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Holocaust Oral History Project

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Interviewer:

Transcriber: Joye Evans

Q. Could you start by just talking a little bit about how you happened to be in Indonesia?

A. Indonesia was a Dutch colony, and my father went as a young man, I think, 25, 26 years old, to Indonesia because he had studied in Holland for an architect, and he was mesmerized to go to that country. So he worked there, and then he went back to Holland and he married my mother, and he took my mother to Indonesia and he built his own home. He had a beautiful home there. And then after four years I was born. I was the eldest of four children. And so my parents were Dutch, we talked Dutch, and I was a Dutch girl, because it was a part of Holland and everything was Dutch there. That is the way I was born in the East. I was born on the island because Indonesia had a lot of islands. The main island is Java. But I was born on the biggest island, and that is Sumatra, that is near Singapore. And I was born in the capital of Sumatra, Medan.

Q. How old were you when the Japanese invaded?

A. When the Japanese invaded I was now one week from five years old. No. Then I went to the camp, and when they invaded I was nearly five years old.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about when the Japanese first invaded?

A. I have to go a little bit back. My father was an architect, and he had built in the mountains, because it is a hot climate there, a kind of clinic where mothers who expected a baby could go and deliver the baby. It was run by nuns. There was also a little convent, and the nuns took care of the babies and of the children. My mother was expecting the fourth child; it was my brother. And so I was in the mountains, (Brcstagi), in that home with my mother and my brother who's a year younger, my sister who's two years younger than I am, and my mother was expecting my youngest brother.

On the day that the war broke out, the 27th of January that was the day they invaded my country, was the day that my brother was born. And I remember that because my father was always stayed in the city for his work and then he came out for some days to visit us and to play with us. When he came off he was always dressed in white. That day he came in military uniform. And he was in a hurry. Had hardly any time for us. He hugged us and he kissed us. And I said, "Why are you dressed that way?" He says, "Papa see you later." We didn't see him for four and a half years. Because the war broke out and he wanted to see his new son and see his wife and therefore he came in military uniform. And that was that day.

But after the war I heard from my father that the Japanese came in my country before the war as storeholders, shopkeepers, photographers. Because in my country they were all nationalities. The main people who lived there were like Indians here. But you had English people, American people,

German people, you had a lot of Chinese people, and also Japanese people. And you all lived friendly together. There was a lot of business. But it turned out that the Japanese were spies, high rank officers who had brought my whole country in map and knew exactly where the military points were and where to attack and where to locate the people. They had everything prepared so when they attacked they were there.

Q. So that was all done before they ever declared war.

A. So it was already prepared. They knew everything. They knew where to put the camps, where the people, where they could attack. So they were spies.

Q. What were the first changes once they invaded?

A. Rounding up people.

Now, what I remember as a child, that we lived in the mountains in a beautiful house with a big yard around it, and we could move freely. And I saw them coming in tanks and in jeeps and some on bikes. And they came in that home and we were put together in some rooms. We were not allowed to go out of that house anymore. And they took a part, a big part, of the building. So there were a lot of restrictions.

And then after, I think, two weeks, we were put on trucks, with things that you could carry, only a handbag, some luggage, what you could carry, you were allowed to take with you. And from there we were moved to a school that was there in the neighborhood, a big school, and they had transformed it into a camp. So it was surrounded by barbed wire and watch towers. And in that school were already a lot of people who were

rounded up. Because it was the same as what the Germans did. They rounded up everybody out of the houses in the city.

Men and women were separated, and the men went to a men's camp and the women went to a women's camp. Where I came was only a women's camp. There were two thousand women and children. And you had fingerprints, all your valuables you had to give to them. So you were not allowed to have anything.

But my mother was a smart one. She put valuables in the diaper of my baby brother. And who's looking in diaper of a baby? There you expect something else than valuables. And she did it as long as my brother was wearing diapers, a very long time, I tell you. So he was a safe deposit box for my mother.

And then you got your place. And for my mother, she was in a room near the nuns because the nuns ordered that, because all mothers with just-born babies had to be taken care of. So the nuns had rooms for the mothers and a baby room and the children's room. And the world of my mother was a bed. So my home was the bed of my mother. And the luggage was under her bed. And we slept separated from the mother, first with the children in a room. And later because when I was a year older I went to the children's department what was in a separate building. The children slept together, and the adults slept together, and the babies were together.

So that was the beginning of the camp. Then you got rules. They had rules. You were not allowed to do that, not to use electricity, not allowed to use gas. We had to cook in the open. The women had to do slave labor, so they had to work on

the fields and in the woods. And your food was portioned, what they give. And we were not allowed to get any education.

So there was punishment. If you did that and that and that, you got punished for that and that and that. And in the middle of the camp was a special place, an open place, and was surrounded by a wooden fence. And in that place was a kind of cage and a pole standing. So if somebody did something what was not allowed, then you were put in that cage and you were tortured. And also they bound people on that pole, and then you were standing in the sun for hours and hours and hours. And they shave you bald when you did something. So there were a lot of punishments.

And the food was bad. There was hardly any food. There was no milk, there was no bread, there were no potatoes. You had a little bit rice, a little bit vegetables, corn. And I remember as a child that when it was time for the meals then we got some corn, and you had your own metal mug and a spoon. And as a kid we were counting the kernels. And if your friends had five kernels more as you, if you had 30 kernels, it was already a lot, then you were fighting for it.

And what my mother and other mothers did in the night, tried to smuggle, to go out of the camp. Because it was barbed wire, but it was also surrounded by plants. So they dig a hole and then they go out in the night to the native people because they sold the food secretly.

There was something else. All the people, the white people, were in the camps. Because it was not a religion

question, but it was a question against the white people. And so the native people who were dark-skinned could stay in the villages, were not in the camp. But they had to work also for the Japanese on the field for the rice. They had to provide for the food. And the men, a lot of men, were rounded up and had to fight in the Army with the Japanese. And a lot of natives were former servants, and they knew you, so they sold you some food and beans for valuables.

I have to think. Yeah. I go a little bit back because that is also important to know. And on the moment that I was in the camp I didn't know that. I found it out later when I was an adult through reading and literature, what was behind it, why. Because it was the Japanese and they wanted it. But there was a whole purpose behind it.

The Japanese had an ideology that they were a super race on account of their Shinto religion. The Emperor was God, a descendant from a goddess, and they were the only nation in the world who were descendants from that Goddess. They were very special. So they put themselves superior above other people. Other people were less as they are.

And because their country was small, they wanted to have an empire. And they had the same wish as what Hitler had. Hitler wanted to have a Reich, what was the whole world, and they wanted to have an empire what was the whole world. But there was Hitler. So they make a compromise, and they said, okay, Hitler, you have half of the world and I have half of the world. So Hitler talked with Hirohito that he would take Europe

and Africa and a part of America. And Hirohito would take Asia, Australia and other part of America. So they had divided that. And that is what people don't know.

And Hirohito started already with China. He attacked China before, in 1933, I think, already, the Massacre of Nanking. Because in their eyes the Chinese were not people. And they treated the people so bad what they did. They murdered, they raped. It was unbelievable.

From there they went to the other parts of Asia and even to the Phillipines, and they went to the Dutch colony. Because they said all colonialists, they don't belong there, we take it under our supervision, and we will have the power over it. So that was the main purpose -- a big nation Japan

And also the population of Japan was prepared for that. They said the whole population has to make that ideology real, make it ready to succeed. And it was the emperor and his military advisers who were the leaders. So the whole population was working with it, women in factories, and the men in the Army, and they were all trained for it. And the young men, they had to give up their life, the kamikaze fliers. Then you go to the Nirvana, that was their heaven, because you are a martyr. So they were brainwashed. So that was the point that the war started.

So on the moment that I was in the camp my father was fighting because he was a reservist in the Army. So all the men who were reservists were called up. And my father was a sergeant in the Knil. That is the name for the Royal Dutch

Infantry. And my father said it was terrible because we were not prepared for war. We were never thinking about war. We hardly had any arms and weapons. We lost most of our weapons and airplanes when Japan attacked India because we were allies with England and France.

And when India was attacked, we helped India. That was a part of England and France. We helped England and France to defend it, and we lost our planes. So we had hardly any planes. And the weapons were not good enough. So it was so difficult to defend.

The only thing what they could do was by sabotage, so they sabotaged everything. They'd blow up bridges. And what the Army did in the whole Dutch colony was blowing up all the oil refineries because it was a rich country of oil. And that was something with which they attacked Japan. Because Japan -- and this is also what people don't know -- wanted to use Indonesia as a spot to attack Australia, because the distance was too big. So they needed it for fuel, they needed the oil to attack Australia, but now it was gone. In that way we prevented the invasion of Australia. And that was what my country did.

Q. So there was no intimations ahead of time at all, like, gathering war clouds? People just didn't expect there was going to be an attack?

A. No, no, they didn't expect it. So suddenly it was there. And when it was there they found out it was already here, it was already prepared by Japan.

My father said the shopkeeper -- he knew him as a

shopkeeper -- suddenly was a high-rank officer. So in that way they found out they were spies. And then they found out that all the Japanese storeholders and shopkeepers were spies, were officers, and they knew everything.

And then the soldiers had to surrender because there were no arms anymore. You couldn't do any more. And there was no help from other countries because there was the big war in Europe, the mainland. Holland couldn't help. And then you were surrounded by water, so you were surrounded by the enemy everywhere. You could do nothing.

So then they put soldiers in the camp and they took away everything. My father said the only thing you were allowed to have was your underpants, and that was his whole possession. And the men's camp were terrible. And they had to work as slave labors, very hard slave labor in the maiden wood because they had to make a railroad from the northbound to the southbound for transportation for everything. The conditions were terrible.

And punishment was -- they had torture. Kind of different as what the Germans did. They did it in a very slow way. They had tortures, putting in cages in the sun so that you couldn't move, putting bamboo under your nails. And the bamboo travels, it goes through your veins, and it travels out your veins and goes through your heart. And that is very slow, painful. They were experts in that. And then beheadings. So that was the concentration camps. And that was the beginning.

Am I making myself a little bit clear that way?

Q. So how long were you in the camp?

A. I was in the camp for four and a half years, but I was in two different camps. First I was in this camp. So now I will start a little bit telling what my life was in that first camp, my experience as a child.

When I entered the camp I was nearly five years old, and my fifth birthday was in the camp. I remember very much because there was no birthday party, there was nothing. My mother made a little present, and I got a little basket.

And still we were not allowed to have education, but it had a kind of kindergarten. So to have a treat, my mother made some popcorn, and I could give every child one kernel. I remember that very much. When I see popcorn, I always remember that.

As a child, my duty was to gather wood. So every morning I got a basket on my back, and all the other kids, and we had to get some wood for cooking. Otherwise, you couldn't cook. And you were cooking in a kind of tin. And that was your duty. It wasn't a hard job because you had only in certain area, and all the kids were looking for wood. And you had to do that. You fought for a piece of wood

The Japanese never attacked young children. Never. I know in my camp when two young boys smuggled food, they punished the mother. They didn't punish the children.
They said the mother is responsible for it.

There was no school. School was forbidden. And still we got a clandestine education in our own language, with material, because our camp was in a school. And they found material and

books. The mothers hid it and they used that for education.

There was one lady was the head of the camp, was the spokesperson for the women. The language was very difficult because it was Japanese and English. And that lady was fortunate she spoke fluently Japanese, so she was the person in between. And she had to make everything clear to the people, the rules. She was responsible for the order in the camp. Nora Prins was her name.

And we had curfew. You had to be in the buildings in a certain time and out of the buildings a certain time.

And the people had to go to work. And there were mothers allowed to take care of the children because there were a lot of children.

And the nuns put up a little hospital. We had only, I think, for two or three months a doctor and a priest. And then the doctor and the priest and minister had to leave. And they were at that time the only men. So we had no doctor, there was no priest, there was nothing. There was no medication, nothing. And the nuns who were nurses took care of the sick.

Now, in a short time everybody had diarrhea on account of the dysentery. I had dysentery. I got sick. But there was no cure for it. They tried to do it with some food, but there was no cure for it.

Then there was three times a day roll call. You had to stand in line straight, then bow very deep to bring honor to the God Emperor. You had to shout something in Japanese. You got punished and beaten if you did not bow deep enough.

Then I remember there was a day that suddenly they rounded up all the boys ten years and older. They had to come forward, and they had to leave the camp because they said a boy ten years old and older is, in the Japanese culture, an adult. So they were not allowed to stay by the mother. They were taken away from the mothers and put in the men's camp, not by their fathers. And that was a very terrible scene. Because what is a boy ten years old? They are still kids. And what they experienced in the camp! I met boys after the war later, and they never talked about it. They said it was so terrible. It was so terrible that they had to do slave labor and make coffins and were punished for everything. It's unbelievable.

So in the camp were women and children and boys under ten years old. And then the guards. They always walked around with rifles, with bayonets. The uniform was brown. Sometimes the head was covered with branches. When they feared attack they had to blind everything with black paper, and we had to stay inside, and they walked around like trees.

Once I experienced that my mother -- it was on a Sunday evening. I was six years old then. It was bedtime. I had to go to the room in the main building. My mother said, now, tonight I bring you back to the building, and don't be afraid. Most of the time I went alone or with other friends. Don't be afraid. It is not late. We will be on time. (You got punished if you were outside when you were not allowed.) So we had to be in, I think, at six, and it was a quarter to six. And I felt something, I don't know, but I was so terrified. And I grabbed

my mother's hand, and I said, "I'm afraid. Let me run. Or let me stay with you, Mom, tonight, please. I'm afraid."

And my mother said, "You don't have to be afraid; I'm with you. Nothing will happen."

And between one building and another building was an open hall. In Indonesia you had that a lot. And in the middle of that hall was standing a guard. And I said, "He looks so mean."

Mom again said, "No, nothing will happen. Come on, we go. You are in time."

And I grabbed my mother's hand and I walked on the right side from her. She was on the inside. And the moment we passed by the guard, he grabbed my mother, and he beat her and he throw her on the floor, and he kicked her with his boots. And then he took his bayonet and he wanted to put the bayonet in her belly. And I was standing there frozen. I saw that -- I still see that. I saw it with my eyes. And the moment he want to put the bayonet in her belly I run away, screaming, loud screaming. And at that moment he dropped the rifle. He didn't expect my loud screaming. And then women came out of the building so my mother could run away.

I always had a terrible guilt feeling, and I lived with it for 40 years, that I run away and I left my mother with the man who wanted to murder her and that I did nothing to protect her. There was no counseling, there was nothing.

When I ran in the building, they put me on a chair and then they put me in bed, and they didn't even hear my story. So I never could talk about it. And my mother was in a daze, so

they took care of my mother. And later I found out my mother hardly realized that I was there, because it was a kind of blackout for her. So I lived always with that guilt feeling that I was a bad child and I didn't do anything. But I was only six years old. What is a child six years old? Children experience things different as adults.

Children experience things different than adults. We experience fears in a different way. We see things in a different way. Because you can't comprehend things, you don't know what is behind it, and you experience what is there, and it goes through your child's mind and your child's thinking. You don't have time to talk about it with your mother because your mother's mind is also in a shock state.

My mother was a lot of times sick, and she did slave labor. You are not around your mother the whole day. So that is one frustration I had to live with.

Then another frustration was that in the middle of the night they came to count people. And as a child you are asleep, and then suddenly you wake up, and at the end of your bed are standing four or five Japs with bayonets and counting the people. And I hardly had any toys. I had one doll they had fixed from different dolls that was from cotton. But she was a little bit big and she was sleeping next to me. And I saw them standing there, and I said, "Oh, my god, they think there are two people in bed, the doll and me, and they will take me and they will kill me." So I jumped out of the bed and I was telling them, "That is a doll, that is a doll." And then they

calmed me down. So I had a fear that they would kill me because they were thinking about two people. Because in my mind the doll was a human being.

I was a lot homesick because I wanted to be by my father. They didn't know where my father was. Some noises what I heard reminded me of my home. Because I remembered everything, how my home was, what was home like before the war. So I was a lot of homesick.

Then you had the diseases. I had a lot of diarrhea, and I was ashamed about it, because you have dirty pants. But it has to do with the dysentery. And it is terrible. Suddenly you have to go to the bathroom; you can't keep it in. And I had it in a terrible way that also the intestines come out, and I was ashamed of that, so I tried to put it in by myself. And then everything was on blood. I know it once happened in the night and it took the nuns an hour to get the part of the intestines in again. It hurt terrible. I had always belly ache.

Then I had two tape worms. And tape worms eat everything inside. There was no medicine for it. And the nuns tried with a kind of vinegar and dirty oil to get rid of it, but they did not succeed. So my little bit of food was eaten inside me by the tape worms, plus the amoeba dysentery. So in the camp were a lot of diseases, and most of the people were sick.

Then what the Japanese also did, they put big boards in the camp, and on the boards was a list of the names of the men who died. And when the women would look at the board they said your husband dead, he died, so look. The women cried, oh, my

husband died. My father's name was four times on the list. But what I didn't know -- I found it out after the war; my mother told me -- that when she went out of the camp for work, her servant, a boy who cooked for us, and a woman who took care of us children lived near by the camp, and they saw my mother. And one of the servants knew where my father was in the camp. My father was in the men's camp. And the boy became a messenger in between.

So he told my mother where my father was, in a secret language. And he said, if you put a note I will bring it to your husband. So my mother dropped secretly a note, and the note went to my father, and then my father dropped secretly a note. The boy picked it up and he hid it in the handle of his bike. And then my mother got the little note, and so my mother knew it was not true, my father was alive, because she had the proof. She couldn't talk about it with anybody because she knew what was on the board was not true. And she knew that she and my father would be killed if the Japanese found out.

Q. Psychological warfare?

A. Yeah, to, you know, to punish and to make you -- how do you say that in English?

Q. Morale?

A. Yeah, to bring your morale, your resistance, down. It's terrible what they did. So there was a lot of psychological assault.

How much time do we have?

Q. We still have some time.

A. So that was my story, a part of my story.

Then suddenly we had to move, again in trucks, and you had to put your luggage on the truck, only what you could carry. And it was less what you had because you hardly had anything.

Then we were moved to Medan, our home city. And I remember that my mother said, "Oh, we are passing by our home. Look, and we will see our home." And my mother pointed it out. And I remembered how my home looked. And then we pass it by. And it was not our home anymore. Because ours was a beautiful white two-story home, and now it was all painted green, the windows were out. We had a beautiful garden with a pond and a fountain, and it was all stone. Now it had trucks parked in front and was the headquarters of the Japanese army. And my mother cried. I remember that my mother cried. She said, "Our home is gone. We don't have a home anymore. It is all ruined." I cried inside.

And then we were brought to the railroad station. And there we found other women and children huddled together. And we stayed there for hours and hours waiting for a train to bring us to another camp. And we had some food there. Then finally when the night came and the train came, it was not a normal passenger train, but it was a train for cattle.

And we were put in that train and we drove the whole night till the next morning, and then we came in the maiden woods of Sumatra, and it was not a station. It stopped somewhere, and we had to go out. And then we have to walk. Only the women who were very sick and couldn't walk were allowed

to sit on the truck. And everybody had to walk. And it was miles and miles in the maiden wood till we came by the camps.

And there were three camps, three different camps together, and I was in the last camp. And the camps were surrounded by barbed wire. And that camp was built in an open place in the woods, and there they had built stables. They were not really stables, but big -- I call it big, big stables, with roofs from iron, and you had walls, and inside it was dirty. And they had made four long of wooden floors above the sand floor. And there you had to live. So there were no windows, and there was no light, there was no separation because it was one open space. And there you lived, so many inches to a person. So you put some blankets down and with some rags you try to make some separation.

And there was no water. The only water you could get was rainwater in a kind of basin that they had made. Most of the time the basin was dry.

The sanitary were open holes in the floor. And they made a kind of roof above it, no walls, it was open, and then some wooden panels where you could stand on. So you can understand, everybody had diarrhea, and you had to do that in the open holes, and with worms. And it was unbelievably stinky and dirty. But the Japanese said the camp was a good place for us because we were no more than animals.

Then for cooking, the only water was one well outside of the camp. And some women got turns and were allowed with a guard to go outside with a little gallon to get some water.

That water was not right to drink. It took an hour to cook it for drinking. And with that water you had to do everything -- make your food and wash yourself and your rags. So you hardly washed yourself. If there was water and the rainy season started, you were lucky. Otherwise, it was dusty.

And my mother was sick. She went to the sick barrack. I didn't see my brothers and sister. They were younger. They were in a special barrack. And a friend of my mother took care of me. And when my mother was a little bit better then she stayed with us.

Still we got a kind of education. The food was hardly anything. What I remember was, I don't remember colors, I remember that there were no flowers, no animals. It was only dust, dust and black. I think I was numb.

And you were walking in rags. I know I had two underpants. The white one was for Sunday, and the kind of blue one with little squares was for during the week because it didn't get so easily dirty. You were walking on bare feet. We had no shoes. So my mother tried to make it livable, but it was so hard. And toilet paper was not there; you used the leaves from the trees for it. It was a hard job.

So in that camp we were doomed to die by starvation. That was their purpose. So the women had to do slave labor. There were the same rules as in the first camp. But you got weaker and weaker. And people got beriberi. So your legs were all swollen. There were no coffins if you died, and you were buried outside the camp. Children who died were buried outside

the camp, too. So that was their purpose, letting us die by starvation. That was my camp.

Then my father was in the men's camp. Now, the men's camps were terrible. My father said, we lived on tree bark and insects and snakes. And the first duty was, the Japanese guarded everything what was electronic, radios, and then bicycles and cars. And my father said we had to de-part every car and then to select, say, from a Chrysler, everything from a Chrysler, from a Ford, everything from a Ford and some other cars. And then it was packed in big wooden crates and sent to Japan. But my father said we mixed everything up. We didn't do that. We mixed everything up.

And then they stole some leather from the cars. And he said, when you chew on leather then you had an idea you had some meat, because you never got meat.

And they were punished in a terrible way, he said. And when you go out of the camp they count the people, and when you came in they count the people. And the people who died when they did the work in the maiden woods -- and it was hard work because it was so hot, the climate was so hot -- then they were buried in the camp. And they slept on a kind of little mat. And they were buried in their mats because there was no wood for coffins.

Once, my father said, we were so hungry and they discovered a barge with salted fish. And when the trains stopped, he said, all the prisoners jumped on that barge with the fish. But they didn't know the fish was salted. And, he

said, you hide the fish in a kind of sun hat, but in the sun hat were holes so the fish was sticking out, and in your pants it was falling out. Then we had to line up because the Jap was angry.

Then, he said, something strange happened: We had to sit down. Otherwise, we had to stand. We had to sit down and we had to give all the fish to the commandante. So they guarded all the fish. And then some people were called and they had to give everybody fish. And, he said, that is strange that we got the fish we stole. But what the Japanese knew and what they didn't was that it was very salty fish. So they had to eat that salt fish.

Now, what happened, if you work in the heat, terrible heat, and it's very humid, you transpire a lot, so you lose a lot of water, so you get thirsty. And they got mad from thirst. He said it was crazy, it was terrible. Then you got beatings and whippings.

Then my father was transported. Because a lot of soldiers, men, there was no difference, because they didn't keep the Geneva Convention. P.O.W. was not treated what was set by the Geneva Convention. A lot of men were transported to Japan to work as slaves in the copper mines and coal mines and in factories under terrible conditions, because the Japanese population had to fight in the war.

So my father's camp was put on a cargo ship; not a regular ship, in a cargo ship. My father said, we were like cargo, packed together, and without water and food and anything,

and no sanitary. And sometimes you were allowed to get a little bit air.

And then that ship on the way to Japan was torpedoed in the middle of the sea. And, my father said, I was lucky. He was near the entrance from that boat, so he was blown out in the sea and he grabbed a piece of wood. He said he was for two days and two nights in the water, and then he was picked up by a Japanese ship. But what the Japanese did, they picked up the people out of the water and then they first cleaned your face because, he said, I was black from oil and they didn't know if it was a Japanese or a prisoner. And they first want to save their own men. So they cleaned your face and saw that I was a prisoner, and they throw me back. So, he said, for another day and a night he was clinging on a piece of wood.

And then he was picked up again by a Japanese ship and transported to a camp in Malaysia. Malaysia is a part of India. And from that camp he never told us one word. Never. He didn't want to talk about it, what happened there.

I also had an uncle, the youngest brother of my father, who was in the -- he was not in the Army but was in -- how do you call that? -- for commerce, in the merchandise, on a ship. And he was captured by the Japanese, and he was imprisoned in Burma where you have the movie The Bridge on the River Kwai, the Burma Railroad. He was there, and he died there. He was murdered there.

In the meantime, we didn't know where my father was. And we were in that camp doomed to die by starvation. Then suddenly

I remember, I was playing in the dust, and I was sitting on a kind of piece of wood. Something strange happened. My mother came out of that stable, that big stable where we lived, with other women and they put a pole in the ground and a kind of flag, and they started singing the national hymn! And it was not allowed! You were not allowed to stand in a group and not allowed to sing. And the guard was standing there and was doing nothing!

And I said, "Mama, what are you doing here?" And she said, "Oh, isn't it wonderful? The war is over! The war is over! And soon we are going to Holland." How she knew that, I don't know. I have no idea. But it was about the 14th, the 15th, of August that the war was over.

And then a day later I saw trucks coming and tanks and jeeps and a lot of soldiers. And my mother said, "Look! There are the American soldiers!" And there were the American soldiers. And they always told us children that when the war is over the daddys come back. And I remember that my mother had a little picture of my father. And my little brother didn't know him. He always said, "What is a daddy?" Explain to a child what a daddy is. Because there were no men, only soldiers, in the camp. What is a daddy? So we kids were running to the gate and clinging to the men and looking at their faces and asking, "Are you my daddy? Are you my daddy?" They said no, we are not your daddy. And they took us on their shoulder. And then the camp suddenly was heaven.

And we got medicine and food. I remember that we got

potatoes. Now, I didn't know what a potato was. Because they didn't know how many people were in the camp, so it was not a big amount of food. And we got one potato a person. It tasted so delicious! "When you are free you can eat it every day," said my mother. And I was sitting on a piece of wood with that potato. And I kept it for hours in my hand because it was so delicious. It was only cooked without salt or anything, in.

water.

And then they came with makeup for the ladies. And my mother said, "Why makeup?" But it is to give your prestige back. Medicine and toys for the kids. I remember big crates with toys. My first toy after all the years was a Lincoln Logs from what you have to put together.

And then we were allowed to go out of the camp to visit the people in the surrounding camps. But then, still, the Japanese were there, because the Americans had to set up everything. They discovered the camps because they were in the maiden woods. And they had not yet a safe place for us. They had to bring us to the city.

But then you got the extremists, the native people. Sukarno was the leader. The Communists wanted to try to kill the Dutch people. They thought now they are in the camp now we can get rid of them. Because they wanted to take over from the Dutch government. And the Americans ordered the Japanese to protect us. So from our enemies they became our protectors. Under supervision of the Americans, they had to protect us from

the extremists. So it was very dangerous to go out of the camp.

And then after awhile we were put on trucks and brought to the main capital of Medan, and there a whole part was separated and surrounded, again, with barbed wire to protect us from the extremists. And we were put with several families in one home. And there you had the Red Cross, so we got medicine. And there was a central kitchen where you could get food. So we got bread and milk and good food what came from America. We got clothes. Because you only had rags.

There were doctors, and I remember that the first thing they did was to put me in a kind of home that they had transformed into a little hospital. And there was a doctor from the Red Cross who would try to help get rid of your tape worms. And you had big holes in your leg, in your skin, big sores. So they took care of that. My mother was only 90 pounds because she has dysentery in a very heavy way, and she was a skeleton. She was nearly dying on the moment from the liberation.

Still we didn't know where my father was. They were also liberating the men's camp. And then via Red Cross you had to give your name, find out where the people were, because they were scattered over all the islands. When the war started, people tried to fly overseas and were captured and put in camps and they transferred from one camp to another camp again to other camps. So you didn't know where they were. So via the Red Cross they tried to get families together. When the family was together, then they were transported to Holland.

We got education. I got to start school right away. I

was with my mother. My brothers and sister were taught by the nuns because my mother was too weak to take care of them. And I went to school half day because one section of the city had it in the morning and the other section of the city had it in the afternoon in a house what was bombed, I remember, sitting on the bare floor. But you got education, oral education, and a little bit of writing, what was possible.

After several months, an officer came from the Red Cross and told my mother that they had discovered my father and he was alive in Malaysia. On the moment of the liberation in Malaysia, when they entered the men's camp, they found a shed, a big shed, and in that shed were all dead bodies piled up. And they went through the bodies to see if some were alive and to find out what happened to these people. And they found that my father still had a weak heart beat. He was unconscious, but he had a heartbeat. He looked very old. He had long gray hair. (When the war started, he had dark curly hair.) And my father was just in his 40s. So they found an old man, swollen, paralyzed, blind, long gray hair. And they put him in the hospital. It all came from the diseases and from the malnutrition. So it took him about half a year to recover. And he got his sight back, and he could walk again. And so we heard that my father was in the hospital, and it would take awhile, but he was alive. So that was already good news.

Then one day I went with my mother to visit my brothers and my little sister who were under the care of the nuns. We crossed a little river, and I saw an airplane in the air. It

was a water plane. I was a strange child. I told my mother, "Daddy's in that airplane." And she said, "You are ridiculous. You know your father's in the hospital and it will take a time before he will come here." I said, "No, he is in that airplane."

The next day I came out of school in the afternoon. My mother was dressed in her blue dress waiting for me. My mother had two dresses: a yellow dress that she wore during the week, which she got from the Americans, and a blue dress for Sundays. And it was Monday, and my mother was wearing the blue dress. And I said to my friend, "Do you see? My mother is wearing a blue dress. That means there's a surprise. There is something. That means two things: Either my father is there or I get ice cream." Because ice cream was a special treat.

And I came, and my mother said, "We have a surprise." And I said, "Is daddy there or do I get ice cream?" And she said, "You are right; your daddy is there. And you get ice cream."

So she brought me to the room. And I came in the room and I said, "That is not my daddy. That is an old man. That is not my daddy. That is my daddy." And I pointed at the picture. So my mother had to explain that through the war and through everything that my father had changed; still he was my father. And it took me awhile to get assured to that. And my brothers and sister were already there, and my little brother was clinging to my father's leg because it was for him something new. And he said, "That is my daddy. I have a daddy."

And I was right. My father was in that airplane. And he told me through the Red Cross he was put in that airplane to bring him back to Medan.

(End Tape 1, side one, begin Tape 1 Side 2)

So I had a kind of clairvoyance that I picked that up. So I told my mother, "See, I was right. He was in that plane."

Then after some months the first kids got the measles. It was also something. The liberators wanted to have the kids to get the measles before they got transported to Holland and to other countries. But we had to go out because the situation got worse and worse from the extremists. They tried to come and to kill people. So the Americans want us to get out. So what the nuns did, then a doctor came, and they put red spots on the skin of the kids and said they had measles, they had measles. So they went out. So they also told my sister had already measles, and my brother.

Then we were put on a ship, on a big cargo ship that brought us to Holland, and it took us about three weeks. We had to go to Holland because that was our main country and there was our family. And it was 1946. I was liberated by the Americans August 1945, end of August, and we left Medan the end of April, 1946. So after the war we stayed for nine months in Medan.

When we were on the sea, my father got very sick, got malaria, and my sister got the measles. And a lot of kids got the measles. There was a measles explosion on that ship. Thank God there were doctors on board who took care of the sick.

We got food and clothes from the Americans in Africa by

the Suez in Egypt. There I got my first pair of shoes.

I also want to tell you what the Japanese did to the Americans. No, first I want to emphasize about the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb saved my life. The atomic bomb saved the lives of my father, my mother, my brothers and sister. I'm against war, I'm against bombs, I'm against everything. There is nothing worse than a war. War is terrible. But to put yourself above other human beings, that was what the whole world war was about. There were two people in the world who felt themselves superior above other people, brainwashed people, and on that account a lot of people were murdered in a terrible way. If Hitler and Hirohito had succeeded, if America hadn't ended the war, then also America would have been overrun by Japan and Germany and you would have concentration camps here, too. Then the world would have turned into a big, big concentration camp.

The Japanese had a philosophy. This last part, I think, is very important. I found it out later. It is very important, also, for education, because you get a whole other view on the bomb. The Japanese had a philosophy: Never surrender, because surrender is a shame. We fight, fight till our deaths, even if the whole population of Japan had to die. So surrender was not in their mind. Surrender was a shame. What was the solution? To go on with that war? If they would have gone on with that war, America had to put in more troops and more troops and more troops. And America was planning a big, big invasion of, I think, about a million soldiers, to attack Japan, then all the soldiers would have been murdered. The people in the camps

would have been murdered.

Japan had a plan to exterminate all the P.O.W.s in the camp on a date in August, I think, the 9th of August. And I found it out from a P.O.W. in Australia who wrote a book about it. All the people in the camp would be exterminated. The atomic bombs prevented that. If you count the people that were the victims of the two bombs, then you said the two bombs saved a lot of lives even though it killed a lot of Japanese in a terrible way. I hate bombs. But that was the other side of the bomb. And I think you have to talk about that too, that through the atomic bomb a lot of lives were saved. Because without the atomic bomb I would have been murdered, my mother would have been dead. Even if the bomb had been dropped one day later, my father would have been dead. If it had been a month later my mother would have been dead, and a lot of people, and several months later big populations. Even a lot of Japanese people.

And it was scheduled on the 9th of August to kill all the P.O.W.s and to get rid of them and to rip out all the traces so that nobody should see and know what the Japanese did.

There were lot of similarities. Because Hirohito took a lot of examples from Hitler. Only there were no gas chambers, but he had it in mind. The experiments, the medical experiments, what Hitler did in the camps in Germany Hirohito did to the P.O.W.s in Manchuria. There were P.O.W.s from America, from Australia and from England. Ten thousand were murdered that way.

Did you hear about it?

Q. The medical experiments?

A. Yeah, on the P.O.W.s in Manchuria.

Q. Not that particular place, but --

A. Yeah, there were two thousand soldiers exposed to germs and diseases and in freezing cold and when it is frozen. And the knowledge they used for deep freeze, for the freezing of the fish and for other things. So it is terrible what they did.

And then you think about atomic bomb. It saved many lives. And I think you have to emphasize that too.

And who started the war? We didn't start the war. America didn't start the war when they attacked Pearl Harbor. It was Japan who started it. And when you start something you get it back.

And when I talk for the children, I always tell them there are two memorials in the world from World War Two, and I hope they will stay there as a reminder, and that is Auschwitz. Auschwitz is a reminder of how low, how inhuman, people can be, what evil human beings can do to other human beings.
I don't say like beast, because beasts are not that way, like devils. It is so inhuman what happened there. That is a reminder. But when you act that way, you get it back, and that is what happened in Hiroshima. So that is the law of the universe: What you do it comes back to you. So Japan got it back in a terrible way.

I had a difficult time also on account of the war. Later, when I got married, I found out I couldn't have children because of all the diseases and the tape worms I had, that my

female organs were underdeveloped. And so I lost five times a baby. One was seven months old. And it was as if my body was a concentration camp, because my babies died from starvation inside. They were too small, too weak. And that was hard to live with. But thank God I could adopt a beautiful baby. And I emphasize on it. My husband now says, don't mention it. But I emphasize on it, that race has nothing to do with it. And now you see how God works. I got an oriental baby, a beautiful oriental daughter, and she's the biggest beautiful gift I got from God.

So I always tell people, for God everybody is one. God created the human beings like a diamond. If you put a diamond in the sun, you see all colors -- you see red, you see blue, you see green. And the diamond is beautiful. But if you hate red and you cut out red because you see it in the diamond and you don't like red, then you get an ugly stone. And that's what we are doing on earth. You murder people because you don't like them, because they are black and you are yellow or you are white, and you get an ugly world. And that is what we are doing, what we still are doing. And that is why hate and racism is so terrible.

And kids have to learn when you put yourself above somebody else, that is so low. Because you all have the same rights; you are all human beings, beautiful human beings. You have no right to put yourself above another. And that is what started World War Two. And I think that is important to tell kids if you do that, you get it again. And you see it around

you. You see in South Africa, see in Iran, see in Iraq, see in Cambodia. It is the same. People put themselves above other people and say other people are minorities, sick human beings, they are to be destroyed and they have to be killed. And only we -- we are the super human beings. And that is not true. So that is why I talk.

And I want to emphasize that it took me a time, but I have forgiven the Japanese. I have peace with it. I always said God took care of me. I had a difficult life after the war, but I'm happy, and I have a beautiful child, and I've forgiven that. And I think we have to try to forgive and to start from a point that you say let us work together and make together a better world.

Q. What enabled you to, like, forgive and to be able to get over it, quote? What helped you?

A. It was my daughter. I realized suddenly that I got a beautiful gift from God.

I was always crazy about children. I wanted to have ten brothers and sisters, and I only got three. And I wanted to have ten children, and I didn't get one. Even when I was a little child I was crazy about babies and about kids. So for me to have a child was something I deeply longed for, and I didn't get it. The adoption was difficult, but we succeeded and got a baby girl. She came from Surinam. Her mother was from India. And I have a picture. She is a beautiful daughter. And then I said, God gave me a child.

And then through my reading and through my thinking, I

said, yeah, you have to forgive. It took me a time. It was a few years ago, when Hirohito was dying, and I was thinking about it, and I thought, I forgive him, and let him go to heaven with my forgiveness. Now I have a good feeling about it. I have forgiven the Japanese people.

And I saw the picture of the new emperor and empress, and I got the vibes, yes, they also want to have peace. The new emperor said, we want to have a time of peace and working together. And I said, yeah, we have to start from somewhere. If you don't start from somewhere, you stay hating and feeling it.

And then I did something my husband doesn't know about. Because he'd say you are ridiculous. But I tore up all the documentation I had from the camp, everything, and I throw it in the garbage. I thought, if I talk, I talk, and I tell what I have to tell. But I don't want to have it in my home anymore. I had a painting that reminded me of when I went in the camp and out of the camp, and I gave it away. So, I said, I start free. Now I'm really free.

Because my first freedom -- and I want to emphasize this -- is through America, and I'm very thankful to America. And I think that is underestimated. And that is what hurted me so many times every year when they talk about Pearl Harbor, they never emphasize about the role of America, that through America peace came in the world, that peace was established again, that life was given back to people.

Life was given back to me, it was given back to my

family, it was given back to my now husband, it was given back to millions of people. And that is so important. Life was given back. We could live in freedom. We were human beings again. And that was what America did. And I will never forget that. And I'm so thankful that I live in the country that liberated me, who give me my life back, that I can live now in this beautiful country.

And I only hope that America always will have the courage to bring life back and respect human beings. Because they did that. And I hope they always will do that. Because that is the power of America. And you must not underestimate that. That is the main power of America. Not all the the nuclear missiles, but the real human beings, the humanity. That is what I want to say.

Q. Okay.

A. So that was my story, the whole story.

Q. Thank you very much.

A. Okay. Now, it is about the same as what is on the tape. Some things are different, but is also on the tape.

Q. The tape in the Holocaust Center here?

A. Yes, when I talk in schools. Also videotape.

Q. What date was that, approximately?

A. That was in April last year.

Q. April '88?

A. Yeah. Also tape from my husband. We talked for the same school, Galt, was from Galt.

So there we did a whole ceremony, with candles. I

lighted candles for the American soldiers.

There was one boy, I said, you have to come, because he looks like my liberator. And it was a tall boy with freckles and red hair. And I remembered that soldier what came there, because he was so different from the Japanese. And I say, if I see your face I see my liberator. You have to light a candle. He was 13 years old.

Q. Did your parents recover?

A. They recovered in a way. But you always have your scars, inside the most, and some outside.

What I want to say is that, in the war, kids are the biggest victim, because kids can't defend themselves. They take away a part of the children, what is very important for their development as an adult. If you take that away, you miss a lot as an adult. It is like a foundation. And if you take a part away from the foundation, the home that is built on it is not stable. In every age of a child till they are an adult, the stages are very important for a normal house of development.

So for me were four years stolen. I could not be that child I was supposed to be. In the camp I was old. Very old. And emotionally I'm very hurt. Physically, inside, and emotionally. Because I had not a normal life.

I had my mother around me, but it was not my mother, what she would be in a normal life. You didn't know what family life was. The hurting, the fears, the terrible fear, the insecurity, is what you now have to get rid of.

That's also what my husband Eddy had in his teenage

years. And that is so terrible, in your teenage years, when you focus on an adult and you see in the adult a bad example. In the camps your example was how a guard acts and talks. And that makes an impression in the mind of the teenage children. And then you get the after-reactions. You get after-reactions when you are an adult that are reflections from the impressions in the camp and that are reflections from the guards in the camps. And you often act that out when you are an adult.

Q. So for the imprisoned teenagers the guard becomes the role models.

A. The role models, yeah. And that is terrible. Because you are searched, you are brainwashed, and your mind is in a stage that is open for everything because you have a young, open, clear mind. But your mind, your personality, is not wholly developed. So you can't sift out things, you can't reason things. You think it in a childish way. And you have no guidance because the guidance is not there. So you are impressed with things, with wrong things. And that are things you have to fight as an adult.

And therefore, in every war, everywhere in the world, the children are the biggest victims. And they underestimate that when after the war it was always, "She was a kid. What do they know? They were only kids." They don't realize it, but a kid is the most hurt. As an adult you can protect yourself in a way because you have developed a base. And that is what I want to make clear.

Q. Thank you again.

A. Also, from the Japanese side, I want to say that the Japanese children were in a way victims too. But a child's experiences in a war are terrible. So that's what I want to say.

Q. Okay.

A. Okay. That was my talk. Thank you so much. I hope she can do something with it.

Q. Yeah.

A. We lived by my aunt, a sister to my mother. She was a sweetheart. She opened her home to us. But my father wanted to set up his family, his business, again. So after six months my father went back to Indonesia, while he was sick, to build up his business there.

My mother was alone with three kids and got a miscarriage from the fifth baby. And her health was not well. So you needed a recovery, mentally and physically, from everything. So it was very hard not to live in a home and not to have the support of your husband. And my father was alone and had not the support of his family, his wife.

After two years, in 1949, my father, an architect, got sick, and then my mother went back to Indonesia with the two youngest children, my brother and my sister, and my eldest brother and myself had to stay behind. And we were put in a convent school by nuns. And for me that was the worst thing what you ever could have done at that time to me, also, because taken away again, locked in again, it was for me a second concentration camp, to keep rules, not have a family life, away

from your father and mother. And you got your education, but not the love, the care, the security. You were not yet recovered from the camp. And then I had to experience that.

After awhile my sister was sent back and went to the convent school. And by that time the mother of a friend took care of me during the vacations. But you had not a normal family life.

My father worked hard to build up business, and he succeeded in it. Then my youngest brother was sent back. And once in a while my father and my mother came for a visit for a few weeks. But you didn't have the relationship. So our whole family was scattered. I didn't know what a mother was, what a father was. And my father and mother didn't know what we were. Then you had a father and mother, they knew they had children, but they didn't know the children. We didn't know our parents. So we were a family of strangers. And that affected us our whole life. That was very, very emotional. Very much.

My father got a lot of heart attacks. Then he was kicked out by Sukarno. He lost his business again, and he had to build up again. He never could as an architect build again. He worked in an office by a friend of his after the war.

My mother tried to get the family together, but we were grown up. When my father came back, I had already a boyfriend, and I studied for a nurse, and I was on my own. And my father thought that I was ten years old when he left me. So that was a big -- it was very difficult. So we married, and we resettled.

And my mother suffered under that and my father suffered

under that and the children suffered under that. So through the war we never had a real family life, what brothers and sisters are. The relationship was damaged in a way. And they couldn't help that. Because they wanted to do everything, to give us what we needed. But the most thing we needed was a family, to live together, even with less money.

And then my father got several heart attacks. And my mother got bone disease on account of the camp. But they lived till they were in their 70s and 80s.

But the worst one off was my brother. He was always nervous, very nervous, and never a happy boy. Because he never had a family life. He had kidney stones when he came out of the camp. And he didn't live with his mother and brother and sisters. So he was always in convent schools. And when he married, he was so happy. His children and wife were everything for him. But through his nervousness he got into accident after accident. And he got one terrible accident when he was 35 years old. And that broke the heart of my father. Because my brother was a half year in a mental institution. The accident made him blind, he was crazy, and paralyzed. And my father couldn't handle that. Six weeks after his death my father got a heart attack and died.

And my sister died last year from cancer. She was 48 years old.

Also, we all have that nervousness, that restlessness, not knowing what is your home. Your family is your possession. And for your own children that's not good, because they feel a

kind of pressure. And you are not free.

I had the same for my daughter. I want to give her everything. Every stuffed animal I saw I bought for her because I never could get a doll, and I want her to have because I didn't have. She had a closet with clothes because to walk without clothes, to have no shoes, I didn't want her to have that. And you protect your children. And that is also not good. Now I can let go, but it is difficult.

Q. You mean overprotected.

A. Yes. I said, okay, Judith (that is my daughter), you go your own way. It is your own life. And now I can let go.

But my sister had the same. And it takes out of you the things that are eating in you. Therefore, I throw all things away which reminded me of the war. I want to get rid of it and start new because I saw for my sister what it did to her.

Q. Yeah.

A. So I have only one brother left, he was the youngest one, who had from all of us the most normal life and came out the most healthy. Does that answer your question?

Q. Yes, it does. Thank you so much.