

1 Interview with LOUIS DE GROOT
2 Holocaust Oral History Project

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6 Q: WOULD YOU LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF
7 AND SAY WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

8 A: Yes. I am Louis de Groot. I was born on
9 June 28, 1929, in (Amsfort) in Holland. I only lived
10 there as a very young boy. We moved when I was about
11 three years old, and I spent most of my childhood in the
12 city of Arnhem.

13 We were a family of four people. I had a
14 sister two years older than myself and my parents, who
15 owned a hardware and electrical-appliance store. We were
16 pretty much integrated in life in the city.

17 It was a Jewish community of about 1600
18 souls. I don't remember exactly the total population of
19 the city, but it was a major city for the general area,
20 having a lot of agriculture and orchards around the city
21 (Barham). It's located on the Rhine River.

22 And so on May 10, 1940, as Germany invaded
23 Holland, by about 10 o'clock in the morning our city was
24 occupied because we were very close, relatively speaking,
25 to the German border.

1 Actually, at four in the morning there were
2 some dogfights overhead, and that woke us up. Shortly
3 afterwards, the police came around and alerted everyone
4 that the bridge across the river was going to be blown up
5 by the army engineers, and so they warned everyone to open
6 the windows because of the pressure so that the glass
7 wouldn't break.

8 My parents immediately gathered the family
9 together. We didn't own a car. It wasn't common in those
10 days.

11 Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY RELATIVES LIVING IN THAT
12 TOWN?

13 A: No, I did not.

14 My dad went out to find a taxi, realizing we
15 were close to the border that we should try to get away.
16 And the intent was to get to the western part of Holland
17 where the port cities are and see if we could leave
18 Holland and get to England.

19 So I recall my father walking around having
20 gotten dressed very quickly with his pajamas still
21 sticking out from his pants and carrying his passport -- I
22 don't know if my mother had a passport; I'm sure my sister
23 and I didn't -- and trying to make an attempt, really, to
24 leave because they were very much aware, of course, what
25 was happening in Germany since the '30s and especially

1 after Kristalnacht, after many of the German males had
2 been taken to the concentration camps, they were released
3 about six months later and many of these people left
4 Germany if they possibly could to go to England or the
5 United States and would pass through Holland.

6 And my dad used to go to the border to meet
7 them because he would know -- it was like giving a
8 guarantee to the Dutch government that he would provide
9 them a home for a number of days that they needed to be in
10 Holland to arrange the passage and would take care of
11 them.

12 So we had seen people -- and I remember as a
13 young fellow, about eight, nine years old -- people who
14 had gone through hell in Germany who had been in Dachau
15 and Buchenwald. I remember one woman very clearly coming,
16 being shaven completely bald and having a swastika burned
17 in her skull. That's a sight I'll never forget.

18 So as a child myself, Germans meant something
19 terrible to me, so this invasion of Germany was very
20 scary. But my parents were very much aware of the
21 suffering that had been going on.

22 We had found a cab driver.

23 Q: HAD THEY MADE ANY OTHER PLANS FOR THEMSELVES?

24 A: No, not at that point. You see, I believe
25 that Holland had declared its neutrality. The day before

1 Germany invaded, Hitler had spoken and said that he would
2 never attack that little country on this western flanker.
3 So even though there was some worry, there was no
4 expectation that Holland would be occupied by Germany, and
5 I think maybe also because during the first World War
6 Holland was never touched by the actual war.

7 So they had had no plans. The Dutch Jews
8 were really very comfortable in Holland. They felt
9 themselves to be part of the Dutch population. There was
10 some discrimination, some anti-Semitism, but nothing
11 really of the order that you would fear for a pogrom.
12 Nothing like that existed in Holland, so they were very
13 comfortable among population that had lived.

14 Q: WHAT FORM DID THE ANTI-SEMITISM TAKE THAT YOU
15 WITNESSED?

16 A: As a kid I experienced boys beating me up and
17 calling me "dirty Jew" and my sister sometimes getting beaten
18 up by other girls, but never really on an adult level.

19 There was a National Socialist Party in
20 Holland. There were some literary sources of
21 anti-Semitism, but most of the population really didn't
22 adhere to it at all, pay attention to it.

23 So the Jews, in general, felt very
24 comfortable in Holland, also because historically the
25 relation between the Jewish population and the Royal

1 Family had been very good, and that goes really back to
2 the Sephardic Jews that came to Holland from Spain. That
3 was the time that Holland was occupied by the Spanish.

4 And so these Jews moved to Amsterdam. They
5 were well-to-do, and they helped the Dutch to finance the
6 war against the Spanish. So from that stemmed a very good
7 relationship between the Jewish community and the Royal
8 Family.

9 So there was never any thought really of
10 immigrating. The Dutch Jews weren't Zionist, either.
11 Zionism was almost something looked upon with disdain.
12 There was, among the many rabbis from what I remember,
13 only one who was a pro-Zionist.

14 Q: WAS YOUR FAMILY RELIGIOUS?

15 A: We were observant, that is, Jewish holidays
16 were observed at home. My sister and I both had religious
17 training and my sister and I attended synagogue every
18 week, but my parents only on the High Holidays.

19 But it was a very conscious Jewish family.
20 Holidays were observed at home. We knew everything about
21 it. So it was kind of a traditional way. But we observed
22 Passover; we had separate dishes for Passover. My mother
23 kept Kosher. It wasn't very difficult. Kosher food was
24 easily available. So in that respect, yes, we were a
25 positive Jewish family.

1 To go back, our attempt to get out of the
2 country failed because Holland used the water as its
3 defense, and so they broke some of the dikes, and it was
4 impossible to cross those areas. So we went back to
5 Arnhem, and by the time we got back it was about hour
6 before the first German tanks entered the city.

7 From that point on, life changed. I must say
8 that this was in May 1940 and it was not till November
9 1940 that the first anti-Jewish actions really took place
10 in Holland; that was when the Germans required all civil
11 servants to register whether they had Jewish ancestry, and
12 that was, of course, based on the racial classification.

13 And then later that year they fired all the
14 Jewish civil servants. Professors at the university,
15 since the state university was considered civil
16 service, were dismissed. That led to a dismissal of a
17 very highly-respected law professor at the University of
18 (Lydon), which caused the students to go on strike. As a
19 result, the Germans closed the university and actually
20 forced the students into resistance, and it was the
21 beginning of the underground movement in Holland. So that
22 was very early in late 1940, and then by 1941 -- well, the
23 Germans in the meantime had already started to issue
24 identification cards -- and by February 1941 Jews were
25 required to go back to the registration offices and be

1 registered as Jews and have ID cards stamped with a "J" on
2 it. Then after that various restrictions came into being,
3 too many to enumerate, really.

4 I'll just touch on a few that touched me
5 personally that I remember very well: We were not allowed
6 in public places, could not go to swimming pools, the
7 movie theaters, play out on the street, which was
8 considered a public place, not be part of a soccer team,
9 or anything like that. That was one of the things which
10 hurt me personally in a way.

11 Then came the restriction that we couldn't,
12 of course, do our shopping except between three and five
13 in the afternoon. And in the summer of 1941 came the
14 ruling that we couldn't go anymore to any school except
15 Jewish schools, which meant that the Jewish community had
16 to find school facilities and Jewish faculty to set-up the
17 elementary schools and the high schools. That is
18 something that really cut away my whole social life
19 because my school was my social life. I had very good
20 friends.

21 Another restriction was that we could not
22 enter the houses of non-Jews anymore and neither could
23 non-Jews enter the houses of Jews, which meant I couldn't
24 go to my friends' houses and play there; although I must
25 say, to the credit of the parents, they said, "Never mind

1 the restrictions; you can come anytime you want to."

2 Q: WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE COST TO THEM?

3 A: I think in those years -- depends. I had some
4 friends, one, for instance, whose father was a judge, and I'm
5 sure that if they would have wanted to punish the judge, they
6 might have sent him to a concentration camp in Holland. I had
7 some friends whose parents owned stores; they might have been
8 fined. It was all what had more impact.

9 Q: DO YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THE GENERAL REACTION
10 OF THE DUTCH PEOPLE WAS?

11 A: Well, some of them were fearful, so they
12 really appreciated if you had the good sense not to put them
13 on the spot; and there were those who were very blunt and
14 straightforward and said, "Never mind the restrictions. They
15 are not going to tell me what I can do and who I can be
16 friends with."

17 But still, if they would come to our house,
18 they would sneak in; they wouldn't just walk in because
19 you don't know who would turn you in. There was always
20 this matter of betrayal that you didn't know about; the
21 idea sort of the walls had ears, and that made life very
22 tense. The whole family life was full of tension.

23 In the meantime my parents had decided that
24 the family would go into hiding. Deportations hadn't
25 started yet, but there were some deceptive ways by which

1 people were being put to work for the Germans in camps,
2 and there was a foreboding that this was going to be bad.

3 So my parents had decided the family would go
4 into hiding. They never discussed it with my sister and
5 myself because we were too young. And, of course, the
6 danger --

7 Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU?

8 A: I was at that time about 11 or 12 years old.

9 Q: AND YOUR SISTER?

10 A: My sister was 14.

11 -- and there was this danger. I might say to
12 a friend of mine, "We're thinking about going into
13 hiding," and he might mention it to his parents, and his
14 parents might mention it to someone else, and before you
15 know it the plan may fall through.

16 So what my parents did is they made
17 arrangements for themselves to hide in a house of one of
18 the neighbors, and they took part of their furniture over
19 there and some of their wardrobe -- there was room in the
20 house -- so that they would have their own furniture and
21 their own things there.

22 And then they laid in an enormous supply of
23 food. They would buy chickens by the dozens and cook them
24 on the weekends and during the night so they were sure no
25 one would come around to see what they were doing, and

1 they would preserve them.

2 The same with the vegetables. I know my
3 mother made sauerkraut in very large crocks, boiled eggs,
4 which were preserved in kind of a liquid which looked
5 almost like a starch, and they bought a lot of canned
6 goods, which, of course, were closed off with rice and
7 butter and milk powder, and so on.

8 And that was really hard to get. Most of it
9 was bought on the black market. And these were all
10 provisions that were set aside. I guess they must have
11 assumed that once you go into hiding you are totally cut
12 off from the rest of the world and you have to have these
13 things.

14 They took those things to another neighbor.
15 One was living on the right and one was on the left, so
16 the neighbors didn't know from each other what the plans
17 were.

18 Q: EXCEPT ONE NEIGHBOR KNEW THAT --

19 A: -- that they were going to hide there.

20 Q: AND THE OTHER ONE KNEW THEY WERE HOARDING
21 FOOD.

22 A: The other one knew they were going to be the
23 keepers of the food, and everything, but they never would
24 have known where to bring it.

25 But the plan fell through; for some reason it

1 fell through. By April 1942 we had to start wearing our
2 star. Things, of course, became more difficult then. We
3 were more restricted in our movement, and so on, and the
4 whole situation changed.

5 In the school -- I was now in the Jewish
6 school -- the Germans would come whenever they felt like
7 it to inspect to see if we were wearing our star.

8 There was a shortage of faculty. I was in
9 the sixth grade, but the fifth and six grade were in the
10 same classroom with a teacher who had come out of
11 retirement. She had married, had a child, but she came
12 back to teach because there was a shortage; and she
13 brought the child to class, and he would sit there and
14 play with his toys. And it was very impossible, of
15 course, because his mother was paying attention to all the
16 other children instead of him.

17 And then every day when we came to school
18 there were empty seats. There were kids who were gone,
19 had been taken away or who maybe went into hiding.

20 Sometimes families were picked up by the
21 Germans during the day, and they would send for the
22 children, and the Germans would come and take them right
23 out the classroom. So that was a very, very unpleasant
24 time.

25 By November 1942 the police in our city was

1 told to have an extra contingent of officers on duty at
2 night; and although they didn't know exactly what for,
3 they suspected it might be the rounding up of the Jews.
4 The policemen still walked their beat at that time, so
5 every cop who knew about this and knew the Jewish families
6 on their beat warned the people, and they also warned
7 prominent people whom they felt might be taken as
8 hostages.

9 So my parents decided not to sleep home that
10 night. My sister and I went home with one of our trusted
11 employees who had worked there from the day my parents had
12 opened their store. Of course it was a risk to him.

13 We -- the two of us; my sister and I -- left
14 the house at about five in the afternoon. It had started
15 to get dark. And we were wearing our star. And all we
16 had with us was our school books because we didn't want to
17 arouse any suspicions. And as we got closer to where he
18 lived -- we weren't allowed to use public
19 transportation anymore -- we took our books and raised
20 them up to cover our star and went to his house.

21 My parents were sleeping somewhere else. And
22 the Germans had the habit that after they would have gone
23 to a house to arrest people, they would seal the lock.
24 They would place kind of a label over the lock. So my
25 parents had made up with this employee that he would go in

1 the morning and check and see whether the locks had been
2 sealed; and if they were, then he knew where to meet my
3 parents and he would warn them about this, and if not, of
4 course, we would just go back home.

5 Well, as it turned out they did come that
6 night. My father was still in the house because he was
7 gathering up some of our final belongings, thinking this
8 was pretty much the time to go into hiding, and he left
9 the house by going across the roof to one of the
10 neighbor's and then left them. He didn't sleep there.

11 Somehow the plan of going into hiding at the
12 neighbor's house fell through. It never came about. I
13 don't know why. But as the plan worked out, the next
14 morning they found out that the Germans had been there,
15 and my dad made up with this employee to take my sister
16 and myself and bring us to the railroad station, where he
17 would meet us, and there I met my parents, carrying our
18 school books. That's all we had.

19 We had removed our stars. We got on the
20 train, and we went to another city, the city of Hilversum,
21 which is close to Amsterdam. And I had an uncle there who
22 was in hiding already and who had pretty much contacted
23 people in the underground, and we had hopes that he would
24 help us.

25 So he did. He found immediately a hiding

1 place for my sister, and he told my parents and myself to
2 go to a friend of his in Amsterdam, stay overnight, and by
3 the night he would send someone to take care of me, to
4 find me a hiding place or to take me to a hiding place.

5 Q: WHERE WAS YOUR SISTER?

6 A: In Hilversum. She was with a detective of the
7 police force, the local police force there. And this man
8 himself -- I don't know how active he was in the
9 underground, but he had a son who was very, very active,
10 and that's how my uncle had made contact with him and
11 asked him, "Can you help these people?"

12 And he said, "No. The girl can stay with my
13 parents no problem."

14 Q: DID THEY HAVE TO PAY?

15 A: I don't know whether they paid there. I
16 really don't know. I would assume maybe some money for room
17 and board but certainly not excessively with that family.

18 Then we went to Amsterdam, as they had
19 suggested we do, and the next morning a young fellow -- a
20 Jewish fellow, must have been in his early twenties --
21 came to take me up to the Northwestern part of the country
22 to a hiding place that had been arranged in the meantime.

23 This was a young Catholic family. I think
24 the wife must have been in her early twenties. They were
25 almost newlyweds, maybe two or three years. To them it

1 was, of course, very strange. I was then 13 years old,
2 and what do they do with a kid like that? Besides that I
3 couldn't go out. I was totally restricted. So do you
4 entertain him? Do you find books for him? Do you go to
5 the library and take out books for a 13-year-old boy? Are
6 they going to question why you are doing this?

7 So the first days of hiding was a trial and
8 error for both sides. But about two weeks after I got
9 there, the police showed up one evening, and they came
10 under the pretense that the gentleman was a black
11 marketeer and they wanted to search the house for grains,
12 which he supposedly was selling, and automobile tires,
13 which was utterly ridiculous because there were no
14 automobiles so you didn't need to trade in tires.

15 So I had run out of the house when I heard
16 there was police and was in the back yard behind some
17 bushes hiding there. And then when they got into the
18 house, they whispered, "Look, you have been turned in.
19 You have a Jewish boy hiding here, and we will help him to
20 get away. If he has a place to go, we will take him
21 there."

22 So they called me into the house and told me
23 the neighbors had turned us in. They apparently had heard
24 my voice and suspected that -- maybe they heard
25 conversations; we don't know -- but they had turned me in,

1 that there was a Jewish boy hiding there. I'm sure they
2 never saw me.

3 So they asked me what possibilities I had for
4 another hiding place. And I said, "Well, I don't know. I
5 could go back to my parents."

6 And they said, "We'll take you there."

7 And I said, "You can help me if you take me
8 back to Amsterdam and from there I'll find my way."

9 Q: DID YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR PARENTS WERE?

10 A: Well, I knew where I had left them.

11 So I was arrested the next morning. They
12 came and made a lot of noise to make sure the neighbors
13 knew what was happening. They took me to the railroad
14 station. And then one of the policemen traveled with me
15 on the train to Amsterdam, and we separated at the
16 railroad station in Amsterdam, and I went to the address
17 where I had left my parents, and they weren't there
18 anymore, but the people knew where they had gone so they
19 took me to their hiding place.

20 And they were hiding then in a house where
21 the lady rented out rooms to students -- and it was
22 actually on the same canal where Anne Frank was hiding --
23 and this lady had agreed to take this couple in and give
24 them kitchen privileges, and then I showed up and of
25 course that was not part of the deal.

1 So she told my parents, she said, "Look, I
2 won't put him out on the street, but you really must find
3 a hiding place for him because I don't want a young boy
4 here."

5 And there was always some hesitation about
6 young boys because they felt they'll want to kick a ball
7 or they want to run around, or so on, while a girl maybe
8 would do some embroidery and help with sewing or dusting
9 or making beds, or so on, and you didn't ask that of a boy
10 in those days.

11 So the lady really kept the pressure on, and
12 my dad was successful in finding me another hiding place.
13 And I went there about four weeks later. I know it was
14 New Year's day of 1943 that I went there.

15 And this was a family which was the farthest
16 removed from the home life I had known. They had three
17 daughters. There was a shortage of food already at that
18 time. They rationed the food pretty much, but then the
19 husband and wife would make meals for themselves, like at
20 ten at night, and eat it up in the bedroom. Not only
21 didn't they feed me, but they denied also their own
22 children food, which was something I really couldn't
23 understand.

24 They had made arrangements with a local print
25 shop in the area for work that I could do at home for

1 additional income. They put me in a small room without
2 heat, gave me a quota of how much I had to do every day,
3 hardly fed me, didn't allow me to shower, change my
4 clothes, cut my hair -- whatever you can think of, none of
5 these things.

6 Q: YOU WERE LIKE A SLAVE?

7 A: Essentially, yes.

8 And they would go every month -- this woman
9 would go -- and visit my parents to, first of all, collect
10 my ration card, which I needed, which was issued every
11 month. My father used to get it from the underground in
12 Amsterdam. He bought it from them. I guess it was more
13 really a donation for the work they were doing than an
14 actual price that they set on it.

15 Q: WAS THIS A FORGED CARD?

16 A: No. These were cards that were stolen by the
17 underground from the distribution centers, where the issuing
18 officers handed out the cards.

19 And then the lady would get her room and
20 board, which she also required.

21 The husband and wife were always fighting.
22 And the wife would say, "I'll lock you out of the house."

23 And he'd say, "I'll turn you in for hiding
24 Jews," like it didn't affect him; it was her affair.

25 And this was a miserable situation. I wrote

1 letters to my parents, which were dictated, and then what
2 they would do is deny me my rations. And then when they
3 would visit my parents, they would say, "We had some extra
4 butter left over this month. We brought it to you," or,
5 "We had some extra sugar." All of this was rationed. So
6 my parents were thinking what wonderful people they were.

7 And so at one point when the lady went to
8 visit my parents, which was in May, my dad just asked,
9 "How are things going?"

10 And the lady said, "We had a discipline
11 problem." And my father was very upset because here it
12 was so difficult to find hiding places and now he got
13 complaints about me.

14 So he said, "I'll come and give him a good
15 talking to."

16 Q: WHAT WAS THE COMPLAINT?

17 A: Well, really what happened is that I had a
18 cousin -- who lives in Jerusalem now -- who needed a hiding
19 place temporarily at that time, and she came over there; and
20 noticing how food was handled in this family -- first of all,
21 she had to help -- she had cut an extra slice of bread for me,
22 and she was accused of stealing food, and of course I opened
23 my mouth and said, "She didn't do this." So there was a bit
24 of a shouting match, but of course you couldn't go too far
25 because your life depended on these people even though they

1 mistreated you. But that was really the source of the thing.

2 And so she first said, "No, no, we'll take
3 care of it.

4 And my father said, "Nothing doing. I'll
5 come talk to him."

6 "If you want to, you can come tomorrow." So
7 she came home; she cleaned me up, found somebody to cut my
8 hair. And my father came the next morning, and I pleaded
9 with him to take me with him. I couldn't tell him why.
10 And then I said, "Even just for a few days." I said I
11 wanted to see my mother; I hadn't seen her in all these
12 months. And he got the message and took me with him.

13 Q: WHY COULDN'T YOU TELL HIM? WAS SHE THERE?

14 A: Sure.

15 And so he took me with him to Amsterdam, and
16 then I told my parents, and they could not believe it.
17 They were shocked, first of all that they had been taken
18 that badly, and hurt because they had actually been eating
19 my food -- the woman brought it to them -- and that they
20 had left me with people that treated me that way. They
21 were terribly upset.

22 Q: DID YOU EVER TALK TO THE PEOPLE'S CHILDREN
23 ABOUT IT?

24 A: Just a little bit. Not that much. They were
25 fairly young children. And I remember the oldest daughter

1 was a little bit rambunctious, but really, no, I didn't
2 have much conversation with them at all. I was a stranger
3 in the family. I was not part of the family at all. I
4 was the boarder who brought in the money, besides doing
5 the work which brought in the extra money.

6 Q: WHY DO YOU THINK SHE RETURNED WITH FOOD?
7 THAT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY PRECIOUS THEN.

8 A: Because I was a source of income to her, and
9 so she tried to make sure of the relationship, and now my
10 cousin was there, so there were two sources of income there.
11 So I guess that's what must have motivated her in a way. And
12 it wasn't such a big deal which she brought them, but still
13 the idea that somebody comes and brings you some butter, it
14 was almost like bringing you gold.

15 And I have never tried to figure out the
16 psychology of these people because it's somewhat amazing.

17 So I was back with my parents, and of course
18 the lady said again, "He can't stay here." And I went
19 through about ten, twelve different places during that
20 year until my dad finally was able to find the right
21 contacts at the underground organizations that concern
22 themselves with helping Jewish children.

23 And so just before Christmas 1943 I went
24 again with a detective, of the Amsterdam police force now,
25 to Friesland, which was a province in the Northeast of

1 Holland. And there was a very well-organized network for
2 helping people who had to go into hiding.

3 And I came first to the central area, and I
4 stayed there through Christmas and New Years and then went
5 to a family which were in a local area and had the
6 responsibility for finding hiding places for people. They
7 were part of the network itself. And the intention was
8 that I would go to a farm. Apparently they had already
9 made arrangements with the farmer that I would come there.

10 And I, of course, at that time was a skinny
11 kid. I was underfed and not very strong at all.

12 Q: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS IN THE OTHER
13 MANY PLACES YOU STAYED IN?

14 A: For instance, in one place I was in a bank in
15 Amsterdam. I stayed with the bank janitor. It was a
16 small bank, and the janitor's family lived on the top
17 floor of the building.

18 And they had two sons, and one was very much
19 involved in the underground. He had been in training with
20 the merchant marine before, and he used to go -- I don't
21 know exactly how to describe this -- but there were ships,
22 boats that went from Sweden to England and then got back
23 to Sweden, and somehow these people got out of Sweden to
24 Denmark and back to their station. This was a
25 communication line with the government that was in exile

1 in England. And he was involved in these kinds of
2 activities.

3 And so one of his associates had been
4 arrested by the Germans. And this happened on a Saturday.
5 And you never knew whether the Germans would torture a
6 person like that so that he would talk and tell who his
7 colleagues were. So the two sons and myself spent the
8 whole weekend in the vault in the bank, locked up in the
9 vault in case Germans would come and search the place.
10 And so came Monday morning, they wanted me out of the
11 house as quickly as possible. This was one situation.

12 I was staying with a woman who had placed me
13 with her father, who was a gardener, an older man who was
14 a widower and had a housekeeper, and she had told him I
15 came from Rotterdam and had not told him I was Jewish.

16 Rotterdam had been bombed when the war
17 started, and there were a number of orphans as a result of
18 the bombing, and so she told him, "Let him help you with
19 your job." He worked at a large estate for some nobleman,
20 and she said "You can use an extra hand."

21 So he said, "Fine." And so I stayed with
22 this man, and I used to go with him every day to the
23 estate to work in the garden, and then I had to go to the
24 kitchen and find out from the housekeeper what kind of
25 vegetables they wanted that day. And so it turned out

1 that the housekeeper came from Rotterdam and started
2 asking me questions, and I couldn't answer them so I had
3 to leave.

4 And so there were all kinds of things like
5 that that happened repeatedly. Most often it was a matter
6 of danger, of suspected danger.

7 Q: WAS IT DIFFICULT TO FIND HIDING PLACES?

8 A: Yes, it was in a way. You know, some people
9 were willing to accommodate you on a temporary basis, you
10 know, "I need a place for a week." Okay; they would do
11 it. But in general it was not that easy.

12 I stayed, for instance, with an engineer of
13 the radio station, who, when the head of the Dutch Nazi
14 party recorded a speech for radio, he sabotaged the speech
15 claiming so-called "technical difficulties." The guy
16 recorded five, six, seven times, and every time again and
17 again. They finally suspected he was doing that. So once
18 suspicions arose he was doing this, I had to leave because
19 he didn't know; maybe they would come to his house.

20 So there were various reasons why I had to
21 keep moving.

22 Q: HOW WAS YOUR SISTER FARING IN HIDING?

23 A: My sister was faring a little better. To go
24 back to this family that treated me so poorly, well, they now
25 only had my cousin, and they had had this benefit of having

1 two people hiding there. So my sister was hiding in the same
2 town, so they decided to go get my sister and just move her
3 into their house.

4 So when the lady came again to my parents --
5 and of course my parents didn't let on that they knew the
6 story from me because my cousin was still there -- they
7 came to collect the money for my cousin and her ration
8 card and said, "Now we need two."

9 My father said, "Why?"

10 "For your daughter."

11 And he said, "What about my daughter?"

12 "Well, she's staying with us now." And he
13 got very angry about that.

14 He said, "You have no right to move my
15 children around without talking to me." And he demanded
16 that they bring my sister to him, and the woman refused
17 and threatened to turn him in if he dared to come and get
18 her.

19 So that, of course, was the straw that broke
20 the camel's back. My father talked to one of the students
21 who lived in the house there, who was also very active in
22 the underground, and he said, "Don't worry about it.
23 We'll take care of it."

24 And they went over there to this house, in
25 German uniforms, to search the place for people hiding

1 there and scared them enough that they let my sister go
2 very quickly because they didn't want anybody else in the
3 house at that point, thinking that they had been turned
4 in. So my sister got back to my parents.

5 Q: WAS YOUR COUSIN STILL THERE?

6 A: No. My cousin left, too.

7 I mean this was a calculated decision to get
8 them out of there. So my sister got back to my parents.
9 My cousin found another hiding place.

10 And the lady was more accepting of my sister,
11 of having a girl in the house for some reason. She didn't
12 pressure my parents that much to find a hiding place for
13 her, and so my sister stayed with my parents for a while.
14 I believe she had some other hiding places but did get
15 back to my parents.

16 But in the meantime I had left; I had come to
17 the other hiding place. I got to this family, which was
18 going to send me to a farm. They had already made a
19 commitment to take in a Jewish baby. That was a child
20 that was born secretly and taken away from the mother
21 immediately after birth.

22 And so the woman looked at me and said to her
23 husband, "You can't send him to the farm. Then the farmer
24 is going to call you the next day to take him back. He
25 expects a farm hand, not a kid that can't lift anything."

1 So her husband said, "We can't keep everyone
2 at the house who passes through. He has to go to a hiding
3 place." But she one out, and I stayed with this family.

4 And so about four or five weeks later they
5 asked me about my general experiences and my family, and
6 so on, and I told them the story about these miserable
7 people that we had been involved with. And so the husband
8 said, "I would like to go and visit your parents and
9 introduce myself because they must be very worried not
10 knowing what kind of people you are staying with this
11 time."

12 And so he did go, and he visited them. And
13 that was in February 1944. And my sister was there with
14 my parents at the time, and so he offered to find a hiding
15 place for my sister Mimi so the two of us could be
16 together. My parents were very happy with that, and he
17 told me we would be back in about six weeks, he had and to
18 make the necessary arrangements.

19 And when he traveled from where he lived,
20 which was in the eastern part of the country, to the
21 western part, he was going to get his list of people for
22 whom he had to find hiding places. That's really what he
23 was doing, but he didn't tell it to my parents. I don't
24 know if you are familiar with the book by Corrie Ten Boom
25 The Hiding Place, but that was the organization that he

1 dealt with. And he used to take people from that area,
2 that particular place, house almost, and have them come to
3 his area and then find hiding places for them. So he knew
4 he was going to be back in April.

5 So he went back the Thursday after Easter to
6 pick up my sister and found out that they had been turned
7 in and arrested the Saturday before.

8 Q: YOUR PARENTS?

9 A: My parents and my sister.

10 So he came home. He had hoped to come home
11 with a surprise for me, and then he had to come home with
12 the sad news that he knew my parents had been picked up
13 and my sister had been picked up.

14 Q: AND TAKEN WHERE?

15 A: At that point they still were in Amsterdam.
16 My father was in prison in Amsterdam, and my mother and
17 sister in The Hague, for some very peculiar reasons; but
18 eventually they were sent to Westerborg.

19 He kept track through his underground
20 contacts of where they were. When they were in
21 Westerborg, he went there and tried to bribe the guards to
22 see if he couldn't get their freedom, and so on, but to no
23 avail. So they were then deported and sent to Auschwitz,
24 where they died.

25 But at his first meeting with my parents, he

1 had told my parents that if ever anything happened that
2 they shouldn't worry, that he would take full
3 responsibility for me, take care of me.

4 This was in April. And then came June, and
5 someone in the town where he lived and where I was
6 hiding -- in the meantime he had taken care of about 32
7 other people to find them hiding places -- someone in the
8 town called the Gestapo headquarters in the city, and at
9 that time to make a long distance call you had to call the
10 operator to place the call, and the operator at the
11 telephone office realized that this was a call to the
12 Gestapo and listened in and heard that we were being
13 turned in and sent someone over to warn us.

14 Now the whole family went into hiding. They
15 had a little four-year-old girl at the time.

16 Q: THEY WERE YOUNG PEOPLE?

17 A: Yes, they were young people.

18 They had a Jewish baby, and myself. And of
19 course, being members of the underground, they had no
20 difficulty finding a place to hide. But the underground
21 said, "You should put the Jewish boy separately. You are
22 in danger enough now." And they insisted.

23 They said, "No." They made a commitment to
24 the parents that they shouldn't worry about him and,
25 "Wherever we go, he goes with us." And so after when we

1 left the house initially that same evening that we were
2 warned, the little girl and myself went to a farm in the
3 area, and the baby went to another farm, and they told us
4 they would be in touch with us as soon as possible.

5 The underground, in the meantime, found a
6 hiding place for them in another city, and then they sent
7 for the girl and myself.

8 I had been very happy to be on the farm
9 because I was free and could go out and run through the
10 fields, and so on.

11 Q: WHEN YOU WERE WITH THEM, YOU HAD TO BE
12 INDOORS?

13 A: Yes, I had to be indoors. Sometimes I could
14 go out with them in the evening, but not that often. But I
15 had to be indoors.

16 Q: HOW DID YOU OCCUPY YOURSELF IN THE DAYS?

17 A: Well, they had a tutor for me, but the only
18 thing I remember is that we did some geography. I really
19 was not prepared to do any studying. The tutor wasn't
20 that regular.

21 But there was a lot of activity going on.
22 There were always people coming in who went on to other
23 hiding places, so they would stay there for one or two
24 days. So I helped out in the house: I peeled potatoes; I
25 washed dishes and made beds. So I was busy enough.

1 And there were other activities, underground
2 activities that I participated in, especially if it was of
3 an administrative matter and I didn't have to go out.

4 So being at the farm I learned how to milk
5 cows, and I also drank the raw milk, and so I contracted
6 diphtheria. And so a few days after I left the farm and
7 joined the family where we were all together in hiding in
8 the house of someone else, I got sick.

9 We were in a strange town, and they had to
10 find a doctor whom they could trust, and they just took a
11 chance and found a doctor. They said, "Someone is very
12 ill," and the doctor came over and realized they were
13 strange people, and took one look at me and knew
14 immediately I was Jewish. He never asked a question. He
15 said, "I'll take care of you. I'll get you medicine."
16 And so they nursed me back to health.

17 And then the woman contracted it from me
18 because it's very contagious. She got sick. And then the
19 lady of the house where we were hiding got sick. She got
20 very fed up with all this and threw all of us out. So the
21 five of us were out on the street.

22 So the underground requisitioned a house for
23 us, which became the center of activity for the
24 underground in the area, and there I became much more
25 involved in underground matters. I was out on the street

1 quite often. I moved around much more freely because it
2 was a strange town.

3 Q: YOU WEREN'T SUSPECTED OF BEING JEWISH?

4 A: My hair was dyed, sometimes red, sometimes
5 orange, depending how it turned out. I was probably
6 suspected of being Jewish, but it was an area that was
7 very much oriented to helping people anti-German. It was
8 later during the war. Many more people were willing to
9 risk resistance, in a way, but also they were by that time
10 fed up with the treatment they received. So there was
11 less risk, although there were always traitors around.
12 You always had to be careful.

13 The gentleman became very active in the
14 underground. It was now more paramilitary work than
15 hiding Jews because it was not an environment where he
16 knew people and could go out and find hiding places.

17 The underground workers had been told by that
18 time that if they ever were arrested and the Germans
19 questioned them as to who gave them the orders to say Paul
20 gave them the orders. That was his nickname because they
21 were looking for him anyhow, and this really happened that
22 people were arrested and asked, "Who gave you the orders?"

23 And they would say, "They come from Paul."

24 "Well, who's Paul?"

25 "Paul is the one that gave the orders."

1 That's all they knew.

2 During that time the Gestapo had planned to
3 renovate its headquarters, and so the underground had
4 spoken to the laborers who were going to do the work and
5 the telephone installers. The underground had asked to
6 put microphones in the rooms and the telephone installers
7 to put it in the telephone sets, and then they put an
8 additional cable in the building which they ran out of the
9 building to a warehouse in the city where the underground
10 had a 24-hour listening post so they could hear all the
11 conversations, all the questioning that was done of
12 prisoners, and all the phone calls that came in and went
13 out.

14 And so at one point, of course, we were again
15 turned in. They now knew where Paul was. They found out.
16 So again we were warned, and we left. Then we really
17 split up. I stayed in the city where we had been hiding.
18 But the family went out of town. They went to a farm in
19 the area there. They stayed in touch with me almost on a
20 daily basis.

21 Q: HOW WOULD THEY DO THAT?

22 A: They would come to town to see me. They were
23 very concerned about me.

24 That was in February of 1944. And then about
25 six weeks later the gentleman came to town from the farm

1 and said, "Come with me." And this was in the evening.
2 And, "We'll go to City Hall, and I'll introduce you to the
3 first Canadian troops that have arrived here."

4 And that was my liberation. That was an
5 incredible experience really to suddenly be free, take
6 back your own name, and say, "I'm Jewish." It was really
7 a very incredible experience.

8 Then after about two weeks we went back home,
9 that is, the home that we had run from the first time.
10 All the 32 people that they had hidden survived. None of
11 them were ever found, which was a very gratifying
12 experience for them. And then the baby's mother showed
13 up. The father had been killed, but the mother showed up
14 and claimed the child, and that was a very moving
15 experience.

16 Q: IT MUST HAVE BEEN TERRIBLY DIFFICULT FOR THEM
17 TO GIVE UP THE BABY.

18 A: It was, but it was also during war. They had
19 taken the child to save it for the parents, and they had
20 succeeded. But it was a very difficult thing.

21 Q: IN SUCH A YOUNG BOY, HOW DID YOU FEEL YOU WERE
22 ABLE TO COPE WITH THE LOSS OF YOUR FAMILY?

23 A: Well, that's really difficult. You had to go
24 on. You had to continue. First of all, this family, as
25 I'm sure you understand, was very affectionate and warm;

1 for instance, they didn't leave me time to wonder what
2 would happen. As soon as high school opened, they
3 registered me in school and said, "You go to school."
4 There was no question. That was what I must do.

5 So I went to school. I stayed with them for
6 another year after the war. I'm still in contact with
7 them, of course, although only the --

8 Q: CAN YOU GIVE ME THEIR NAME?

9 A: Yes. It's a family, the Ungerways(?).

10 Unfortunately the husband died in 1979. Their
11 four-year-old little girl, who was an amazing person, died
12 suddenly in 1986, most unfortunately. So only the mother is
13 alive. There were two other children born after the war with
14 whom I have had contact and am friendly with them and visit
15 them, but of course I don't have the same relationship with
16 them.

17 Q: DID THE SMALL GIRL DIE OF DISEASE OR OF
18 ACCIDENT?

19 A: We don't know. She suddenly went into a coma
20 and never came out of it. I had had dinner with her and her
21 husband about four weeks before that, so that was really quite
22 a shock.

23 I should just tell you about the girl
24 herself. The family was Calvinist, believed absolutely
25 that it was their responsibility, their duty, to God to

1 take care of God's children, after all the Jews were God's
2 children in their belief. So they had taught that little
3 girl that to protect the Jews was a religious
4 responsibility and, therefore, if she had to lie on
5 account of that, that this was permissible. And she
6 would.

7 And people would sometimes tease her and
8 question her and say, "Who is that boy?"

9 And she would say, "It's my brother."

10 "But I didn't see him before."

11 "Oh, yes. He's been here all the time."

12 When we went to this city where all of us
13 were hiding, she was questioned by the neighbors very
14 thoroughly, and she came home and told us, "They kept
15 asking me; they kept asking me." But she was very firm
16 that the baby was her brother and I was her brother.

17 Of course, there she felt better because all
18 of us now had the same name. The family had to change
19 it's own identity also and had to forge documents. So now
20 all of us were her family, and she felt much better about
21 that.

22 Q: DID YOU EVER FIND OUT WHO HAD BETRAYED YOUR
23 FAMILY?

24 A: Oh, yes. My family was betrayed by a Jewish
25 woman who turned in about 1500 other people. She worked

1 for the Gestapo. She claimed, of course, after the war
2 when she was brought to trial, that she was forced to do
3 it, but she did it with such enthusiasm that it was hard
4 to believe she did.

5 She is the only person that was executed by
6 the Dutch government after the war for working for the
7 Germans. As a matter of fact it was written up in the New
8 York Times here in 1949.

9 She betrayed them. And the policeman who
10 arrested them, who was also a Dutchman, was a former
11 classmate of my father from elementary school, who came
12 with two of his assistants. He worked for the Gestapo.

13 The lady who was hiding my parents told us
14 after the war that he recognized my father immediately
15 when he came to arrest him. There was a case of mistaken
16 identity. The woman who had turned them in thought it was
17 my father's brother, and so he saw the difference and told
18 my father, "I thought it was your brother."

19 And so my father said, "Well, why don't you
20 let us go, then" and offered them money.

21 And his words were, "Three Jews in one catch,
22 that was too good to let go." And those were his words.

23 He was tried after the war. He was given
24 about 20 years. That was in 1947, so it meant he would
25 have gotten out in about 1967. And I'm sure, as what

1 happened with most of these people, that his sentence was
2 shortened and he may not have served more than ten years
3 or so.

4 I have never wanted to know whether he was
5 walking around free or not or where he lived. I put that
6 behind me. It was just something that happened, and
7 taking my anger out on him would not bring my parents or
8 my sister back.

9 Q: AND WHAT HAPPENED THE WOMAN WHO HID THEM, WAS
10 SHE ARRESTED ALSO?

11 A: Yes. She was taken away. That was very
12 interesting. They came back a few days later to take her
13 away. She went to a concentration camp in Holland, which
14 was a pretty bad camp, and then was sent to Ravensbruck,
15 which is where she was till the end of the war.

16 I never saw her after the war. I never
17 visited her. It's very strange kind of thing that, like I
18 said, I stayed with the family I was hiding with for one
19 year after the war. I then went to Amsterdam to a Jewish
20 orphanage. I passed, I cannot tell you how often, the
21 house where my parents were hiding when they were taken
22 away. I never went in. I never rang the bell. And every
23 time we've gone there, I've been to Holland. It draws me.
24 I go back to the place, but I have never spoken to the
25 lady. I assume she is passed away now.

1 Q: SO YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN IN THE HOUSE AGAIN?

2 A: No. Never. Never. But I can't go to
3 Amsterdam without passing by there.

4 Q: IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE.

5 A: Yes.

6 Q: AND WHY DID YOU LEAVE THIS FAMILY THAT YOU
7 WERE WITH ABOUT A YEAR AFTER THE WAR?

8 A: Well, immediately after the war the Jewish
9 community in Holland was completely devastated, is probably
10 the best way to describe it. Whoever had survived had lost
11 family members, came either back from a camp, or had been in
12 hiding and had to start from scratch.

13 So there wasn't much social care. There was
14 no Jewish-family children's service, and so on. That was
15 one of the reasons why I stayed with this family.

16 Then they had immediately taken the lead by
17 saying, "School is open. You go to school." What was I
18 going to decide for myself. They told me what to do.

19 Then a Jewish social-welfare agency opened up
20 because there were about 1400 children like myself who
21 were orphans who are been entrusted to other families, and
22 some of them were younger than me and had relatives who
23 had survived or grandparents who said, "I'll take care of
24 the child," or, "I'll take care of my brother's child or
25 sister's child."

1 And the people who were hiding the child
2 said, "I don't know if I can just give up this child to
3 the relative." So an organization was started.

4 Well, the government first stepped in, and
5 they said, "They are all wards of the government, and we
6 will look after them."

7 Another Jewish organization was started to
8 see if these children could go back to Jewish
9 environments, which probably in most cases was the desire
10 of the parents anyhow.

11 And so a social worker came to visit me, and
12 I was then 15 years old, so I could talk for myself. And
13 the social worker saw I was in a very caring family, and
14 so on, and a very pleasant environment, but she asked me
15 would I like to go back to a Jewish environment. And this
16 was during the school year. And she said, "If you make a
17 decision like that, you will have to make the change
18 during the summer."

19 And I thought it over because I knew I would
20 go to an orphanage.

21 I had surviving relatives who had said
22 immediately that they would take care of me, and there was
23 no question that they would --

24 Q: WHO WERE THESE RELATIVES?

25 A: That was my father's older brother.

1 -- but they had lost a son, and they had a
2 daughter who survived, a younger daughter. Not only was
3 my aunt terribly distraught over the loss of her son, but
4 she couldn't deal with the fact that she had lost all
5 these relatives.

6 My aunt sat in a chair, like this, just
7 staring at the wall trying to deal with her grief of the
8 loss of her own brothers, her husband's brothers, her
9 friends, her environment -- whatever she had grown up
10 with.

11 So the psychiatrists who got involved with
12 this immediately said, "He can't go to his relatives.
13 That's not the place for him to be." And so it was an
14 orphanage that was the alternative.

15 And I decided that -- you see, I was now a
16 bit of a novelty. I was going to a high school in an area
17 where many Jewish children had been hiding, so many of my
18 classmates -- although I was the only Jew in the school --
19 many of my classmates were proud that this was someone
20 that they also had contributed to saving, even though it
21 was another person they had saved. But they had all been
22 in it together. And so I was treated with extra care.
23 And many people pitied me, and I figured that if I was
24 going to live with this kind of special treatment, I was
25 never going to get my own life in order because there

1 comes a point where people don't pity you anymore; they
2 don't say, "Oh, the poor kid."

3 Q: IT SOUNDS LIKE A VERY MATURE THOUGHT FOR SUCH
4 A YOUNG PERSON.

5 A: Well, you matured very fast during the war.
6 Self-preservation is an incredible kind of thing. I have
7 often said that I wish that during my years now I was as
8 sharp as I was when I was in hiding and had to really
9 think about every move that could possibly endanger me.
10 So, yes, you did mature very fast.

11 Of course, I realized when I was told my
12 parents had been shipped from Westerborg that was the end.

13 Q: DID YOU KNOW THAT EARLY ON?

14 A: I knew when they left Westerborg because this
15 man had traced them very carefully, so we knew when they
16 were in Westerborg and when they left; and I was very much
17 convinced that this was the end.

18 There are people who say they didn't know
19 that the Jews were even being murdered. I think it's part
20 of denial that they didn't know during the war because I
21 knew.

22 That family used to say to me even when they
23 were in hiding that the danger was bad for them but for me
24 it was the end; it will mean death. Well, they wouldn't
25 have said that if nobody knew that the Jews were being

1 killed.

2 Q: YOU KNEW ABOUT THE DEATH CAMPS, THEN?

3 A: We knew the Jews were being murdered -- that
4 they shipped them off to Poland; we didn't know where; I never
5 heard the word Auschwitz -- but that they were shipped off to
6 Poland and that's where they were killed, either worked to
7 death or just killed.

8 I find it interesting, for instance, that in
9 Westerborg there was a person who would know -- every
10 Thursday the transports would leave from Westerborg -- and
11 there was a person who then at the job to go to the
12 different barracks and call off the names for people who
13 were going to transport. This man was nicknamed the Angel
14 of Death. Now, why did they call him the Angel of Death
15 if they didn't know that it was the end? That was one
16 example.

17 But also Anne Frank wrote it in her diary
18 that there had been broadcasts from England from the BBC
19 saying the Jews were being killed. But I knew it, too.
20 It really meant the end.

21 So I had already dealt with this idea that
22 the chance of my parents and my sister surviving was very
23 slim. Of course, I didn't want to believe that for a long
24 time after the war that they really were dead, even when I
25 had spoken to eyewitnesses who had seen them and knew that

1 they had been killed.

2 Q: SURVIVORS FROM THE CAMP?

3 A: Survivors from the camp. Yes.

4 I spoke to a woman. Actually she tried to
5 find me to apologize because what had happened is when my
6 mother and sister -- well, the three of them arrived in
7 Auschwitz at the same time, but the males were separated
8 from the females, and then my sister was separated from my
9 mother and cried bitterly, and then the Germans said, "All
10 right. You go back to your mother" and switched her with
11 this other woman, and this woman survived. And she felt
12 guilty about that in a way and came after the war to tell
13 me and to apologize.

14 And I said, "I don't know why you are
15 apologizing." I can very well imagine that my sister must
16 have been very devastated by being separated from her
17 mother under those circumstances. So it's one way I found
18 out.

19 My father I never found out exactly what
20 happened. I still intend to find out, but I always put
21 this off. He came to Auschwitz. He was sent to a work
22 commando. They arrived in May. He died in September. I
23 have been told he was sent to the gas chamber. I have
24 been told he was packed with a group of other men in a
25 cattle car and just left to die. I have never found out

1 exactly what happened. The Dutch government at one point
2 declared all these people dead because they didn't come
3 back. And I still want to find out. I would somehow like
4 to know.

5 Q: HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT DOING THAT?

6 A: Well, the Red Cross was responsible for
7 repatriating people who survived the camps, and they have
8 an office in Germany -- it's called the International
9 Tracing Service -- where they keep all these records, and
10 I thought I would write to them and ask them what do you
11 know about him. I know the date he arrived and the date
12 he left Westerborg and the date he arrived in Auschwitz.
13 "Where did he work?"

14 Q: I WAS JUST WONDERING WHETHER YOU FELT SOME
15 RELUCTANCE ALMOST OR A SIDE OF YOU NOT WANTING TO KNOW WHAT
16 HIS LAST DAYS WERE.

17 A: Well, for a long time I felt that way, but I
18 have heard many personal histories now of people who were in
19 camp. I am interested in hearing them. And so I feel I
20 should know what happened to my father, too. I know what
21 happened to other people.

22 But to come back to one of your questions
23 which I think I never answered fully, which is how did I
24 deal with the loss of my parents, the orphanage was an
25 orphanage of Jewish boys, some camp survivors, some of

1 them having lost parents, like myself, and this was very
2 good group therapy to be together and all have the same
3 problem and also realizing that there were others who have
4 had these tremendous hardships who had been terribly
5 demoralized, and so on. So that helped me a lot.

6 And then in 1948 I volunteered to fight in
7 Israel with the founding of the state of Israel. I was
8 never a Zionist, but I could not possibly see another
9 defeat for the Jewish people. That's what it appeared
10 like to me.

11 And so I came back to Holland in 1949 and
12 went back to school. I was gone for exactly one year, so
13 I went back where I left off and finished up part of high
14 school and then 1950 came to the States.

15 Q: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO EMIGRATE TO THE UNITED
16 STATES?

17 A: Well, again, I guess a desire to be more
18 independent. My uncle had made sure that when I went to the
19 States that I had enough money to buy a ticket to come back.
20 So I had this kind of security that if I didn't like it here,
21 if I couldn't make it here, that I could go back, that I was
22 not out on the street.

23 And Holland didn't attract me. I had very,
24 very bad experiences after the war compared with during
25 the war in terms of getting my rights back.

1 I can give you two examples: One of them was
2 that a family, here from San Francisco who were
3 acquaintances of my parents but really good friends of my
4 uncle, had come to Holland and visited me in the
5 orphanage -- it was in December 1946 -- and told me that
6 they would give me an affidavit to come to the States and
7 I could stay with them and I would go to school here and
8 they would help me get set.

9 So I was a ward of the government, and I
10 needed a passport, for which I needed permission because I
11 was underage, and the government organization said to me,
12 "We can't let you go. These are strange people. Maybe
13 they have bad intentions." I mean my parents had just had
14 to entrust me to anybody during the war, and now these
15 people were afraid somebody would have bad intentions with
16 me while they weren't doing anything for me at all.

17 Another thing was that my uncle had the
18 intention of re-opening my father's store and to run it or
19 to have someone manage it until I was old enough, feeling
20 that certainly would have been my parents' intention that
21 the store would be turned over to the children and would
22 be a source of income for me.

23 And so in the city where I lived in Arnhem
24 there had been a battle in September 1944, and there was a
25 housing shortage, and some of the population had been

1 evacuated. And those who came back to Arnhem were
2 allocated housing; and if you had had a store, you got
3 housing with a storefront. But the requirement was that
4 you would carry the business that was there in 1939 before
5 the war started in addition to what possibly your business
6 was if it was different.

7 And so in my case somebody was allocated the
8 housing space. We didn't own the house; it was rental
9 space, but still we had lived there. And in my case
10 someone was given the space who used to sell stoves, which
11 my parents didn't sell, and therefore was required in
12 addition to his own product line to carry the line that my
13 parents carried.

14 So my uncle thought that I was just as much
15 someone coming back to the city as the other people, so he
16 asked for the storefront back. And they said, "No.
17 There's a shortage of housing here."

18 And we went to court, and my uncle explained
19 that this was a business that was going to be run for my
20 benefit, that the people who were in the business now
21 really were benefiting from the goodwill my parents had
22 built up over all the years that they had been in the
23 store.

24 And the judge said, "Look, he's a young kid.
25 He should go to school and finish his high school, and

1 nothing doing with the store."

2 And I could go on and on and on. When I talk
3 about the post-war period, I am angrier than what I talk
4 about the war time.

5 Q: YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT
6 NOW?

7 A: About the Dutch government, yes -- well, the
8 climate after the war, not necessarily only the government,
9 but the climate after the war in reabsorbing those who came
10 back.

11 No, I have always said that I was basically
12 condemned to live in poverty because the Dutch government
13 didn't do anything for me.

14 Q: NO REPARATIONS OF ANY SORT.

15 A: The reparations I got were minimal.

16 First of all, everything was stolen from us,
17 and when there was an opportunity to put in a claim for
18 reparations, I was asked how many sheets and pillowcases
19 and blankets and towels, and on and on, my parents had.
20 How did I know? I had no idea of that.

21 As far as the inventory was concerned for the
22 business, my father kept the inventory to a minimum in the
23 business, but he kept it in the house. The reason was
24 that they were confiscating Jewish businesses at very
25 irregular times. You never knew when. And surprisingly

1 it never happened to my parents, but they were prepared
2 for that.

3 So the books that were kept for the business
4 showed a very small inventory. Our accountant had the
5 books that really showed the true inventory. He was
6 Jewish. He survived the war. All his records had been
7 hidden, so he did have the records from our business.

8 So he put in the claim based on the total
9 inventory from the business. The Dutch government
10 wouldn't accept it because basically that was not the
11 inventory that was there officially according to the
12 documents. And so then I got 60 percent of that paid,
13 which was a pittance; and then to top it off I got notices
14 that I had to pay inheritance taxes on that, that this was
15 an inheritance.

16 My father had life insurance. The
17 life-insurance policies were considered negotiable
18 documents, like stocks and bonds, so they were confiscated
19 by the Germans. They had a loan value. The Germans
20 borrowed money on it; they used it as collateral. When
21 the war was over a friend of my uncle, a lawyer, who was
22 interested in trying to help me out with these things,
23 went to the insurance company and said, "I want the policy
24 paid. The person has died."

25 At first we had to wait a few years to get

1 proof of death, which of course didn't exist. And so the
2 insurance company said, "Wait a minute. The policyholder
3 didn't pay the premium till he died." And so we went to
4 court over that thing.

5 And eventually the settlement was that I
6 would get the cash-surrender value of the policy after I
7 paid off the loan that had been taken on the policy, which
8 my father never took out; somebody else did. The Germans
9 took the loan. So as far as that goes, I got nothing.

10 So I came to the United States with about
11 \$350, and that was it, with whatever I had done in the
12 meantime while I was living in Holland in terms of
13 clothing, and all other things my uncle paid for. So I
14 really felt that I was basically told to "Figure it out
15 for yourself."

16 Q: DO YOU THINK THAT THAT WAS A COMMON
17 EXPERIENCE?

18 A: Yes. That was one of the things I discussed
19 recently with people who went through similar experiences who
20 say, "Well, I have a friend that got scholarships, and I got
21 loans," like from the Hebrew Free-Loan Society there. That's
22 true, but you had to pay off the loan. The parents had
23 prepared for the children, and there was no one doing anything
24 for them.

25 Q: WHAT ABOUT THE DUTCH PEOPLE IN GENERAL AFTER

1 THE WAR, DO YOU FEEL THEY WERE WELCOMING?

2 A: No, they were not. The best example I can
3 give you is of a City councilman in Amsterdam who went into
4 hiding and came back after the war and wanted to reclaim his
5 seat, and he was told that he had left his electorate without
6 good reason, so what did he want now coming back to reclaim
7 his seat.

8 Q: THAT'S AMAZING.

9 A: There were several reasons. Holland suffered
10 very badly during the war. The country was completely --
11 what do you call it -- emptied out by the Germans. They
12 stole everything. They took the railroad tracks, the
13 overhead wires from the trains. Everything was taken
14 away. There was nothing there. No food. The cattle they
15 took away from the farmers, and so on.

16 So people had suffered very badly, but
17 especially the Jews who were in hiding had lost. They
18 were paupers when they came back. They didn't have any
19 possessions whatsoever.

20 And so some of them would come back, for
21 instance, doctors would come back and say, "I want to
22 restart my practice." But what happened was other doctors
23 had, of course, taken over the practice. And the doctors
24 would say, "I'm not going to get out of this office. I've
25 been practicing for the past few years. You were not

1 around." So there was tremendous conflict all over the
2 place about those things, and it created a lot of bad
3 feeling, a lot of anger.

4 Another thing that happened in the very
5 beginning was the southern part of Holland was liberated
6 before the northern part, so many of the Jews who were
7 hiding in that area were not able to go back, really, to
8 the cities where they had lived; and since that area was
9 run under military government, they used to get jobs with
10 the military government, and the military government put
11 out rules and regulations, which they then had to enforce
12 or work with. And so there were people who said, "Look at
13 this. We saved their lives, and now they are telling us
14 what to do, and they are restricting us in what we can
15 do," and so on. So there was a lot of bad feeling.

16 Q: IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU RAN INTO A FEW
17 EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE, LIKE THE POLICEMAN.

18 A: During the war, yes, absolutely. Well, this
19 is the strange part: My parents were arrested by a member of
20 the police force where another one risked his life all during
21 the war helping Jews to go into hiding. So it's very
22 difficult to say. My life actually was saved three times by
23 the Dutch police. But my parents were arrested not by Germans
24 but by Dutch police. It's very strange.

25 The same as when I was in hiding. I was

1 hiding with very outstanding people. I can't talk enough
2 about them. The older you get, the more you realize that
3 they were precious and maybe there are two or three more
4 people like that in the whole world. I was also hiding
5 with people who were terrible, and I have heard horrible
6 stories of very bad experiences of people that were in
7 hiding.

8 Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER LIVING RELATIVES
9 BESIDES YOUR UNCLE, LIKE GRANDPARENTS?

10 A: No. My grandparents all had died before the
11 war. I had two aunts, two of my mother's sisters, who
12 survived the war. One family intact, as a matter of fact,
13 and one of them lost a husband and one of the daughters.
14 But that was the extent of the relatives, although I have
15 never really taken exact count of how many relatives were
16 lost.

17 But we were a very close family, that is, my
18 mother had four sisters, two brothers. They all had
19 children. We always got together. The cousins got
20 together. And my father had five brothers with a good
21 number of cousins there, too. We had very close contact
22 with them. And all of that was gone. The whole world had
23 changed when the war ended.

24 Q: DID YOU STAY IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH PAUL'S
25 FAMILY?

1 A: Yes. When I was in the orphanage I used to go
2 visit them regularly. Whenever I go to Europe, of course I
3 visit them. I visit the woman. She remarried. They have
4 visited me here in the United States. I still correspond with
5 them. Correspondence is getting a little poor, now so I call
6 now and then to talk to the woman. Yes,
7 that's a very important family in my life. As a matter of
8 fact I had my 60th birthday in June of this year, and the
9 first thing I did was call this woman and say, "If it weren't
10 for you, I wouldn't have had this 60th birthday."

11 Q: HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

12 A: And she just pooh-poohed it. That was the
13 only human thing to do as far as she sees it.

14 But, you see, they cared for me; I was part
15 of the family, but they cared for many other people.
16 There were other children there that they supervised. The
17 family really took good care of them and noticed when the
18 kids were growing that they needed clothing, and they
19 would go and get it for the, and that came out of their
20 own pocket.

21 Q: THEY WERE EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE.

22 Q: They were absolutely very extraordinary
23 people.

24 Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

25 A: No, I don't think so. I think I pretty much

1 told my story. Afterwards, there are always thoughts of "I
2 should have added this or that."

3 Probably the one thing I should say is that
4 not only didn't my parents go into hiding in the place
5 where they planned to go into hiding, but also they never
6 got the food that was stored -- not our clothing,
7 nothing.

8 Q: SO THOSE WERE YOUR NEIGHBORS?

9 A: Those were very, very good neighbors.

10 As we traced their activities, they did very
11 well on the black market selling it, and claimed after the
12 war not to have any of the possessions of my parents, so I
13 had to go with the police and take the tablecloth off the
14 table and say, "That's mine," and go through drawers and
15 find silverware, which had my parents' initials on it so
16 they couldn't deny that it was my parents'.

17 Q: SO YOU WERE ABLE TO RECLAIM THOSE THINGS?

18 A: Yes, I was able to reclaim those things, but
19 that all fit in an attache case. That's the extent of it. It
20 was very little that I got back.

21 But these are part of the post-war
22 experiences which just made Holland a very unpleasant and
23 painful place to be, so I was really happy to be able to
24 go to the States. I think it was very good to go to a new
25 environment, a new life.

1 And then here, of course, after a short
2 while, I got drafted and ended up in the army and then got
3 the GI bill and was able to make something of myself.

4 Q: I WAS JUST WONDERING: WHEN YOU HAD TO BE IN
5 HIDING DURING THAT LONG PERIOD, DID THAT SUBSTANTIALLY AFFECT
6 YOU AT SCHOOL, GOING BACK TO SCHOOL?

7 A: Yes. When I went immediately to school after
8 the liberation, of course I was nowhere near where the other
9 students were, although their time had been interrupted, too.
10 But I went into hiding in November. I had just started high
11 school, and I went back to school in April. So the period
12 from November to April, the first year in high school, I had
13 missed. But they advanced me to the second year anyhow, and
14 there I ran into all kinds of obstacles because I didn't have
15 the background.

16 And besides that, when I thought about it
17 later on, it was a very ridiculous situation. I had gone
18 through this extremely difficult period in my life. I had
19 to adjust to being an orphan, thinking about what I was
20 going to do and how I was going to do it, and then
21 somebody said, "Go to school and get good grades." People
22 had no idea. They didn't know how to deal with this.

23 Q: THINKING THAT YOU COULD JUST SNAP BACK.

24 A: Yes.

25 So when I went to Amsterdam to the orphanage,

1 I enrolled in a school that had been created especially to
2 help you catch up for those who had been in hiding, and we
3 worked very hard there, but I couldn't keep up.

4 And the principal called me in and talked to
5 me, and he said, "Look, you are not going to be able to
6 make it here in a normal school. You need private
7 tutoring to catch up with several subjects, and you will
8 have to work very hard; and if you are going to do it" --
9 this time I was at the orphanage -- "if the orphanage will
10 agree to it, I know a tutor who will do this for you and
11 then come September you can come back and I will admit you
12 to the school and help you along here."

13 And that was the first time I realized that
14 he didn't call on my parents to talk to them. He was
15 telling me, "It's your baby. You are responsible for your
16 future and what's going to happen." And that really shook
17 me up, and it sank in.

18 Q: SO NOW YOU REALIZED THAT YOUR PARENTS WERE
19 REALLY DEAD.

20 A: Yes. Not only that, he was telling me,
21 "Look, it's your baby. No one is going to tell you what
22 to do. I'm going to advise you. You will have to live
23 with it. No one else is going to have an interest, even,
24 whether you do it or not." And he did that very well. I
25 realized it later on. That was the moment that I realized

1 that I was responsible for myself.

2 And so I did go to the tutoring service. I
3 never knew who paid for it. I have no idea how it was
4 taken care of, but the principal did contact the
5 orphanage, told them that this was what was recommended,
6 and it was worked out. And so I had private tutoring by
7 the man who later on created the Anne Frank Foundation.
8 And I caught up.

9 So when I went back to school, of course, I
10 was pretty much ready to work with the other students,
11 although a few months later I decided to go and fight in
12 Israel.

13 Q: BUT YOU DIDN'T STAY IN ISRAEL, EITHER, AS I
14 UNDERSTAND IT.

15 A: No, I didn't stay in Israel. I was very
16 disappointed at that time with Israel because I could not
17 understand -- I had never really been exposed to the fact
18 that there was also discrimination among the Jews. For
19 instance, someone would say to me, "Where are you from?"

20 "I'm from Holland."

21 "Oh, there are Jews in Holland? Then you
22 must be a Yacket(?)."

23 Q: A WHAT?

24 A: A Yacket(?). That is an expression they use
25 for German Jews as opposed to Eastern-European Jews.

1 Then they had this division of whether you
2 were from Galicia or from Lithuania and whether you were
3 from the Mediterranean. And this apparently was very
4 common but very strange to me.

5 The Jews in Holland never spoke Yiddish.
6 They had their own kind of mixture of Dutch and Hebrew. I
7 came to Israel, and those who didn't speak Hebrew then, in
8 1948, spoke Yiddish. I couldn't speak that language, so
9 they didn't want to bother with me, they didn't want to
10 know from me. So they'd almost ostracized me. So it was
11 a terrible disappointment from me.

12 Q: YOU COULDN'T FIND A HOME ANYWHERE.

13 A: Yeah.

14 Q: I GUESS PEOPLE ARE THE SAME ALL OVER.

15 A: They are, yes. But for a young person this
16 was a very painful, shocking realization.

17 I also didn't like -- especially at that
18 time -- the very great difference between the city and the
19 kibbutz. I felt the people in the kibbutz really were
20 very dedicated and idealistic, while the people in the
21 city just were benefiting from it.

22 So I went back to Holland. And there were
23 some people in Holland who were Zionist who looked at me
24 and said, "Oh, you didn't stay there. You bad person.
25 Bad character."

1 Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?

2 A: Nothing else. No.

3 Q: WELL, THANK YOU.

4 A: Thank you for letting me talk.

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