

De Hes, Betsy

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HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BETSY DE HES

(Interview with BETSY DE HES
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Hi, it's July 19th, 1990. We're in San Francisco with Betsy De Hes.

Q BETSY, LETS START THE DAY YOU WERE BORN, WHAT WAS THE DATE OF YOUR BIRTH?

A April 17, 1910.

Q AND CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR EXACT NAME AND HOW IT'S SPELLED AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

(A I was born in Holland. The last name is d-e capital H-e-s, the first name is Betsy, B-e-t-s-y.

Q AND WHERE IN HOLLAND WERE YOU BORN?

A I was born in the province of (? Freesland) that's the north of Holland.

Q AND WHAT WAS THE TOWN NAME?

A Torredyk, T-o-r-r-e-d-y-k.

Q BETSY, TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, DID YOU HAVE BROTHERS OR SISTERS, WHERE YOU IN A TOWN WITH MANY JEWS, WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE?

A My father was a Rabbi and he was teaching Hebrew and connecting subjects, Cantor and I had three brothers and that--well, that's all.

(Q BETSY, WHAT WERE YOUR BROTHERS' NAMES AND HOW OLD WERE THEY?

A Well, my oldest brother's name was Abraham, the second one Benjamin, the third one Max.

Q AND WHAT WERE YOUR PARENTS' FIRST NAMES?

A My father's name was Moses and my mother's name was Alida, A-l-i-d-a.

Q AND WHAT WAS HER MAIDEN NAME?

A My mother's maiden name was Vamberg, V-a-m-b-e-r-g.

Q TELL ME ABOUT LIFE AT HOME, WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL DID YOU GO TO AND WERE THERE MANY JEWS IN YOUR TOWN?

A We didn't live too long in Torrdyk which is a village. We moved from there to (? Frisingham). I went to the (? Habies) which is-- schooling has changed in Holland, but I finished a five year (? Habies) and studied for chemis analista, which is chemical analyst and here, when I came to America, I graduated from medical analyst, ladies analyst.

Q WHEN DID YOU MOVE TO THE SECOND TOWN?

A Um, about when I was 8 or 9 years old.

Q WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A Well, that was 1918.

Q OKAY, AND HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THAT TOWN?

A Eight years.

Q WAS YOUR FATHER A RABBI, TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE THERE?

A Well, he was a Rabbi and Cantor and teaching and the community and we moved because all the Jewish communities the Jews mostly moved to Amsterdam and so there were not enough people in the school to make it worth while to stay there so that's why we moved from there. We went to-- after eight years in (? Frisingham), we went to (?)

Beringopsome) which is about an hour by train from (? Frisingham), and from there my parents went to Amsterdam and that was the time that we fled from the Nazis.

Q WHEN DID YOU GO TO AMSTERDAM, YOU SAID YOUR PARENTS WENT TO AMSTERDAM DID YOU GO ALSO?

A No, I did not go.

Q WHY NOT?

A Well, I was working at a sugar beet research institute and I stayed there and my parents went to Amsterdam because my oldest brother was living there and my father would enjoy Jewish life more in Amsterdam than he would in (? Beringopsome) and---

Q WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A Well that was in 1942, I think, '41 or '42.

Q BETSY, CAN YOU TELL ME WHEN YOU FIRST WERE AWARE--- WHEN DID ANTISEMITISM START?

A There was very little antisemitism in Holland but, when the war broke out people that were not Jewish were very supportive. There was nothing they could do to help you really, so when I-- after my parents had moved I stayed in (? Beringopsome) and worked in this research institute and gradually our life had changed completely, like we were not supposed to have any non-jewish help at home, we could not travel whenever we wanted, and we couldn't shop whenever we wanted and many things accordingly.

So, gradually things started to become kind of threatening, then when I discovered from different things that happened that I better go and better leave because I did

not-- when I heard the speeches that Hitler made I knew that there was nothing good. I could never expect anything good, so I better save my life and get out of this. So, I was planning to go to Switzerland and there was a road to go to Switzerland through Belgium with the help of different safe houses, but before all this happened I went I left town, (? Beringopsome), and I mailed a card. We didn't have telephone in that time, so I mailed the card to one of my friends from my folk dancing group.

We had a folk dancing group and I was the only Jewish girl and the one couple said, one couple who was very progressive, said since it's getting a little bit bad, be sure to let us know and that's what I did. So, I wrote them a card I think I'd like to go on vacation and make it a kind of didn't sound realistic but so they understood and the next morning she came over and she, and they had an address for me where I could be in hiding until I was ready or until I had the opportunity of going to Switzerland.

So I had a star and I kind of detached that a little bit so that I could remove it very easily and we went to the station, the railroad station, and we were not together, in order to keep things safe, and so my friend had bought a ticket and that was the understanding and I felt some movement in my pocket and she had put it in my pocket and then we both we kept detached and we went in the train for about an hour and then to the town where she was living then we got together.

There was somebody at that--they had an address where I

(could go because it was an old lady who needed some help and she was not so easy to get along with so she couldn't find much Dutch help. So, the two of us got together that way and I stayed there and the connection with the group to go to Switzerland did not work out and the first thing I heard was that one of the safe houses fell through. People were caught and this whole group was caught so actually I was lucky that I hadn't had the chance to go with them. So another opportunity came then and that fell through, so as a matter of fact, I actually stayed from 1942 to 1944 in that house.

I had an unpleasant experience besides all the tension and stress, the old lady died and nobody was home but me and nobody actually knew that I was living there. So I went to the neighbors and I said my aunt is sick, will you please call a doctor. In order-- they didn't know who I was so when the doctor came and actually she died and so all this time, that is the two years, all this time was actually stress day in and day out. It-- if you are in a jail you know when you get out, there you actually never knew when it would end and that was very stressful. Also things happened we heard about other people that were caught and the friend, the couple that saved my life by finding this address for me saved about 30 people.

(He was in a concentration camp in Holland for a year because of his political background, I think it was Communist, and they saved about 30 people because everybody had a friend or a cousin and from all of 30 people there were

(only two survivors. There was one girl who was a nurse in Rotherdam, and I-- so day in and day out there was stress things happened, like one of the members in that family did black market, and so they came to the house and I didn't open the door. I was home alone, I did not open the door but I could see out and later I went-- this person talked to the neighbors. I could hear the story that he wanted to get in touch with the family, so I slept with a bag next to my bed and a big stick and I've always been wondering if I'd be able to use it, but I was always prepared to get out, get out of the house.

(Whenever we were sitting at the dinner table and the door bell rang I was all ready. I had my plate and my fork and my knife and everything out so that I could flee through the back door if somebody would come in through the front door.

(And so I stayed there until 1944 then the allied army pulled up through it came closer and closer and then-- I think that was June 6 when they landed in Normandie. And when we heard that we had a radio-- and that was also dangerous, if you would be caught listening to the British news, they would kill you. The Nazis would kill you, but at least we stayed, we knew a little bit what was going on and even in the last minute when we heard the shooting on the Belgium boarder the papers, the newspapers, still mentioned that the Germans were still winning, but we heard the allied army pulling up and so that was that. That was the time that I spent there and actually this was-- it was very nerve-

racking and especially because Holland was a quiet country. Actually, there haven't been many wars in a long time and the people were not antisemitic.

My father had a very good reputation, especially in (? Frisingham), and when he left there was a flattering article in the paper about him and so we were not used to-- really not used to this and didn't expect any bad things to happen. In 1933 when all this business started in Germany and we got very many Jewish-- German Jews passing through and there is a thing in our town and my father helped them getting across the boarder to Belgium, and so we had many visitors during that time and were more prepared about what was going to happen, but many people in Holland or many Jews, I think, didn't realize.

Many people, the non-Jewish too, couldn't visualize the existence of those concentration camps that we heard about later. There was one thing when I later on I was told by some friends that one hour after I left my town and fled to the other town with my friend the Gestapo was there to pick me up. So, I escaped there by the skin of my teeth. All this after-- the first year when I came here we celebrated my liberation and I thought I would never forget anything about what happened.

Gradually things faded a little bit, but the experience itself really has ruined, I wouldn't say ruined my life because there are many things I am grateful for. It has given it a complete change really.

Q IN WHAT WAY?

(A Well in the first years, I got very much involved in building up my future again. I went back to school, got my-- became a medical analyst and started working. I enjoyed my work and actually, the past was being pushed away kind of. Only after I had got, when I was 55 years old I was able to retire from the university-- I was working at a university. And that was the minute I was 55 years old I took my retirement because I was exhausted mentally and physically and because I had really done everything to build up my future and tried not to think about what had happened.

(Besides that I was lucky to live in San Francisco, which is a cosmopolitan city and I felt at home here right away. The only thing is to built up a circle of friends takes a long time and also the difference in culture is also something that you have to get used to, accept advantages and disadvantages.

Q I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED YOU ESCAPE?

(A The name I have, they still live in Holland. His name is (? Keese Deruiter) and I'll spell that for you. Keese is like Cornealus, it's like an abbreviation, it's (?K-e-e-s) D-e-r-u-i-t-e-r. His wife's name is Julia Deruiter. I still have contact with him. His wife, I'm sorry to say, has Alzheimers disease and I have had contact regularly with them. And of course there is a close contact because if they would not have saved me, I don't know if I would still be here.

(Q BETSY, IN THE BEGINNING YOU MENTIONED FOLK

DANCING SAVED YOUR LIFE, TELL ME THAT STORY.

A Pardon?

Q WHAT WAS THAT STORY?

A Well this Kees and Julie belonged to this group of folk dancers and we used to go to the youth hostile and hired a folk dance teacher so that we would learn new dances. Usually, we spent the weekend there and as matter of fact I still in San Francisco, I still have done a lot of folk dancing there too, only recently I got detached from it.

Q WAS IT THROUGH FOLK DANCING THAT YOU MET?

A Yes, yes I think in that time we were quite idealistic before the war. We used to be abstinent and I think they belonged to the same group of abstinence called JVD, is an abbreviation for Jews for Abstinence. We thought we could improve the world because alcoholism makes a lot of victims-- that actually had nothing to do with the alcohol but we thought that this would, if we would give an example this would be improving the world. So not thinking what was in the future and I think the war time changes a little bit your philosophy, not completely but actually you learn a lot from it and probably are more realistic.

Also, we would belong to a group which was called The International Freedom, I forget a little bit the name, but the purpose was for youth, it was originated in England by an Englishman who got quite involved in it. The purpose was for youth from different countries to spend a vacation together and to get acquainted and also, as a way of preventing war or keeping peace, getting acquainted really. That was life

before the war.

Q BETSY, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BROTHERS AND YOUR PARENTS DURING THE WAR.

A Well, I told you about when the war started that life became a little bit difficult for my parents because we could not keep any help and my parents were not too young any more. We had many people visiting us and so that's why my parents decided to move to Amsterdam. Also, they had contact with my brother Abraham and his wife Millie (? Schooster), a wonderful person. And my other brother Benjamin was living there too, in Amsterdam. Benjamin had very heavy asthma so it was really not-- it was hard for him to keep working.

My brother Abraham was 11 years older than I was and we had a very close family. My brothers and I were very close and that's how-- when I came to San Francisco my youngest brother, Max de Hes, left right at the last minute and came to San Francisco and he sponsored me. He was married and had a family and that's where I spent my first 9 months. I think getting on my feet again, which was not very easy, was very difficult so--

Q AND WHAT ABOUT-- YOU HAD THREE BROTHERS DID YOU SAY?

A Correct.

Q SO YOU HAD-- WHAT HAPPENED TO ABRAHAM?

A My parents and Abraham and Benjamin-- Abraham and his wife Millie and my parents they all were taken in and died in Auschwitz.

Q TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

A Well, the first thing I did when-- when the north of Holland was liberated, free, I wrote a letter to the-- I contacted the Red Cross and I have a letter with their names in and when they died and I-- that's how you would trace some of the people like some friends and some relatives. It was very difficult and I remember the first time I went to Amsterdam, there was no transportation so you had to hitch-hike or take your bicycle. I took my bicycle, of course, the tires are not too good any more, they put a piece of string around the bicycles and I then could hitch-hike on a truck with my bicycle and gradually I was able to reach Amsterdam and then I found out about some very close friends that had survived. Actually, the whole experience of the tension and the stress during the war time take a lot out of you and it takes many years before you really can function. You never forget really, but life goes on as I said before. So you don't forget what happened but you-- the main thing is to think positive and to accept and evaluate the positive things in life. Also, you are aware of the fact that actually this life right now is a present you haven't-- you could have been dead easily and so you try to, you appreciate things more too, that's another factor and so I have a rather cheerful nature. Well that should I say-- you like to do the best you can and appreciate what you have. You don't forget the past but keep trying to keep positive and have the better value. Learn a better value in life and appreciation of things that I really feel right now that actually the only problem that you have is your health, as long as you keep your health I

think that is the only major problem that you have and that I'm very lucky about that I can function.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR THIRD BROTHER?

A Pardon?

Q YOUR THIRD BROTHER, WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

A They all died in Auschwitz. They went to one concentration camp in Holland first, (? Vestaburg), and that's where most of my relatives were. Also, I got a list of relatives that died in the Jewish (?majam) in Amsterdam, where they had it in a computer so they all probably met in (? Vestaburg), the Dutch concentration camp, and got transported to Auschwitz that way.

Q NOW, YOU SAID YOU SENT A LETTER TO THE RED CROSS, DID THEY SEND YOU A LETTER BACK?

A Yes, they sent a letter back with the names, my parents and my two brothers, my sister-in-law and the date that they died. My oldest brother probably died a little bit later because he was more, I guess they put him to work or something but, the others, I think died right a way after.

Q WHEN WERE THEY DEPORTED, DO YOU KNOW?

A Yes, in '42, 1942.

Q AND DO YOU STILL HAVE THAT LETTER, DID YOU BRING IT WITH YOU TODAY BY ANY CHANCE?

A No.

Q WE MIGHT CALL YOU AND ASK YOU IF WE CAN PUT THAT ON THE VIDEO TAPE ALSO.

A I also have a picture that I later on, got through in front of my sister-in-law, in which my parents, my father

is playing chess with my sister-in-law and you can see the yellow star on their shirt and my mother was knitting and she looked very peaceful and a non-Jewish friend of my sister-in-law was sitting there and that was during the war time, but in that time my brothers, two brothers had left already. What they did, I think, I'm not quite sure about that but, what they did is they pulled up bridges in Amsterdam and got hold of the Jews in that way and lined them up, but I was not in Amsterdam so I-- that is just hearsay.

Q LET'S SEE, COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT-- YOU SAID EVERY DAY THERE WAS TENSION DURING THE WAR?

A Yeah, when I was in hiding every day there was something, something happened.

Q CAN YOU TELL ME SOME SPECIFIC THINGS THAT HAPPENED?

A Yes, I mentioned something, I think before that somebody from the (? haig) or who did black market business contacted one family member and wanted to do probably some business, I don't know and he saw me because they wanted me to be there when he was having dinner there and I didn't like that because I felt it was very dangerous for him to see me and because nobody actually knew where I was and the way I-- so he left the next day and he stayed over night and he left the next day so after he left, for a whole week I went to sleep with a, like I said, a big metal bar next to my bed and the door open and sleep with one ear listening to the sounds during the night and later on that calmed down again. When nothing happened I felt I had survived that part, also some

times somebody was being caught from that group of 30, roughly about 30 people that were saved by my friends Kees Deruiter and Julie and there was a moment when they said, you better move some place else so for a few nights I came to their house or to some other safe house until I could return again. One time I had to go through a forest and I went by myself that time because I was familiar with this town and close by, there was a little restaurant where the Nazis were staying so it was kind of dangerous to walk around there. It was dark but I was pretty alert and I was able to get where I wanted to go, where I had to go and so things happened.

Also, to stay in the house for a few years without anything anything happening, that was pleasant and the tension of not knowing if you would be alive the next day had it's toll, but I was lucky and it's after all those years it's really very difficult to fight to remember all of the details, only the high points. One time I had some, had to go to the

dentist, of course you couldn't just go to the dentist dentist, of course you couldn't just go like you do now, and so my friend who found me this address, Kees Deruiter, found a dentist who was reliable and he took care of me. We had to go to the street during the black out and so on the back of his bicycle he took me there. That was taken care of, I think I had an abscessed tooth or something, so off and on this kind of thing happened. One thing I can remember is that all we could talk about was food. There was very little food and everything was rationed and I had one friend who took care of my ration cards. He was working in city hall

(and that was also one of the group of the people that and that was also one of the group people that were abstinent, we had the group that were doing hiking together and he stole my the ration card so that I did not have to buy food in the black market, so that was one of the experiences too. He didn't even know where I was, only the person who found me this address, he and his wife knew where I was otherwise nobody. Nobody because you don't, you wanted to keep things as safe as possible and some times people talk without knowing.

(Like people in the war that had the north of Holland, they called little Israel and there were many Jews hidden there. Some of my friends that I found back were there too, now like for example if people, a couple had too much garbage on the street standing, the neighbors were aware of it. Why do they have so much garbage? That was one of the reasons why some of the groups were taken, were caught. So I don't know what you are more interested in.

Q I HAVE A FEW MORE QUESTIONS.

A Yeah.

Q DID THE WOMAN-- DID THE WOMAN WHERE YOU STAYED, DID SHE KNOW YOU WERE JEWISH?

A Oh yeah, sure, yeah.

Q AND WHAT WAS HER NAME?

A I forgot.

Q OKAY.

(A It was a little bit hard because I had never done any cooking at home and some how, I don't know why, I had put

a little cookbook in my handbag and I used that to help. She had diabetes and she would have blinds and so she used to say I smell something this or that. Maybe it's done because to I had to cook on a stove that did not have--that had coal and when nobody was home and I had to keep the stove going and I had to take one piece of coal at the time and put it in there so I would not make any noise for the neighbors next door. We had to be very careful not to have anybody know that I was in the house.

As a matter of fact, if somebody was visiting, then I was right away went to the kitchen and in the kitchen, in the window I put a newspaper, a little piece of paper I tore up so that I could open it up and look through that part so that was in the exit of the front door so I always knew who was coming and what was coming. When the war was over so I said well, Mr. so and so or Mrs. so and so. How do you know our name or how do you know us and I said well, I knew you a long time for the few years that I was there but it was very difficult.

Besides that I'm--it was a different life for me because I was working in research institute and studying and then I had to do the cooking and cleaning, no vacuum cleaner, of course, and just-- also they had chickens and I had to feed the chickens and never, I've never held a chicken, that was new. They had to be in there in the place where they were spending the night, so sometimes I had to hold one of the chickens and take care of that.

What we did during the war time, what those people did

is in was in order to get some food they were bartering and like I remember having unraveled one cotton bed spread and then wound it up and made it very useable again as thread and that was traded or exchanged or whatever, for butter or cheese or what ever. That's how you got around.

During the war time too, when I was still, from 1940 to 1942 I was still working and the first thing that-- one of the things that happened was we had, the Jews, had to trade, send in their radio or so they had to send in copper and I put-- I was still living with my parents and I didn't want to scare them so I did it on my own and I put all the copper and one kettle, a big copper kettle, in a copper kettle that we used for the laundry, I think, and then one of the persons I worked with was very active. His father was killed in the war, in 1940, and he said give it to me and I'll take care of it, so I put everything in there and I had the menorah in it and suddenly I was thinking suddenly, I don't know why, but I better not put that in so I put the rest of all the copper and pewter in there. The next day he came and picked it up and he also had his own copper and pewter and things that they had to trade in and was hiding it somewhere in the forest. I think he put it in the soil or something like that and that was also one of my close friends. Later on the same thing happened with the bicycle, you had to turn in the bicycles and so in order not to he dismantle the bicycle, took the good things off and put the bad things on so that we followed the order, but it was still not a very good bicycle that we turned in.

Things like that happened and those were the minor things.

Q WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIG THINGS?

A The big thing was going into hiding and when I went to that town-- I think I am telling it a little bit jumping around because this is out of the year, how many years have gone over it.

They took me over-- my friend Keese took me over to the address where I was in hiding and then I was in the house, it was dark and I, when I went to my room, they took me to my room I didn't know what was in the room because it was dark and, of course, there was a black out and that the first time that I started to-- I couldn't really breath. I had a lump in my throat or something, those were just some of the things that you didn't know, where you were. The hiding time was the war time then in 1942.

The first time after the invasion of Normandie, when the allied army came in north up to Holland and they tried to make a corridor to (? Arnam) and cut off, I think, I don't know. In any case they tried to get into Holland and they were-- that book that is written, A Bridge Too Far, I don't know if you know that it describes the whole story. They were actually too late and the Germans had a chance to pull up and that all fell through and I saw the gliders coming over, that were over, I was in (? Bravand) and (? Bragdar) and landed near (? Arnam) and I thought that was the liberation but it wasn't. In any case the south of Holland was liberated before the north and so I was liberated I think

in 1944, the end in October 1944.

Q I WANTED TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT HIDING,
DID YOU CHANGE YOUR NAME?

A Pardon?

Q DID YOU CHANGE YOUR NAME?

A Yes, yes.

Q TELL ME WHAT YOU HAD TO DO TO CHANGE IT.

A Well, I had false papers, I still stayed in the house in order not-- to keep as safe as possible. I very seldom left the house but I had false papers because I was planning to go to Switzerland and it never happened, but not withstanding I had false papers.

I very seldom went out of the house, only some times when I said, Oh, I can't stand it any longer! Then we went just for a little walk close by and we had to be very careful because of this group of Germans that were standing, that were living in this restaurant not too far away. The place where I was staying was in the suburb of (? Bragdar) and they had-- it was actually on the outside of the town but we had to be very careful and always be aware. Always, you had to be aware that you could not just do what you wanted to do. Also, you had to be aware of that you could be picked up. Sometimes it was just so rough to be at home all the time that very seldom, once in a while then we just stayed close to the house, but we went out for a little walk.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR NAME?

A Pardon?

Q WHAT WAS YOUR NAME?

A I don't know what the last name but the first name was Jo, J-o, Johanna.

Q FOR YOU?

A Yes.

Q OKAY, WHEN YOU WERE IN THE HOUSE, DID YOU SLEEP IN A REGULAR ROOM OR DID YOU HAVE A HIDDEN ROOM?

A No, I had my own bedroom, a regular bedroom. I think, I don't know but a cellar, no I don't know.

Q DO YOU STILL HAVE THE COOKBOOK THAT YOU USED?

A My what?

Q YOUR COOKBOOK?

A Yes.

Q GOOD, WE WANT TO TAKE A PICTURE OF THAT, WE'LL CALL YOU.

A Yeah.

Q AND DO YOU STILL HAVE YOUR FALSE PAPERS?

A No, no but I had an photograph when after the liberation I got an I kept I-- my papers were lost of course and I got an identification card with my photo on it and I think look like my own grandmother right after the war and I still have that.

Q GOOD. WHAT ABOUT LIBERATION DAY, THE DAY YOU WERE LIBERATED, WHAT HAPPENED. TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING BEFORE?

A Well, what happened before like I said, we had a radio and so we knew a little-- no, we heard the shooting in Belgium because we were close to the Belgium border and (?Braidar) is not too far away so we knew that the army was

(pulling up, getting closer when they got very close and we heard this shooting came in town. The night before some Germans came and also they (?stent) and were in the house and had dinner there or something and that scared me to no end. I thought-- I was afraid that something would happen but thank heavens they were too busy.

They put dynamite on a bridge close to the house where I was. The house where I was was close to a bridge and they put dynamite under that bridge and they stayed in the house where I was hiding. That was very scary because I didn't know if they would realize if I were Jewish or not. I acted just as if nothing was happening, so then the night after they blew up the bridge and the bridge was hangs about, something like that (hand gesture) and then the allied people came in.

(At that time the allied army and when they came I was hanging out of the window and I was so happy that I ran out of the house and was-- I think it was a Canadian or a Polish fellow and he was very tall and I couldn't reach him but I put my arms around him and kissed him because he didn't-- the shooting didn't bother me-- the shooting was not important, that came closer and closer but the fact of liberation that was, I think, that is the most exhilarating feeling that you can live. That you can have your own life again and that you can-- there is no danger, no normal danger, threatening so that was a liberation day then.

(The allied army came into town and I was in-- I don't know how you call it--a commandant or something and I went

over to see him and told him that I had been in hiding and that I would like to contact my brother in San Francisco and could you help me? And he said, "You waited so long, you can wait a little longer" and I but I found, I think, a Canadian soldier and I asked him to try to write a-- I wrote a letter and that over Canada it came to my brother's place.

In order not to forget where he was living I had saved a stamp with the name Jefferson on it. He was living on Jefferson street here in San Francisco and it reached him and that's how I got in contact with my brother. That was the only survivor because I already had found out that the rest of my family was all gone and it's a very strange feeling to be a member of a family and suddenly there you are by yourself. I was happy that at least my brother and his family had survived and that I was able to make contact with them and that's how I came later on to San Francisco.

I had to wait about half a year before I could contact the American Consulate in (? Andberg) and get my papers for-- I got my papers to go to immigrate in America then the problem came. That day when I got my papers there was a movie going, San Francisco, with Janet Mc Donald, so I saw that movie later which I thought was appropriate. Then I had the problem of finding transportation to America because there was hardly any traffic but I found a freighter that had 14 passengers and there were two nuns and two people from the Paganini string quartet and ten women in one cabin. That was kind of rough because I get seasick. I had my violin, saved my violin, somehow I had taken them out my house and left it

(with friends and on board they played violin on my music and that was a good, good, good point.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE DATE THAT YOU WERE LIBERATED?

A Yes. That was in October 1944, I don't know exactly which date in October, I forgot it.

Q AND THE STAMP THAT YOU HAD, THE JEFFERSON STAMP, DO YOU STILL HAVE IT?

A No I don't think so, no.

Q DID YOU GO THROUGH NEW YORK, WHERE DID THE FREIGHTER GO?

(A The freighter went to New York and I had-- I took because I was on a ship I took somebody one of the doctor, Dutch doctor, had fled from the Nazis and had arrived in New York during the war time. His sister who was still in Holland asked me if I would take the microscope along so I did. I brought the microscope over but of course I didn't know this doctor so I somehow I managed-- I met him. He came to the ship and I stayed with them a few days and a very interesting thing happened there.

(He had patients coming to his house and here I was going through all this fighting the Nazis and something happened that really impressed me. He came up stairs and he said to his wife guess what just happened. I had this patient coming in and she was already outside and suddenly I see she lost her purse and I ran outside and I gave her the purse and she said "Well, I'm glad I don't have a Jewish doctor." That was kind of a funny experience that impressed me.

(Then another thing happened, people in the north Holland

really died of hunger and they pulled out the wood from the street car tracks in order to have something to burn and have some heat. In Holland, especially the north, gets very cold and I came one of my aunts who was living in New York took me to a restaurant in New York and I saw all that food that people didn't eat and that was really that was wasted. That had quite an impression on me too.

So then I took-- from New York after I stayed there for about five days I took the train from New York to Oakland and from Oakland I took the ferry over and that's when I met my brother, which was my brother and his family, and two daughters were still eight and ten years old and it was a happy meeting.

I very seldom talk about all this because in the first, place I want to look in the future and in the second place, it's very difficult form people who have not experienced this-- to get an idea or to understand and I do not blame them for it because I probably would have felt the same way if I would not have experienced it-- so, it's very hard to actually to shake it all off and it's hard to, like I said before, to think positively and evaluate what's important.

Q WHEN YOU GOT TO SAN FRANCISCO, YOU MENTIONED YOU WENT BACK TO SCHOOL ONCE. YOU GOT HERE, HOW WAS YOUR ENGLISH HOW DID YOU GO--

A Well, my English was not bad because I had studied English in Holland but, there were still expressions that, of course, I didn't know but I did pretty good. I had to do job hunting again and at first it was very difficult to get in my

own field again and I found a job and because I was working in Holland in sugar beet research field doing analytical chemistry I found a job at the sugar beet in Woodland factory and I went over there but it wasn't-- I couldn't take it, it was not-- nobody talks to you, it was heat and also it was too lonely so I went back to San Francisco then I stayed with my brother during that time then I got a temporary job is not in my own field, like in cancer research assisting and in places working on a calculating machine.

In another working in the basement of a department store selling, which was not really my field and I wasn't very good at it. I got a better job, I was in one job do you still want to hear about that? And that was actually not in my own field, it was imitating--imitating some food product. It was actually more a job for a dietitian but in this case I finished it. It was supposed to take three months and I finished it in six weeks, so what was the result, I was fired. They didn't need me any more, but the good part was that just in that time in the lunch hour I had an appointment with the American Chemical Society and I found a much better job in a testing laboratory which was exactly in my field. And so I said, oh, now I'm going to have to tell them that I'm going to quit and I felt a little embarrassed about it. I was called into the office of the chief chemist, I was fired but it didn't matter because I didn't-- I had the other job.

That was a job that was very interesting, it was something I had worked in. The food and drugs too, testing

foods mostly and this was a little bit similar testing whatever came in this testing laboratory. That job did not last because that director got more interested in me than I was planning to get, I mean, personal interest so that was the end of that job. The pretty part is that when i was staying with my brother the kids were little and I said every time I get a new job I'll give you a present so they didn't mind. When are you going to move again, and so I got tired of moving around and wanted to settle down and that's when I went back to school and so I took all my different subjects and did an exam of the department of public health in Berkeley and got my license in medical technologies.

After that was no problem, I could get jobs anywhere and so I worked in a hospital and I didn't like routine work really, so I was asked-- somebody asked me at the university medical center and I found a job there and researched. That was the last--and I got retired from that. I really enjoyed that. That was interesting work and it was not routine and life on campus was stimulating and so after my retirement I did a few temporary jobs and that was the end of my working.

When I retired at 55 I had to take a rest, stop from all that had happened to me I really was exhausted. They kept the job open for about three months for me to come back, but I just couldn't take that. It was, that was enough.

Q WHAT YEAR DID YOU RETIRE?

A I retired in '65, I think 1965.

Q AND YOU STAYED IN THIS AREA SINCE THEN?

A Yes, I stayed in San Francisco and then I-- after

two years that I was retired then I was, I had a job for a temporary job and after that was through I had a temporary job some place else so I don't know what that what year that was but, so that is a little bit outline an abstract, I would say and it's a little bit confused that it's not regularly discussed. It's kind of confused because that's-- things happen when you talk about it, you think about other things that come up and actually I so not like this.

I feel that it should be known for the people that are living in the future so that they know it happened and what happened and should be kept alive that way and the reason why I'm talking about this.

Q I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU ABOUT NOW, AFTER THE WAR AND ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SINCE THE WAR DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE A WAY OF LIKING AT THE WORLD, A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE THAT WAS INFLUENCED BY THE WAR?

A Philosophy of life?

Q YOUR ATTITUDE?

A Oh, my attitude. Oh, definitely, definitely, like I said, yes after the first-- after you go through the first painful memory of everything that happened, you like I said, when the liberation came that was the most exhilarating feeling that you have. I think you could never repeat that, this is the most exhilarating feeling to be free again and to, like I said, I had a lump in my throat when I was in hiding and I never new when is the end coming and that feeling that feeling was from the liberation. I will never forget that.

What was the other-- the philosophy of life right? Now I think little, little things disappear and there are little problems you get over faster than you would have otherwise. I was like I said, I was close to my brothers, I was the youngest and I had a very peaceful actually, a peaceful life and I was probably a little bit spoiled. Then the cruel reality came which I had to deal with and I did, like I said, from the group that survived was only this one girl and I otherwise lots of people that were in hiding were taken did not make it, look at the book by Anna Frank, and so after I went through that nothing can be as bad that can--there have been some very bad parts in my first years that I was living in San Francisco and had to deal with reality there and adjustment to a different culture and other problems that has been very, very hard, very hard.

As a matter of fact, I remember walking the street and sitting in a very cheap restaurant because I didn't have any money too and crying and not being able to stop it because all the problems that I had to deal with in that time but I think you become stronger and like I said, you realize what is important and you also you, I mean, it doesn't pay to be bitter because then you ruin the present of your life. I think you have a different philosophy, your less naive and, like I said, real problems--the only problem is your health and the rest is you can deal with.

Q BETSY, WHAT ABOUT RELIGION, DID THE WAR MAKE YOU MORE RELIGIOUS, LESS RELIGIOUS, DO YOU FEEL THERE IS A GOD? WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT GOD AND RELIGION?

A No, I don't believe in a God and I am not religious. I have never been religious, and I can not see that if there would be a God how that could happen, how that the holocaust could happen and people being suffer, still not people that still suffer strife, it sometimes are still suffering. I could not believe that, besides, as I said, I am more realistic and the I'm not bitter, not withstanding.

It has changed my life quite a bit and years have passed because I-- well I don't know how to say it. No, I am pretty optimistic and because I'm, like I said, I know what is important but I still have feelings but these things can upset you but you get over it faster. If I would not have been realistic I probably would not do this interview because I don't really like to talk about it. I like to forget and I find this very important for other people to know my philosophy about a God. I do not believe in a God, in religion and or in life after death. To me I have no idea about this and I think you become a little bit more aware and well, I don't know how to really how to express it you-- well, you are greatful for, you're greatful for good things that are happening and bad things that are happening you get over it faster, that is I try to get the positive faith I still have nightmares off and on not too often, but I still think sometimes it happens.

Q WHAT ABOUT THE POLITICS OF TODAY'S GERMANY, REUNIFICATION, DOES THAT-- WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

A You mean in Germany, I think I worry about that, I think, I hope for the best but and maybe the youth in Germany

(has learned something they-- like it was not all Germans that were that way, but I don't know how much they learned in school about it or how much they know about it, but I can only say, I hope for the best and that doesn't happen. It happened twice that the war broke out caused by Germany. Maybe the rest of the world should be very aware of it and that's all I can say.

Q AND WHAT DID ISRAEL-- WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS TOWARDS ISRAEL?

(A I have been in Israel twice, I have friends in the (?kibbutz) and I travel a little bit before the 6 day war. My friends are not alive any more and I found I found it very stimulating to be there. I was there for three weeks and I find it very interesting. I was-- went to-- what is the institute near Tel Aviv? The (? Hein Weisterman Institute) where they have the most current research going on. I found that very interesting and the same day I was in the (? Gailay) where the women walk with their something carrying on their head more, a more primitive way.

(This was many years ago and but, I would not want to live in Israel. I wouldn't want to live in Israel because not withstanding, I can't understand it. I found the people a little bit-- not everybody-- too chauvinistic. I like everything in Israel than anywhere else in the world and I can understand that because they had to struggle in order to make Israel be there and to create a country and I admire this. The way people that have been fighting for to get it and I still am happy I- that Israel is there but I, as a

person, I like people from all kinds of directions. I do not like just one group, I think that's how I thank my life to, because I was the only Jewish girl in this group of folk dancers but that's a personal, personal idea.

Q BETSY, I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION FOR YOU--

A Pardon?

Q I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION AND THAT IS, DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL PEOPLE AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OR DESIRE EITHER FOR YOURSELF OR AMERICA OR JEWS OR THE WORLD. SOMETHING THAT YOU HOPE THE FUTURE WILL BRING?

A Peace, and it looks a little bit better and-- but war is a horrible. I saw it coming in the town where I was and it's terrible. I heard the shooting and as a matter of fact, my supervisor was hit by a granite, he was not Jewish but he was hit by a granite and he was killed, his and three small children, his wife and three small children but I can not find any other way like peace and health. A good health people have the opportunity of having good medicine and good-- that's why I like to work in the medical research, because that was it's positive, constructive work and I found that I was I did not get financial-- didn't give a big salary but it gave a good feeling of being involved in constructive work. That I think is the best I can do.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE? I'VE ASKED EVERYTHING THAT I COULD THINK OF, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD OR ANY STORIES THAT YOU THOUGHT OF WHILE WE WERE TALKING?

A Well, the most important part of this thing is, I

think, the fact that I left, fled home and went to that other town with my friend then I escaped that an hour after I had escaped that the Gestapo was there to pick me up. That kind of gave you a shock when you hear that.

The other part is when I found out that my family was in Amsterdam, I sent this one friend, Julie Deruiter, over with the package with food for them and they were already gone and that was also a shock. At that time, I knew that they were not there any more but, well, I don't know what to end to this, you know, gradually your life develops again and I've been very lucky and worked hard and I and things are smooth now and I'm lucky that I have it.

I know some people want to talk about keep on talking about it and that's their way of feeling of listening, I don't feel that way. I feel like get involved in here and I-- in my retirement I got involved in music quite a bit. I play the violin and I used to play chamber music and I don't do that any more but I got involved in another hobby and I got involved in art quite a bit I've been doing enameling which is-- and that way I got more and more involved in and I do that for a hobby but I also know people that have to do it for a living and I find it stimulating. I find it-- I find art the more I learn about it the more stimulating I think it becomes. That's it when your working you don't have time really to do all that so that is the positive side now which I have been experiencing and it's kind of, I find creating is a positive side in life too. I don't no how much of an artist I am. I can see things I can see beauty and nature

and beauty in art and I don't know how much I can-- I have made things people think are very nice and that is the kind of an positive thing that I think is very important. That's my life right now, also, I like nature, I like being outdoors and music art and museums and that's, that's about it.

Q THANK YOU BETSY, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. YOUR STORY IS A REAL IMPORTANT, REAL IMPORTANT ADDITION TO THE ARCHIVES AND THANK YOU--

A Your welcome. That was my purpose, I like I said, I really don't like to talk about it. I hardly ever talk about it to anybody and but this is very important that's why I sacrificed my own feelings for--

Q WELL, WE ALL APPRECIATE IT AND MANY PEOPLE IN THE FUTURE WILL BE GLAD YOU DID.

A Thank you.

Q So, thank you.

De Hes, Betsy
Version 2

1990 July 19

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BETSY de HES

Interview with Betsy de Hes
Holocaust Oral History Project
Date: July 19, 1990
Place: San Francisco
Interviewer: Anne Feibelman
Transcriber: Connie Parker
2nd Typing/Revisions: Kim Ecclesine

Hi, it's July 19th, 1990. We're in San Francisco with Betsy de Hes.

Q: BETSY, LET'S START THE DAY YOU WERE BORN, WHAT WAS THE DATE OF YOUR BIRTH?

A: April 17, 1910.

Q: AND CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR EXACT NAME AND HOW IT'S SPELLED, AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

A: I was born in Holland. The last name is d-e capital H-e-s, the first name is Betsy, B-e-t-s-y.

Q: AND WHERE IN HOLLAND WERE YOU BORN?

A: I was born in the province of Friesland, that's in the north of Holland.

Q: AND WHAT WAS THE TOWN NAME?

A: Gorredyk.

Q: BETSY, TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, DID YOU HAVE BROTHERS OR SISTERS? WERE YOU IN A TOWN WITH MANY JEWS? WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE?

A: My father was a Rabbi and he was teaching Hebrew and connecting subjects, Cantor, and I had three brothers that--well, that's all.

Q: BETSY, WHAT WERE YOUR BROTHERS' NAMES AND HOW OLD WERE THEY?

A: Well, my oldest brother's name was Abraham, the second one Benjamin, the third one Max.

Q: AND WHAT WERE YOUR PARENTS' FIRST NAMES?

A: My father's name was Mozes and my mother's name was Alida.

Q: AND WHAT WAS HER MAIDEN NAME?

A: My mother's maiden name was van Berg.

Q: TELL ME ABOUT LIFE AT HOME, WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL DID YOU GO TO AND WERE THERE MANY JEWS IN YOUR TOWN?

A: I was 8 or 9 years old when we moved from Gorredyk to Vlissingen (province Zeeland), and after 8 years we moved to Bergen op Zoom. In Vlissingen I went after Grammar School to 5 year "Hogere Burgesschool" (HBS) and finished the last 2 years in Bergen op Zoom. After 5 years at HBS I studied Chemistry and graduated as a Chemical Analyst. When I came to America, I studied and graduated as a Medical Analyst.

Q: WHEN DID YOU MOVE FROM GORREDYK?

A: When I was 8 or 9 years old.

Q: WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A: Well, that was 1918 or 1919.

Q: OKAY, AND HOW LONG WERE YOU IN VLISSINGEN?

A: Eight years.

Q: WAS YOUR FATHER A RABBI, TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE THERE?

A: Well, he was a Rabbi and Cantor and was teaching Jewish schoolchildren in the community. We moved twice, because in the communities the Jews mostly moved to Amsterdam and so a large Jewish community became too small and there were not enough people to make it worth while to stay there, so that's why we moved from there. After eight years in Vlissingen, we went to Bergen op Zoom, close to the Belgian border, which is about an hour by train from Vlissingen. From Bergen op Zoom my parents went to Amsterdam. That was the time that we fled from the Nazis.

We never experienced anti-Semitism in Holland before the war. I always remember

that my father and 2 other men belonged to a PTA. My father, an orthodox rabbi, was secretary, the president was a laborer, self-educated and very bright, and the treasurer was a college teacher. Both were atheist, however they got along fine and respecting each other.

Q: WHEN DID YOU GO TO AMSTERDAM, YOU SAID YOUR PARENTS WENT TO AMSTERDAM, DID YOU GO ALSO?

A: No, I did not go.

Q: WHY NOT?

A: Well, I was working at a sugar beet research institute and I stayed there and my parents went to Amsterdam because my oldest brother was living there and my father would enjoy Jewish life more in Amsterdam.

Q: WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A: Well, that was in 1942, I think, '41 or '42.

Q: BETSY, CAN YOU TELL ME WHEN YOU FIRST WERE AWARE -- WHEN DID ANTI-SEMITISM START?

A: There was very little anti-semitism in Holland, but when the war broke out, people that were not Jewish were very supportive. There was nothing they could do to help you really, so when I -- after my parents had moved I stayed in Bergen op Zoom and worked in this research institute and gradually our life had changed completely, like we were not supposed to have any non-Jewish help at home, we could not travel whenever we wanted, and we couldn't shop whenever we wanted, and many things accordingly. On the trains, Jews were not allowed to sit if non-Jews were standing. However, non-Jews usually gave their seat to standing Jews. (rebellious gesture.)

So, gradually things started to become kind of threatening, then, when I discovered from different things that happened, that I better go and better leave, because I did not -- when I heard the speeches that Hitler made I knew that there was nothing good to come. I could never expect anything good, so I better save my life and get out of this. So, I was planning to go to Switzerland, and there was a road to go to Switzerland through Belgium

with the help of different safe houses, but before all this happened I left town, Bergen op Zoom, and I mailed a card. We didn't have a telephone in that time, so I mailed a card to one of my friends from my folk dancing group.

We had a folk dancing group and I was the only Jewish girl. One couple, Julie and Kees, who were very progressive, Kees was a communist, said when it's getting a little bit bad, be sure to let us know and that's what I did. So, I wrote them a card "I think I'd like to go on vacation"

and made it kind of sound realistic, but they understood and the next morning Julie came over, and they had an address for me where I could be in hiding until I was ready or until I had the opportunity of going to Switzerland.

So, I wore a yellow star and I kind of detached that a little bit so that I could remove it very easily, and we walked to the station, the railroad station. We were not together, in order to keep things safe, and so my friend had bought a ticket and that was the understanding and I felt some movement in my pocket and she had put it in my pocket. We both kept detached and we went in the train for about an hour and then to the town where she was living; then we got together.

There was somebody there, they had an address, where I could go. It was an old lady who needed some help, and she was not so easy to get along with, so she couldn't find much help. So, the two of us got together that way and I stayed there. The connection to go to Switzerland with the group did not work out, and the first thing I heard was that one of the safe houses fell through. People were caught and this whole group was caught, so actually I was lucky that I hadn't had the chance to go with them. So another opportunity came then, and that fell through, so as a matter of fact, I actually stayed from 1942 to 1944 in that house, with the old lady.

The evening when Kees de Ruiter took me on his bicycle to the family where I would be hiding, we passed by a place in a restaurant and living quarters which was occupied by the Army. When I arrived with this family whom I had never seen before, they took me to my

bedroom, which was dark, and I had never seen it before. I got a strange feeling. The first time I had a lump in my throat. That feeling comes back regularly. After the war, I still had nightmares. It was difficult at first to function, but I had to put my feelings away for later. Because of malnutrition, I came back with red spots on my back, and infected teeth.

I had an unpleasant experience besides all the usual tension, when the old lady became sick. The old lady died and nobody was home but me; nobody actually knew that I was living there. So I went to the neighbors and I said my aunt is sick, will you please call a doctor. They didn't know who I was. The doctor came and she died, actually. All this time was actually stress day in and day out. It--if you are in a jail, you know when you get out, there you actually never knew when it would end and that was very stressful. Also, things happened! We heard about other Jewish people who were caught. The friend, the couple that saved my life by finding this address for me, saved about 30 people.

He was in a concentration camp in Holland for a year because of his political background, I think it was Communist, and they saved about 30 people because everybody had a friend or a cousin and from all of 30 people there were only two survivors. There was one girl who was a nurse in Rotterdam, and I -- so day in and day out there was stress; things happened! One of the members in that family did black market, and so somebody came to the house and I didn't open the door. I was home alone, I did not open the door, but I could see out without being seen. This person talked to the neighbors. I could hear the story; he wanted to get in touch with the family, so I slept with a bag next to my bed and a big stick, and I've always been wondering if I'd be able to use it, but I was always prepared to get out, get out of the house.

Whenever we were sitting at the dinner table and the door bell rang, I was all ready. I took my plate and my fork and my knife and everything out, pushed the chair back, so that I could flee through the back door, if somebody would come in through the front door.

And so I stayed there until 1944, then the allied army pulled up; it came closer and closer, and then--I think that was June 6 when they landed in Normandy. And when we

heard that, we had a radio--and that was also dangerous, if you would be caught listening to the British news, they would kill you. The Nazis would kill you, but at least we knew a little bit what was going on and even in the last minute when we heard the shooting on the Belgium border, the papers, the newspapers, still mentioned that the Germans were still winning, but we heard the allied army pulling up and so that was encouraging. That was the time that I spent there and actually this was -- it was very nerve-wracking, always stress. Especially because Holland was a quiet country. Actually, there haven't been many wars in a long time, and the people were not anti-Semitic.

My father had a very good reputation, especially in Vlissingen, and when he left, there was a flattering article in the paper about him, so we were not used to -- really not used to this, and didn't expect any bad things to happen, in the beginning. In 1933, when all this business started in Germany, and we got very many German Jews passing through, because Bergen op Zoom is close to the Belgian border, and my father helped them getting across the border to Belgium, and so we had many visitors during that time, and were more prepared about what was going to happen, but many people in Holland, or many Jews, I think, didn't realize.

Many people, the non-Jewish too, couldn't visualize the existence of those concentration camps that we heard about later. I was told later, after the war, by some friends in Bergen op Zoom, that one hour after I left my town and fled, that the Gestapo was there to pick me up. So, I escaped by the skin of my teeth. The first year, when I was in San Francisco, we celebrated my liberation, and I thought I would never forget anything about what happened.

Gradually, things faded a little bit, but the experience itself never leaves you. I wouldn't say ruined my life, because there are many things I am grateful for, but it has given it a complete change really.

Q: IN WHAT WAY?

A: In the first years, I got very much involved in building up my future again. I went back

(Hes -- 7

to school, got my license as a medical analyst and started working. I enjoyed my work and actually, the past was being pushed away kind of. Only when I was 55 years old I was able to retire from the university -- I was working at a university. And the minute I was 55 years old I took my retirement, because I was exhausted mentally and physically; I had really done everything to build up my future and tried not to think about what had happened.

Besides that, I was lucky to live in San Francisco, which is a cosmopolitan city and I felt at home here right away. The only thing is to build up a circle of friends, and that takes a long time; also the difference in culture is something that you have to get used to, accept advantages and disadvantages.

Q: I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED YOU ESCAPE?

(A: They still live in Holland. His name is Kees de Ruiter and I'll spell that for you. Kees is like Cornelius, it's like an abbreviation, it's K-e-e-s de R-u-i-t-e-r. His wife's name is Julia de Ruiter. I still have contact with him. His wife, I'm sorry to say, has Alzheimers disease. I have had regular contact with them. And of course there is a close contact, because if they would not have saved me, I don't know if I would still be alive.

Q: BETSY, IN THE BEGINNING YOU MENTIONED FOLK DANCING SAVED YOUR LIFE, TELL ME THAT STORY.

A: Pardon?

Q: WHAT WAS THAT STORY?

(A: Well, this Kees and Julie belonged to this group of folk dancers and we used to go to the youth hostel and hired a folk dance teacher, so that we would learn new dances. Usually, we spent the weekend there and as a matter of fact, in San Francisco, I still have done a lot of folk dancing there too, only recently I got detached from it.

(Q: WAS IT THROUGH FOLK DANCING THAT YOU MET?

A: Yes, yes I think in that time we were quite idealistic before the war. We used to be abstinent and I think they belonged to the same group of abstinence called JVO, is an

abbreviation for Youth for Abstinence. We thought we could improve the world because alcoholism makes a lot of victims. We thought that if we would give an example, no alcohol, this would be improving the world. I think the war time changes a little bit your philosophy, not completely, but actually you learn a lot from it and probably are more realistic.

Also, we would belong to a group which was called The International Freedom League. It originated in England by an Englishman, who got quite involved in it. The purpose was for youth from different countries to spend vacation together and to get acquainted, as a way of preventing war or keeping peace, getting acquainted really. That was life before the war.

Q: BETSY, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BROTHERS AND YOUR PARENTS DURING THE WAR.

A: Well, I told you about when the war started that life became a little bit difficult for my parents because we could not keep any help, and my parents were not too young anymore. That's why my parents decided to move to Amsterdam. Also, they had contact with my brother Abraham and his wife Millie Soester, a wonderful person. And my other brother Benjamin was living there too, in Amsterdam. Benjamin had very heavy asthma, so it was really hard for him to keep working.

My brother Abraham was 11 years older than I and we had a very close family. My brothers and I were very close and that's how--I came to San Francisco. My youngest brother, Max de Hes, left right at the last minute in 1939 and came to San Francisco; he sponsored me. He was married and had a family, and that's where I spent my first 9 months. I think getting on my feet again, which was not very easy, was very difficult...I could not talk about my experiences, because nobody would understand.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT -- YOU HAD THREE BROTHERS, DID YOU SAY?

A: Correct.

Q: SO YOU HAD -- WHAT HAPPENED TO ABRAHAM?

A: My parents and Abraham and Benjamin -- Abraham and his wife Millie and my parents they all were taken and died in Auschwitz.

Q: TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

A: Well, the first thing I did when the north of Holland was liberated, free, I wrote a letter to the -- I contacted the Red Cross and I have a letter with their names and when they died. That's how you would trace some of the people like some friends and some relatives. It was very difficult, and I remember the first time I went to Amsterdam, there was no transportation, so you had to hitchhike or take your bicycle. I took my bicycle, of course, the tires were not too good any more, I put a piece of string around the tires and then I could hitchhike, sometimes on a truck with my bicycle in the truck, and gradually I was able to reach Amsterdam. I found out about some very close friends who had survived. Actually, the whole experience of the tension and the stress during the war time takes a lot out of you and it takes many years before you really can function. You never forget really, but life goes on as I said before. So you don't forget what happened but the main thing is to try to think positive and to accept and evaluate the positive things in life.

Also, you are aware of the fact that actually this life right now is a present you haven't -- you could have been dead easily and so you try to appreciate things more too, that's another factor, I have a rather cheerful nature. You like to do the best you can and appreciate what you have. You don't forget the past but keep trying to keep positive. Appreciation of things, that are good. The only problem you can have is your health; as long as you keep your health... I think that is the only major problem that you can have and I'm very lucky that I have no complaints.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR THIRD BROTHER?

A: Pardon?

Q: YOUR THIRD BROTHER, WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

A: They all died in Auschwitz. They went to one concentration camp in Holland first, Westerbork. Also, I got a list in the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam of relatives who died.

They had it in a computer, so they all probably met in Westerbork, a Dutch concentration camp, and got transported to Auschwitz from there.

Q: NOW, YOU SAID YOU SENT A LETTER TO THE RED CROSS, DID THEY SEND YOU A LETTER BACK?

A: Yes, they sent a letter back with the names: my parents and my two brothers, my sister-in-law and the date when they died. My oldest brother probably died a little bit later because he was strong, I guess they put him to work or something, but the others, I think died right away after arrival in Auschwitz.

Q: WHEN WERE THEY DEPORTED, DO YOU KNOW?

A: Yes, in '42, 1942.

Q: AND DO YOU STILL HAVE THAT LETTER, DID YOU BRING IT WITH YOU TODAY BY ANY CHANCE?

A: No.

Q: WE MIGHT CALL YOU AND ASK YOU IF WE CAN PUT THAT ON THE VIDEO TAPE ALSO.

A: I also have a picture that I got later, after the war, from the not-Jewish friend on the picture. My father is playing chess with my sister-in-law and you can see the yellow star on their shirt. My mother was knitting and she looked very peaceful and a non-Jewish friend of my sister-in-law was sitting there and that was during the war time. In that time my brothers, two brothers, had left already.

Q: LET'S SEE, COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT -- YOU SAID EVERY DAY THERE WAS TENSION DURING THE WAR?

A: Yeah, when I was in hiding every day there was something, something happened.

Q: CAN YOU TELL ME SOME SPECIFIC THINGS THAT HAPPENED?

A: Yes, I mentioned something, I think before. Somebody from Den Haag, who did black market business, contacted one family member and wanted to do probably some business, I don't know exactly. He saw me, because they wanted me to be there to serve dinner. I didn't

like that, because I felt it was very dangerous for him to see me. Nobody actually knew that I was there. He stayed over night and he left the next day. After he left, for a whole week, I went to sleep fully dressed with a, like I said, a big metal bar next to my bed and the door open. And slept with one ear listening to the sounds during the night. Later on I calmed down again. When nothing happened, I felt I had survived that part. Also sometimes, somebody was being caught. Roughly about 30 people were taken care of by my friends Kees and Julie de Ruiter. There was a moment sometimes when they said, you better move to some other place. For a few nights I came to their house or to some other safe house, until I could return, when it was considered safe again. One time I had to go through a forest. I went by myself, because I was familiar with this town. There was a little restaurant, where the Nazis were staying, so it was kind of dangerous to walk around there. It was dark, but I was pretty alert and I was able to get where I had to go. Things happened continuously.

Also, to stay in the house for a few years without anything pleasant happening, never being relaxed . . . The tension of not knowing if you would be alive the next day, had its toll. I remember always having a lump in my throat. I was lucky to survive. After all those years it's really very difficult to remember all of the details. One time I had an abscessed tooth and had to go to the dentist. Of course you couldn't just go to the dentist, you couldn't just go like you do now. So my friend, who found me my hiding address, Kees de Ruiter, found a dentist who was safe and he took care of me. We had to go to the street during the blackout, and so he took me there on the back of his bicycle. That was taken care of, I think I had an abscessed tooth, very painful.

So off and on this kind of problem happened. One thing I can remember is, that all we could talk about was food. There was very little food, and everything was rationed. I did not get ration cards anymore, because I did not exist anymore. I had one friend, Thony Labaw, who took care of my ration cards. He was working in city hall. He was also one of the group of people who were members of the abstinent group, the group that also did hiking together. He stole my ration card so that I did not have to buy food in the black market.

That was one of the experiences too. He didn't even know where I was, only the person who found my address, Kees and his wife, knew where I was, otherwise nobody. You wanted to keep things as safe as possible and sometimes people talk without being aware of the danger. Example of the necessity of being very careful: a couple had too much garbage on the street standing, the neighbors were aware of it. Why do they have so much garbage? That was one of the reasons why some people were caught. The north of Holland, we called "little Israel" as there were many Jews hidden. Some of my friends that I found back after the war were there too.

Q: I HAVE A FEW MORE QUESTIONS.

A: Yes.

Q: DID THE WOMAN -- DID THE WOMAN WHERE YOU STAYED, DID SHE KNOW YOU WERE JEWISH?

A: Oh yes, sure, of course.

Q: AND WHAT WAS HER NAME?

A: I forgot.

Q: OKAY.

A: It was a little bit hard, because I had never done any cooking at home. Somehow, I don't know why, I had put a little cookbook in my handbag. I used that to help me. The old woman had diabetes and she was nearly blind, and she used to say: "I smell something this or that." That was a signal for me. I had to cook on a stove with coal and wood. When nobody was home and I had to keep the stove going, I had to take one piece of coal at a time and put it in so I would not make any noise for the neighbors next door. We had to be very careful! Nobody should know that I was in the house!

As a matter of fact, if somebody was visiting, then I went right away to the kitchen. In the kitchen, on the window in the door, I put a newspaper in which I tore a little piece of paper. I tore it so that I could open it up and look through the opening. That was in the direction of the front door; so I always knew who was coming. When the war was over, I

said, well Mr. so and so, or Mrs. so and so. "How do you know our name?" or "How do you know us?" and I said, "Well, I knew you a long time." It was very difficult to be always alert!

Besides that it was a different life for me, because I was working in a research institute and studying and then I had to do the cooking and cleaning; no vacuum cleaner of course in that time. They also had chickens and I had to feed the chickens, I've never held a chicken, that was new. They had to be indoors, in the place where they were spending the night, so sometimes I had to hold one of the chickens and take care of that.

During the war time, those people did bartering for food on a farm. I remember having unraveled one cotton bed spread, wetted it, then wound it up and made it very usable again. That was traded or exchanged for butter or cheese or whatever. That's how you got around.

During the war time too, from 1940 to 1942 when I was still working, Jews had to send in their radio, also they had to send in copper, pewter, etc. I was still living with my parents and I didn't want to scare them, so I did it on my own, and I put all the metal objects in a big copper kettle, that we used for the laundry. George Monteione, one of the persons I worked with, was very actively involved in the underground. His father was killed in the war, in 1940. He said, "Give it to me and I'll take care of it." So I put everything together. I had the menorah in it, but suddenly I was thinking, I don't know why, but I better not put that in this. I put the rest of all the copper and pewter in. The next day he came and picked it up and he also had his own copper and pewter and things that they had to turn in. He was hiding it somewhere in the forest, I think. Put it in the soil or something like that. George was also one of my close friends. Later on, the same thing happened with my bicycle, you had to turn in the bicycle. My friend took the good things off and put the bad things on, so that we followed the order, but it was still not a very good bicycle that we turned in. Things like that happened and those were the minor things.

Q: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIG THINGS?

A: The big thing was going into hiding! In the evening, my friend Kees took me over to the address where I would be in hiding. When I came in that house, it was dark! They took me to my room, I didn't know what was in the room, because it was dark. There was a blackout and it was the first time that I was there -- I couldn't really breathe. I had a lump in my throat. Those were just some of the things that you didn't know, where you were! The hiding time started in 1942.

After the invasion of Normandy, the allied army came up to Holland. They tried to make a corridor to Arnhem. In any case they tried to get into Holland. The book, "A Bridge Too Far" describes the whole story. The Germans had a chance to pull up and that all fell through. I saw the gliders coming over and they landed near Arnhem; I thought that was the liberation, but it wasn't.

In any case, the south of Holland, where I was, was liberated before the north, and so I was free in 1944, the end of October 1944.

Q: I WANTED TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT HIDING, DID YOU CHANGE YOUR NAME?

A: Pardon?

Q: DID YOU CHANGE YOUR NAME?

A: yes, yes.

Q: TELL ME WHAT YOU HAD TO DO TO CHANGE IT.

A: Well, I had false papers, I still stayed in the house in order to keep as safe as possible. I very seldom left the house. I had false papers, because I was planning to go to Switzerland. It never happened, but notwithstanding I had false papers.

I very seldom went out of the house, only some times when I said, "Oh, I can't stand it any longer!" Then we went just for a little walk close by in the evening. We had to be very careful because of this group of Germans that were living in this restaurant not too far away. The place where I was staying was in the suburb of Breda -- it was actually on the outside of the town but we had to be very careful and always be aware. Always, you had to

be aware that you could not just do what you wanted to do. Also, you had to be aware that you could be picked up. Sometimes it was just so rough to be at home all the time, that very seldom, once in awhile, we just stayed close to the house, but we went out for a little walk.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR NAME?

A: Pardon?

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR NAME?

A: I don't know what the last name was, but the first name was Jo, J-o, Johanna.

Q: FOR YOU?

A: Yes.

Q: OKAY, WHEN YOU WERE IN THE HOUSE, DID YOU SLEEP IN A REGULAR ROOM OR DID YOU HAVE A HIDDEN ROOM?

A: No, I had my own bedroom, a regular bedroom. In case of real danger, I was hiding in the cellar downstairs.

Q: DO YOU STILL HAVE THE COOKBOOK THAT YOU USED?

A: My what?

Q: YOUR COOKBOOK?

A: Yes.

Q: GOOD, WE WANT TO TAKE A PICTURE OF THAT, WE'LL CALL YOU.

A: Yeah.

Q: AND DO YOU STILL HAVE YOUR FALSE PAPERS?

A: No, but I have a photograph. When, after the liberation, I got and I kept I -- my papers were lost of course and I got an identification card with my photo on it and I think I look like my own grandmother right after the war, and I still have that.

Q: GOOD. WHAT ABOUT LIBERATION DAY, THE DAY YOU WERE LIBERATED, WHAT HAPPENED. TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING BEFORE?

A: Well, what happened before, like I said, we had a radio and so we knew a little ... We

heard the shooting in Belgium because we were close to the Belgium border, so we knew the army was pulling up, getting closer. When they got very close we heard the shooting in town. The night before, 2 or 4 Germans came and were in the house and had dinner there and that scared me to no end. I was afraid that something would happen but thank heavens they were too busy.

The house, where I was in hiding, was next to a bridge and they put dynamite under that bridge and they stayed in the house. That was very scary, because I didn't know, if they would realize that I was Jewish or not. I acted just as if nothing was happening. The night after, they blew up the bridge and the bridge was hanging over the water something like that (hand gesture). Then the allied army people came in to town.

At the time the allied army came, I was hanging out of the window. I was so happy that I ran out of the house and I think it was a Canadian or a Polish fellow and he was very tall and I couldn't reach him, but I put my arms around him and kissed him, because he didn't -- the shooting didn't bother me -- the shooting was not important, that came closer and closer, but the fact of the liberation that was, I think, that is the most exhilarating feeling that you can have. That you can have your own life again and that you can -- there is no danger, no normal danger, threatening, so that was a liberation day.

The allied army came into town and I went to see -- I don't know how you call it -- a commandant or something and I went over to see him and told him that I had been in hiding and that I would like to contact my brother in San Francisco and could you help me? And he said, "You waited so long, you can wait a little longer." Then I found I think a Canadian soldier and I asked him to try to help me contacting my brother. I wrote a letter and over Canada it came to my brother's place.

In order not to forget where he was living I had saved a stamp with the name Jefferson on it. He was living on Jefferson street in San Francisco, and it reached him and that's how I got in contact with my brother. That was the only survivor, because I already had found out that the rest of my family was all gone. It's a very strange feeling to be a

member of a family and suddenly there you are by yourself. I was happy that at least my brother and his family had survived and that I was able to make contact with them. That's how I came later to San Francisco.

I had to wait about half a year before I could contact the American Consulate in Antwerp and get my papers to immigrate to America. That day when I got my papers, there was a movie, "San Francisco" with Jeanette McDonald in Antwerp. I saw that movie that day, which I thought was appropriate. Then I had the problem of finding transportation to America, because there was hardly any traffic. I found a freighter, that had 14 passengers. There were two nuns and two people from the Paganini string quartet, and also ten women in one large cabin. That was kind of rough because I get seasick. I had saved my violin. Somehow I had taken some things out of my house and left them with friends during the war. On board they played on my violin and with my music and that was a good, good, good experience.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE DATE THAT YOU WERE LIBERATED?

A: Yes. That was in October 1944, I don't know exactly which date in October, I forgot it.

Q: AND THE STAMP THAT YOU HAD, THE JEFFERSON STAMP, DO YOU STILL HAVE IT?

A: No I don't think so, no.

Q: DID YOU GO THROUGH NEW YORK, WHERE DID THE FREIGHTER GO?

A: The freighter went to New York and I had -- I took, because I was on a ship, I took a microscope along for a Dutch doctor. He had fled from the Nazis and had arrived in New York during the war time. His sister who was still in Holland asked me if I would take the microscope along, so I did. I brought the microscope over, but of course I didn't know this doctor, but I somehow managed -- I met him. He came to the ship and I stayed with the family a few days and a very interesting thing happened there.

He had patients coming to his house and here I had gone through all this fighting the Nazis and something happened that really impressed me. He came up stairs and he said to

his wife, "Guess what just happened? I had this patient coming in and she was already outside and suddenly I see she left her purse, and I ran outside and I gave her the purse and she said 'well, I'm glad I don't have a Jewish doctor.'" That was kind of a 'funny' experience, that impressed me.

Then another thing happened. People in the north of Holland had really died of hunger. They pulled out the wood from the street car tracks in order to have something to burn and have some heat. Holland, especially the north, gets very cold. One of my aunts who was living in New York took me to a restaurant in New York and I saw all that food that people didn't eat and that was really wasted. That made quite an impression on me too.

So then I took -- from New York, after I stayed there for about five days, I took the train from New York to Oakland and from Oakland I took the ferry over. That's when I met my brother, which was my brother and his family, and two daughters of eight and ten years old. it was a happy meeting.

I very seldom talk about all this. In the first place, I want to look in the future and in the second place, it's very difficult for people who have not experienced this to get any idea or to understand. I do not blame them for it, because I probably would have felt the same way if I would not have experienced it -- so, it's very hard to actually shake it all off and it's hard to, like I said before, to think positively and evaluate what's important.

Q: WHEN YOU GOT TO SAN FRANCISCO, YOU MENTIONED YOU WENT BACK TO SCHOOL ONCE. YOU GOT HERE, HOW WAS YOUR ENGLISH? HOW DID YOU GO --

A: Well, my English was not bad, because I had studied English in Holland, but there were still expressions that, of course, I didn't know, but I did rather well. I had to deal with abscessed teeth and the lack of vitamin (red spots on my back) besides nightmares. However, I was full of courage.

I had to do job hunting again and at first it was very difficult to get in my own field again. However, I found a job. Because I was working in Holland in sugar beet research

doing analytical chemistry, I found a job at the sugar beet factory in Woodland. I went there, but I couldn't take it. Nobody talked to me, it was hot and humid and also it was too lonely, so I went back to San Francisco. Then I stayed with my brother during that time, then I got a temporary job in cancer research, and in places working on a calculating machine.

And another temporary job in the basement of a department store selling, which was definitely not my field, and I wasn't very good at it. Then I got a better job. I was in one job, do you still want to hear about that? And that was actually not in my own field, it was imitating some food product. It was actually more a job for a dietitian but I finished it. It was supposed to take three months and I finished it in six weeks, so what was the result? I was fired! The didn't need me anymore! However, the good part was, that just in the lunch hour, I had an appointment with the American Chemical Society and I found a much better job in a testing laboratory, which was exactly in my field. And so I thought oh, now they will give me a raise and I'm going to have to tell them that I'm going to quit. I felt a little embarrassed about it. Then I was called into the office of the chief chemist, I was fired! It didn't matter, because I had the other, better job.

That was an interesting job, and in my own field. I had worked in Holland in the "Food and Drugs" laboratory. This was similar; testing whatever came into this testing laboratory. That job did not last, because that director got more interested in me than I could accept, I mean, personal interest so that was the end of that job. The funny part is, that when I was staying with my brother, the kids were little and I said every time I get a new job, I'll give you a present. So they didn't mind. "When are you going to move again?" I got tired of moving around and wanted to settle down. So I went back to school and passed an exam in the Department of Public Health in Berkeley and got my license in medical technology.

After that there was no problem, I could get jobs anywhere and so I worked in a hospital first. Then somebody offered me a job at the University Medical Center in research. I really enjoyed that. That was interesting work and it was not routine and life on campus

was stimulating. After my retirement I did a few temporary jobs and that was the end of my working.

I retired at 55. I had to take a rest, from all that had happened to me; I really was exhausted. They kept the job open for about three months for me to come back, but I just couldn't take it. It was enough.

Q: WHAT YEAR DID YOU RETIRE?

A: I retired in '65, I think 1965.

Q: AND YOU STAYED IN THIS AREA SINCE THEN.

A: Yes, I stayed in San Francisco. Two years after my retirement, I was offered a temporary job and after that was finished, I had a temporary job in another place. This is an outline, I would say and it's a little bit confused that it's not regularly discussed. It's kind of confused because -- things happen when you talk about it, you think about other things that you remember then.

I feel that my wartime experience should be known to the people that are living later, so that they know it happened and what happened and should be kept alive that way. It is the reason why I'm talking about this.

Q: I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU ABOUT NOW, AFTER THE WAR AND ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SINCE THE WAR, DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE A WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD, A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE THAT WAS INFLUENCED BY THE WAR?

A: Philosophy of life?

Q: YOUR ATTITUDE?

A: Oh, my attitude. Oh, definitely, definitely! After the first -- after you go through the first painful memory of everything that happened, you also think of the liberation day. When the liberation came. That was the most exhilarating feeling that I had. I think you could never repeat that. It is the most exhilarating feeling to be free again! I had always a lump in my throat, when I was in hiding and I never knew when is the end. This feeling and

the feeling from the liberation. I will never forget that.

What was the other -- the philosophy of life? Now, I think, little, little things disappear. There are little problems, you get over faster than you would have otherwise. I was like I said, I was close to my brothers. I was the youngest. I had a very peaceful life and I was probably a little bit spoiled. Then the cruel reality came, which I had to deal with. From the group of 30 saved by Kees and Julie de Ruiter, only one girl and I survived. Many people, who were in hiding, were caught. Remember the book of Anna Frank. After what I went through, nothing can be as bad as that. In the first years that I was living in San Francisco and had to deal with reality, adjustment to a different culture and other problems, it has been very, very hard, very hard.

As a matter of fact, I remember walking up the street and sitting in a very cheap restaurant, cheap because I didn't have any money too, and crying and not being able to stop it. All the problems I had to deal with in that time. I think you become stronger and like I said, you realize what is important. It doesn't pay to be bitter, because then you ruin the present of your life. I think you have a different philosophy, you are less naive and, like I said, real problems -- the only problem is your health and the rest you can deal with.

Q: BETSY, WHAT ABOUT RELIGION, DID THE WAR MAKE YOU MORE RELIGIOUS, LESS RELIGIOUS, DO YOU FEEL THERE IS A GOD? WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT GOD AND RELIGION?

A: No, I don't believe in a God and I am not religious. I have never been religious, and I cannot see that if there would be a God how the holocaust could happen, people suffer, are still suffering. As I said, I am more realistic and I'm not bitter, notwithstanding my experience.

It has changed my life quite a bit and years have passed because I -- well I don't know how to say it. I am rather optimistic and because I know what is important, I still have feelings and things can upset you, but you get over it faster. If I would not have been realistic I probably would not do this interview, because I don't really like to talk about it. I

like to forget but I find it very important to keep history alive. I do not believe in a God, in religion and or in life after death. I have no idea about this. I think you become a little bit more aware and well, I don't know how to really how to express it, you, well, you are grateful for, you're grateful for good things that are happening. Bad things that are happening you get over faster. I try to be positive. I still have nightmares off and on, not too often, but it's impossible to forget!

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE POLITICS OF TODAY'S GERMANY, REUNIFICATION, DOES THAT -- WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

A: You mean Germany? I hope for the best, but maybe the youth in Germany has learned something. Like it was not all Germans that were guilty. I don't know how much they learned in school about it or how much they know about it, but I can only say, I hope for the best and that it doesn't happen again. It happened twice, that the war broke out, started by Germany. Maybe the rest of the world should be very aware and that's all I can say.

Q: AND WHAT DID ISRAEL -- WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS TOWARDS ISRAEL?

A: I have been in Israel twice, I had friends in the kibbutz and I traveled before the 6-day war. My friends are not alive anymore. I found it very stimulating to be there. I was there for three weeks and I find it very interesting. I was -- went to -- what is the institute near Tel Aviv? The Chiam Weizman Institute where they have the most current research going on. I found that very interesting and the same day I was in the Galilee where the women walk with something carrying on their head, a more primitive way.

This was many years ago, I would not want to live in Israel. I wouldn't want to live in Israel because notwithstanding, I can understand it. They like everything in Israel better than anywhere else in the world. I can understand that because they had to struggle in order to make Israel, to create a country and I admire this. People had to fight to get it. I am happy Israel is there, but I, as a person, I like people from all kinds of directions. I think that's how my life was saved too, because I was the only Jewish girl in this group of folk dancers.

Q: BETSY, I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION FOR YOU --

A: Pardon?

Q: I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION AND THAT IS, DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL PEOPLE AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OR DESIRE EITHER FOR YOURSELF OR AMERICA OR JEWS OR THE WORLD. SOMETHING THAT YOU HOPE THE FUTURE WILL BRING?

A: Peace, and it looks a little bit better and -- but war is horrible. I saw it in the town where I was and it's terrible. I heard the shooting and as a matter of fact, my supervisor was hit by a grenade, he was not Jewish but he was hit by a grenade and he was killed. His wife and three small children survived. I can not find any other way better than peace and good health. People with good health have the opportunity for a good life. That's why I like to work in medical research, because it's positive, constructive work. It is a feeling of being involved in constructive work. That I think is the best I can do.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE? I'VE ASKED EVERYTHING THAT I COULD THINK OF, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD OR ANY STORIES THAT YOU THOUGHT OF WHILE WE WERE TALKING?

A: Well, the most important part of this is, I think, the fact that I left, fled home and went to that other town with my friend, that an hour after I had escaped, that the Gestapo was at my home to pick me up. That kind of gave you a shock when you heard that.

The other part is, when I found out about my family in Amsterdam, I was already in hiding. I sent my friend, Julie de Ruiter over with a package with food for them and they were already gone. When I knew that they were not there any more, that was also a shock. At this time I know some survivors want to talk about their war time experiences, keep on talking about it and that's their way, I don't feel that way right now. I feel like getting involved in things I never had time for before. I did get involved in music quite a bit. I play the violin and I used to play chamber music. I don't do that anymore. Now I get involved in Art quite a bit, I have been doing enameling and painting. I find it stimulating. The more I

learn about Art, the more stimulating I think it becomes. When you are working you don't have time really to do all this. This is a positive side now which I am experiencing. I find being creative in any way a positive side in life. I don't know how much of an artist I am. I can recognize beauty in nature and beauty in art. I have made things people think are very nice, which is important. That's my life right now, also I like nature, I like being outdoors, like to listen to music now and visit museums. And that's about it.

Q: THANK YOU BETSY, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. YOUR STORY IS REAL IMPORTANT, REAL IMPORTANT ADDITION TO THE ARCHIVES AND THANK YOU.

A: You are welcome. That was my purpose. I really don't like to talk about my war time struggle, I hardly ever talk about it to anybody, but it is very important to keep history alive. I sacrificed my own feelings, but am happy to contribute.

Q: WELL, WE ALL APPRECIATE IT AND MANY PEOPLE IN THE FUTURE WILL BE GLAD YOU DID.

A: Thank you.

Q: So, thank you.

ADDENDUM: When I heard this, I drew a parallel about my feelings: Four prisoners of war, reporters, returned from Iraq after having been caught inside the border, and rudely investigated blindfolded. They were interviewed in London, and expressed shock afterwards, and felt that their lives would never be the same.

-- March 3, 1991