

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ARNOLD VANDERHORST

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Natalie Packel
Date: January 17, 2005

© 2015
Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

AV - Arnold Vanderhorst [interviewee]

NP - Natalie Packel [interviewer]

Date: January 17, 2005

Tape one, side one:

NP: January 17, 2005. This is Natalie Packel interviewing Mr. Arnold Vanderhorst. And Mr. Vanderhorst, can you tell me where you were born, when?

AV: I was born in Arnhem, July 24th 1935.

NP: Can you spell that please?

AV: Arnhem is A-R-N-H-E-M, as in Mary.

NP: And that was in Holland?

AV: That was in Holland, right.

NP: And a little bit about your family.

AV: My parents had a bakery and in the back of the bakery is where we slept and we ate. I remember on the weekends, my father took me on his bicycle and we delivered bread around the city. And I would sit-- you know the bicycles they had a metal bar on them in the middle, and I would sit on the metal bar, and it hurt. So...

NP: And was there a bread basket?

AV: We had a bread basket in the front and it-- loaded with bread, fresh bread. And if I'm not mistaken I think on the way back I got to sit in the bread basket, but I'm not too sure about that.

NP: That would have been a treat.

AV: Yeah.

NP: That would have been a treat. And so how often was the bread delivered?

AV: Gee, that's hard to say, because during the week I went to Jewish school downtown.

NP: All right.

AV: So I don't know if he delivered the bread, you know, we didn't have a car, we had a bicycle. So he may have delivered it by himself.

NP: And you were how old at that time?

AV: I think I, I was probably six or seven. It's hard to put dates when you're that young, to put dates together.

NP: Absolutely.

AV: I remember wearing a star, a yellow star with the word Jew in the middle well in Dutch it's *Jood*, J-double O-D.

NP: Is that-- so did you have to pin that on everything?

AV: I had to pin that on my shirt, yeah, or my mother pinned it on the shirt. I remember going to school on the scooter, downtown Arnhem because the Jewish school was in the city and there were kids on the way who would scold me, you know they would

call me “Dirty Jew” and. My mother told me if they say that to you, you should tell them to break your *poot*. It doesn’t rhyme in English, you know because they would say to me “*Rot Jood*” which means “Rotten Jew”, R-O-T, J-O-O-D, *Rot Jood* which is “Rotten Jew” and I would say to them, “Break your *poot*” it means “Break your leg”.

NP: The-- P-O-T-E...

AV: P-O-O-T it’s like a derivative of leg. You don’t say to a human being you have a *poot* but an animal has a *poot*...

NP: Right.

AV: A human being has a *vein*, it’s like Yiddish [unclear].

NP: Right. Did your parents wear the star as well?

AV: My mother had to wear the star and when she went into the bakery-- into the shop, shop to help the customers she normally took it off, but very much [unclear] you know to be seen with a star. So when she went into the store to help the customers, I had to watch the baby. My sister was born in 1940 and a lot of times, you know, when she was finishing taking care of my sister, putting on the diapers and when she had to go up front I had to watch my sister. You know she would lay on the edge of the table and I had to keep watch so that she won’t fall off. I think one time I let her drop to the floor. But, it’s you know, sometimes your memory, you know, is not too good.

NP: For sure. Did they bake *challahs*?

AV: You know I don’t remember much. Did they bake *challah* or not? I don’t think we did much on religious things. I remember my mother telling me once that I had a *bris* [circumcision] and that two religious men held me, held me on the arm and another religious man held, held my feet, and she would mention the gentlemen by name and I forgot.

NP: I was wondering, do you have any memory of holidays?

AV: No, no, no memories whatsoever of holidays.

NP: Or of a synagogue perhaps in your town?

AV: No, I don’t, I don’t remember any-- I don’t think my parents were religious. I have a very nice memory of-- there was a trolley in the backstreet of our bakery and he used to stand at the trolley stop and if the trolley came by, we would ask the conductor, can you give us the stubs? Oh we used to love to collect the stubs...

NP: Oh.

AV: You know, with the stubs from the transfers or whatever...

NP: Were they different colors?

AV: I-- gee, I don’t remember, no...

NP: And you were so young.

AV: Six, seven years old. Another time that I remember that I loved was that we collected cigar bands, you know, we looked in the gutter and we were collecting and picking up cigar bands. Some stuff that you remember, during the war, we were picking up shards of grenades, and they were sometimes colored, you know, mustard and orange-

greenish, you know, and we would yell to each, today I found a bigger one, you know. Another...

NP: Go ahead.

AV: Another thing I remember is, we would take the knobs of matches and put it in a, in a key, in a hollow key and then we would take a nail that was on a board and we would hit it against the wall and we would get a nice bang. Some stuff, you know from your, you know, from your youth, I guess you remember.

NP: The games and playful things.

AV: Yeah.

NP: About your school, you said...

AV: I don't think I went to school. As far as I remember I was tutored by a couple who lived at the end of the block and this was already when I was with the strange family.

NP: Well can we back up a little bit about that.

AV: Okay.

NP: When did you become acquainted with this strange family?

AV: Well, my sister had swallowed some lye and she was rushed to a hospital, because next door to our bakery was an apothecary and he left the bottles, you know, empty bottles, on his yard. And my sister, you know, she was crawling and she put a bottle to her lips and swallowed some lye. So we rushed her to the hospital, and I don't know how long we stayed there, but when we came back, the bakery was sealed and I think the Germans had sealed it, or maybe somebody was ratting on us, I don't know. But I remember my parents, they broke the seal and then my mother put the baby in the stroller and she told me to hold onto the stroller and we started walking and she dropped me off by this strange family, and...

NP: Was it far from your store?

AV: No, no, in fact, a couple of-- maybe last year I looked it up on Mapquest and...

NP: Really?

AV: Yeah online and it's in the neighborhood. And I don't know how she found this family but she dropped me off.

NP: Do you remember the address?

AV: Oh yeah, well, it's-- not the number, but the address was Klooster Straat, K-L, double O, S-T-E-R, and then Straat, S-T-R-A-A-T, Klooster Straat. I know it's really strange, sometimes you can remember addresses very distinct and yet this address I only remember the street, the street name. And this family they had a number of children and there was a boy who was a year younger than me, there was a girl, she was 18, there was a man, he was, I guess about 25 and there was another man, he was about 27 and then there was the woman and the man. I think the man was in politics, and I think at one time he was up for Mayor, you know, of Arnhem. So, I guess they were well connected, because

we never starved, even in the hunger winter, from 1944 to '45, we always had food. So it's-- yeah...

NP: Do you remember the name of the family?

AV: Yeah, Holthuis, H-O-L-T-H-U-I-S and I'm sad to say I never kept up correspondence with them. The boy's name was Ben, the girl's name was Annie, A-N-N-I-E, the 20-- what did I say, 25 year old was Joop, J-O-O-P, and then the 27 year old was Ees, E-E-S. He was in the Resistance. For some, some reason I could learn that he was in the Resistance. You know as a kid, you pick things up. Because he only came home on the weekends and it was always hush, hush. I was sent upstairs to my room, and they were talking I guess, and I was not to learn anything about him.

NP: Was your sister, was with you?

AV: No.

NP: She was not.

AV: My sister, when my mother dropped me off by this family, she took my sister in the stroller someplace else. And later on I learned that my sister was taken by a family, the name was Alter, A-L-T-E-R who also lived on the exactly opposite of the bakery on the Homoserecht [phonetic], which was right beside-- Homoserecht but I don't know the name, the number.

NP: Okay. Homo...?

AV: Homoserecht, this was the bakery's address and they lived across from us.

NP: Okay. This was the bakery's address?

AV: That's the bakery's address.

NP: And they lived across?

AV: They lived across.

NP: They lived across the street.

AV: Right. And they were I guess so afraid they kept her in the closet most of the time. To this day, I, I would say she's very timid, so, but I guess she did alright. She got married and...

NP: Well, if I can for just a little bit, the family, how did they treat you?

AV: You know, I never got any love, nope, never any hugs, no kisses. I remember I got a lot of smacks around my ear because sometimes I was bad. I remember one time I was licking the cream off the milk with my finger, and the woman saw that and I got a smack. They were very liberal, they let me play outside even though there was a school at the end of the block and the school was occupied by German soldiers. They had made a barracks out of it, and sometimes I was playing with the other kids around those soldiers.

NP: Was this a Christian or Jewish family?

AV: No Jewish family, no, I think it was a Christian. But I, again, I don't remember going to church or anything.

NP: You mentioned that you had a tutor.

AV: I had a tutor at the end of the other block there was a photographer and his wife, and I believe that the wife taught me the rudiments of language and probably some arithmetic and to read, but I'm not too sure about that. I had a, you know, a relation with that, a relationship with that family. I believe...

NP: With the family of the tutor?

AV: This was the family of the tutor. Now what I don't understand, this man became a very famous photographer, press photographer. His name was Sem Presser.¹

NP: What kind of photographer did you say?

AV: A press photographer.

NP: A press photographer, okay.

AV: His name was Sem, S-E-M, Presser, P-R-E-S-S-E-R and his wife's name was Hilda and I believe they had a marriage of convenience, a war marriage. Now Presser, wouldn't you say that would be a Jewish name?

NP: I would think so.

AV: Yeah, and I don't know how they escaped the Nazis either, you know, maybe, I don't know.

NP: So which one of the-- so was it Sem Presser that was your tutor?

AV: No, I think the wife...

NP: This Hilda?

AV: Hilda, yeah. In fact, years later after the war, she would look me up in the orphanage and she would take me out to see a show. You know they kept up, or she kept up the relationship. She was much older, I think, maybe 10 years older than me, but it was nice, you know.

NP: From the family, the Holthuis family...

AV: Yeah.

NP: Where did you go then? You did not stay with them?

AV: I stayed with them through the war, during liberation and then after the liberation in 1945, I was sent to England for health reasons. I was sent for three months in a camp for kids and then the other three months I went to a private family.

NP: You were not feeling well?

AV: As far as I knew, I was okay. But that seems to-- I just found out that seemed to be the thing for a lot of kids. They were sent abroad for health reasons, not just me. Some were sent to Sweden and they learned the Swedish language. I was sent to English, England, and I learned the English language, so it was nice. I forgot, later on what I forgot. But, in England I had some of the nicest time, they were so nice those people.

NP: That's wonderful.

AV: Yeah.

¹Sem Presser was a noted press photographer who worked with the Dutch underground during the war, in hiding in Arnhem at great risk since he was Jewish. His work continued post-war to great acclaim. His work is honored in the annual Sem Presser lecture.

NP: Were you part of a *Kindertransport*?
AV: No, no *Kindertransport*.
NP: No, then you were aware of it, [unclear] I understand...
AV: I just – maybe-- in March, I was talking to Anne Fox...
NP: Oh yeah.
AV: ...and she was...
NP: I know Anne.
AV: Yeah, and she was part of the *Kindertransport* and that's when I heard about it. I never knew about the *Kindertransport*.²
NP: But your experience was separate from that?
AV: Yeah.
NP: And where did you stay in England?
AV: Well, I don't remember the town where the camp was but when I went to the private family, their name was Plowse, P-L-O-W-S-E, the family Plowse and they lived at 7 Cumliffe Road in Ilkley. Strange how you remember these addresses.
NP: Yeah, seven...
AV: Seven Cumliffe, C-U-M-L-I-F-F-E Road in Ilkley, I-L-K-L-E-Y and Ilkley is in the middle of England near the Birmingham, Leeds, Doncaster, and the man had a car and he had a cottage up in the hills. And on the weekends, I used to love to go with them in the car-- that was a treat, because I was never in a car, and went up, up to the cottage. I remember one time, I had a toothache and I was afraid to go to the dentist. So they gave me some sort of a medicine to put on my tooth and for a while it worked, but then, you know, when you have a toothache you have to have it pulled or what, you know. So finally I went to the dentist.
NP: Mr. Vanderhorst was there any talk of your parents when you were with this Holthuis family?
AV: Nothing at all.
NP: No reference.
AV: No reference. I heard them one time mention the word Sobibor. You know I was afraid to pick things up and for years and years I thought my parents were killed in Sobibor. No, only-- well when I say years and years, I didn't know they were killed you know. I mean, I always thought that I would meet them around the next corner. But you know after a while, you give up, you know, and the word Sobibor stuck in my head so I thought that's where they were killed, and then I was talking to Simone Gorko...
NP: Yes.
AV: ...and she told me why don't you write to Yad Vashem and find out, you know, what really happened. So I think it was in '97, almost 50 years later, more than 50

²The *Kindertransport* was a series of children's transports to England starting after *Kristallnacht* and ending months later with the outbreak of the war. Approximately 10,000 children, most of them Jewish, came from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

years later, I wrote an email and they said they couldn't send me an email but they could send me through the post mail, they could send me some papers and then I learned that they were killed in Auschwitz in January 1944.

NP: They had both their names?

AV: Both their names, yeah. I wanted to take that with me here, but you said I don't have to take anything with me.

NP: Well if you want to photocopy anything, I could always pick it up here at the synagogue.

AV: Oh okay. I could leave it with Marilyn?

NP: Marilyn, yeah, that might, that might be a good idea.

AV: Oh okay.

NP: That might be a good idea. And so there was no mention with-- from Hilda or Sem Presser about your parents?

AV: No.

NP: Or the families, the Plowse family in London.

AV: In England, no, nothing. In fact, they wanted to adopt me but because I had a sister, they didn't adopt me.

NP: Where was your sister when you were in England?

AV: That's a good question. All I know is that when I came back to Holland from England, I was reunited with my sister and my grandmother.

NP: Do you know what year you came back to Holland?

AV: I can surmise that it may have been 1936, and you know something that's a piece of history that I cannot remember. Somewhere I was taken up by a family with my sister and my grandmother.

NP: In Holland?

AV: In Holland. I remember the man gave me a beautiful watch and we were-- after a while we went to America.

NP: Excuse me, where was your grandmother during the war?

AV: She was also hidden.

NP: She was taken [unclear]. Do you know where she was hidden?

AV: I have no idea.

NP: All right.

AV: But at one time I met her in the woods. After I was hidden by this family Holthuis.

NP: Oh you were hidden by the family?

AV: I was hidden by the family Holthuis.

NP: Where were you hidden?

AV: But in Arnhem, but they let me play outside sometimes. Does that make sense?

NP: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

AV: Now, in 1944 we had to evacuate Arnhem because they were-- the Allies were in the South of Arnhem and the Germans were still in the North and they were going to bomb Arnhem so they told all the pop-, the whole population to evacuate the city. So we loaded all of our stuff in push carts and we started walking and the first night we stopped in the woods and the men had made a camp. You know they dug a big hole and they lined it with the doors that they had taken from the push carts, the doors from the house, and we slept in a makeshift tent.

NP: What was the weather like?

AV: I have no idea. I don't know what, but I remember the following morning I was playing outside in the woods and all the sudden there was a yell and a woman had fainted and that was my grandmother. And we met, you know, after-- I think it may have been two years, you know, it's hard to put a date on it but...

NP: Certainly, certainly. Was this your mother's mother?

AV: Well this was the second marriage of my grandmother. My grandfather first wife died and he married again and she took care of, I think it was five or six kids, all siblings, so it was my mother's second mother.

NP: Her stepmother.

AV: Her stepmother, right, and what was I going to say? My uncle escaped. He was the only one of all the siblings that escaped to America. He was a chef, a chef on a boat and in 1939, he just walked off the ship.

NP: Oh.

AV: And all his brothers and sisters had stayed in Holland and they were all killed. It's a shame. Same with my father and he had a large family too.

NP: Do you know of any of his siblings of his family...?

AV: Well I...

NP: ...[unclear] survived the war.

AV: You mean their names. I remember vaguely one, one of my father's brothers got married. I think he was an instructor on a high school or on a college. I'm not sure. But his name was Sam, Uncle Sam and he got married to Aunt Hety, H-E-T-Y, I think it was, Hety, H-E-T-T-Y? Now it's strange, about two years ago I found another family member...

NP: Oh.

AV: Very, very, very far removed. His name was also Vanderhorst and he comes from South Africa.

NP: How did you find him?

AV: Well it's a long story. Through my good friend whom, whom I went to school with in high school, in Amsterdam. He went to a reunion in, I think it was in 2000 or 2001, he went to a reunion in Antwerp and there he met this man Vanderhorst, Ronald Vanderhorst and he wrote me an email and said I found a family member of yours. And I was very skeptical, but, sure enough it was, one strain of the family went to South Africa

and another strain stayed in Holland, and he wrote me, he was a genealogist and I got to know my whole family.

NP: Through him.

AV: Through him, yeah.

NP: What was his name?

AV: Ronald Vanderhorst. He was a cardiologist in Chicago. He's retired now.

NP: How wonderful.

AV: Isn't that really amazing?

NP: Oh it's a beautiful story and a beautiful piece of your life.

AV: I've got all the dates. You know, I got my mother's history and my father's history, you know.

NP: You know, if I might I'll go back a little bit in time. When you met up with your grandmother...

AV: Yeah.

NP: ...in the forest but then, and was your sister there as well?

AV: No.

NP: No.

AV: I hadn't seen my sister. But we broke up afterwards, you know we separated. She went-- my grandmother went one way...

NP: Alright.

AV: ...and we went another way. In fact we went to Hilversum...

NP: Okay.

AV: ...which is up north which is about 25 kilometers east of Amsterdam, Hilversum and we stayed there-- first we stayed with a family...

NP: Who was we?

AV: The Holthuis and myself.

NP: All right.

AV: We went to a-- I think they had family there in Hilversum and we stayed with them some. They had a supermarket and I used to go downstairs in the warehouse and put my finger through a sack, a lemon sack and take the candy out of it, but finally, eventually, you know, the Holthuis found their own house and we stayed in Hilversum till the Liberation.

NP: Till the Liberation.

AV: I remember standing in line for bread, because you know, it was very hard to get food and sometimes when you got to this store they were sold out, you know, so you stood for nothing there. And another time I remember we got white bread out of the sky. Somehow I think it was the Swedes... [Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

NP: Natalie Packel, side two of the interview with Arnold Vanderhorst. Two of the interview. Mr. Vanderhorst, we were talking about you being in England and your experiences there and then returning to Holland.

AV: Right.

NP: And being reunited...

AV: With my sister and grandmother.

NP: With your-- where were you reunited? Where did you go?

AV: This is a part of my experience that I have no idea. I don't even remember the trip back to Holland. I don't even remember the ship that I was on, going back to Holland and yet, I remember the ship's name when I went from Holland to England. It was a *Sibayak*. It was a troop transport ship that they had converted into a regular ship, you know, to take kids to England.

NP: Do you know how to spell that?

AV: *Sibayak*, I believe it is spelled S-I-B-A-Y-A-K, it's an Indonesian volcano I think, *Sibayak*.

NP: Indonesian?

AV: Indonesian, yes. Indonesia was still a colony of Holland in 19-, I believe in 1947 they seceded. [unclear]

NP: All right. And so you did meet with your sister and your grandmother and what happened after that? Where did you go?

AV: Okay, I told you that the man of the house gave me a watch.

NP: Yes.

AV: And pretty soon, we left for the United States. Now for some reason...

NP: What year was that?

AV: I believe it was 1947.

NP: All right.

AV: I think it was January 1947, we left by train for Sweden. Somehow we couldn't leave Holland to go to America, so we took the train through Germany, through Denmark and then with the ferry I believe it was Mo-- Gothenburg³...

NP: How do you spell that?

AV: Gotheburg, G-O-T-H-E-B-O-R-G [Gothenburg] Gotheburg, Sweden and we took the ship, the name was the *Gripsholm*, G-R-I-P-S-H-O-L-M and we left for the United States.

NP: Your grandmother?

AV: My grandmother, my sister and myself. The people that had taken care of my sister, the family Alter, they went with us as far as Sweden.

³Norway Heritage indicates that this ship left port from Gothenburg, Sweden. (www.norwayheritage.com)

NP: Were they the family that kept her in the closet?

AV: That was the family that kept her in the closet, yes. After the war, she stayed with them for a while still, you know, before we went to America and the woman, it was always, she loved flowers and she gave that to my sister.

NP: Where in America did you stay? Did you land in New York?

AV: We landed in New York and we stayed with my aunt and uncle, my Uncle Max who had walked off the ship in 1939. They were newlyweds. I believe they were married in 1943 and they had an apartment in Brooklyn on Marine Avenue, and...

NP: M-A-R-I-N-E?

AV: Marine, M-A-R-I-N-E, right. Marine Avenue in Brooklyn, a small apartment, and it was very cramped and my aunt was complaining that here she was still a newlywed and already had to take care of three more people and that was kind of, you know, touch and go. She had bought me a pair of skates, roller skates and in the beginning I didn't even use them. For months they lay under the bed, and one time she told me, "Why don't you use the skates?" And I said, "Okay, I'll try it." And pretty soon I was skating up and down Marine Avenue. I was a whiz. She gave me an allowance of 69 cents a week, seven cents a day for Good Humor, 20 cents for the Harbor on Saturdays to see the movie. So, and if I was bad, she would take it back, and pretty soon I got smart, you know, I put my money in an open lot across the street. I buried it in the sand and when she wanted the money back, I said, "I don't have it", so. She got me a job delivering newspapers. There was a newspaper and I forgot the name, the *Eagle* I think it was called, the *Brooklyn Eagle* and I had to-- this fellow was delivering the paper and my aunt had asked the boy if I could help him. So eventually the boy said, "Look, I can't use you anymore. There's not enough money for me, you have to find your own," so I was out of a job.

NP: I want to go back a little bit, if I may. Do you remember anyone saying, that any of your family members was a member of the army?

AV: I think my, my, my parents?

NP: Your parents or uncles or...

AV: For some reason, I...

NP: In the National Army.

AV: Oh you mean in the Dutch army?

NP: Yes.

AV: No, I think I remember that somebody told me that my uncle was in the American army, but...

NP: And when you were still in London, first in Belgium...

AV: [unclear]

NP: How did you hear the news? Do you remember radios being on?

AV: No, I-- you see these movies where people are listening to the BBC?

NP: Yes.

AV: Yeah, I got sometimes wind, you know that Tunis had fallen, you know, in North Africa. I think the grown-ups, you know, were talking and I was listening, but, no, the radio was nothing to listen to for me, you know. I was...

NP: You were very young.

AV: I was young. Sometimes the man of the house where I was, you know, put me to work, getting the blades of grass between the gravel in the backyard. It was all gravel but there were, you know pieces of grass and I had to go on my knees and pluck out, so it was more like doing every day work and not listening to radios or anything, you know. I remember they had a piano and they never taught me how to play the piano, you know, we were mostly left on our own and to this day I can't fathom them, that they let me play outside.

NP: Do you think they had any connection?

AV: Did they have connection? I think they were politically, you know, I think they had connections.

NP: With the Germans?

AV: No, I don't think so. People have asked me, you know, the, the neighbors weren't they surprised that all of the sudden they had another boy there, you know, because let's face it, you know, there were people in the Netherlands, you know, that ratted on other people, and...

NP: Unfortunately, yes...

AV: Yeah, and for some reason these neighbors they never ratted on me. I was playing with these kids outside and their...

NP: The children from the family?

AV: Children from the family but also children from the neighborhood. At one time we had a birthday party by this photographer⁴ and he took photographs and he published it in a book. The book is in the museum in Holland.

NP: Have you returned to Holland?

AV: This past April, I went to Holland. We had a reunion from the orphanage, all the boys from the orphanage. There were about four or five orphanages in the neighborhood of Amsterdam, and...

NP: Okay, so let me understand this. Were you in an orphanage in London, in England as well?

AV: No.

NP: It was just a private family.

AV: I was with a private family.

NP: Right. And when you came back to Holland, you were in an orphanage?

AV: No, when I came back to Holland, I went to the United States.

NP: Right, okay, so when were you in the orphanage?

⁴Sem Presser.

AV: Well, in 1947 when I was with my unc -, aunt and uncle I acted up. I was rebellious, I played with matches, I ran away. They couldn't handle me. They sent me back to Holland with my grandmother.

NP: From the United States you back to Holland.

AV: From the United States I went back to Holland.

NP: I see.

AV: My sister stayed in the States, so we were separated. Back in Holland, I was put in a family that had the same surname as I have, the Vanderhorsts. They lived in Wageningen, where my father was born. They had an antique store, nice stuff. They had Ming china, they had Biedermeier chairs...

NP: Beautiful.

AV: And one time they said that I dented one of the tables and I also tried one time to steal a guilder out of the JNF [Jewish National Fund] box that I couldn't get out because somehow it was lodged, you know how it is when you-- in the box there are clamps there and they, they, I think they saw something bad in me, so they sent me to orphanage in Amsterdam.

NP: Do you know the name of the orphanage?

AV: It was called-- well first I went to a children's orphanage in the Koningslaan...

NP: How do you spell that?

AV: K-O-N-I-N-G-S-L-double A-N, Koningslaan.

NP: Double A, N.

AV: Koningslaan, right.

NP: Right.

AV: And I stayed there, I was *bar mitzvah*'ed there. That was in 1948 and I got 50 cents allowance but I never saw it. The direct-, the director, the woman director, she kept it in the safe for me, every week 50 cents into the safe. I never saw it.

NP: And...

AV: Afterwards, I went to a boy's orphanage which was in A-E-M-M-A-L...

NP: A-E-M-M-A-L...

AV: L-A-N-N, Aemmalann zeven [seven], seven, and I stayed there till 1954. We-- there was a husband and wife, they were not Jewish but yet they send us to *shul*-- the little kids, the small kids. They send us to *shul* every *Shabbos*.

NP: Was this a Jewish couple?

AV: This was, no, not a Jewish couple.

NP: But was it a Jewish boy's orphanage?

AV: It was a Jewish boy's orphanage.

NP: Was the one before when you had your bar mitzvah...?

AV: It was, it was a Jewish...

NP: ...also Jewish?

AV: ... a Jewish children's orphanage...

NP: Okay.

AV: Yes. It was-- I think the Jewish agencies. They had legacies from rich people and that's how we subsisted. I remember for Hanukah, I got a mud guard, you know, a mud guard on,-- for the bicycle so that the rain wouldn't splatter on your pipes, and I was ecstatic about that. A normal mud guard, you know, I mean let's face it.

NP: The little things that mattered very much.

AV: Right.

NP: Very much.

AV: But I was very happy with that.

NP: And your education throughout this time, of the first orphanage in Koningslaan?

AV: In Koningslaan?

NP: Yeah.

AV: I was sent to a Jewish elementary school. It was called Rosh Pina in Amsterdam.

NP: All right.

AV: And I think I did very well.

NP: What language were you taught in?

AV: I was taught Dutch and I took French. Later on, we went to a Jewish high school and, and I learned German, Dutch, English and French.

NP: Wonderful.

AV: Yeah, and I graduated in 1954. So I wasn't too much behind in my schooling but then when I was in the United States, I didn't learn a thing. My aunt and uncle sent me to school and I was reading comic books, you know, but later on I did a lot of catch up.

NP: Wonderful.

AV: Yeah.

NP: And so after 1954, where did you go from Aemmalaan?

AV: Aemmalaan, I went to a private family. I was 19 years old. This man and wife, the man had an accounting firm and he had gone broke and he needed money. So I was sent there to live there, and the agency would pay the room and board, and so in a way, they got help from the agency and I got a roof over my head. I stayed there for I think two years. They had two daughters and there was Ruth, she was 17 and Vera was 14, and I had a little crush on Ruth. So the man was very obese and he always took the biggest portion of the meal. I was real hungry a lot. So with the allowance that I got from the Jewish agency, I bought rolls, I bought cold cuts, and I kept it in my desk and when I was hungry at nine o'clock at night, I would make myself a sandwich. One time, the woman came into my room and went into my desk, and she noticed all of that, you know. So, from then on, you know, she always asked me, "Arnold, did you have enough?" yeah.

NP: You had survival techniques.

AV: Yeah. Yeah.

NP: Mr. Vanderhorst, did you ever speak with any members of the Jewish Agency?

AV: Down here?

NP: When you were there.

AV: Oh yes. In fact...

NP: Through the years, from Bar Mitzvah to High School.

AV: In fact when I, when I got on to my own, with the Perelkamps after I was out of the orphanage, the boy's orphanage I went to Perelkamp, the accountant.

NP: Ah, yes.

AV: It's called P-E-R-E-L-K-A-M-P. They lived in Amsterdam...

NP: The accountant.

AV: ...on the Weteringschaus. Do you want the address?

NP: On where?

AV: Weteringschaus. Here I'll write it for you.

NP: Okay, you can just, I'm just-- I'll rewrite everything but...

AV: Oh.

NP: But you can add it here. That would be helpful.

AV: Weteringschaus 187 and it's the third, third in Amsterdam.

NP: Very good.

AV: In Amsterdam.

NP: That was the address at the, of the Perelkamps.

AV: Perelkamps. This is where I went when I was 19 and they had gone broke.

NP: Right.

AV: ...and they wanted somebody to take care of.

NP: About your speaking with the members of the Jewish Agency.

AV: Okay, I had to report I think it was once a week to the social worker of the Jewish Agency and, you know, he would ask me, you know, how do you feel and everything. We used to talk about everything, you know. In fact, I looked him up this past April when I was in Amsterdam, with his wife. He's 78 and I guess his wife is about the same age, and you know, they took me to Keukenhof which is a, something like the flowers, you know, the bulbs.

NP: How do you spell that?

AV: Keukenhof, K-E-U-K-E-N-H-O-F. It was a very nice experience that...

NP: When you had that reunion?

AV: Yeah.

NP: With the fellow from the Jewish Agency.

AV: In fact, my uncle had wrote, written to me and he said, when will you become eligible to come to the United States and, so one time I played hooky from school- - I had gone to an architect school and I went to Rotterdam to the American consulate and

they said, "Well, we have a tough quota, you know, and it would take about four or five years before you can go to the United States." So I was discussing this with my social worker and he said, why don't you go downstairs to the office, there's a HIAS office and see what they can do for you.

NP: Do you recall, at this time you were out of-- graduated high school for high school level.

AV: I was, I had graduated high school and they had sent me to architect school. For some reason, I did not know what I wanted to be. I never know what I wanted to be. You know, when you don't have parents, you know, it's very hard, and so the agency sent me to a psychiatrist to find out what I would like to do, and I said I like solid descriptive geometry. You know, that's with X axis and Y axis and you can sort of see it in your mind, how it all goes. So he said, "Oh that's the drawing so maybe you'll like architecture school. So they sent me to a technical school in Amsterdam, and I stayed there for two years...

NP: Would you know the name of the technical school?

AV: No.

NP: That's all right, that's all right.

AV: I had a bad experience there because I didn't like drawing and I couldn't fathom the, you know, architecture curriculum, you know. I couldn't even do the math. You know, for some reason, I couldn't concentrate, you know. I was very lonely and when you're lonely, you can't-- there's something psychological that you can't concentrate.

NP: Of course, of course.

AV: Years later, when I was here the second time, I went to Brooklyn College and I couldn't concentrate, you know. Later on, you know, when I was married, I could concentrate and I did much better. I could graduate. But for some reason, then I flunked twice, and this whole series with the school was a, just a bust job.

NP: Do you think there was a strong organized community to help survivors after the war? You mentioned the Jewish Agency. Were there other people from other agencies helping people put their lives together?

AV: No, I don't think the orphanages were all, was all that were there, I guess, you know.

NP: How about the Jewish Agency of Belgium?

AV: Belgium?

NP: No, Holland.

AV: Holland.

NP: I meant Holland, excuse me. The Jewish Agency was the only visible source of help to you?

AV: I think the orphanage, yeah, and the Jewish Agency. You know, they didn't see the need for help until much later. In 1997 I was speaking to my high school friends whom I finally-- my sister found him for me. And he said, "Do you know that there is a way that you can get help from the Dutch government?" I said, "I never heard of that."

He said, "Yeah, for some reason if you had had bad psychological problems," you know, "you can get help." So I wrote to the American consulate, to the Dutch consulate in Los Angeles and I said, "I'm a war victim and it's been a struggle my life, what can you do?" They said, "Well, do you have any psychological problems?" I said, "Yeah. I'm afraid of people," you know. "I'm very awkward in social settings." So they sent me to a psychiatrist, and that's how I met Simone Gorko and then they wanted to send me to their own psychiatrist which he had an office in Philadelphia. His name was Wolf and he determined, yeah, I was lacking in certain people skills and everything. So, now the Dutch government sends me a stipend every three months and I get by.

NP: You say the Dutch consulate was in Los Angeles. There was nothing closer, Washington, nothing?

AV: I think they may have a Washington consulate, yeah. But for some reason the ones in Los Angeles, they are set up for this. And a lot of the orphans around the world needed help from the Dutch government; in Israel, in Australia. You know when I was at the reunion there were a lot of fellows, you know, that had just as life struggles as I had and they got help now from the Dutch government. I think it's-- the Dutch government is the only one that does this. I'm not sure if the German government does this. They may come around now. I heard something that Austria was doing something for the orphans, so.

NP: You mentioned your high school chum...

AV: Yes.

NP: That you keep in touch with. When you were in the two different orphanages, did you make friendships with those orphanages?

AV: We, we had a...

NP: Did you form a group of any sort?

AV: Well, there were some people that took up friendships with, with some of the guys. I, I had a friendship with one fellow whom I went on vacation with during the summer. We went to England-- no, first we went to Belgium in 1953 on a bicycle, in the Aden [phonetic]...

NP: Oh, how wonderful.

AV: Yeah. In 1954 we went to Paris and the Loire valley.

NP: Wonderful.

AV: With a bicycle, yeah. We put the bicycle on the train and we had a cheap seat on the bus to Paris and we bicycled around there. In 1956 we went to England and to Scotland and we hitchhiked with lorries, the trucks they call them lorries.

NP: That was a beautiful experience.

AV: And when I saw the fellow at the reunion this past April, he said, "Did you know that we were the only two boys that they let go on vacation?" He didn't know why but he's a year older than me, so 1954, I was 19, he was 20. They let us go. We were the only ones that they let go.

NP: Who was they?
AV: The director and his wife.
NP: Of the orphanage.
AV: Of the orphanage, yeah.
NP: And this year was 19-?
AV: 1954.
NP: 1954.
AV: We went to the Belgium to the Adin [phonetic] was in '53 we went to the Adin, '54 we went to Paris, and '56 we went to England and we got-- in fact, on the way back from Scotland we, we got a ride from New Castle all the way to London and I wanted to stop in Ilkley, you know, and look up my old family there but because we had a ride all the way to London, we didn't stop.
NP: Oh, you couldn't stop.
AV: We didn't stop off, you know.
NP: How do you spell Ilkley?
AV: I-L-K-L-E-Y.
NP: There is a book by Sir Martin Gilbert called *The Boys*. Are you familiar with that?
AV: No.
NP: Boys that had survived and had remained together...
AV: Oh yeah.
NP: ...through the years and had reunions and corresponded and so forth and, but...
AV: *The Boys*.
NP: *The Boys*, Sir Martin Gilbert.
AV: Martin Gilbert.
NP: By Martin Gilbert. We might have it here. We are sitting here in the library of Congregation Beth El Ner Tamid in Broomhall, Pennsylvania. That's where this interview is taking place and we're surrounded by many books. I did see one by Martin Gilbert and perhaps we'll be able to find another. It's a very fine [unclear]...
AV: ...oh yeah.
NP: ...and I think perhaps you might appreciate reading, appreciate...
AV: I read *Michele, Michele*, did you read that? About a boy who was taken up by a Catholic family...
NP: No.
AV: ...in France. That was a long time ago that I read it. I'm not sure about the gist of the story is anymore.
NP: And so, when did you come the second time to the United States?
AV: I came in October; I believe it was October 30th or 31st of 1956. I came with the ship the *De Groote Beer*.

NP: How do you spell that?

AV: D-E and then the second word is G-R-O-O-T-E and then another word B-E-E-R, De Groote Beer, it means the Big Beer.

NP: That was the name of the ship?

AV: It was a troop transfer ship that they had made into a passenger ship and it landed in Manhattan on the pier and I was welcomed by my aunt, my uncle Max and my cousin Evelyn, their daughter, you know, she was 1956, she was six years old. And they had a house on 72nd Street and in Norwegian Building, Norwegian neighborhood of Brooklyn. They had a store and they were making rain gear.

[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one:

NP: ...Vanderhorst, tape two of an interview on January 17, 2005. Mr. Vanderhorst, you had come to the United States greeted by an aunt and an uncle and a cousin and what happened from here?

AV: This is in-- now we're talking about 1956, right?

NP: Yes.

AV: Okay, after I was put to work in their factory, it was like a store, a store factory. They said that I wasn't bringing in any money and that I would have to look for a job in New York City. So my uncle suggested I go to an employment agency in New York and that's what I did and when I got to the employment agency the fellow there asked me, "What do you want to do?" And I had no idea. And he gave me a list and I, when I looked over the list, I saw one of the items was bus boy and I said I'd like to do that. I didn't know what bus boy meant, meant, you know. So he said, "You're much too much intelligent for that," you know, and he sent me to a brokerage firm on Broad Street. And the brokerage firm was called Eastman Dillon Union Securities & Company. And the personnel manager, you know, was impressed with me, and he hired me, and they put me to work in the accounting department because I was good with figures, and I was doing a lot of bank reconciliations every month and besides that I was also punching IBM cards on a punch machine. And I didn't like that job too much because every now and then I was interrupted by somebody who wanted to use the Xerox machine and I would have to go underneath the punch machine, take the plug out of the punch machine, put the plug in for the Xerox machine and let them make copies, and then I would have to reverse the procedure again. It was a big-- it was not so, such a nice, nice job.

NP: Now where were you living at the time?

AV: I was living in a rented room.

NP: In a rented-- where was your grandmother?

AV: My grandmother had died in 1955, I believe. When we got back in Holland, she lived in an old age home and when I went to high school which was only a block away from the old age home, I used to visit her for lunch, and I believe, I am not sure, I think it was 1953 or '55 that she died, and she's, she's buried in Muiderberg.

NP: Where is that, if you could spell that?

AV: M-U-I-D-E-R-B-E-R-G, Muiderberg in, which is not too far from Amsterdam, maybe 20 miles east of Amsterdam, yeah. In fact, I visited her grave this past April and I also noted that my grandfather was buried next to her. My grandfather died in 1939 and everybody said he was lucky. He died before the war.

NP: Is this a Jewish cemetery?

AV: This is a Jewish cemetery. In fact, I was corresponding with one of the boys from the orphanage who lived in Vancouver, British Columbia. I was, oh this is maybe

three years ago that I was corresponding with him, and he had a sickness of the kidneys, he had to have the dialysis and he died, and he was buried also there in Muiderberg.

NP: That's the town which has the cemetery, right?

AV: Which has the cemetery. It's a Jewish cemetery, I asked my friend who picked me up from the airport, he was a, an undertaker. I asked him, you know, "How they, how do they do that, you know, do the people have to pay?"

NP: Yes.

AV: ...to get in there?

NP: I was wondering that too.

AV: Yes, they said that every year they have to pay into a Jewish agency, I'm not sure how much. I think he mentioned a number, but every year and then when they die, they automatically are taken care of.

NP: They, meaning the people of the Jewish community?

AV: The Jewish community, yes. There is a big Jewish community south of Amsterdam and called Buitenveldert.

NP: Did I spell that before? I'm not sure.

AV: Buitenbeldert, B-U-I...

NP: B-U-I...

AV: T-E-N...

NP: T-E-N...

AV: V-E-L-D-E-R-T, Buitenveldert, big Jewish community, you can walk there with a *yarmulke* on your head. They wouldn't recommend to do that in the city, in Amsterdam itself, you know, because they-- you never know what can happen. But, but he was this, this fellow, he picked me up from the airport.

NP: He was a Jewish undertaker?

AV: He was a Jewish undertaker, yeah. And in fact, he took me to the funeral parlor, you know, where he worked for 25 years. He showed me where the *kohanim* could stand, you know they had a separate entrance for them, even on the, in the, what do you call it? Where they are buried in the-- what do you call it, where they're buried?

NP: Cemetery.

AV: Cemetery, they had a separate entrance...

NP: Okay.

AV: And...

NP: Did you visit a synagogue when you were -- went back?

AV: Yes, yes, in fact, I visited the synagogue where I was *bar mitzvah*'ed.

NP: Oh...

AV: In 1948.

NP: Where was that?

AV: It was in, you mean, you want the...

NP: ...the name of the synagogue did you know or where it was...?

AV: It was the, the synagogue was in the-- it was the Jacob Obrecht Shul [synagogue]. Do you want to write it down?

NP: Jacob?

AV: Jacob Obrecht Shul.

NP: O-B...

AV: O-B-R-E-C-H-T, Shul, Jacob Obrecht Shul.

NP: In?

AV: In Amsterdam. The *chazzan* [cantor] is an icon in Holland. He is a biochemist...

NP: Ah.

AV: And he is also a *chazzan*, a beautiful voice. He was my, my instructor when I went to the Jewish High School. He was my instructor in chemistry.

NP: Oh.

AV: I spoke to him briefly after the service and you know, I told him that I was a pupil of his and he said, "Where?" you know, and I said, "In high school" and he sort of brushed me off, you know. Because he's a big shot at a University, a name maker, you know. What does he want to do with a pupil from his early days?

NP: Wow, but you called him something, a name maker, no?

AV: His name was Hans Blumenthau.

NP: But there was a word you just used. What did he want to do with someone from a high school, he was a...

AV: A big shot, I guess.

NP: Okay.

AV: What did he want with a, you know?

NP: Maybe his memory wasn't sharp, maybe he didn't want to admit it.

AV: You may be right. I think he's up there. I think he's 88, yeah...

NP: Yeah, so, you know...

AV: It's possible, I never gave that a thought, but you may be right.

NP: Maybe the recall was not as sharp.

AV: Yeah.

NP: So...

AV: And you know something, in that shul I couldn't follow the service.

NP: Really?

AV: It was all *frum* [very religious], they were all *frum*. They had the black hats on. They gave me an *aliyah*⁵.

NP: Really?

AV: Yeah, the man-- I was sitting in the back and the *gabbai*⁶ came over and he said, "What are you sitting in the back for?" and I said, "Well," you know, "I don't want

⁵*Aliyah* – an honor to go up to the Torah and recite blessings before and after a Torah reading.

⁶*Gabbai* – one of two people who stand up with the Torah while it's being read.

to upset the apple cart”, you know. He said, “Come over here, you know, sit up front.” And you want an *aliyah*? I said, “Okay.” “Do you know the *brokhe* [blessing]? I said, “Yes” and he says, “When you come up, you put your *tallis* [prayer shawl] over your head.” Everybody put their *tallis* over their head. He says, then he-- a little bit later, he came over again and he said, “What’s your Jewish name?” I said, “Aharon ben Yaakov” and he called me up and he gave me *aliyah*, and I couldn’t follow the service. They had no rabbi. They just had a *chazzan* and later on I learned that the shuls there have a floating rabbi.

NP: Oh.

AV: A rabbi goes to one shul and then maybe the next week...

NP: Not a full time...

AV: Not a full time rabbi.

NP: ...no, not a full time rabbi. So the Hebrew and the lessons that you learned when you were in the orphanage remained with you and you could be part of an *aliyah*?

AV: Yes, they, they taught me Hebrew and I can follow the service.

NP: Which is wonderful.

AV: Yeah.

NP: Wonderful.

AV: It’s something that I never wanted to do when I was a kid, you know, they-- in the high school they taught me Jewish history, and I never put much attention to it. But later on, you know, you appreciate it.

NP: It becomes more meaningful...

AV: Yes.

NP: ...becomes much more meaningful. When you went back, did you go by yourself? Were you with other family members?

AV: You mean in 1947?

NP: No, when you came back and had the *aliyah* in the synagogue?

AV: Oh, we had the reunion. I went back by myself, yeah. My wife is in a wheelchair...

NP: Yes.

AV: ...and I didn’t know how the...

NP: And what year was this, did you say, was the reunion?

AV: The reunion? It was last year, 2004, April, April 18th we had the reunion in, oh, I forgot the town already. It’s not far from Amsterdam. But, this fellow who picked me up from the airport, he took me there.

NP: Wonderful.

AV: And it was-- again, you know, I’m not good at social, you know, it’s very hard, you know. Something that is-- I guess sticks with you when you’re a child, you know?

NP: The circumstances of your youth.

AV: Yeah.

NP: Yeah.

AV: On one on one, I guess, I'm okay, you know, but in the social situation-- we used to have parties at the orphanage, you know. Everybody, almost everybody had a girlfriend, you know. You know I didn't, you know, and I sort of, you know, sat by myself, you know. It's hard.

NP: Certainly...

AV: Yeah.

NP: Certainly, it was difficult. Well I really do appreciate your giving the time and the Gratz College Archive certainly will, you know, benefit by your testimony...

AV: Yeah.

NP: And it will be used by serious scholars in their research throughout the years and we and Washington, our repository, of many interviews and many experiences that must be heard.

AV: I tell you, the war does something to you. Be it the Second World War or the War in Kosovo, you know, I pity all of these children, you know. If you are a grown-up, I don't think it will affect you as much because you are already formed. I was talking to some people, you know, in, when I was in Holland this past April and one of the women said, she was very outgoing, she said, "Well the war didn't affect me that much because I was already 17 or 18 years old but when you're, you know, kids, six or seven, you know, everything..."

NP: You needed the support and it was lacking.

AV: Yeah.

NP: It was greatly lacking. I'm happy to hear that you have a family.

AV: Yeah, yeah. We have two adopted boys. One works at night in Genaurdi's and the other one is-- he is unemployed. He is a recovering alcoholic. I had a very tough time with him. I used to pray every Saturday here in shul that somehow he would get better. I finally said this past April to him, when he was sober, I said, "You have to leave the house. You know, we can't stand, stand it anymore." So he said, "I'll go to Mirmont and I'll get better."

NP: How do you spell Mirmont?

AV: M-I-R-M-O-N-T and that's here in Delaware County. It's a place where you, where they give you psychological help, and knock on wood, since May 25th, he has been sober.

NP: I'm happy to hear that.

AV: I'm so glad and I believe there is a G-d, because I pray to him that he would somehow intervene and take care of that boy. He's 30, 35, I think, 1968, he'll be 37. They're not married. I don't think they'll ever get married. I wish they would get married, and go out of the house but, you know, as long as we can afford it, let them stay in the house, you know.

NP: Well I wish you well...

AV: Thank you.

NP: ...and I look forward to seeing you here again in our spiritual home and if you have any other thoughts, please don't hesitate to be in touch...

AV: Okay.

NP: ...with me or with the Archive at Gratz College.

AV: Okay.

NP: If you want to come and visit, and look through some of the books, we are just reorganizing now.

AV: Oh.

NP: So thank you again.

AV: Oh, okay.

[Tape two, side one ended. Interview ended.]