

You have 10 seconds here.

OK.

OK. Can you tell me what happened with the children in the camp?

Yeah. They-- from eight years on, they were taken from the mother and sent to the men's camp. They didn't mean that they were sending them to the father. Those eight-year-old kids and older they were taken away later on and sent just to the men's camp. Now they didn't work too well, of course, those kids. And later on, we found out that they were going to take all the children, even the youngest ones from the mother and send them all together but they were planning-- to the jungle, I think Borneo or Sumatra.

And the women were going to be rounded up and dumped somewhere in a jungle, either Borneo or as far apart as possible. And they thought at that time-- that's what I heard on the radio when I was already in America. I didn't know that. But that's all what I heard from the records in Washington that they thought the Japs thought they were going to have Australia. And then the men were going to be rounded up and dump their out in the back, the Outback of Australia.

So I mean the whole families, the whole race was destroyed. They weren't going to kill them. But we will die off all by ourselves.

Where was the men's camp?

They were all over, Java, just as from us-- Antoine had been in Adak and another camp. And then he went up to Bandung in another camp.

But those men camps were also spread all over Indonesia. Most of them were on Java. And there were hundreds of camps, hundreds, hundreds of camps. So I didn't know there were so many whites living in Indonesia. But there were an awful lot, a whole lot.

Did the children end up going to the men's camp or--

No, it never did get that far because they never did get Australia. And somehow, they all got-- the atom bomb saved us. That is without the atom bomb that is what would have happened. So there are people in-- and I read it in Reader's Digest, they had a mental problem-- I mean a mental hospital because they thought it was terrible what they have done to the people in Japan.

It was indeed terrible. But it saved our lives. It's either they or us. And so they saved more than they killed, to tell you the truth.

And I wrote a letter to one guy who was in a mental hospital-- I don't have the address anymore-- that he shouldn't worry about it. And that I was grateful for what he did, however bad it was, because it saved hundreds of thousands of lives on our side. That's what happened.

Before we get to the atom bomb, I wanted to ask you some more about the camp. Did you ever witness any births? Children being born?

No. No. But I have heard that there were not many, perhaps a handful of Polish women who were pregnant and did get their babies in the camp, very few. And some of them came in with babies two or three months old. If they were married to Polish people or that they were married to Indonesian I don't know. But that's how they-- later on that was we were already in the camp for a couple of years before they came in. So--

What did--

Yeah, go ahead.

What did the children do every day in the camp?

Well, they had to entertain themselves quite a bit. Like I had to work. So Robbie was on his own. He was the only child for one-- at a time. So they did-- the older people looked after him. But he had his own little tin with sugar and bread. And I ate everything what I got. I never had anything. And he always said, mom, you shouldn't do that because if anything happened then you don't have anything to eat. He always already had something in preserve for the future-- little old man, a little old man. That's how he came out.

And when he went to school in Holland, he had a very nice teacher. I know because he couldn't sit still. Then right smack in the middle, he got up, didn't say much. And he walked around the class. He didn't talk to anyone. Anyway, he went around. He went back down. And he sit there. So I told what had happened. She said, well, I better let him go.

Did he have friends in camp?

Yeah, in that one camp we were, before we get transferred to that other house, from one house to another in the same camp, yeah, there were a couple of little kids, also from the neighbors. But not-- everything after the war went out, nothing left.

I know my girlfriend-- I knew her from before the war, or I learned it. And we were visiting, always visiting the consul general from Sweden. He was sweet. And that was the time you still could get out of the camp. So she was also there.

And he treated us on a special lunch, you know, and a drink. And then we had to go back to the camp again. That's where I left.

And out after the war she met-- her husband worked for Shell Oil in Borneo. And he burned up in the oil fields. She knew that. And then after the war, she met an Englishman, and she married him and lived in England.

We have been friends for all those years. A couple of years ago, she passed away. But, yeah, we stayed friends.

And I have another one who doesn't know who I am anymore. She was crazy about my little son, told me-- Fromac. Fromac was the name. But she has Alzheimer's. She's still in Holland. I don't know if she's still alive. But I a couple of years ago she didn't-- she wasn't there anymore.

And then there are other Frone. I know he worked-- it was a Dutch family. He worked on the harbor for NISM. That is the Netherlands' coal company in Tanjung Priok. He worked on the outside and was kind of a bragger.

And when he was in the camp-- was in the camp or out-- out of the camp, they took him because he was bragging he did that and he had done and he knew-- he didn't. He knew nothing. So then they tortured him, put the hands up and had burning candles and--

Tortured him.

And that was outside the camp, before he went in. And the flesh came out like charcoal. It was all burned up. And with those wounds-- if they were healed, I don't remember-- he went into the camp.

And then after the war when he went home with his wife, he went out in dark. And they never saw him again. He jumped overboard in the Red Sea. That was the end of him. That happened there. So he never made it home.

He was-- well, he was bragging, which you never should do, talk about things you don't know anything about because you get yourself in trouble. And if you know anything, you better don't say anything because you get in trouble too. Mum was the word really. But that is what happened to him then. What was else there for me?

Do you remember any outstanding women that helped you in the camp when you needed it? Either with food or with Robbie or--

I forgot her name, but she was a mother with six kids, I think. I'd never seen her before. And the oldest girl was 12, sweetest girl, sweetest girl. And she was good to my son, helping me out. The mother, for the little she had, you cannot believe it.

And there I had friends who were no, no. I had more help from the strangers. And that particular family with all those kids, they were outstanding.

I wish I remembered the name. But we didn't make any notes because we never knew what was going to happen to us. Had problems enough with the films to get them out, but I did. But with the notes, I really-- I'm sure the mother is dead because she was older than I am, I was at the time. The girl, that girl, sweet girl, yeah, she did a lot.

And she protected me. That was because the rest of the house for the other ones, they were talking about me because I had some canned milk when for the days we didn't get anything, you know. And they were always talking about it that I should share it. And I said I got a sickly baby. I cannot share with anybody. I wouldn't touch it for myself. And people didn't like that.

So, you know, you have to be nasty and selfish at times if you want to make it out. But then after a while, of course, I ran out of that too. So we both had to-- but then Robbie was still-- he was doing better.

Once he got sick in the hospital, very sick, matter of fact, no medication. And the nuns from the hospital were also there in the hospital. And that one nun, she was the sweetest little thing. And she said, I knew when I hear that cry that it was Robbie. She knew it. And he was there. She said, I'm surprised he's still alive. I said, well, there are more people who think like that.

But he was there in the hospital with, I don't know, dysentery. And he had a lot of problems, tropical sicknesses. But he came out he came out. And he's still alive.

Was the hospital outside of the camp?

No, it was a school building that they had converted to a hospital. No, it was in the camp. But it doesn't mean-- it didn't mean anything because you didn't get the medication anyway. And most people died there.

Did you feel threatened all the time? Did you feel like you were going to die on a day-to-day basis? Or--

No, never.

What were the feelings you had there?

I don't know. Very optimistic really, as bad as they were. It never goes down. I always got dolled up for 6:00. Except when I start losing weight, that shocked me. That really shocked me. But that was by the end. And then all of a sudden, the whole thing was over. But that shocked me. No, nothing else did.

Can be tired because of the heat, of course. But, no, I never thought that-- I was so sure. I never thought of dying, heck, no. I was going to get out there. And I'm going to do my thing.

What did you feel was the general mood of the other women?

It could be very depressed. Yeah.

Mostly depressed?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And another thing is-- what people don't talk about, and perhaps I shouldn't, but I think I do-- that your period stopped. Well, all of a sudden it stops. It's malnutrition, and no men and no sex, drugs, no nothing. That's it. So a lot--

And then after the war, I mean the men were around. And even if they didn't even touch you, your period came back. There was the sex drive. It just came real natural. It took care of itself.

[INAUDIBLE]

No, problem. Yeah. Well, we, yeah, because we didn't have anything, you know. And doing the laundry was a problem in itself-- and if you had that. But it took a long time before that disappeared. But somehow it all came back. It disappeared, and it came back.

Can you describe the different facilities? You're talking about the school was the hospital. And you just mentioned it was difficult to do laundry. Where did you wash? And where did you wash clothes? Or where did you cook? I guess there were kitchens in the house. Could you--

Yeah, the kitchens were usually outside. In Indonesian homes that is a kind of on the outside. We had to do that on charcoal.

So it's open right outside?

And we had to be very careful with the fire because we didn't have matches. So we had to bury a little coal under the ashes to keep it warm for the next day. So we could put it on. And you saw people going with a tin from house to house so everybody could have a little fire.

But that was-- excuse me-- at the time that we had to do the cooking ourselves. Then after they took over, of course, we didn't have anything. And we made-- we didn't have tea. We didn't have coffee.

We had hot water at the time. We had some-- put in some nutmeg and jalapeno--

Peppers.

Pepper. And that's what we made. It's just like bouillon. We catch the snails.

In fact, we-- and the dog, for a while we had a dog with flying ants. That is really the big fat ones. They're termites. We catch them, and we fry them out in the old we fried our rice in. Yep.

Was there a feeling between people like of sharing? Or was it more for each person they had to survive, so they kept their own food?

Well, I had a good friend. She was from Singapore-- English. Her father was Dutch. He my mother was English. She was very nice and shared.

Not many people did any sharing. But like that family, what I told you, they shared. But the other one, to each his own.

Did everybody have a separate place outside to cook?

No. That had to be communal. Had to be-- because we didn't get separate things. We did get that much intestine and that much rice. And so that had to be-- and then it had to be divided.

Was there somebody in charge of this?

Well, we had a girl. She liked to cook. She and her mother did some of the cooking, yeah. But there wasn't all that much

to cook. No, I never did the cooking.

In Kramat, the first camp I was in, when we had to take care of ourselves, and I was in the thing-- and I was taken up by a family, the family Frone, with two daughters. And then there was Christine, I think, red hair, from Nias. Her father was governor of Nias, little tiny island. We went there a couple of years ago. It's gorgeous.

But anyway, and because her husband worked for the same company as Antoine, I was in that group. They did the cooking, the mother and one daughter. The other daughter didn't do much, talked a lot. But we had to take turns in washing the dishes.

Now guess what? If it was my turn with one of the other girls, we had a load, everything was standing there, you know. Now, if it were her daughters who were doing the dishes, it was very minimal. So then I decided, the heck with that. I didn't feel like doing that.

So I ordered-- there was a lady with two daughters in the camp. And she was half-- half-half. And she cooked in an Asian food. And I asked her-- or she asked me if she could cook for me. I said, yeah. So I paid her. And every day I got her-- that's what they call a rotonde that is 1, 2, 3, 4 little dishes on top in one handle. And that was for Robbie and me.

And so that was all I had to wash. And then the first time they had that up to the ceiling. Well, I wasn't going to wash that. See? I had everybody up in arms. I said that's all I used myself. I wash it. So we don't have any complaints here anymore. So that changed the whole picture.

It's not important. But all those little things, they get the-- everybody gets little picky. And if it had to be-- and I'm not exaggerating, but there was not a dish or a pen in the house that wasn't used.

But anyway, we got over that. So I had my-- and I liked their cooking a lot better. So that worked out pretty good.

And then we got in. And like we moved to Tjideng again, like I told you. And then we got in the same house. And then later on-- I didn't ask for it-- they moved me out. And I got my own little kitchen. But we had to scoot in and out by that thing. But it was part of a bigger house. But I had that little corner with the baby by myself, which was quite nice. The other ones had partitions with blankets or drapes, they had, to get a little privacy if they wanted to sleep early or late.

In either of the camps, was there a very strong guard presence? Were Japanese guards walking around armed or--

No. No. No. Sometimes they drove around on a bicycle. And they had a gun in their belt. But, no, only when it was full moon with Sonei.

Can you describe some of his activities during that full moon?

He didn't do much. But he scared the hell out of everyone. He was always in a white satin kimono. He was walking out like they can do. There was a big tree. And that all he did was holding on the tree and walking around and making all kinds of noises.

In the middle of the night with the full moon on it, it was scary because we never knew. He was a loony. We never knew what was going to happen next.

Did you ever have a personal encounter with him, positive or negative?

No, I don't think so. No, I don't think so. I have had an encounter with one of the Japs that was-- I was in-- we were already in Kramat. And I had to do something outside in one of the big government's buildings. And something has happened. and I was accused of. I don't know what it was.

And I said, well, I did not. Like we do, look you right in the eye. Of course, he's smaller, so you look down. And he said, no, you did not. So I got hit. A Jap, you never look him straight in the eye. You look-- never straight.

So I said, no, I didn't do that. Ka-boom. That's all that I remember.

Is that the only time--

Yeah, I guess so. I guess so. I don't want to make it worse than it is. If it happened, I don't remember anymore. So I won't make a note of that.

What about birthdays and holidays, were you able to celebrate them in any ritualistic way or--

No. No. No. In the house, when was somebody's birthday, we tried to make it a little nicer than on a regular. But, no, that went by.

Even for the children?

No. No.

It was just--

Yeah--

Was the second camp-- what was the name of it?

Tjideng.

Tjideng. Was that harsher--

Yeah.

Than Kramat? It sounds like it.

Yeah. Yeah.

Can you describe that in more detail?

Well, it was in not such a good part of Jakarta. The other was really in a good part, beautiful homes. But that was small homes really, lower, lower, lower class. And a part of it that used to be the red light district.

What you have, the red light district is they don't walk the street like they do here. They go to that park. Curacao, they do that too. They have their-- oh, I forgot the name-- outside the city. And sailors come in, tourists. That's the camp you go to. They don't walk the streets.

They should do that here too. Then you get them all off the street, right? It's going to happen anyway. They are under government control for health. They're checked every week. And it is safer for everyone.

So this camp was near that district?

It was in our camp. They were not working anymore because they gave those little cubbyholes to us to live in. But it used to be the red light district.

So these were smaller houses?

Oh, yeah, very, very small.

About how many people to a house?

Two. Two or three.

Oh, so they were little bunkbeds?

Oh, yeah.

Were there toilet--

Yeah.

Or washroom facilities.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That was there. Every little cubbyhole did have that.

And what about kitchens?

Well, you did that outside and in front of the door. No kitchen.

So you were still cooking for yourselves?

Well, at that time, yeah, before they took it all away. And, of course, when we got the community kitchen, then, of course, the whole thing-- there was no cooking anymore. But before that, you know, have those clay pots with charcoal. That they keep us [BLOWS].

Was that around '45 by now, early '45? Or was this '44?

Oh, we have had the community kitchen for a long time, so at least two years. I think we had two years. I cannot pinpoint it down. But I would think at least two years.

In this camp did you feel any guard presence? Or was this also--

No. No.

So you were just barricaded in by a gate or fence?

A barbed wire fence, yeah. Three barbed wire fences, one after the other. No man's land in between.

And was this all women?

Yeah, all women. We had one doctor. That was a surgeon, which he couldn't do anything because he didn't have anything. So-- but somehow, we never-- I don't remember ever anybody needed surgery or whatever, you know.

That can be bad. But somehow a lot of things work out with taking care of people. You don't think about it. But looking back, some of the things were just taken care of.

Were you in the camp in Tjideng for the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima? Where were you?

You mean the atom bomb? Yeah, we were in the camp. Oh, yeah.

Can you describe first weeks?

We didn't know anything about it.

You didn't know. The day went by, you didn't hear anything?

Nothing. But like I said, it was-- by the end of the war, we had, what you call, when they shut us off, took the food away, and we had to bury it. And we didn't get anything for four or five days. And then shortly after that, what they call, the Bartholomew's night, when they start shaving the women bald. That must have been in reaction to the bomb. But we didn't know anything about it.

Except we knew if things like that happened to us we must have won another battle. We knew they were fighting around the Christmas Islands and, you know, what you have there. But we didn't know. There was no radio. All radios were gone and--

So Nagasaki and Hiroshima were bombed. And you were in the camp.

Yeah.

And the days went on. When were you finally liberated?

We were never liberated. We walked out.

Do you remember the day, month, that you walked out the gate?

No. I don't. I really don't.

What the weather was like?

It is always hot, hot and sunny, and dry.

So what happened one day, were you woken up by commandants and they said, OK, you can leave now?

No.

How did that happen?

Nothing. The gate was open. Somebody walked out. And then they said, hey, she walked out and nobody stopped her. So we all started to walk.

And that's it?

That's it.

Where did you walk? Where did you go?

Oh, we went just out, outside. And then the natives gave us food. And they told us that we had won the war.

Did they know about the bombings?

They didn't say anything about that. They must have found out later, but nobody told us.

Matter of fact, when I came back to Holland, I didn't-- I don't think I even knew then that there was a Hiroshima and-- I don't know. I've heard about it, but I couldn't tell you when, if it was in Indonesia or that it was later in Holland. I just don't know.

But everything went quiet, lackadaisy. And we went back in the camp and--

After walking out of the camp--

Yeah, we were all back in. Nobody said a word. And later on, we had Sikhs. You know Sikhs, with the long beards and the turbans from India? They-- the Japs disappeared after a while. And we had them taken over, well, for protection-- not to harm us, but just to be there for the camp.

And then there were complaints. I never saw it. But I know women were complaining because they were walking around in the nude. Oh. And so some people took-- didn't like it all that well. But I have never seen it, but I know it has happened.

So the day that the gates opened and you walked out, you went to the natives' homes and ate?

No, we didn't go to their home. No, we just walked around because what the little we had was still in the camp. So we came home at night. And then we-- the British came in. Lord Mountbatten I remember came. And I'm standing here. And there he is walking with a couple of officers, going through the women's camp. I was there.

Then the officers asked us out for dinner and party. And we did. We did go out with the officers.

Did you ask them questions? Or did they tell you any news?

No. Nobody was interested. They just had a good time. Nobody asked any questions. We were free. And to heck with the rest.

So you knew you were free by then?

Yeah, by then, of course, we knew because otherwise they couldn't come out in the camp and ask us out to parties, you know. But--

How long were you in the camp after you were free?

Not too long really. Perhaps three, four months.

Oh, that long?

Yeah, I think three, four months.

What was happening then in the camp?

Nothing. We were just waiting for the husbands to come back.

So this was sort of like this was your home?

Yeah. That was our home.

Was anybody providing food? The British or the Red Cross?

We did get packages, care packages, from America with little things of Spam and all-- we did get that before. But one package what was supposed to be for one person had to be divided in 17 people. But then we did get the packages one for 2, I think. So for my and the baby, one package, something like that.

How it all-- I don't-- I really don't know. But the natives did bring us food too. They cooked it. And they brought it over. All we had to do was--

And some people kill themselves because they were eating eggs. We hadn't seen eggs for all those years. And there were dark eggs, those big ones. And I remember those girls, they were eating, I don't know how many, one after the other. And two died of it, of course.

You have to do that kind of slow. And they overdid the bit. It was still too late, didn't make it.

And then, of course, there were men coming home from camps around us and coming through the camps looking for their wives. Some of them we knew had died. Matter of fact, there was one-- I don't know them personally, but I know that that lady had died the day before her husband came looking for her. She went through all that and then still miss. Yeah, that happened. I don't know who it was. But I know it.

During those few months, who was-- you said there were six Indian men, were they protecting--

No, Sikhs. The name is Sikhs.

Oh, Sikhs.

Sikhs, from India, that's the name of them, yeah.

Sikhs. So were they there in the camp the whole time?

Well they took over-- no, no, they took over the offices from the Japs by the gate. That's where they lived. They didn't go through the camp. But that was their department. And they thought they could do whatever they want what they did. And then some ladies didn't like it. So--

Were there any British-- was there any British presence in the camp?

No. They came later. But they didn't live in the camp. They were all living outside. But the Brits and American occupied. They were living in houses, just like we did after a while, like my girlfriend who married the Englishman. She found that place. And she said, why don't we all move out, instead of sticking it out here in the little thing? So that's what we did.

Did your husband find you yet? Or did you leave before he got to the camp?

Wait a minute. He came back when I was outside the camp. But the day after we got free, then I knew that Antoine was still alive. And then the message went back that he knew. And he knew where I was.

And then we moved out. How did he find me? Because while I was living outside there was a big home, with three or four big bedrooms. I didn't want to go. But the girl I was supposed to go with her baby, she knew I was there. So she told him when going up, when she got there, she told Antoine where I was. That's how it went.

So he came to this house?

Yeah. When they let him go there, because they chartered them right away for the ambulance, then he knew where because she told him where I was. Yeah. And he came to the other house. We were there for quite some time before I finally could get home.

OK, so you left that camp with this other woman. You went to this house outside. It was in Indonesia?

Yeah, Jakarta.

Jakarta.

Yeah. And that's where you were reunited with your husband?

Yeah.

And you lived in that house for--

Oh, five, six months before I got a chance to go home. And my husband came later. We didn't come on the same ship. Another one. But--

Oh, to Holland?

Yeah, to Holland. And then we stopped in-- going through Aden, the Red Sea, not in Suez. There was a stop somewhere in the desert, where the Dutch had set up tents, where we did get some clothing. And we spent a day there.

And like I said, my sister was engaged to one of the twin. Guess who ran into in the desert in Egypt? The other half of the twin. He was stationed there. He was in the army.

This was the doctor's--

No, no, that was my other sister. One is married to the doctor. The other one, one of a twin.

And a pure accident, I ran into him in the middle of the desert, Egypt. Can you believe it? Well, he had worked in the mines, in the coal mines, in Germany. And he was sent back-- after the war, he came back to Holland. And then he was drafted again by the army. And they sent him to Egypt.

And that's where we got some clothing. And a coat I did get. And Robert did get some warm clothes to go back to Holland, which we came back on a troop ship. It was not a cabin. We were sleeping in hammocks, one on top of another, three on top of one another.

A heck of a time to get in a hammock to sleep, I tell you. And then getting into the cold, Robert was peeing and I was underneath and it's coming down. Yep, it takes all kinds.

How long was that journey?

Oh, it takes about six weeks. And in the Gulf of Aden, I remember very well, it was hot, hot, hot and humid. And you have that fog hanging there. And we took a shower that was like in the army, everybody in one big room in the shower.

And the kids-- and Robert's little one was one of them. They had taken the toilet paper. And they had gone up in the nests where they have the 45 automatics or whatever it is. And they were there. And they rolled that off, all the toilet paper.

And having been in Indonesia and having heard all those ghost stories, and it was-- they thought they saw a ghost. You've never seen the panic on board, until they found out it was toilet paper and the little kids had done that on the way home. Yeah. It was kind of fun.

What year did you arrive in Holland?

In '47.

And so that was two years after the war ended.

Yeah.

And how did you find your family? Were they in the same house?

How did I find my family? Good heavens. You know, that's my own father and mother and two sisters. I don't even know why we found them. We found them because they were waiting. The flags were hanging out when I came home. The whole street was in flags. Hmm, I don't know.

Were they in a different neighborhood?

Oh, yeah, in a neighborhood I never been before. How did I find them? I really don't know. Perhaps they found me through the Red Cross. I know I didn't do anything. They must have found me.

When you got off the boat, what did you do?

Well, they must have found me and written to me where I was in Indonesia. I don't know. And then I think I must have written them a letter to let them know that I was on my way home. That is-- otherwise-- can you believe that?

It's a blank. But I know everybody was standing there with all the flags out, the whole neighborhood. And I don't know how I found them. Hmm. No, I cannot tell you that.

But they were expecting me. And I must have told them that I was coming on my way. Perhaps Antoine told them. I don't know. But he's not one much of writing letters. And everybody after the war was kind of keyed up. Jeez, who cares? And we had an awful good and wild time, believe you me.

Went did Rotterdam look like?

Well, every year we go to Holland. Matter of fact, a month from today we are leaving again. I'll be there.

In '46--

In '46, yeah--

When you arrived, what did it look like?

Flat. Everything was in ruins. So--

Did you find out then what happened both in the Pacific and in Europe? Because you said you hadn't heard news--

No. Well, that is what I got to hear.

When did you hear--

When I came home, they started-- I have heard about the bombing of Rotterdam. That's what the Germans had done, just flatten it out. That I knew before we even went into the camp, I guess even before we got into the war with the Japs. But after that, I just don't know.

When you got back to Rotterdam, what kind of news did they have? Were they telling you stories about--

Oh, gosh, everybody-- nobody listened to my story. Everybody was telling their stories, what they went through during the war, you know, especially the last winter when it was so cold and there was no heat and no nothing, nothing of anything.

Did your family know at some point about the concentration camps in Europe, in Eastern Europe?

Eastern Europe?

In Poland? Auschwitz? Did they know--

Oh, yes, they knew because my sister's in-laws went there. Yeah, yeah, they knew about those camps, but they couldn't do anything about it either, you know. I've been to Auschwitz. I've seen it. Can't believe it. A film is nothing.

You have to see it to believe it. It is unbelievable. You don't go there for the sensation. But a lot of more people should see that there. Then it will change their mind.

Like you have now the skinheads again. What can you help that you born a Jew or a Catholic? How can you-- what does it mother?

See, my sister married a Jew. Kids are Catholic. That's what they wanted. But that doesn't make any difference.

People, they never learn. They never learn. And I think it is going to get a lot worse, if you ask me. It is-- what say, beginning of the end. But I hope it is not in my lifetime. But the way things, I don't know. I have a very funny feeling about those things. They all standing up.

Rwanda, right? You cannot go anywhere anymore. We went to Egypt. Now you cannot go to Egypt anymore, to on the Nile, you know, and Aswan.

We went to Kenya on a Safari. You can't do that anymore. They are shooting you out wherever you go.

I have a friend in Cape Town. I met him on a world cruise. He's old. I think he's very sick. I haven't heard from a long time. But the guy doesn't dare to say anything for the things that are going on. No, it's not getting any better.

Do you see parallels with the '20s and '30s and now?

No, it is totally different.

How do you see it different?

That was a war you wait out. You knocked it out, and it was over and done with. Not that anymore. Look what happened in Bosnia. That is Bush's fault. If they had stepped in right there and then, could have knocked it. But now it is too far. Nothing more. We get a name from nothing.

I want to go back to Rotterdam.

Yeah.

You got there '46. How did your family seem? How was their health, their mood? What was the feeling?

Since the war was over, when we came home, I mean, it's no problem there. No problem. In the meantime, my sister left for-- she waited for more than a year. And she left for California, for Hollywood, where his uncle and aunt were, Camilla and Robbie.

And then Dennis was born, the youngest one was born. And he was about four months old. Antoine got a job. He didn't like it in Holland. It was flat. Friends were killed or they were moving out, or moved out. We couldn't find-- it was a whole-- it was a mess.

When did Antoine get back to Holland?

Same year, but a couple of months later. And then he spent 1 and 1/2 year in Holland. And then he got another job. We went to Curacao, the Caribbean. He worked there for seven years as a CPA. And-- now what I was going to say?

Holland, Rotterdam.

Yeah. Oh, then my mother-- my sister had a little homesick in America.

You sister who married the doctor's son?

Yeah. He is a doctor in the meantime himself, with Ph.D. And he-- and she wanted my mother to come. So my mother said, well, if I can get a ship that goes over Curacao, I come. So she found a ship, came over Curacao. She spent a day with us. And she went through there.

She liked it so much that after three months when she went back, she said to my dad, we are going to America. So-- oh, he was all for it, no problem there.

But I had another sister who didn't want to go. But her husband wanted to go. So my mother said, well, you have to make up your mind and tell me what you guys-- if your seven years are over, if you're going to go back to Curacao or to Holland or America or wherever you want to go.

And since the kidney was removed in '48, I had an awful lot and I still have that problem with heat. Heat bothered me an awful lot. I'm just like a dish rag. So I couldn't go back there. The doctor said you go to a cooler climate.

So she said to tell me what you're going to do before I make my decision. So Antoine said we go to America. It was the last place I wanted to be. But anyway, we were going to America. And so we said that was it. So we couldn't change that.

So then she started to work on my sister. She said, if we can get her shipped off to Hollywood, she said, then I can make my plans and come too. So that's what they did. They shipped her off by ship.

And, oh, my sister was crying. Oh, God, she even fainted when they left port. But you're still here. Of course, we don't want to be anywhere else.

So you were all in America?

And so then we ended up-- parents came over in America. And, of course, my mother was 63. And you don't learn the language that easy. My father, the same way. My mother, like me, talking. My father was-- didn't say a peep. But he was doing a lot of reading.

He worked-- oh, he lied about his age. He looked a lot younger. So he got a job with Van de Kamps' Bakeries in Los Angeles. It was a Dutch family, matter of fact. So he worked there the night shift.

And then my mother worked with Jane Wyatt, from Father Knows Best, because here-- my mother had a little bungalow here, with Spanish bungalows. It was a little courtyard with all bungalows, Spanish style with wrought iron and lamp to get in. And the next street through there was Jane Wyatt. I don't know how she got that job. But anyway she got a job.

And Jane Wyatt was very good to her, very good. She didn't do hard work. If there was a problem that the maid didn't come in and there was a party, then Jane went on her knees scrubbing the bathroom floor. She said, oh, no, Katherine, you cannot do that. So she was scrubbing.

And when her mother came over from New York, she was-- my mother took her around. And even so she didn't speak English very well, she understood it very well. And if you had a problem, something you couldn't get, you sent my mom. She got it. She went behind the counter, told the butcher how to cut, and do things. And everybody, in some way, accepted that of her.

And she had a good time. She worked there for years. And when my father passed away, Jane Wyatt and her husband came over, changed the bed, took her to the laundry, make up the bed again, you know. And, oh, just, no, there we are. No problem there.

Were living in Southern or Northern California when you came--

North Hollywood when I came out there. I rented an apartment. And then when my husband came, then, well, there we had to look for a job, of course. But he had bought a car and paid for in Curacao, a Chevrolet. And so we had to go to Detroit to pick up the car.

So right away, we took, I guess, six weeks or two months' vacation, touring around first in the Greyhound and then in the car to the Badlands. And we were doing sightseeing. So by then, we decided to settle down and look for a job before we were going to buy a house.

So he got a job in Alhambra. Was an accountant. Of course, the law is different. A lot of things are different. So he didn't make much. I guess he made \$275 a month. It was in '54. Yeah, '54.

And then we bought a house in Monterey Park, nice, on a hill, you know. Oh, gosh, 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, and the works. More-- beautiful view of-- before the smoke came in there, it was smoke free at that time.

In your first year, of course, you don't make much. Then they started quibbling about the house. Our income fell. The payments on the house were 325. But we did have enough money, cash, that we could live without a job for a year. We had figured it out if. You know, we toned it down a little.

And so we bought a house. And then we had to pay another \$5,000 down. And I had to get a job to supplement the income. And I worked by Cahill. It was a designer in Beverly Hills, from evening gowns, bridal gowns, cocktail dresses. Only custom made, not on the rack. Only when they had the order, it was made. I learned to sew there quite a bit, because I didn't know much. But I told them I did.

And my sister worked there. And she said, do you know everything? When they ask you, you know it. And she said, where do you work? Or Cahill said. And I said, oh-- and I gave them a name of a grocery. He said, well, I can see your experienced. And instead of \$0.75 an hour, I got \$1.25 an hour because I was the experienced one.

And all the things that happened there, you know. I had to applique skirts, the lace on. And I made a hole in it. Oh, my God. So I cut out a flower, put it on, made it an even four. Nobody knew the difference.

I'd like to go back awhile.

Yeah, sure.

When you came to America, was what, '48? Or about what year was it?

I came to America in January '54.

Oh, it was '54. So you were in Holland until '54.

No, in Curacao. We never went back to Holland. We came straight from Curacao. And I did get priority because my husband-- my sister was an American citizen. But the kids couldn't come. They had to stay behind.

And they came later on when school was finished. I could send out my application for them right away, what I did. But they finished school there. And they put them on the plane to Curacao-- from Curacao to Los Angeles. They came by themselves. And then my husband came in September that same year.

Was there a lot of talk or any talk about the war when you were in America, when you came in '54. No?

No. Not at all. But I tell you something, somebody got me tickets to get on Queen for a Day in May. And I was the queen for a day because of my story, you know. I told them what happened. So everybody was in tears. And I was the

queen, Queen Elizabeth.

It was in the paper. It was in Holland, in the paper. Delf. Yep, so I got a lot of presents.

When was that?

'54. May '54. I spoke English, but not that fluent, you know. So that went-- anyway. And then I didn't have the American slang so well. It was the Kings clipped.

But anyway, yeah, it made me the queen of the day. Took me out to the Coconut Grove. And we had dinner and dance. And I got my makeup and my hair cut by Max Factor of Hollywood. They said, we are ready for the queen now, so.

And I went there by streetcar with my mother, got all the roses. And then we came home in a taxi. All paid by the Queen for a Day. [LAUGHS] That was really an experience, you know.

And we had-- oh, we had quite a bit of money. So I took the loot from Curacao over and here in the bank. And then, I think the kids did bring some. But anyway, Antoine brought the rest over. So that we had to split up, if anything would happen, we wouldn't lose everything right there.

And there, he thought I sent him the papers. And here, he thought, oh, my God, my wife's gone haywire, she's gone Hollywood. I never see her again. And I had the loot too. Oh, dear, don't work. Those things will work out really.

When you heard about the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, were you in Holland or in Curacao? When you--

I must have heard it in Holland.

What did you feel?

Nothing. Uh-uh. Didn't do a thing. I've been there. I've seen it.

Have you been back to the camps that you were in?

No. I've been back in Indonesia a couple of years ago, Jakarta. But it is such a mess now. You have no idea. As beautiful as it was with all those beautiful homes, now they're on top of one another. It's all built up. It is dirty. It-- now, I wouldn't-- even if they paid me in gold, I wouldn't want to be there anymore.

Where do you consider home?

Here. This is home. And Holland. Not all that, but the older you get, the more it pulls because we still have friends there from-- not family really. My parents are buried in Hollywood. And all the uncles-- all the brothers and sisters, they're all gone. I still have a couple of nephews. But I haven't seen them in so many years. And they are in the 80s and 90s. I don't know even how they look like. So, no.

But we have school friends. But he has still a friend from grammar school. And I got two girlfriends from grammar school. We still go see each other and growing old, telling stories. But it is funny, the way my life has gone with all the traveling and the living in different countries. And you coming home, they don't have any idea where-- I am not even talking about it because they don't know what's going on. They are still-- special the one-- still very small, in a small little country.

Provincial.

Yeah, provincial. The other one understands a little better, has done some travel. And then we have still a number of friends there from Curacao, where Antoine used to work with. So, of course, that is a different story. They're open. They have been around. And they travel a lot. And it makes a difference.

So do you visit Rotterdam every year or--

Rotterdam? We never go there. It stinks. I don't even know my way around.

You put me in Tokyo, you put me in London, I know my way around, no problem there. You set me in Rotterdam, I wouldn't no where to go.

The whole thing is bombed out. I have that old city in my head. And some of the names remind me. But it doesn't look the same anymore.

And Holland is very liberal with the drugs and everything, especially the big cities. No, we never go there.

How do you feel when you're in Japan? You just mentioned Tokyo. You know your way around.

Yeah.

Did that bring back bad memories?

No. You cannot live with all the hate. It's not killing them. It's killing me.

And I hope to be around for a while. They're not my favorite. But, on the other hand, I was there on the world cruise in '77 with the QEII. And I'd been there before, because Antoine had to work in Tokyo. So then I go everywhere all over.

That I was alone. And they wanted to come with me. And I said, no, I don't want anything. I do the walking all by myself and alone. I want to take pictures.

And I have the most beautiful pictures I took there from the tea parties and the kimonos and all that. And I go to a little street, and there is a lady standing with a baby, Western. Well, I'm not interested in the Jap who is in Western dress, right? And she said, oh.

I think, oh, my God, no, no, I didn't want to. She said-- OK, so I take the picture. Think now, what am I going to do with that? So I go to the shops. There's a cake shop.

And I said, well, can you tell me-- she doesn't speak English and I don't speak Japanese. So we finally got it together that I wanted her address to send the picture, which I did. Finally, we got it together. And she gave me a cake, the world wonder-- well known, world known Nagasaki sugar cake, or whatever it was.

And you go on the Queen Elizabeth, you don't need any cake from there because they kill you with it. Well, I got the cake, and I took the cake home to the ship. And I sent off the with the letter and the negative and the whole thing.

Whole and below, I was just back to go back to Brussels. In the meantime, Antoine was working in Brussels. Go on the post, ring the doorbell, a big package from Japan. I still have the letter that they composed with the whole family to thank me, two World famous Nagasaki sugar cakes with a postage of \$36, American dollars, airmail.

So you see? What can you do? Those people don't for nothing, right?

Do have any other experiences and memories you'd like to add? Anything from the camps or during the war?

No, I think I got to most of it. I'm sure when I come home, I think, oh, I should have told them that. But now I don't know.

Lessons learned?

Oh, well, one thing-- and I hate to brag-- I'm a good judge of character. None whatsoever. And this has happened-- I'm not going to tell you that.

Are you glad you went to Indonesia in 1939?

Oh, Yeah. Oh, yeah. I wouldn't miss that for the world. And I tell you another thing is I've been through it. I wouldn't do it over again. Matter of fact the way things are standing with me, I couldn't do it over again. But it has been my whole education.

Now, I've been through it and came out of it quite well. I wouldn't miss it because I've learned so much, special about people. You don't learn it anywhere else, believe you me. But--

Anything else?

That-- no, I think that's about all I can think of.

[INAUDIBLE]