your wife, eh...

G: Not my wife..

P: Part Jewish or...

G: My wife was part Jewish.

P: What was her part, like, ah, like ah?

G: I think her father was Jewish.

P: Her father was a Jew, and her mother was not Jewish.

G: Not Jewish.

P: What was her mother?

G: Ah, 'Evangelish' [Evangelical].

P: Ah, ha, but she was a, a Christian...

G: Christian.

P: But, she was, was she, um, also Dutch Christian?

G: No, no, German.

P: German. So um...

G: My wife was German.

P: So, so by ah, she was brought up as a German?

G: Ya.

P: Your wife, but she knew that her father was a Jew?

G: Uh um, she came when she was twenty-six, she came to, to Holland.

P: Ah, ha.

G: And, that was the, no, no, no, she was, I think she was, ya I think twenty-six when she came to Holland.

P: And, and then you met her in Amsterdam?

G: Ya. I went to the opera and there was a lady sitting besides me, and there was the opera "La Bohème." She was sitting besides me and when, you know the story from "La Bohème," Mimi died, Mimi was very sick, and that lady besides me was crying, and I said to this lady, "You don't have to cry, it is just an opera." So, from after that time I asked her if I can go out with her, and she said, "fine." Come to that and that street, in Amsterdam, so I went out that night, and another night, I went out with her.

P: So you started dating?

G: Dating, but she didn't come up anymore.

P: She didn't...

G: No.

P: Show up there?

G: No, she didn't show up. One day, that was maybe in August

and I was going to the movies in Amsterdam, in a big street, where a big ah, theatre, and I come out of the theatre and I walk right in her face, and I said to her, "You did not come, you did not show up eh." So she made an excuse, she can't do it and so on, and after that time we were in love, for one year. We were engaged for one year and then got married. We had to get married because in 1934, in 1935 there was talking about the Nuremberg Law: Jews couldn't marry Christians. So we got married before that time. And in 1935, my son was born, and that was it. And then in 19...we couldn't get any work anymore and, when the invasion came in Holland.

P: When was the invasion?

G: In, what was it, May fifth I think, when was the invasion, the tenth, isn't it?

VH: In Holland?

G: Ya.

VH: In May the fifth.

G: May the fifth, ya.

P: What year?

VH: Or May the tenth, no, no, you're right, May the tenth.

G: May the tenth, the first was...

VH: The first [not clear] was May the fifth.

G: Ya, ya.

VH: The invasion was May the tenth.

G: Ya.

P: May the tenth of what year?

G: Eh, 1940. May the tenth 1940.

VH: Right.

P: Ah, ha, was the Nazi invasion, in Holland?

G: Yes, Nazi invasion. And Jews couldn't get a job...

P: So, did you have both children then, did you have the boy and the girl?

G: No, I had only one, I had only one.

P: Only the boy?

G: Boy, and he was at that time about five years old.

P: Ah, ha, when the Nazi invasion. So what happened then from 1944 till they took you to that Callandsog camp, ah, describe your years of um...

H: You mean from 1940?

P: From the time, from 1940, ya.

G: First of all, we couldn't get a job anymore, as diamond polisher.

P: When you say 'we', you couldn't, because you were a Jew?

G: Ya, the Jews couldn't get jobs anymore.

P: Uh, hum...

G: And so I was a gardener and they asked for gardeners in a Jewish eh, how you call that, eh, in Apeldoornbos?

VH: Ah, a mental institution.

G: Mental institution as gardener.

P: They needed a gardener in a mental institution?

G: Ya, the Christians, they couldn't work anymore for Jews, at that time. That was I think in 19...

P: Ah, ha, this was a Jewish mental hospital?

G: A Jewish mental hospital, ya.

P: So Christians weren't allowed to work for Jews.

G: No.

P: So then you were hired?

G: Hmmm. And we went over, or I went over, and I stayed there

for a couple of months, but there were rumours, we didn't hear that, but there were rumours in Amsterdam that, the, German want to pick up the mental patients and they didn't look if you were Jewish or if that you was not, or if you was mental sick or not mental sick, they took the nurses and everything and they shipped them right away to Auschwitz.

- P: So, you mean that you heard the rumours that they would...
- G: My wife, my wife...
- P: Your wife heard rumours that they would pick up the mental patients.
- G: Yes.
- P: The Jewish mental patients?
- G: There were no Christian mental patients...
- P: Oh, from that hospital, and they actually did take them away?
- G: They actually did, all of them, but just before that happened, my wife took me back to Amsterdam.
- P: Eh, bef...before this happened your wife asked you to come....
- G: To come back.
- P: Back to Amsterdam and where was this mental institution located, if she took you back?
- VH: Apeldoorn.
- G: Apeldoorn.
- P: How do you spell that?
- G: [Sound of writing]
- P: The spelling of Apeldoorn is A-P-E-L-D-O-O-R-N, and this is a place outside Amsterdam, or how many kilometres from Amsterdam?
- G: Dalia, how many kilometres, how many kilometres from Amsterdam?

VH: Amsterdam? Maybe twenty-five.

G: No, you're not...

VH: Apeldoorn?

G: Apeldoorn, I don't know, maybe, maybe 75 or something?

VH: Oh, I don't know that, I really don't know.

P: So, ah, it was, a separate town, Apeldoorn?

G: Oh, ya, ya.

P: And this is where this mental in...Jewish mental institute was located. Do you know the name of it?

G: The Apeldoornbos.

P: No, the name of the institution? Of that mental hospital.

G: I think there was not a name, there was 'Apeldoornbosch'.

VH: Apeldoornbos.

P: Apeldoorn, how, what is that?

G: Bos.

VH: Woods, it means woods, it was in the woods.

G: Ya.

P: Oh, B-O-S-C-H, and this is a capital 'B'.

G: No, no.

P: No, just, I see. So they actually took everybody away?

G: Ya.

P: The nurses and the doctors?

G: The girls and the doctors, and the whole ward.

P: And they never came back?

G: No.

P: So your wife saved you.

G: Ah, ha.

P: And you listened to her?

G: Oh, ya.

P: Was it a big time span between they actually picked up the people and that you went home with your wife?

G: Oh, maybe 14 days later.

P: Ah, ha, but you didn't go to work there, to the, as a gardener?

G: Ya, ya, I went there, for about a couple of months, maybe two months.

P: Yes, I understood that, but after you left?

G: No, no, there was...

P: You never returned?

G: No, no, no.

P: And it took about two weeks before they actually evacuated that hospital to Auschwitz.

G: Ya.

P: So what did you do after that? What happened? Like how did you, how was it further on?

G: Then I had to go in a war camp by Callandssoog. That's the same thing.

P: Oh, then you went in the war camp, that was in 194..?

G: '44.

P: Oh, but what did you do between 1941..?

G: Nothing, I could do nothing. My wife...

P: Oh, you just stayed home?

G: Ya.

P: Hidden or, or, a...

G: No, not hidden, I, I didn't go on the street, because of the always 'razzias'. You know what a 'razzia' is?

P: Well, tell us.

G: A razzia is when they picked the Jews up from the street. We

had to wear stars, the 'Star of David', and they picked them up. Young, old, not so old.

P: Eh, did you have to wear a star of David even though you were inter-married?

G: Ya, ya. Ya, ya.

P: And when did they ask you to wear it, when was the ordinance given to the Jews in Amsterdam? I mean, do you remember the time? Was it in 1940 when they first came, or '41?

G: No, when did we have to wear the stars?

VH: Huh?

G: When did we have to wear the stars?

VH: Oh, I would say, I would say 1941, 1940, 1941, 1941 I guess.

G: 1941, ya.

VH: I guess it was 1941.

P: And who notified the Jews about having to wear the stars?

G: The German, the German Wehrmacht, of the German, the Nazis.

P: Ah, ha, did they have ah...

G: Notified the...

P: Posters, notifications...

G: Notifications, ya.

P: And did they issue those stars, they gave out those [stars]?

G: Ya, ya.

P: They issued stars.

G: The Jewish ah, Jewish ah... [not clear]. Jewish ah... [comments in background]. We got a form and we had to fill it in, and...

P: You had to register as a Jew?

G: Ya, I got one at home, I forgot to take it with me. A form we had to fill in...

P: A registration form that you are a Jew, and that you are wearing a star.

G: Ya, uh hum.

P: Oh, we would like to have that form as a document, thank you.

G: Ya, ya.

P: If you have it, that's a very important document, because this is rare. Thank you. And, um, so eh, in all this time how did you survive, and your wife and son? I mean how, how were you able to nurse yourself, where did you get the food?

G: Ya, I [shuffling of papers in background]. We sold our marriage band. We sold everything that we could to stay alive.

P: Ah, ha, and who did you sell it to, to other Dutch people, and what did you sell it for, money or for food?

G: And to farmers. My wife went with the bicycle, in that time, she went to the farmers and picked up some, some ah, grain, and...

P: Some what?

G: Grain.

P: Oh, grain.

G: And you had to give them something, so and when, in the beginning it was not that bad. They were satisfied with a little bit, but my wife was very ah, ah, how you call that? Eh, she drove from Amsterdam to Alkmaar, that is about 40 km, with a bicycle.

P: Determined is it, determined, you want to say?

G: Ya, ya, and she drove with a bicycle. In the beginning there were still tires with air in it, but later on if the Germans saw a bicycle with ah, with ah, a tire with air in it, they

confiscated the bicycle.

P: Why?

G: Because they could use them, themselves [themselves]. But, my wife, I put for my wife on, you could buy at that time, strips from an, an auto, auto tire. That strips you put it on, on the tire.

P: A car tire?

G: A car tire, yes. From the thin strips they make from one tire maybe twenty other tires, for the bicycle, and they didn't care about those tires, they were too hard, and there was too much trouble with that. But my wife went anyway with those tires all the way for 135 km, maybe a little bit more, and sometimes she had, it was inundated, Holland was inundated in that time with water. You know they put ah, they put ah, the dykes open and half of North Holland was under water.

P: Flooded you mean, they flooded the North...

G: They flooded all, you know.

P: Then?

G: And then I had to go to work in that camp and they never paid us for that. We had to work, but the Germans were very good to us. Really, the Commandant from that, from that camp was very, very good and we could go in the town, in a little, it was a little village, and we could go in that little village, we could go in a restaurant there for a while. And one day, the SS of the S.A. came over and he said to the Commandant: "You let, you leave your Jews go into that restaurant."

P: You allow Jews to go to a restaurant?

G: Ya.

P: He was reprimanding him?

- G: Ya, and he said, "You have nothing to do with it, because they are my Jews, and they work for me, and you've got nothing to say about that," so. But anyway, he told us to stay away for a little bit. And we get a, bread from Hoorn, that is a little bit more up, and ah...
- P: Bread, from what?
- G: From North Holland [province], from Hoorn. That is a little town too,
- P: Oh.
- G: But it is on the coast too, and they baked that bread. Real German bread, but they give to the...
- H: Could you spell that?
- P: Could you spell that...?
- G: Hoorn?
- P: Ya.
- G: H-O-O-R-N.
- P: H-O-O-R-N, this is the name of the town where there was a bakery?
- G: The name of town, ya.
- P: And they baked German bread for the Germans?
- G: For the Germans, and for us too.
- P: Ah, ha.
- G: But, when the German needed a bread, that was okay for them, but when we had to get our um, rations.
- P: Ration.
- G: Our rations, the, the, [not clear] that is, the, how you call it? [not clear] The, how you call the, the, the [not clear]? This was the, [comment in background], ya, how you call those?
- P: Bands?

VH: Collaborators with the Germans.

G: You call collaborators with the German. You know...

H: Collaborators.

G: Ya, collaborators, ya.

P: Oh, German col...eh, Dutch eh...

G: Dutch collaborators.

P: Dutch collaborators.

G: Ya, and they used to go when it is raining and they didn't cover the bread with, in a truck, you know. Open truck, and the bread [that] was inside was all yellow and (pause).

P: You mean, eh, Dutch collaborators...

G: They picked up that bread in Hoorne.

P: Ya.

G: And then when it was rain, they were looking for a day of rain, or something, and the bread was all wet, you know, and it was ...

P: So these are not the collaborators, are they? They were the Dutch resistance movement?

G: No, no, no, no.

VH: The other way around.

H: They made sure to go and pick it up on a day when it was raining...

G: That's right.

H: So the bread would get wet and wouldn't be any good for eating, is that what you mean?

G: Ya.

P: Ya, but wasn't this bread delivered to the German eh, soldiers, too?

G: Ya, but that was another day, probably, that they get the

bread.

P: I see, it's only for the inmates, like yourself. When they picked up bread for you separately, that's when they would choose a day that was wet, so that you wouldn't enjoy it. Uh hm.

G: So we said ah...

P: What did you get to eat? Let's say a typical day, choose just one day's meal.

G: Oh, I don't know.

P: In the morning did you have bread, and coffee, or water?

G: No, no, we get a meal, we get...

P: Bread and butter?

G: Bread and butter ya.

P: And coffee?

G: And coffee.

P: And for, and lunch, you had a lunch break, too?

G: Oh ya, oh ya.

P: And did you have a hot meal during lunch, like potatoes and...

G: I really don't know, we had mostly, we get soup.

P: I see, well that's a hot meal.

G: A good soup, it's good soup.

P: Ya.

G: What they gave to the Germans, they gave it to us too.

P: Oh, that's good. And then in the evening?

G: I really don't know.

P: Ah, ha.

G: I...

P: But it was rationed?

G: Ya, ya sure.

P: Ya, and you had to eat in a ki...in a hall?

G: We get meat, we get eggs, we get...

P: Ah ha, did you have a cot or a bed to sleep in for the night?

G: A bed to sleep, sure.

P: But, how many people were in the room?

G: How many, maybe sixty, seventy.

P: Sixty, seventy, it was a big barrack?

G: Big barrack, ya.

P: Ya, so did you get any warm clothing, or anything for the winter, or did you get..?

G: No, it was mostly, it was beautiful weather at that time. Then we had to go at night, we had to go in the sea.

P: Oh, so you worked mostly at night? and..

G: When there was, when there was eh, eh, low tide, it could happen at night, it could happen during the day too.

P: So you were working right on the sea?

G: On the sea, right on the coast.

P: And what did you do there, what did the inmates do, what was there job?

G: We had to put, some, ya how you explain that? Ah...

P: Dykes? Or...

G: It is a dyke.

P: Mines? Or...

G: It is a dyke, it is a dyke, and we had to ah, we had...

H: Like concrete blocks?

G: Concrete blocks, ya, and we had to tie that together, and then we had to push over in the sea as far as possible, and then they put mines on it.

P: Um, hum.

G: The German put mines on it, it was for an invasion from England.

P: So this was like, so this was like a bar...the Germans were building like a barrier from, for...

G: That's right.

P: For the Allied invasion, against the Allied invasion.

G: Ya, ya, and they had bunkers, where they stay, for, with the, with the...

P: Machine gun?

G: Machine guns and everything, you know.

P: So you built those too, the bunkers?

G: No, no, no.

P: No, they were there?

G: The company, the company what ah, hired us to go to Callandsoog, they built the, the bunkers too. That is "J. Slingerland" [shuffling of papers].

P: Um, the firm would, which hired them was J. S-l-i-n-g-e-r-l-a-n-d. Um hum, so this was a Dutch company?

G: Dutch company, ya.

P: And she hired, this company hired...

G: He hired for...

P: For the Germans?

G: For the Germans ya, and I think...

P: Ya, did they pay...

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 1

INTERVIEWEE: Isaac GOKKES (G)

DATE OF RECORDING: April 10, 1992

FILE NUMBER: 23-2

TRACK NUMBER: T1-S2

INTERVIEWERS: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

P: Now please tell us what happened after you escaped from the labour camp on July '44.

G: They were talking about, they were talking about an invasion from England, so we all disappeared, all the Jews disappeared, even the, the German, he took off, they disappeared a little bit, but there was not an invasion. And, we anyway, two eh, me and somebody else...

P: Also a Jew?

G: All Jews, we went to a farmer and he hide us for a week, and later on we became very good friends, and after that, for a week, I said to my friend, I said, "Let us go back to Amsterdam." Because my wife was in Amsterdam, and his wife was in Amsterdam. And, we took our stars off and we went with the train to Amsterdam.

P: You took the 'Star of David' off?

G: Off.

P: I see, and you went with the train?

G: With the train, oh ya, take a week, we couldn't walk and, when we came in Amsterdam, eh, and when we came in Amsterdam. That was in '44, there was no electricity, and there was no nothing any more, and my wife, they went all the time to that farmer, and she was there and she heard from other people who went to the farmers that you can get, when you go to a farmer,

and you said you are hungry, they give you some bread to take home. But, my wife tried that too, and they gave her all to eat, instead such that she couldn't take something with us home. She had to eat it all the time before five farmers and she had to eat and she couldn't say "No, I thank you, I just ate already." So she had to eat and eat and eat, and when she came by that farmer who eh, had us for a week, she said, his wife said, "Mrs. Gokkes, I got some very nice um, cereal for you." And my wife said, what could she say? She said, "Oh, that is nice," and she had to eat that too. But anyway we became good friends and she was staying overnight sometimes, and she was one day up with the bicycle and one time...

P: Return with the bic...

G: But, she, we got an electric sewing machine, and we sold it to them for um, big bag with ah, with grain.

P: Now when you were saying before that you became good friends, you meant, you became good friends with that farmer?

G: With that farmer.

P: Okay, what's that farmer's name? [shuffling of papers]

G: Jan Dekker.

P: Would you spell that.

G: [writes]

P: J-a-n D-e-k-k-e-r. So Jan Dekker, is the farmer, and he's the one that gave your wife the grain for the sewing machine?

G: Yes, uh, hum.

H: How do you spell that?

P: D-e, D for Donald, e-k-k-e-r, Jan, J-a-n.

G: And she slept there, and on the next day she went back. But sometimes there was a truck and they took instead that she had

to drive on the bicycle, they feeled sorry for a woman with back by train and they ah...

P: So they gave her a lift?

G: Gave her a lift, on top of the car. It was a big truck with potatoes and something from the farmland. You know. Sometimes the, English, the British, they shoot on those trucks, you know, and she was laying on top of those trucks, and she was very scared at that time.

P: When you say the English and the British, you mean the planes flying over Holland?

G: The planes flying over, ya, ya.

P: They would shoot at a moving truck?

G: Ya.

P: Is that it?

G: They didn't know if it was potatoes or something else. One time she was, there was talking that in Alkmaar... (shuffling of paper)

P: Ah, A-l-k-m-a-a-r, Alkmaar is a place, ya.

G: Somebody somehow shoots...

P: She was in Alkmaar?

G: No, no, on the way...

P: Home.

G: To, to...

P: To Amsterdam?

G: To, to, on the way to Callandssoog.

P: Oh, when, when is that, could you relate the...?

G: No, when she was on the way to Callandssoog, and Callandssoog is before that place.

P: Ah, I see.

- G: And that really played the name from that place, (laughter).
Where the farmer lived is, ah, wait a minute, Tuijenhorn.
[writes]
- P: Would you print it? T or N. What is this T-R?
- G: ...juinhorn, that's a T. T-U-I-T-U...T...
- P: No.
- G: T-U-I-J-E-N-H-O-R-N [said in unison] That is that place where
the farmer...
- P: How do you pronounce it?
- G: Tuijenhorn.
- P: Tuijenhorn, T-u-i-j, yes. This is the village, where this is
the farm.
- G: The farm. And when she was drive, driving on the bicycle to
Tuijenhorn, somebody, there were rumours that there was ah, an
German soldier was killed, and they start picking up the
people who were driving on the bicycles on that road. There
is only one road to that place.
- P: Anybody?
- G: Anybody, and they put them together, and that the rumours were
terrible, and there was a woman standing besides my wife and
she says, "Oh my G-d, I have illegal papers with me." My wife
said, "Why don't you eat them, give me, give me some papers
and we eat them, and nobody can see it." So that is what they
did, and a few other people they eat the paper.
- P: What does it mean, "eating the papers?"
- G: Eat it, the papers. [shuffling of paper as though he is
eating them]. Eating it, they had to do something with the
papers, they couldn't destroy them. So they had to eat it.
(Laugh)

P: Why would she eat her papers?

G: It was illegal papers.

P: Ah, ha. Like the document. Why did she need to eat them, what was the reason for it?

G: Illegal, illegal papers, that was from the Underground papers.

P: Ah, ha, so this other woman had underground papers?

G: Yes.

P: And your wife helped her to eat part of that document?

G: That's right.

P: I see, so it's you mean document, illegal document?

G: Illegal document.

P: And this woman that had the illegal document, was she Jewish or she was an Underground worker.

G: She was an underground worker. [phone rings]

P: I merely want to verify that 'eating the papers' was actually swallowing the document and Isaac's wife helped the other woman to swallow a part of that document, which was a false document, thank you. And what happened then?

She came home and told you this?

G: Ya, she told me that later on. She went first to the farmer and picked up some vegetable and some grain, and she can't take it in one time, she had to go every fourteen days, she had to go back to the farmer and get some grain from that big bag of grain that she got.

P: And did he still give it to her for this sewing machine, or she had to pay for something else?

G: No, no, no, no, no, no...

P: This was part of the sewing machine?

G: Part of the sewing machine, ya, but after the war, he came

over to our place...

P: To your house?

G: To our house, and he said, "Mrs. Gokkes, I couldn't, I took it, your sewing machine, you gave me twenty-five dollars, twenty-five guilder, and I give you the machine back."

P: So he didn't want to keep the machine?

G: He didn't want to have the machine.

P: The sewing machine.

G: Ya, ya.

P: Ah, ha. Now, eh, tell us about the liberation then, since you say, after the war, that is ah...

G: No, when the liberation came we were sleeping, we didn't even know there was the liberation.

P: When you were sleeping, you were sleeping in your own home?

G: In our own home, yes.

P: And you ah, so ah, how did you find out? When was the first moment that you knew?

G: My, my neighbour, he came upstairs, and he knocked on the door, and he said, "We are free." So, we didn't know, everybody was going on the street.

P: This is in Amsterdam?

G: In Amsterdam. And we live on an dyke, but before something happened, they bombed the railroad on the dyke.

P: The bombed what? The railroad.

G: The railroad was, the railroad was on the dyke to the station. We were living close to the station, and they bombed the railroad, the, I think the, the, 'Tommies,' English, and they bombed the station of the railroad, and they took somebody out of the ah, prison, and they shoot him right in front of our

house.

P: Ah, I don't quite know what, how this relates. What prison are you talking about?

G: Ah, the prison, an, an, a prisoner, out of the, from the, somebody who is...

P: Where was the prison location?

G: Oh, I don't know where.

P: In Amsterdam?

G: In Amsterdam, ya.

P: And where was this, by the trail, railroad station that you saw, it's something that you saw that they did?

G: No, they took, and brought him with the car, in a taxi of...

P: This is, this is on the day of the liberation?

G: No, no, before, before that time.

P: Oh, I see, before when your, the building where you lived was bombed.

G: No, no, no, no, the railroad...

P: Ah, ha.

G: I was, we were living close to the dyke, and the rail, rail, on the top from the dyke, there was an, an, a railway.

P: Running, a railway, on top of the dyke.

G: Ya, on top of the dyke.

P: Yes.

G: And somebody bombed, from the underground, bombed that, that railroad.

P: Um, hum, so it wasn't the Tommies, you mean...

G: No, no, no, no, no, no...

P: The English, the Underground?

G: The Underground.

P: Okay, this regards the word, Tommies, before. The Underground bombed the railroad, okay.

G: They have to come up all the time.

P: Ah ha.

G: So and, they shoot um, prisoner from the Underground, they took him out of the, out of prison and they shoot him right in front of our house.

P: Oh, I see, so they shot this ah, person that was an Underground worker.

G: Ya.

P: And they shot him in front of your house?

G: In front of our house.

P: And you saw it?

G: No, no.

P: No, but somebody told you?

G: Hmm.

P: So, in the, in the, during the liberation when you were saying your neighbour came upstairs and told you that, about it.

G: About the liberation.

P: So you went out on the streets. So tell us the feeling that was then.

G: We were very happy [laughter] you can understand. But, ah, ah, ya...

P: Your daughter wasn't born yet?

G: No, no, in '47.

P: Oh, so you...

G: We wanted to have another child, but we waited all the time for her.

P: For a time when the war would be over, ah, ha. Was your wife

happy?

G: Oh, ya, she was.

P: Ah, ha. So did you celebrate in any way, the liberation?

G: No, what, what can you celebrate, there was no, no electricity, there was no light, there was no, no, nothing. There was no heating, there was no, no nothing.

P: So how much...

G: We had, we had to eat, sugar beet, you know sugar beet?

P: Ya.

G: We had to eat it in the morning, in the night, in for lunch and for dinner and for, for snack, for everything.

P: Ah, ha, and then...

G: But close to us there was an, an factory from mustard.

P: Mustard.

G: From Luyks mustard. Do you know Luyks mustard?

P: No, I know mustard, but I don't know the brand name, that's the name of the mustard?

G: Ya, L-U-Y-K-S mustard. And, during the hungry winter, L-u-y-k-s.

P: Uh, hm, and during the holiday, what holiday?

G: The hungry winter my wife ah, made by hand, a big bag, that big, and by that same factory there was, they brought always in sugar beets, and now my wife she went to that truck and she stole all the sugar beets what she can carry. And then we had sugar beets at night again [laughter], but it was day and, day and night, and lunch and sugar beets. We didn't have any, any, ah, oil, we didn't have any fire, but fire we make, we make from an, an, a garbage can. [not clear] tin garbage can, make a hole in it and put books in it, and a grate on top, you

know, and that was the heating what we had and across our house where we lived there was an, in the old time when there was still there, there were no, eh, houses, they didn't build anything yet, and it was all from the lo...the locomotives, there was all 'cindles'. You know what 'cindles' are? Ah, from the, from the coal, what they throw out, out, out the locomotive. You know the, can you understand what I mean?

H: Locomotive.

G: From the locomotive.

H: The train.

G: From the train.

H: Train engine.

G: From the engine, from the train, they threw out all those what was not in the, what was not burning anymore.

H: Cinders!

G: Cinders, they throw them all on the...

P: Okay, yes.

G: On the place there, so all the people were looking for cinders, and there was gravel in it, and cinders and gravel and cinders, and every time you put a book in the garbage can to heat it up and the coal starts burning a little bit, then, you know, the cinders of the, the [not clear], after the rocks flying the, ah, in the garbage can. You know that would start heating and start sparking all the time.

P: Um hum.

G: Now you start in the morning.

P: The sparks were flying?

G: Yes, sparks were flying from the coal, but the heat of the, the, the...

P: You burn books, you say?

G: Ya, you had to have some heat, it was in the winter. Middle of the winter. And the stones what was sitting in that, in that, in that cind, ah, what you call that?

P: Cinders?

G: Cinders, is start burning too, but not burning, they start making noise...

P: Exploding!

G: You know, exploding, you know, and...

H: I have to run I'm sorry.

P: Ya, okay. So...okay, now perhaps you can tell us um...

G: After the liberation...

P: How you ah, came to, to Canada, when you came to Canada?

G: In '58, April 1958.

P: And who sponsored you?

G: Nobody.

P: And how did you come then?

G: No...

P: As ah, specialist of some sort, or?

G: No, I was diamond polisher and, maybe they needed ah, me as diamond polisher, I don't know.

P: So your occupation you gave as diamond polisher, and did you work as a diamond polisher?

G: No.

P: In Canada? Where did you live when you first came to Canada?

G: Here in Vancouver.

P: Where?

G: In Vancouver.

P: In Vancouver, you came straight to Vancouver? [shuffling of

paper]

G: I had friends here, they live in Langley.

P: Ah ha.

G: And they told us that it is very nice here in Vancouver, so we came to Vancouver.

P: And these were Dutch friends ...

G: That's right.

P: That lived in Langley, and ah, ah. Why did you leave Netherlands, why did you leave Holland?

G: I had a store in Holland, a cigar store.

P: A what? A cigar store?

G: Cigar store, and when I was born seventy-nine years ago, my father had a cigar store there too, till they picked him up from, for Auschwitz. And, at that time they know already that there was an, that the street, they want to make a tunnel under the water, a tunnel. And that was the street where my father, where I was born, they want to tear the whole street down.

P: What was the tunnel for? Who wanted to make the tunnel?

G: Under the water, under water, to go from one side, from Amsterdam to North Amsterdam, Amsterdam north.

P: And who wanted to make that tunnel, the Germans?

G: Government, government.

P: Who?

G: The Dutch government.

P: Oh, the Dutch government. This is after the war...

G: After the war.

P: You are talking, okay.

G: No, no, that is before the war. My father, knowed that

already, seventy-nine years ago.

P: Ah, ha.

G: But, when, the war was over, I took my father's store again, that was the house from my father, and at that time they started really talking about to tear the houses down. And, because ah, (pause). I opened that store, and was very good store, but at that time with breaking down the house, I didn't get anything from the Dutch government, from tearing down. There was no, no ah, ah...

P: Compensation?

G: Compensation, ya, a little bit, thousand guilders, and there was not much.

P: You mean that ah, they took over the property. The Dutch government after the war when they decided to build...

G: All the properties, all the houses.

P: Ya, when they decided to build the tunnel, then they confiscated all the properties and gave you just a bit of money?

G: Ya.

P: So that put you out of business?

G: That's right.

P: And that was that store that you had. So when was that, in 1957?

G: No, 1958 I was still standing there.

P: Ah ha. But they took it over?

G: I think in 1960 when they start with the, I don't know, 1960 or so.

P: But you were no longer there.

G: No, I was no longer there.

P: My question is, that the reason you had to leave because you were out of business, going to be, and you wanted to leave before ah, ah that.

G: That's right.

P: And ah, so what did you do then in Canada, in Vancouver, when you came to Vancouver?

G: First, first I did nothing and later on I got a job as bookkeeper.

P: Um hum, and where did you learn bookkeeping?

G: In Holland, I had to do my own bookkeeping.

P: I see. And where did you work? Do you want to name the firm, you don't have to?

G: No, no,

P: No. So you worked as a bookkeeper the whole time, and what did your wife do?

G: My wife was working in for cleaning...

P: Ah ha.

G: We had to do something to make some money.

P: And she was doing housework?

G: Housework.

P: What's her first name?

G: Louise.

P: L-O-U-I?

G: L-U-I-S-E.

P: L-U-I-S-E.

G: But in Holland they call her, ya, same thing, ya.

P: Um hum, L-u-i-s-e, and ah, she was ah, born in Marburg?

G: In Germany.

P: Ah, Marburg, I'm looking at a document, that is a Dutch

document belonging to his late wife, Luise. And where was this issued, by whom?

- G: By the Dutch, for to get some, some ah, food and um...
- P: This is before you came to Canada?
- G: That's before I came to Canada, ya.
- P: I see. And, I'll take um. And what year was, was she born, does it say here? And when did she die?
- G: August, in 1952.
- P: In 19...
- G: Ah, 1982.
- P: Eh, born Marburg, Germany and ah, do you know what date?
- G: 24th May, 24th of August, 1906.
- P: I eh, August 24th 19...
- G: '06.
- P: '06. And died, when did she die? Ah, 1982, I know.
- G: Ya, on a September the 7th.
- P: September, 7th. Here in Vancouver, British Columbia. And uh, your daughter was born (pause) when? I know 1947 you said, the date?
- G: 1946.
- P: 1946? I'm looking at his daughter's document. Now, not Luise, where is it? Her name is Ingerboorg, Luise, and she was born the eh, November 21st?
- G: That's right.
- P: Ah, 1946, in Amsterdam. And she lives now?
- G: In Denver, Colorado.
- P: Um, Denver, Colorado. Is she married?
- G: Uh hmm.
- P: Yes? And she has children?

G: Two.

P: Two. [shuffling of paper]. And your son?

G: That's my daughter.

P: Son? Is your son married?

G: He's married, ya.

P: And he has children?

G: Ah, one son.

P: And when, ah, what is his name, Raymond?

G: Ya.

P: Siegfried. I'm looking at his son's document. [Shuffling of paper]. And I'm writing at the same time. And he was born September 29th, 1935, and ah, has one son?

G: One son, ya.

P: And now tell me about your parents. Um, did they both, were, you mentioned about your father going to, being taken to Auschwitz. Do you know, we want to put the ah, a note about your parents. Were they both taken away to Auschwitz at the same...?

G: No, my mother passed away in ah...[shuffling of paper].

P: Doesn't matter the date, but she died before the Second World War?

G: My mother had a heart attack.

P: A what?

G: An, an, a stroke.

P: Ah ha, mother died before World War Two. So...

G: In 1941. On the birthday from my father.

P: Hmm?

G: On the birthday from [of] my father.

P: And, so your father was taken to Auschwitz.

G: Ya.

P: When was he taken?

G: 1942, but I don't know exactly the date.

P: In 1942. Did you have brothers or sisters?

G: A brother, one brother.

P: One brother.

G: He went to Auschwitz too. He was married.

P: Brother, what was his name first?

G: Tobias, T-O-B-

P: T-O-B

G: I-

P: A- Tobias.

H: I-A-S.

P: Tobias...

G: Tobias, ya.

P: Gokkes. Um, and where, ah, ah, he was a younger brother?

G: Younger, five years younger.

P: Uh hum, and ah he was married?

G: He was married. No children.

P: And what happened to him and his wife?

G: They went to Auschwitz too. They picked them up.

P: And was he inter-married also, or he married a Jewish woman?

G: No, a Jewish woman.

P: And they didn't have any children yet?

G: No.

P: When was he, his wedding? You remember? In, after yours,
yes?

G: Ya, sure.

P: Uh ha.

G: I think in 1941.

P: Oh, so he married during the war!

G: He married during the war.

P: Oh, no wonder he didn't have any children yet.

G: Ummm... (Pause)

P: 1941. So he and his wife were taken to Auschwitz.

G: To Auschwitz.

P: Did they take them to that, you were mentioning before, yesterday when you were on the tape, that they were taken to Westerbork?

G: My father was taken to Westerbork.

P: And how did your brother disappear?

G: I don't know, in fact I think he went to Westerbork, too.

P: Ah huh.

G: But my wife, they went over to the, what she mentioned, the Dutch ah, theatre.

P: What's kera?

G: Theatre.

P: Oh, theatre.

G: Ya, my father was supposed to be in that theatre and my wife went over to the theatre to get my father out. And he was already to Westerbork, so my wife went with the train to Westerbork, she didn't wear a star, and she went over to the camp, in Westerbork. They told her that if she doesn't disappear then they take her too.

P: Oh, if she doesn't 'verswind,' that's in German, get out, get away from there.

G: Then they take her too.

P: So that was a threat to her life.

G: Uh Hmm.

P: Uh hmm.

G: So she went back to Amsterdam.

P: I see...

G: Not to [not clear].

P: So she came, so she came home, but she tried to rescue your father, that's what you're saying?

G: Uh hmm.

P: So he was already ah...

G: In a camp.

P: You were mentioning ah, earlier, before we started the interview. You wanted to say something about the Red Cross, that you...

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2

INTERVIEWEE: Isaac GOKKES (G)

DATE OF RECORDING: April 10, 1992

FILE NUMBER: 23-2

TRACK NUMBER: T2-S1

INTERVIEWERS: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

Observer: Duifje Van Haren (VH)

P: Now he wants to do, ah, tell us the story of his cousin, and before that, you are going to tell us about the Red Cross and how they told you when the date when your father was taken away, and when he died.

G: Now, my father was taken away in '42 and he died in '42 in September 30th, '92.

P: '42.

G: '42.

P: Ya.

G: And my brother, I really don't know, I really don't know, but ah, after the war I got a letter from, an [a] lawyer in Amsterdam, from the, the Red Cross, a lawyer from the Red Cross that I got the, family names from all my family who went to Auschwitz and passed away. And there was one was from an [a] cousin of me [mine], the first cousin, that was my father's brother's daughter, and she....

P: Her name was, what was her name?

G: Katy, Katy Gokkes.

P: And spell that.

G: K-A-T-Y Gokkes, G-O-K-K-E-S, and she was living before the war in The Hague [writing in background]. The Hague, how you do that?

VH: H-A-, H-A-G-U-E.

P: Okay, she was living in The Hague?

G: Ya, and after the war I got from that lawyer that paper that she was seen right after the war, but she must be killed [not clear] the German while escaping of... She did Underground working and there is a book, the, how you call that? [shuffling of paper] A book, "Escape from Sobibor," and her name [is] supposed to be in it, that she's been killed.

P: Now when you describe that she is killed, it's not clear to me. Was she killed in Sobibor, she died in Sobibor?

G: I don't know...

P: Or she survived the Sobibor and she was killed afterwards working for the Underground.

G: I can give you no answer of that, I don't know. I would have to read the book.

P: So the reason that you're mentioning her name in the book, "Escape from Sobibor," is that she is in that book?

G: Ya, she is in that book.

P: Her name is in that book.

G: Her name is in the book, and I haven't read that book, I didn't read that book yet.

P: And who has this book?

G: My son have the book.

P: I see, so um...

G: I will try to get it from him, otherwise when I go to my daughter I go in, to in, in, in, in May I go to my daughter and there is a bookstore in Denver, he sold, he's selling every book what you can get in the world. There's a big, big, big huge store and I guess he will have that book too.

P: Now, when I initially asked you if you were umm, if you would like to contribute your story to ah, to be interviewed, you said that you didn't have ah, much of a story, but now that we listened to part of your story, it seems like you have a lot ah, it's a big story....

G: About...

P: And you have a lot to say, so can you now say why you have decided to, eh...record your story.

G: I didn't know it was a big, I don't think, I don't, I thought it was not a big story, what I was to tell. I didn't ah, refuse to tell my story, but I was thinking it is not much. Now when everything is come in place, when I got that letter from the, from the lawyer, of the note, notary, it's more notary than a lawyer. In Amsterdam you called them 'notaris'. But anyway, when I was last year in Denver, I know there was a nie...a cousin, first cousin living somewhere in Australia. Her father was a brother from [of] my father, and he was married and her mother was no good, her mother was a Nazi. And she didn't wanted ah, keep up with her mother, she...

P: She didn't want what?

G: She wanted ah, ah, she never look at her mother, she never looked at her mother, and...

P: The girl your talking about, the daughter...

G: I don't want to tell that.

VH: Huh?

G: Do I have to tell that?

VH: There's not a relationship anymore.

G: There was not a relationship with her mother, let me say that. And, ah, she got married and she lived now in Australia, and

I got that from the, from the notary, that um, first cousin was living in Australia. And when I was in Denver last year in 1940, eh, 1991, the telephone ringed [rang] and my son phoned me and he said, "Dad, do you have a niece living in Australia?" I said, "Yes."

P: You mean a cousin?

G: An, an, a, my first cousin was living in Australia, I say, "Yes," and he said, "I got her here, with her husband." So I know she was living in Australia and I sent her a letter maybe ten years ago, but I never got an answer, so I thought maybe she's not alive, and I thought maybe she lived not at that address anymore. But, when he told me this in Vancouver, he said, "Can you not come to Vancouver?" And I said, "No, because I'm still for three days here, I can't go with the plane before my time, that costs too much money, to see her, when she is only for, for two more days here." And he said. "No, she's still for another three days here, then when you come back from Denver, then you see her." So I saw her, and we are writing letters all the time now. And I, she is very happy, and I'm very happy too that there's somebody still from my family...

P: So you have a first cousin...

G: Still alive.

P: Ya, your father's um...

G: Brother's daughter.

P: Daughter. What is her name?

G: The same as the other one.

P: You said that's the one!

G: No, no, another one. Her name is Katy Bom, B-O-M. B-O-O-M.

And Katy, K-A-T-Y.

P: Oh, so she's also a Katy.

G: A Katy. And she lives, my grandmother's name was Katerina, so they called the daughters...

P: Does she consider herself part Jewish?

G: Ya, but she's not married, she's not married Jewish, but she considers herself she's Jewish.

P: Uh hm. Do you yourself participate in any Jewish organization or you contribute your time, or are you associated, affiliated in any way?

G: No, I go with her to the synagogue.

P: I beg your pardon?

G: I go with Dalia to the synagogue, that's all what I do.

P: You do! How nice. Which synagogue do you, or do you go the North Shore too?

G: North Shore too.

P: Oh!

G: And when we go to Hawaii, we go to the synagogue every week.

VH: Temple.

G: Huh?

VH: To the temple.

G: To the temple, to the temple.

P: So you are eh, are affiliated with Jewish um, rituals and ah, where are you going to have your Passover, at home?

G: By her daughter.

P: Uh hum, that's beautiful. Well, thank you very much for this wonderful interview.

G: You want, you want some from those papers?

P: And ah, we will now sit down and record some of these ah,

documents that you brought along, thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]