

And tape, and we're recording. But we need about 10 seconds for all the tapes to get to the correct speed. I'll let you know when we're ready to go, and Judith will identify everybody in the room.

Today is Tuesday, April 25, 1995. I'm Judith Antelman with the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco. Today I'm interviewing Edith Heine-Levy, and assisting me is interviewer Ellen Szekal. Producing is John Grant.

Edith, I'd like to start with some background questions. If you'll tell me first your full name at birth.

My name at birth was Edith Levy. Well, "Livi," if you say your name as Levy.

And when and where were you born?

I was born in Amsterdam, in Holland, on July 16, 1938.

And what are your parents' names?

My father's name was Leo Levy and my mother's name was Erna [? Letko. ?]

And where were your parents born?

My parents were born in Germany.

Do you know in what cities?

Yes. My father in Koblenz, or very close to Koblenz, and my mother in Dortmund, in Germany.

Do you know what year they emigrated to Amsterdam?

Yes. Immediately in 1933.

And did they ever describe the circumstances under which why they decided to move?

Oh, yes. My father warned openly people not only that he was Jewish. He also warned many people leave the country soon. And it was amazing what he thought was that people laughed at him. They didn't believe it. And of course, he warned and was in the newspapers. And so he left immediately. And actually they wanted to go further to overseas, but for reasons I don't know they couldn't make it.

And do when he married your mother?

When they died?

What year your parents were married.

My father died in 1968. Or-- sorry?

When your parents were married.

Oh. I found a document yesterday. It was '30-- I think they wrote down '36. No. '35 or '36.

So they met in Amsterdam.

No. Let me see. That cannot be. Yeah. I don't know.

But as a couple they came married together.

Yeah. They came-- no, they didn't come together. My father left immediately and my mother tried to keep his business. They had some employees but the Gestapo came and harassed her so she then left a little bit later, a couple of months later is what I know.

What was your father's business?

He first had a factory in Elberfeld. But he didn't like it. And he had a smaller business shop, wherever it was.

He sold items?

Yes. Sold I think it was--

Clothing?

Yeah.

So he left first and she stayed on. She tried to keep it for awhile. And it wasn't possible.

Did they ever tell you any experiences they had that were directly anti-Semitic experiences that they had?

Yes. My mother has these anti-Semitic. They put signs on the windows of the shop. And I don't know really what they did. But it made her life-- they made it difficult for her so that she couldn't stay. That's all what I know.

Did they ever break the windows? I don't know. My mother didn't talk about that. But she said it was very threatening. They were already threatening things. But I don't know what. Only with the signs that they-- signs that this is a Jewish business or something else.

Do you have any siblings?

No.

So they came to-- and so they came to Amsterdam about '36, both of your parents.

No. No, no. Immediately when the Nazis got the power, so that was in '33.

Your father--

My father first and then my mother couple of months later, yeah. It was in '33. And they started.

And what did your mother do? Did she help your father's--

My mother helped my father and she worked there. And-- yeah.

What are your earliest memories living in Amsterdam? You were born in '38. '38, '39. Do you recall any sort of tension? As a baby, instinctively you're going to--

Yeah. So before the war, I remember my mother put me into a home the day over because it was not easy for immigrants to be there. And also the people didn't believe. My father told me he had to go every week or two weeks-- I don't know anymore-- to a foreign police, and they said to him, it cannot be that bad that you have to be here. And they didn't believe it till the Germans occupied Poland in '40. Then they know.

But it was very hard, and my mother-- it was a very poor life. We were very poor. And even they had money there. I

didn't know where-- probably they left everything. I have the situation that I cannot ask them for details. I can just sometimes guess what was going on, and from there what they told me. But it was so that my mother-- what do you say in English-- sew for people to earn some money.

And so she worked and she put me into her home. It was a Jewish home. And I have some bad memories because I was so little and all the other children were bigger, and I didn't feel really good being so little. And I was not independent enough there. I suffered from it, and I complained, my mother said. But that was very little. So these are my first memories.

And then my first memory was when the Germans occupied Holland because it was very noisy. The area where we lived in in Amsterdam got destroyed. The German-- there were a lot of airplanes in the air, and I know the Dutch people only tried a couple of days to defend themselves, and then they gave up. And they shot all these airplanes down, and it came down just where we lived.

And I always had fear when I hear an airplane. I run away when I was a child, and I still have it in my system because they came down, and where we were, the house where we were that got-- not destroyed, but the other side, the whole part of Amsterdam was destroyed. So that was my first impression.

And the next impression was that the Gestapo came to our house. And I must have been between two and three years old, and that was a bad experience. My mother was there, my father, and another couple also with the name Levy. They were also Jewish. And I don't know exactly what happened. But they started-- what do you say-- beating down the other woman, and she started screaming. And so there was a fight. She defended her-- there were two-- I always said soldiers, but probably these were always Gestapo people, two.

And so it was a fight and screaming, and they throw her into a car. And they obviously said something to us because from that moment on, we went away from there. And my mother told me later they had said, wait here. We come and take you later. We bring her and wait here. We come-- I don't know when.

And so and then we lived in a very humid and cold cellar with rats, and that was a real bad experience. And that's what I remember as my first memories.

Can you describe the house that you lived in, the house that you were born in in Amsterdam?

Yes. It was a very old-- written on it was N-O 1600. So it was a very old house, so with these--how do you say in English? And my mother always told me that before the war, everything was so cheap, and that whole house cost five [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]-- or five Gulden, at that time-- rent.

And the couple who live there, so she rented rooms to get some money. That was also part of it. It was always marmmer? Is that marmmer inside? Very old. And actually, yeah, it was pretty big. It was the Kerkstraat. And it's interesting, the yards. Later I heard about Anne Frank. The Prinsengracht is just-- the yards get together there. So I didn't know her, but that was very same place, more or less. Center of Amsterdam, yeah. Yeah.

But we were not long there because after this incident with the Gestapo, I don't know. I think we came back once but then went away from there.

The home that you were put in, you said you had bad memories. Do you remember, did the other kids bother you? Did they harass you? Do you remember any of that?

I didn't have contact with other children at that time. I had contact when I was more little. No, at that time, I don't-- or I don't have memories.

Judith just asked you about the home that you replaced. And you had said previously that you had felt it very uncomfortable. And I think what Judith meant was you were placed in a daycare situation with other children where you felt uncomfortable. Why did you feel uncomfortable?

Oh, yeah, but that was only till the Germans occupied. So I felt so uncomfortable because all the other children could move around and run away. And they put me on a table and they fed me because I wasn't able to do that myself. And that made me feel very uncomfortable. And the children laughed. That was always-- I think because I was the smallest one there. I really felt terrible.

Because they were all Jewish, I assume.

It was a Jewish home, yes.

No, it was not against me or harassing. No, certainly not. But I was too little to be in a group with children. Yeah. My mother told me later I always complained that there was a such fat woman who feeds me, and I didn't like that. So that was all. It was very harmless. It was before the war.

Did you ever ask your mother or father why they put you in that daycare home?

No. We never talked about why. I think because my mother had to work was probably-- my father brought me every day there. And I came home in the afternoon or evening.

As a little baby up until two years old, do you remember instinctively feeling your parents' fear or anxiety? You know, as a child, you have happiness around you and different experiences. But it didn't seem to be a normal childhood. Do you remember feeling--

The only feeling I remember was that my mother was very tense. I didn't like that. And she was also-- yeah. I think I have memories. Yeah, she felt very tense. And I couldn't do anything. I was too little. And then she was very-- I don't know how to explain it. Probably, when I look at it today, it was certainly not easy for her to have a child at such a time. They know that the Germans are at the door. They know that. Didn't make it any more to what they wanted, to get here. So there must be tension. There must have been tension.

Do you remember anything positive during those first two years, again, purely instinctively?

No. Unfortunately, no.

You talked about the Gestapo coming, when the Nazis occupied Amsterdam in 1940. Can you recall anything about that experience? The sounds of the boots marching, guns shooting, any scenes that stand out through a baby's eyes?

Do you mean in the beginning or in general?

In the beginning. In the very beginning when the Nazis came into Amsterdam.

So in general, there were always noisy and shouting and so. But in the beginning I remember another violent situation. I don't know exactly what happened. But we went back to this place. And obviously my father was there, and the Gestapo was kicking the door in. And my mother and I came there, and my father was climbing over the roof. And they were at the door trying to get in.

And we talked about the situation because my father said the Dutch people around saw that. And no one said, he's on the roof. And he said, if we had been in Germany, they would have said, he's on the roof. So that was why they kicked in the door. But I don't remember noise at that time.

When did that happen, do you recall?

That must have been before I was three years old. So between two and three years. That was in-- you mean the year? 19-- was born '38. For year I don't that. Yeah, I was in the middle. '92. Yeah, '92. '42. Sorry, '42. Yeah.

Do you remember anything else about the Nazis coming in to Amsterdam? Do you remember a lot of commotion, fear?

No, I had never fear. You mean emotions?

Emotions or thoughts or scenes. No, as far as I remember, I had never fear, even in the worst situation. And I just felt very miserable because of having no food over long periods, or very bad food, or malnutrition and no nutrition. And that felt bad. And also I felt a lot. The only feeling I had and suffered from was compassion. I had compassion, often, with my parents and with people around.

But no other feelings. At least I cannot remember. I don't think I had any feelings. I numbed myself out because-- you say numbed out in English? Numbed myself out. Even later after the war, I was still emotionless. Emotionless. Yeah. I can be that also today sometimes. But I am in touch with my feelings, actually, in general. But if it's something that's very critical I-- not always, but very often I can. I think that was protection to survive. Only my compassion, that was painful. I suffered from it. Compassion people did there.

At that time do you recall any other family members-- grandparents, aunts, cousins, uncles that lived in Amsterdam, were they experiencing any sort of anti-Semitic attacks? Where they fleeing?

Yeah. So I have never seen relatives. There were no relatives because my parents were the only ones who went to Amsterdam. So we didn't have any relatives there. And others, they were all in the camps. One uncle was in Auschwitz, but I think he must have been before '41, something like '39 or '40 that he got to Shanghai. So he emigrated to Shanghai. And yeah, most of them died in the camps. 22 relatives died in the camps and gas chambers. And so I have never had a family relative around. So other children had aunts and grandparents, and I didn't have that. We were very isolated, my parents too.

Later, did you ever ask your parents, did they consider leaving Amsterdam? I know you said that they wanted to keep going. Did you ever talk about that more with them?

Yes. My father always told me, he always said we have to go on. We cannot stay in Holland. And it's not far enough away. But we did not really talk about Holocaust and the situation, or they didn't talk with me. They anyway thought, oh, she was only a child. And I should be happy that I wasn't in a camp and in a gas chamber, that I didn't die in a gas chamber. That was what my mother said, I should be happy because I didn't look happy. I was very serious when I was a child, and very skinny. And she tells me that I should be lucky, but it didn't work, certainly.

But we never talked about real details. Only I got something that my father, that we had to go further. But they didn't make it and I really don't know why. I heard here that people had difficulties to get a visa and whatever. So they didn't make it. And in 1940, I don't know then it was impossible when the Germans were there. And you couldn't get out anymore. But they certainly wanted to. That's what I know, why they didn't make it out.

You mentioned before the woman that the Gestapo came in, and they beat her and took her away. Were your neighbors Jewish? Were you in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood?

I don't know that. I only know that these two people, a man and a woman, a couple, that they were Jewish and that they beat her-- beat, beat, beat her down, and that they wanted to take us. They didn't wait for them.

Did you see any other people being beaten up?

Yeah, that was later. I saw-- very later, I was older already. And I don't know what was going on, really. I was on the streets. And again, two Gestapo men were hitting a woman. And because when the war ended, I was almost seven years old. So I don't know what age I had. And I didn't know what is a pregnant woman, but she certainly was pregnant because I thought she had such a big distending stomach. She was very big. But I didn't know that. And they kicked her with their boots and hit her. It was so terrible. I only remember that there was a lot of blood, and I disappeared. But it was had something going on that was pretty much terrible for me. I mean, it's just all these things I saw made me more or less speechless, made me very still and speechless.

And I was the same after the war. I could not speak. I did not speak. I didn't know how to talk. And people ask me things. And I didn't talk till I was 10 or 11. I don't talk. I couldn't talk. That was not over after the war, unfortunately.

But there was no one who told me. So the transition from a life in hiding and all these unnatural situations, and then suddenly going to school in a normal life. I didn't know how to do that. And there was no one. My parents were very broken people, and I didn't know. So they were so busy with themselves and relatives, and it was depressing and very hard to have fun.

So I was very on my own. And whenever someone approached me, I run away, children or teachers. And sometimes every day they caught me, the teachers, because I just run away when they approached me. I was afraid of everyone. And they didn't know what was going on with me, and they punished me. And I had no support. There was no family, only these two very broken people. So it was also [INAUDIBLE]

What do you mean by broken? Elaborate on that. What does that mean? I

I'm broken. I don't know whether I can say they were depressed, but something like that. They were-- my father, who must have been a very alert and active man, a very sophisticated man, he was-- it was a kind of paralysis that they had. And also that the Jewish community in Amsterdam did everything that they wanted to go here. Then after the war, my father learned a new job with-- what was the name? It was [NON-ENGLISH]. And they obviously were afraid. My father was old, when I was born, over 50. My mother was almost 40. So they were over 50 and over 60 years old.

And they must have been very-- they left life before the war. What they told me, they had really a nice life. And they were-- I mean, my mother was always sick. I had to take care of her. And she always said, people are so bad, you don't believe that. And my father didn't talk much. It was not real family situation. So I felt sorry for them. I felt very sorry because I saw they were-- both of them had problems and didn't know how to handle my life, really.

This brokenness, it's difficult for me to express that in English. So there is no real-- yeah, I think depression is the right word. Buried in all the things that happened. One sister-- one sister of my father came back from a camp crippled. She couldn't go the stairs anymore, only backwards. And it was also a pretty bad experience to meet her. And she died very soon when she came back from camp. I don't remember which camp it was. So it was depressing.

And then my parents went to Germany. My father had a house, his parents' house. And when he came back, Germany had taken it and sold it. And he said no. And it took-- I don't know, it took so long to get it back. And it was also difficult. My father took me to Germany when I was 12 years old. And in the town where the house was, and he looked around there. And suddenly the German people-- I was afraid of the Germans. I felt terrible to go to Germany. But they suddenly fell on their knees and made a cross when they saw me. And I was 12 years old. It was very strange.

And my father said they took away the land around the house and they stole everything. And he said, and you look like-- my father had five sisters-- he said I had a little bit from everyone. So obviously they didn't know who I was. It felt miserable for me to go there as a child into Germany. But that was all very depressing for my parents. But that was already after the war.

Were you able to talk to your aunt at all, the one who died, the one who was so sick?

My aunt, yes. Yes. I visited her at different times. But we never talked about her, unfortunately. It's really a pity that I wasn't able to do that. And she, obviously, neither. Probably she talked with my father about it. I don't know. But she didn't talk with me about-- we talked about music. We played piano-- not with her, but with her husband. She was lucky and had a very nice husband. But no, we never talked about the Holocaust when I met her. I met her. And she was an actress from-- she showed me. So more of these things were past. And so her way was nicer. Yes, it's pity that we didn't talk after the war.

Which is? Were you able to talk to your parents about why they decided to move to Germany after the war?

Yes. Yes. I didn't want to go. I was 15 years old, or between 14 and 15. And I said, I don't go there. I cannot. When I heard German, made me nervous. I was afraid of the Germans and of Germany. And they said one day, we are going there. And I said, not with me. And I tried to stay in Holland. At that time, with 21, you were an adult. So they told me, you don't have to do what your parents want when you were 21.

And I could not understand that my parents went back. And I really could not understand that at that time. And they were not happy. They were very unhappy then later. And I went to my mother, I said, how could you go back here? And I had all the trouble there because I was so afraid of them. And she said, your father was the one who wanted to go back.

And then I went to my father and said, why did you want to go back? And he said, no, it was your mother. So they blamed each other, and I could never figure it out who it really was. But it was a mistake for many reasons, I think.

I'm going to go back a little bit to the war. Did you see roundups outside your window or in the street?

Yes, yes. Yeah. You have six blocks in Amsterdam. They closed that, and then they searched through all the houses. And we had neighbors there. That was another place, now, later, not the first place. Actually, I lived in countless places. But there I was together with my parents. And there were neighbor children and all over Jewish people hidden in the houses. But no one came back. And sometimes I saw these children. I had contact with them for a while. And I saw how they brought them. I think these were green cars where they bought them, and they never came back and no one came back.

And the roundups, I know that once I lived in family, another family. And they were not Jewish but they helped Jewish people. And he worked in the underground and helped. And I lived in the family probably two or three times, and it was a very good experience for me. It was a very normal family and people were nice. I didn't have such an experience. It was really good. There was warmth. But unfortunately was not long.

And one day, the Gestapo-- I don't know what they did. Was very noisy always when they came. And there was a woman, a man, and three children, twin my age. And I don't know where they were. But I fled with him, again, over such a small roof. It was very small and very scary. And Gestapo, we were surrounded by Gestapo. And he helped me to balance over this roof.

And I don't know how it happened. He really helped me to do that. He was very concentrated and focused on me. And they caught him. They caught him. And I escaped. And it was so that they dragged him into a concentration camp because he became a very famous writer after the war. He's very famous in Holland. And he wrote a book about his time, among other books, about this time in the concentration camps. So that was one experience.

And also, another place. I was with my parents again when they knocked. There was no electricity and all that didn't work and so on. But they always, how do you say, bumped or knocked. And if you didn't open the door they just kicked the windows in, in all hours, whatever it was. These were the roundups. And they kicked them in and were always-- I always thought that the Dutch people were starving or dying on the streets and all over because there was no food. The Germans tried to starve out Amsterdam. And they appeared to me very fat and strong. And I thought that's why they could kick in the doors.

And we hid sometimes below the floor when they did that. I don't know how. There was wooden, what is that?

Planks?

Yeah. Which you could take away. And I don't know how they did that, with something over it. I don't know how it was. But we were standing in water sometimes because there was Amsterdam is built on piles, and there's often water. But again, I only had compassion with the other people there. I was not really-- I don't know. I probably numbed myself out totally. But these were very uncomfortable. situations.

So when you say that you numbed yourself out, you had compassion for other people, are you saying you did not feel personal fear? No personal fear.

I cannot remember that, never. I got fearful later in my life. I got fear--oh god-- but not at that time. Yes. I was so fearful in Germany, and it never really disappeared. Even I studied there and I had very interesting jobs. Even my best friend are German now. It is something. never really disappeared. But I didn't have fear at that time.

Sure, it was a little scary over the roof, and there were scary situations. But at least I don't remember any fear. I would certainly remember it.

I wanted to ask you more about the boy that held you over the roof. How did you wind up with this family, with this boy that helped you? How did you get to that house?

Yeah. He was at that time a journalist in Amsterdam, a big Dutch newspaper. And they worked in the underground. And he was a very good friend already before all that started, though they were very good friends. And they took me to their house because there were times we didn't have to eat anything.

And I found myself in different houses, actually, countless places. I don't recall them, but this was one I recall because it was the only nice experience I had. They were nice to me. The twins were my age. And I was really part of the family. Only when visitors came and I could not appear. That made me feel bad. But it was really a little experience of something normal and warmth and friendly people. And so it was very good. It was not long, I think. Yes.

What was the journalist's name?

His name is Eddie [? Hornig, ?] yeah. Eddie [? Hornig. ?] He died a couple of years ago. But he wrote a lot of books, and also about the war, and one especially about his camp experiences.

The first time the Gestapo came to your house, why did they take you? Do you recall what was that situation?

You mean the first time that they hit the woman?

When they hit the woman, they said they'll be back for you.

Yes. That's why we escaped. I don't know. I mean, they often said to people, and I heard later-- I don't know. I was too little, probably, and I just saw this situation that we had to go into another place, which was really bad. But I don't know why they didn't take us. Perhaps they were so busy with the woman. I can only guess. I don't know. I don't know.

But they must have said they are coming back and take you. Stay here and wait and be ready. So that was obviously set, but later.

Did you ever ask your parents, how did you achieve movement from house to house? Did you have to wear armbands? Or you disguised yourself?

That is very strange that I don't know. I remember there were different situations where we had nothing to eat anymore. And I couldn't get up anymore. I could not get up. You get weak, you have nothing to eat, or sometimes very strange things. But I cannot recall at the moment, and I thought about it, how I suddenly found myself being in another family. I don't know.

I know that I found myself in a family I didn't like. They were not very nice, but they gave me food. And I was starving and I was very sick. I was sick because I had no food and then found myself in families and was dead sick because of their food. Sounds crazy, but these were different situations. But I never know how I got there. I really don't know.

I know that once, men on a bicycle-- there were no cars or anything-- on a bicycle. And these bicycles didn't have real tires, which are soft. And I hang on this bicycle because I could not walk. And he brought me somewhere. And it was terrible because all these shocks, and that's the only thing I remember. I don't know why I got there, got back and forth, got around. There I have no memory at the moment of this.

When you say you couldn't get up and you couldn't walk, can you explain that more? Were people carrying you at some point? You said that you couldn't get up and you couldn't walk. Were you carried? People taking you?

No, I remember I lie down, and it was scary for me because everything was spinning and I was too weak to get up. That happened different times. I think I was very sick and couldn't go to get for medical help. I only know that I saw my mother there once, and she didn't even look at me anymore. I think I was really starving and dying. I don't know. I really don't know.

Also, when we had the liberation, my father and I, we couldn't walk. We were too weak. We couldn't go through the door. But it became better very soon. We got a care package here from America with clothes. And I remember that was such a white bread, very white. And the pineapples, I never forget that, in cans. And god, it was so special. They only gave us-- probably they knew-- only little pieces. And it was also sad because we got a very little piece of this white bread and the crumbs on the floor, my father crawled to take the crumbs, we were so hungry. Yeah.

Yeah. It was already for the Dutch people difficult to get food, and especially when you could not exist to the outside world. That was even worse if-- yeah. And so they were harsh conditions in Amsterdam. They closed it with water to that nothing could come in and nothing could go out.

I don't know why they wanted to starve out the people. I heard that later. People were starving all over, all over. And they brought all the dead people. They didn't have caskets, of course, so they brought them on such wooden-- what is that-- karts-- karts, all over around us. And they fell down on the street. And they had foam, yellow foam. I don't know what it was, but that was my impression happened to people. And we were very close to that.

Can you tell us, on a day-to-day basis in the different hiding places that you were, I'm going to start with this family that was warm, the journalist. What did you do? How did you pass time? Were you able to go outside?

No, I don't remember that I went outside. But I remember that Eddie [? Hornig ?] was every morning working on his desk, and I sat under his desk like a dog, and I loved it. It was a good time. He was just writing, and I was under such a desk. That's the only thing I remember, and it felt good, too. And I was very isolated most of the time, and the twins, they had a very big bed, and I slept in the middle. That gave me such a feeling of warmth. And that was also nice. And every-- food and so, and they taught me how to eat, was also nice. So these were nice experiences. But I don't remember ever going out on the street and so. I don't remember. Only the thing with the--

Tape here.

No criticism, but I lived in Europe. You criticize people much more. You people are so polite, really. In Germany, they tell you immediately, you look so terrible today. You people, I feel terrible, but they say, oh, you look so nice. It is nicer, but it is very extremely opposite.

People are two-faced here.

Yeah, it's all over the same, I think.

What was your question, Steve?

People are more polite.

Yeah. You were mentioning before the occupation, your homes, your home and Anne Frank's home were sort of adjacent?

Yes, for three years. Well, my parents lived there already before it along, but I have been there, too. I was three years old. That was the gardens, the yard of the Prinsengracht, where Anne Frank was hidden. And the yards of our houses were together. And was the same height so we were really neighbors there.

And did your families know each other?

No.

No.

No, we didn't know. Just after the war, I heard that Anne Frank, that the house were there.

Well, she before she moved to the Annex, which was across town, actually, where her father's warehouse was, she lived in a complex, a fairly new complex with her family.

Yeah.

And I think that's the place that you're referring to.

What is the name of the place?

You're much better at pronouncing names. What was the name of the--

Prinsengracht.

No, that's the road I believe she lived on.

They were hidden there.

Oh, they were hidden there?

I think so, yes.

Yeah.

So I never read Anne Frank because I slowly, slowly started reading about the Holocaust. I never could do it. So Anne Frank, I just know that they lived there and had their house there, or their place, the whole family. That's all I know. Could look it up now. Yeah.

But that was the place where we also got caught. I'm talking about this. And I think they went there-- I don't know the year.

Where she got caught in the Annex was right next to the river.

Yeah.

Right on the river.

We call it gracht. And here was the street with what you call a river. And the next street was the street where we lived. And the yards, they connected. Yes, yes. But we didn't know them at that time because no one knew. And if you got out for whatever reason-- you had a false name or there were different names, there were different things, how to hide that you didn't exist-- you could not exist to the outside world. Yeah.

You mentioned something that I'd like to mention on camera, how you felt when you said that you were being carried from place to place. You talked about a boat and how you had to be alert.

Oh, yes. I mean, I we talked about a book. And the HaShoah group, the group for Holocaust survivors, we meet twice a

month. And we talked about the book, and they wrote about, among other things, also mentioned the hidden children, and said oh, they are all robots because they had to be quiet. They had to do.

And I remember sure, yes, I was kind of robot. I run away from everyone and there were different things, that partly I acted like a robot, but partly you had to be very alert. There were situations like the situation with the roof where you really had to act. So also, it depends how the situation was and what was going on. I don't know whether I answered your question, or how I felt with the different families, sorry.

No, you answered it. How you felt being moved every few weeks or few months, what that constant on the run, in hiding felt like.

So that since that time I'm running around all over the world, and really from one country to the other, from one place to the other, I have run away reflects probably from that time. But I had no feelings at that time. I didn't think about it. And I just found myself again in another situation, again with other people, then with my parents, then-- it was just normal daily life for me. I didn't know any better.

It was not pleasant. I suffered from cold. I had no shoes. I have just cloth wrapped around my feet during very cold winter times, temperatures around zero Celsius and under zero, so it was very cold and humid. That was all unpleasant that I suffer from it. But these changes from there to there and there. I don't recall any feelings, and I think I didn't have any feelings because it was just daily life.

Later I got feelings about it, much later, especially when I came to this country because I lived a long time in Germany and studied there and worked there. And I had built up, it made it clear when I came here, a kind of defense. I always wanted not to show them that I suffered. I did a lot of exercise to be fit and to where I could handle my life exaggerated. But I never wanted to show the German people how I really felt. And that was a defense mechanism. Almost my entire life I kept this.

And here it was actually the first time that I had safe feeling. And here I got flooded with memories when I came to this country. And they called it post-traumatic stress disorder. I've never heard about it. It was very strange for me because I came here to start a new life. So it was a little bit shocking. We are now in the present of--sorry.

Do you recall being away from your parents during your time in hiding? And if so, how did that feel?

No feelings. I don't recall any feelings. I mean, there were people like Eddie [? Hornig's ?] family and so where I felt wonderful, and it was over very soon, too soon. But there were other families where I didn't feel good. They just had food, and I didn't feel good. But I was not longing for my parents. I think that I never attached to my parents, never ever.

And I thought about it when I was eight years old, after the war with that, and I went to a Jewish school. And we went for a trip for two weeks in a home in the forest. Was a wonderful experience for me. And I was so happy, that forest and being there. So I loved going there.

And all the other children were crying that they had to separate from their parents. And I thought, my gosh, they cannot even be happy. So obviously, it had a lot of advantages not to be touched because my parents were too burdened themselves. They could not really-- and it has also advantages. It sounds crazy, but it is obviously true. Yeah.

Along those same lines, I'm just so curious how you had no fear, and you're a little girl and watching all of these extraordinary scenes. Did you feel that you were almost detached, as if you were watching a movie? Or did you ever feel that you were in the movie?

I was detached.

You were watching?

Yeah. I was not really detached because I don't know, I think I could be detached because my feelings-- the confession

was really so painful. Also after the war, I always suffered with people who had to suffer. I suffered my parents had to go through, but I didn't suffer about myself, perhaps also because my parents said, oh, you were only a child. And so there was not even a chance to think that I had to suffer with them. Yeah, the cold and the starving and all that. But I don't know.

I really don't know what happened. I think that something-- yeah, it might be the word detached is probably-- at least parts of me detached from it because it was a survivor to survivor. Otherwise, if I had all the feelings which you usually have, I would not be here anymore. It could be. Yes, I'm sure.

Do you recall any of what, as an adult, you could think back and interpret as abuse?

Oh, yes, yes, it was very abusive, I think, the violent treatment.

Were you treated at any of these homes with any kind of physical, emotional, sexual, or verbal abuse?

No. I cannot remember that people were that bad to me. I didn't like some of them because they gave me food and food and food, and I was sick, and they wanted me to get some-- what they say?

Meat.

meat on my bones. But I don't remember that anyone was really bad to me or abusive or so, just distant, some were very distant. No, I don't remember that. And I sometimes thought about it. There was only when we went the first time to the cellar, there was an old woman. Obviously she was the owner. I don't know, really. And we lived in a dark, cold, humid cellar. All over were rats. And I loved the rats, by the way. But now I know that it is not so pleasant. Yeah, I really loved them, but that is another issue. But these were companions for me. And I even had, with one rat, really a nice relationship, certainly, until my mother saw that. She wasn't [MUMBLING] Yeah, that is really another issue.

But it was cold there and dark, and it was unpleasant. And this old woman, when I think back, I was too little to know what she said or did. But I saw that she hated me. And there was a feeling that she didn't want me to be there. And whenever I meet a woman who looks a little like-- I discovered that recently-- then I get these terrible feelings as if she was it. She didn't want me there. My parents, yes, but not me. And she was against me, for what reasons ever, I don't know. So that was a very bad experience.

But I think, as far as I recall, there were not people who abused me. Just that some were distant and cold, and some were nice.

Well, conversely, do you recall tenderness and hugs and kisses?

Not at all. Neither from my parents, nor-- No. My real best contact I had with animals, with the rats first, and there was a cat, a real intense relationship. And there was no one.

Can you elaborate more about your relationship with the rats, your first encounter with the rats, how you developed?

I don't know how that happened. But there was one rat where I really played with him. And I only remember that there were stairs a little down, and I met this rat there, I don't know, probably every day. I don't know that anymore. And my mother later told me that I told her that I had met a wonderful being with wonderful eyes. And one day she went with me there and saw this big rat, and she was so shocked. And from that time on, she must have said terrible things and I was afraid of rats.

And I also felt she destroyed a good relationship. So I really felt, ugh, yeah, because it was a relationship for me, one of my first relationships. So animals play a real big role in my life. And it was good, I think. It was very good--helpful because I could hug these animals. Not the rat. I didn't know that they could be dangerous. My mother said they could kill me and bite me. And so I was suddenly afraid.

I had a similar experience right now. There is a little baby squirrel that comes into my house every day, and I talk with her, and she gets a peanut or something else. And a man came and said they could have rabies. And that's why I remembered this rat thing because I'm now so afraid.

Did you not remember the rat until the baby squirrel incident, when the man told you about the squirrel?

Yes, yes.

It was just now, this year.

Right now, here. I moved here to Oakland in an apartment. And this baby squirrel came eight weeks ago into my house. And she's sitting on my sofa, and I feed her. And the men were helping in the house to unpack some things were so shocked. And then I relived the whole situation with my mother and the rat, and they are a little bit similar. And I have a real nice communication with this little squirrel.

So first I backed away, just gave food on the balcony. But now I let her in again. She's again on the sofa.

You had another friend?

Yes.

Before your mother came in and scared you, what kind of games did you play with the rat?

I actually don't remember that. I was very close with the rat. Perhaps I kissed the rat. I was very close. That I remember. The rat was very tame. The others didn't. Similar with the squirrel. All the other squirrels are looking, and she is tame. But I don't, really, what I did. Long games because I was very busy with the rat. But I don't recall that.

Do you remember, did you feed it if you had some food? Did you ever--

I don't think so that I fed it. I don't know. I just had the feeling that I liked this being, and whatever was going on, like the squirrel, I'm sitting, I talk to the squirrel. And most of the time it runs in that way. No, it's too long ago. But it felt not good when she destroyed that. That was painful I was very angry at her, or not angry, but I felt desperate about this, she had done that. I can understand it today. But at that time, I couldn't.

It was your friend.

Yes, yes.

Was that in the cellar of your first house?

Yes, that was in the cellar, yeah. It was a cellar, and then it went even deeper, something. Was very dark in there and lots of rats. But not all were tame like this one.

Could you talk about your first hiding place, if you remember, how you got there?

You mean in other families?

When you had to leave your house after the Gestapo beat up the couple and took them away, and then your family fled. Do you remember if people took you to your first hiding place.

That was a cellar.

That was the cellar in your house.

No, it was another place. We went away from that house because the Gestapo had said they will take us. We should wait for them. And some people did that, by the way. I heard that in the meantime. But it didn't, and this old woman was the owner, or gave us the cellar, who didn't like me. And it was obvious, I remember. And I don't know how we got there. But we were suddenly in this environment.

Was this old woman Jewish?

I don't even know that, yeah.

Do you suspect this is the reason you left?

Left what?

The cellar. Might this have been the reason that you moved on to a new hiding place because of this woman?

I don't think-- I don't know because I had nothing to say. I was very little. I only remember these feelings, these strong feelings, that there were feelings toward this woman, and negative feelings, with the rat and all that happened at that time. But not why we then went to other hiding places. That I don't know.

When you were in the cellar, do you remember how you slept with your beds? Or--

Yeah. It was very cold there on the floor, and I know it was very uncomfortable. There were no beds. And I only know it was very uncomfortable and cold and dark. And that atmosphere with this woman in addition. So it felt-- I have just this memory of-- I thought about it, really, because of the squirrel. It's interesting, but such things trigger sometimes memories. But that's all I remember because I was very small. I couldn't talk with my parents about it. I don't know.

Do you remember a bathroom or showers or a bath?

This house where we first lived in, they didn't have bathrooms. It was built in 16th century. I think it was a house. So it was very nice house, very old. In the cellar there was-- I don't remember any-- I don't think they had something like that. I don't know. Then we were in the house. There was-- yeah, there was a bath and then not. I don't know how that was. There was not even soap during the war because I remember after the war, they had sent me a substitute. So it was wonderful, but it was not even soap, though.

I also learned, when I lived in other families, I don't remember.

In most of these homes, were you in the cellar? In most of these homes that you stayed in, did you live in the cellar?

No. No. I lived in families that were normal homes. And with my parents, we lived in a house, and we went below the floor when they searched through the houses. There was not a cellar. There was just sometimes water. So we-- yeah. But it was a part that we survived. We escaped. They were searching and stomping with their boots through the house, and we were below the floor.

But the cellar, I call it cellar because you went down to this room, and it was a very dark room without windows and all that.

Did these cellars connect from house to house, or were they self-contained within each? In other words, I know that you had said that the city was built on pyres.

Piles, yeah. Amsterdam is built on piles, yeah. Yeah.

So does that mean that these so-called cellars were connected, actually, or?

No.

No.

No. These were separate rooms. So every house had some or not.

How many times did you have to go under the floor? Do you remember about how many times and how many different places did you have to go under the floor?

Yeah, there was one place where we went below the floor I don't know how often. I don't know. I only remember that I felt so sorry for my father. So therefore I didn't feel sorry for myself. I don't know why. But I didn't know how often. But it was frequently because the German searched through the houses frequently, and very often during nighttime, so very-- without a warning or so, suddenly they were there.

How did you know it was time to go under the floor? You heard a knock on the door?

I think the noises, because they searched through all the houses, and they were very noisy, noisy and shouting and kicking in. I heard later that they even went with, what is it, a bayonet or-- where you saw all kinds of things, thinking that people were hiding all over in so many different places, and they knew that. And they were all noisy. I always had the feeling they are so noisy. I always thought when I was a child, because they have so much food, and they can be so energetic.

At the time that the Gestapo was searching when you heard the clinking of the boots, did you ever feel fear during this point?

Yeah, there was also a noise that they stopped the cars in front of the houses. I don't really remember how I felt when I was in this situation because they were always stopping cars, and then searching through the houses. But I know later, when I lived in Germany, and I heard a car stop-- even sometimes I have it right now also. But there it was-- in Germany very bad. I was trembling. And I knew it has to do with my experiences. I think this fear came later. That's what I think. I don't remember any fear. But there must have been something like that. I really don't know how that works.

In The Diary of Anne Frank, the sirens is that ever present sound that elicits so much fear. Do you recall a siren of the trucks coming to pick people up, do you recall?

There was a siren?

Sort of a siren. What would that be?

Like a whistle, a shriek.

No. A sound that a police car would make in warning to say they were on their way.

They warned people?

In the movie, Anne Frank's drama was going on inside. And in the background all the time you'd hear the trucks coming and going and the siren, the police siren, illustrating the fact that people were constantly being picked up. And actually, the way the movie ends is the siren comes and it doesn't go. It stops. And that's how she knew that the truck was there to pick her up. So my question is, do you recall any sounds?

No, no sirens.

Sounds.

No, I don't recall that, siren. No. No.

Why did they never find you? Why did they find all these other people? Why did they find Anne Frank, and why not you?

Was like this. I mean, it was just-- we often were very close to get caught, very close in different situations. There were countless situations. It was partly luck, I think, or how does it go? Partly I think people gave up. When the Gestapo came they said, here I am because they couldn't stand the situation anymore in isolation. And I know that people did that.

And I think if it had-- what do you say in English-- had gone longer, what would you say?

Continue?

Had continued, probably I would not sit here because it was unbearable. It is probably partly luck, partly being alert, partly you want to survive. I don't know why you want to survive. I really have to think about it because-- and all over they were caught, it's true, in our district there and other districts. It was really not easy to survive. And some people survived. Yes, sure.

What were some of the situations in which you almost got caught?

When they broke in. So when they broke into the house and were violent. And you say [GERMAN] in German, [GERMAN], it was just-- or when we just hid below the floor, and they didn't know where we were, or the situation with the roof for example, was also very critical. And my father alone had some critical situations where he talked about and-- it was just--yeah. I cannot really give an answer.

You said Nazis came in and they were violent. Did they throw things around? Did they--

No. They kicked the doors down. If people didn't open the door, they were noisy. But they went [GERMAN] open the door. And if people didn't open the door, you heard that all over. They kicked in the doors. So they must have been very strong because the doors were real stable in Amsterdam. I don't know how they did that.

Big boots.

Yeah, they had boots and so.

Was there ever a situation where you heard their car outside and you couldn't get to the cellar?

I know that there was a car and they picked up the children, our neighbor's children. These were Jewish children. They were very impatient and very bad, and they never came back, and also their parents. We saw that sometimes. Was a hole or a window or so. I don't know why they didn't come to us or that we escaped, whatever, hide, hid.

Was there ever a situation in which you couldn't hide, in which they actually came in, and maybe you were in some part of the house and you couldn't get to the cellar, and you had to hide upstairs?

Yes. There were also-- there was a situation where we had no time and went into-- I think different times-- into a closet. And I think that was not very helpful. But I don't know why they didn't search through the house, really. It's also strange. I know my father was in one closet. He went there, with clothes in it and so on. And my mother put me in another closet. I think they certainly opened such closets. But I remember we also had such a situation. I mean, there was a constant-- I should say the constant fear. But I don't remember the fear, but the constant pressure to be-- the English word, to get caught, constantly.

Can you describe what you saw through the little slats when you were with that family? Did you see people's expressions? Can you describe that scene?

When I saw the street?

When the children and the parents were taken away.

Oh, yes. Oh, I don't know. I remember that the children were-- they were not depressed or so. And I thought-- I was astonished. Not that they laughed, but they were-- I don't know-- if something nice is going to happen, so that what I can remember, the parents were very depressed and very broken. But there was a lot going on the streets.

In this case, I know that these Gestapo men were very impatient, noisy, and they did their duty. They told me that after the war when I sometimes I tried to talk with Germans. Many of them told me that they only did their duty. They didn't feel bad about what they did. And I suffered from this. That's why I couldn't talk. But I also remember that was why I said that I thought they have food so they can be happy, that they sometimes enjoyed what they were doing the power, I suppose. And I still have that feeling about it. I think about it, people can do to each other and enjoy it.

You were on the run for about two years, from '42.

From-- I don't know when we went into hiding. It was not long after. I don't know the years because I have no memory for years. But I got to know that soon after the Germans occupied Holland-- some people said it was a year later. Some said it was earlier-- till the end of the war.

You mentioned how some people, when the Gestapo came, and they just said, here we are, take us. What kept you going, you and your parents? Did you ever feel that you just wanted to stop running, stop hiding?

I never thought about it at that time. I didn't think about it. I don't know what my parents thought. I don't know. I just continued running after the war in Germany, went back to Holland, lived in Israel, lived in Switzerland. Then finally, I really had to flee because they started-- painted my house with Swastikas. Things were not good.

In Germany?

Yeah. So I fled Germany to Spain.

When did this happen?

That was in the '80s. I'd already started my-- I was married, and my husband and I, we wanted to emigrate together but he didn't dare to do it anymore. He was an editor and writer, and he said-- he was older than I am, 11 years. And he said, I don't dare to do it, to change the language and to go again. and he knew that I could not stay there anymore. I stayed because of him much longer than I wanted to stay. And also because of my mother was very old. And so I went back, and back to Germany. Also my friends were there, and I wanted to do my work.

So I went back and back. But I knew I wanted to leave. And the last years were really very hard because of-- in the beginning there were more subtle remarks and so on, which I suffered from, but became more and more openly. And in '89 I really fled to Spain, to a very remote island. And it was very peaceful there. The nature. The only neighbors. I had there were Germans who celebrated Hitler's birthday every year, and they wore swastikas in their ears.

So I attract-- or I don't know, attract, obviously, such situations. Someone told me, as long you don't have resolved all that, you will attract them. And so I was surrounded by people. Yeah. And they gave gifts to the men, key rings, swastikas, and others painted the town with swastikas. So I felt very uncomfortable and started to prepare myself to go overseas, to go here. This was my first choice. If not, I thought I will go to Canada or to [INAUDIBLE].

I made it here. I started learning English, and so I was very happy when I got my legal immigration in '92, in May, and came here. But with my background, it was really difficult to be in Germany, actually, from the very beginning.

So I was running. I was running from one place to-- that's actually what I wanted to say-- running and never stopped, and I don't know. So I certainly lost-- I only know that there were people who gave up because they didn't want--and I

can understand that. I really can understand that. You don't want to save your life and go through the hell to just to save your life. I don't know whether I would do that today. But at that age, I didn't even know another life because that was very short before. I didn't know a normal life. I didn't like it, and several [INAUDIBLE] it was-- didn't know, really. I didn't think about it, just accepted it day by day.

You mentioned you had a special relationship with the rat. Were there any other animals or children that you had relationships with during your hiding?

There was later a cat. There was a cat, a very big cat. And I think I always had special relationships with animals because I don't know whether I learned that from the cat. But when I was in Germany and 12 years old, I could catch a bird. And my father was so horrified when he saw that. I don't know. I think the cat taught me that because I climbed also trees later. It was a very strange thing. I can put chickens and birds on the floor 20, 30, 40, 50, and they all stay there. And I did that there in Germany with the chickens. It was the neighbor house. I don't know.

I think this cat was very-- she felt-- or he, it was a he-- obviously very domineering being. And that's also another story that has nothing to do with.

But I was not able to handle a normal life after the war. But I was able to handle things which no one could handle, or I had the things-- today I think about that. I never thought about it earlier. But probably-- there was also once a dog. I don't know who gave that to me, or to whom. But we didn't have anything to eat. I think there were two dogs, and they died because of starvation. But no, no other animals.

Did you leave your husband?

Yes.

Is he still alive?

We divorced because he was afraid I would leave. He knew I wanted to leave, made plans. And I only stayed because of him in Germany. And that was not so easy because actually, we didn't want to separate. No, we divorced.

What compelled you to leave?

Germany?

What compelled you to leave Germany and to leave him?

Oh, I think behind-- we were getting along very well, but there are always some problems. And one of the problems was that he was afraid I would leave him. I always said, I will not leave you. But he knew, because of the things that happened there in Germany, that I will leave one day. And he was afraid to stay alone.

And actually he didn't want to leave me, and I didn't want to leave him, so it sounds a little complicated, and it was complicated.

Was he Jewish?

No. No.

But there were some Jewish people in his family. And he was very-- Germans always thought he's Jewish because they think people who are Jewish look dark. And it's such a-- they thought he's Jewish and I'm not. But he also wanted to leave Germany in the beginning when we got together. And we made plans. Later, he didn't dare to leave anymore to start a new life. It's not so easy to leave everything and start again when you are-- It was more or less behind our separation.

But actually, we didn't want to separate. I suffered years from it, and he too. Sounds very contradictory.

Sounds very sad.

Yes, it was sad, yeah. But I'm now over it. So--

Are you in contact with him?

No.

I wanted to ask you, were there ever instances that the Gestapo came in to search and then a family kicked you out?

No. I don't think so.

Do you recall how many hiding places, approximately, or how many times you felt like you moved?

Countless. I don't know how many.

More than 10?

Yeah. Probably more. I think more. Certainly more places, forth and back and all over. Were you ever separated from your parents?

Very often. Can you talk about some of those instances, where you went, what kind of situation, kind of family you were with when you were without your parents.

Have we talked about i?

Some situations where you were alone without your parents.

Yeah.

Can you recall any experiences where you were taken alone and your parents were somewhere else?

Yeah. I think that was also part of normal life for me. I don't recall any special feelings about it. I don't. It was just--

Other than the [? Hornig ?] residence, the journalist-- you said that that was a good experience.

Yes. Yes.

Do you recall if you were with them for a few weeks? Did it feel like--

It always felt short. Yes, it felt short. I thought that they would bring me back to my parents again. It was a bad situation. They put me back into that situation again. It was nice for me to be there, but I have no idea how long it was. I have no idea, time. I have no feeling. Even today I have no feeling for time.

But at that time, I don't know if it was a year or a day, more or less. Probably I don't have a feeling for time because of that time. I don't know. I have no feeling, but I was really to struggle with time, and so when people ask me, I have difficulties, what happened when, and always to look up things, which year it was.

When you said that you escaped-- what was his name, Ernie?

Eddie [? Hornig. ?] Yeah, Eddie.

And he went up on the roof with you?

Yeah.

And he got caught but you escaped? How did that happen, if you can remember the details?

That's what I don't know.

I think he was so focused on me to help me to balance. There I was really scared because it was so steep. It was very steep and small. And he helped me. I think he made a mistake. Yeah, I think he jumped down, but I don't know what he did.

How did you get down?

I don't know that anymore. From there on it is, I remember this situation on the roof, and so and escaping, and hurry and do. And then I don't know how it ended. I only know that he was in a camp from that time on. I heard that later, that they brought him to a camp and that he survived in the camp and wrote a book about it.

Were the Germans chasing you across the roof? Do you remember that?

They broke into the house. They broke into the house, and that was the reason we went over the roof to escape. And I know they were surrounding with guns or what they had. I don't know what they had, the Gestapo, surrounded the house. So it was a very impossible situation. But I thought about it during the last weeks. How did I-- and where did I end up? I have no memory for that timeline. These are the gaps. I don't know. I don't know.

Were the Dutch police involved in any of these raids, or it was simply the Germans?

Germans, yeah.

No Dutch police. Or you don't know.

I don't probably know. I only know there was-- I don't know, some people say it was not such a small group around Mussert in Holland, who were Nazis and collaborated with the Germans. That's only what I heard later. So there were Nazis. But so my experiences were, and also my parents' experiences were that we had very good experiences with the Dutch people. They suffered themselves too much. But there was certainly-- there was a group who collaborated.

But I don't know about the police. I only saw Germans doing these things, German voices in German. I only know about the Germans.

What language did you grow up speaking?

Dutch. My parents spoke Dutch with me.

Was that very different than German?

Yes, it is a different language. Some people think it is similar, but it is different. The grammar is much simpler, and it is a different language, yes, I had to learn German later.

Were you aware of your Judaism?

So that I went to a Jewish school. My parents didn't celebrate anything. My father grew up in a very Orthodox Jewish house, and he was the only son, boy. They wanted him to become a rabbi, but he didn't want. They didn't do anything, but my mother wanted me to be Jewish, and she sent me to a Jewish school in Amsterdam. It was a Jewish school. So that was actually all.

So I was aware, sure. But it was not a problem in Holland. It became a problem in Germany. There it was a real problem.

Do you recall, during your hiding, there were celebrating holidays or marking them symbolically?

Yeah. In school we did that. And also, yes, we went sometimes. Yes, sometimes. But it was not a religious life, not at all. But we went sometimes to holidays, went to a place. And also yes, we were connected after the war with-- sure, after the war- but with the Jewish community in Amsterdam. So sure, there were celebrations, yes, certainly.

What about during the war in hiding? Do you remember if your birthday may have been, in some odd way, marked?

No, no, not at all. No. I didn't even know when my birthday was. No, there were other problems. There was never, ever-- I don't remember that. After the war, yeah, but not really. My family was more than-- that I was aware of the birthday. So I developed a feeling that every day is a new day. So I didn't take it seriously. I think you don't take things seriously if you never had an opportunity to celebrate or whatever it is.

I like names. I know that sometimes I had to wear other names, different names. And I almost forgot my own name. f And I recall every little detail if a person tells me about it. But I never know the names, and that is so difficult because it is not important. It could not be important for me. I think these are results. And people are sometimes so upset I say, I know everything about you, not your name.

Do you recall being told that if somebody asked you something, you were supposed to respond in a certain way, such as your name kept changing? Do you remember any information that you were supposed to tell?

Oh, yeah. That really had a very bad impact, perhaps, on my entire life. But my mother was so afraid that I could do something. They were children. I don't know, sometimes you got out with this one. And they went to Gestapo. They were a family they know very well, and they had different children. And a little boy about my age went to the Gestapo and said, oh, my parents have also such a star. And the whole family got caught and the child, and they never came back.

And my mother always said if we are separated, and someone asks you what your name is or something else, don't say anything. And she really must have done it in a very intense way because I ran away from everyone, even after the liberation. For many years I was so afraid people could ask me something. I was there. I acted like a robot. And I didn't know. I didn't know what to do.

And my life was really filled with disasters because of that. The teachers didn't understand what was going on. I read, and-- but I didn't talk. I wasn't able to explain. I wasn't aware of myself. And my parents didn't go and explain because they were so busy with themselves. And I was so afraid of people because don't tell them who you are. I thought I cannot do that.

Do you think that your parents understood, but simply were so involved in their own lives that they just didn't take the time to--

Yes. They were very involved with their pain and with their-- and I know that the school, because I was so strange, the only thing which was good, I loved learning things. I was very eager to learn things. And so it was easy for me to do school. I never have difficulty. And I still love studying and learning. And that was good. That was the only thing I liked.

But I was afraid of people. And I know my parents got letters or something that they had to go to school. For example, also, I had probably 50 minutes to walk to the school. And I waited till no child were there and the bell rang, and then I ran into the school so that no one could ask me something. And every day I was too late because I could never make it. The bell, and never, every day after day.

And instead of asking-- or I certainly didn't say anything, but my parents didn't understand that I came too late every day. And then my mother sent me earlier and earlier, half an hour earlier, an hour earlier. I was still every day late because then I waited longer.

And one day my father followed me, and then he saw there was a big tree where I stood and waited till every child disappeared and every teacher. And he asked me, so he said, I followed you. Why are you behind the tree? Now I couldn't give him an explanation. And it went on and on and on. So I was strange because of not having learned how to handle the rules of a normal daily life. And sometimes I still have difficulties Yes. I try to adjust. Also because I changed so many countries to adjust to others languages and other mentalities, put myself into these situations.

How long have you been speaking English?

Started learning in '91 when I visited this country and asked for political asylum first because of what was going on against me there. And I started learning with tapes. And I really started when I came here. I already started at that time. And so actually, it's almost three years now.

That's incredible.

Thank you. Thank you. I do not yet have the feeling that it's enough English. I think people have been here for many, many years longer and don't speak a fraction as well as you do.

Thank you. It's improving. I want to express myself. I mean, I do not think right now anymore about grammar and words. But I still have the feeling it's a foreign language and I cannot express myself as well as in other languages yet. So I'm still improving my words almost every day.

I'd like to go back to the war. Do you ever recall people sitting around listening to radios, to broadcasts, whether it's of Hitler's speeches, of any of the programs?

No. No. I don't know. We didn't have a radio, or--

Even some of the houses that you may have stayed in.

I don't recall it. I just don't know.

Were you able to get some sort of feeling toward 1944 when the Allies, after the Normandy invasion? Did you feel people around you feeling that maybe there's an end to the war?

No. No, not at all because we were totally isolated. We were totally isolated, and no. I don't know whether my parents had the feeling, or the other people were-- lived there. I don't think so. I don't know. I don't know. I didn't have any idea. I don't know. No. Probably we were really isolated. So we didn't get to--

1944 you were six years old. Did you ever think, or do you remember thinking, this had to end, I can't go on living like this? Or did you not even think about any of that?

No, I never thought that Because even I had these short experiences with Eddie [? Hornig's ?] family where I felt better. But I didn't really think about my situation. I just lived in it. I suffered in it. Nit I didn't think there could be a better situation. I don't know. I didn't think about it.

Were you ever reunited with that family?

My parents and I visited them as long as we lived in Holland different times. And also visited them when we left to Germany. And I met the twins. And so they were also at that time my age. But then I don't know. It is a pity that we didn't have contact anymore. I was so preoccupied with my life in Germany. And I don't know my parents, whether they had contact. I don't know. But I didn't have contact. I tried to get in contact later, a couple of years ago, and heard that

he-- we say he passed away. And someone tried to get in contact with the children. But so far I didn't hear anything. So there were some--we he tried to do that.

During the war, how did you pass your days? You said that you had this relationship with rats. And did you ever have games you made up or with invisible friends or?

Yes. In the beginning, I think about one place. I had some contact with-- there were also hidden children, but another house. So it was connected, the houses. And I met these children. And my mother told me after the war that they died in the gas chambers. They no came back. They didn't come back. There was some contact, but not long. It was not long. I cannot recall how long. There was some contact.

And I even remember a little boy. He was younger than I was, and I had a real short relationship with him. It might be that, I don't know, my age. He was three and 1/2 and I was four. So it was also a very short time.

Wow.

Most of the time I was isolated. But there were some contacts with animals and also some children. But the sad thing was they disappeared and never came back. Their houses were still there, and the furniture and everything. And people broke in and stole everything because there was no one anymore. So people did that. No one came back. All these empty houses and apartments.

Did you see them being taken away?

Not all of them, but I remember one of these neighbors, yeah. Yes, this was a boy and two girls where I had some contact with them, who went through the [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], or had to go there.

Do you remember asking your parents, what is going on? What is this about? Do you remember any kind of conversations with either your mother or father?

During the war?

During the war, asking them about why are we hiding, why do we keep moving?

I think I know I had to play as if I didn't understand anything because I didn't want to scare them. That is also an interesting issue. I just realized that when I started talking about it because my mother always said, oh, you were only a child, and you didn't know anything. And I knew everything.

And she showed me a synagogue after the war that's Jewish, and so for me that was clear. But I played it really naive so that she is not too upset or too scared. I think during the war-- yes, also strange, I just realized that. I didn't want to-- I wanted her to be feeling that it's OK. Don't worry about me. And yeah.

Do you see a theme-- of just out of curiosity, do you see a theme of, perhaps, caretaking in your life on your part? Have you ever--

Yeah, after the war, yes.

With people in your relationships, and friends.

Caretaking?

Just in terms of trying to save people's feelings. It's just a question.

Yes. For example, my mother, I was often sick and we didn't even know what it was, very sick, almost dead. And my mother was so tense and so upset. And I couldn't stand her being so upset in these situations during the war. And I know

that I always tried to hide when I felt so sick and tried to appear OK and not to upset her, and also not to get these tensions that were so painful for me too.