**Janet:** Today is September 25th, 1995 and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here today in the Ellis Island Oral History studio with Mr. Cornelius Peter Breure [chuckle] and Mr. Breure came here from the Netherlands in 1928 when he was 8 years of age.

**Breure:** Correct.

**Janet:** Well, I'm delighted to see you and I'm happy you fought the traffic to be here today [chuckle] and lets start at the beginning Mr. Breure, if you would say your birth date for the tape? Your birth date again.

**Breure:** August, 16th, 1920 I was born.

**Janet:** Where in the Netherlands were you born?

**Breure:** In Skeerzee. That is S-K-E-E-R-Z-E-E.

**Janet:** Did you live in Skeerzee up until you left at eight years of age?

**Breure:** We were on a farm there, yes and the farm burned down on account of being hay that was wet was stored in the barn and internal combustion and the house was attached to the barn in those countries and the whole business went up.

**Janet:** How old were you when that happened?

**Breure:** That happened to me when I was about three- four years old.

**Janet:** Do you have any memories of that house and barn?

**Breure:** No, I don't have much memory of that all, my older sister has told us about them because she was the oldest at the time and explain it more at least to us you know but we all were able to get out of the house.

**Janet:** What was your father's name?

**Breure:** Matthew.

**Janet:** Matthew and your mother's name?

**Breure:** Cornelia.

**Janet:** Cornelia and do you remember your mother’s maiden name?

**Breure:** Yes, her name was Cornelia Boudeling, B-O-U-D-E-L-I-N-G.

**Janet:** Do you remember your grandmother or grandfather?

**Breure:** I remember my mother's parents on a visit under with the train and going with her which was about an hour’s ride I would say and visiting her also on a farm and having the experience of having lunch there after we got off and in their home and visiting the barn and the cows, what they had and the horses and also enjoying a good home made meal there.

Of course she made homemade bread and then she used to slice that and butter for you and everything for you and everything else and hand you a piece and that was always my memory.

**Janet:** Was this a single trip or did you visit more than once?

**Breure:** That’s one side there and then I remember going to a town of Middleburg which was like an average city, maybe a 40-50 thousand people something like that and seeing the sites of the town itself you know which you don't do as a boy on a farm, that you get into the city in once in a while and see how are the other people live.

**Janet:** You had one older sister. Did you have any other brothers and sisters?

**Breure:** Yes, we had altogether six boys and one girl. My sister was the oldest.

**Janet:** I see and where did you fall in line as far as the boys?

**Breure:** I fall in line about the fourth one down [laughter].

**Janet:** I see so you were like in the middle.

**Breure:** My mother didn't have no more girls, she was going to call her if I was born Cornelia like her so she ended up calling me Cornelius and that was that and then there still two boys after that and one was a store way we called him the store way. He was born six weeks after we lived here so we always called him the store way son [laughter] and he's still living.

**Janet:** That was your mother's parents, how about your father's parents?

**Breure:** Never knew them.

**Janet:** Never knew them.

**Breure:** Never knew them, no.

**Janet:** What was life like on a farm in Holland when you were little boy?

**Breure:** Farm life I don't remember too much of being that I was only five when did we leave or maybe less, I was four maybe when the farm burnt down, so by the time we got out of the farm I remember visiting farms in the area because that’s all there was there you know farms.

**Janet:** What do you remember about them?

**Breure:** Not really, I can remember riding on the hay wagon and getting in the cows in for milking something like that, that’s as far as. Actually working on a farm not so because I was only young anyway.

**Janet:** What did you family do after the farm burned?

**Breure:** After the farm burnt my father went and moved to a town of Sat Lauren S-A-T-L-A-U-R-E-N [unclear 00:05:45] that’s how it was written and my father became motorcycle dispatcher. In other words he took mail from different towns on his motorbike and I guess we stayed there until I was about eight and then they must have decided in mean time to put their money together and make passage for America.

**Janet:** Do you remember any foods that your mother or grandmother or anybody else made when you were still there in Holland?

**Breure:** Not really, no. I would say they used to make a different salad or something they used to call stamped, there was lettuce with bacon and different varieties of lettuce and tomatoes and something like that, that’s about the only thing I remember, some other things but mostly Dutch people were meat and potato people especially in the foreign countries like cabbage and turnips and all kinds of vegetables, beets, carrots they grow. Everything was grown on a farm and that’s what you put in, what you jarred you know that I do remember my mother doing a little bit.

**Janet:** Do you remember market day?

**Breure:** Market day I don’t' recall really to say that my father would take stuff to the market or anything. I think his was more on agriculture like raising wheat or something or [unclear 00:07:36] for animals that’s about as far as I could say about the farm.

**Janet:** How about canals? Any experiences with that?

**Breure:** Well, we moved from the farm, I do remember the dykes and the canals and we would see the top of the mast of the ship going and we would run up the top of the dyke to see what kind of ship it was because it was going through the canal and of course Holland is lowland, most of the homes were below the dykes. [Unclear 00:08:16] that’s why they had the windmills to pump the water and push it back into the canals and into the ocean to relieve and that I remember.

**Janet:** Did you ever see a flood?

**Breure:** No, I did not see a flood. I only seen a flood when I went back in World War 2.

**Janet:** You went back there in World War 2?

**Breure:** I was in there, in a certain part of Holland.

**Janet:** Okay, well we'll get to that part.

**Breure:** Yeah, that is later [laughter].

**Janet:** How about any holidays or any kinds of festivals or festivities that you remember as a little boy before you came to the United States?

**Breure:** The only thing they really mostly celebrated in the big towns in Holland was they called orange day.

**Janet:** How do you spell that one?

**Breure:** Orange is orange and its O-R-A-N-G-E day which is the queens day in Holland then everybody dresses up and has fairs in the cities and picnics likes and different kind of good times, dancing in the streets or wagons dressed up in costumes, covered wagons some of them wear wash drawn carriages in all gala you know and really beautiful to see at that time.

**Janet:** Do you have any recollection of what it was like to have a king and a queen in your country?

**Breure:** Not so much as a young boy, no. The only thing that I remember is going to a wedding in Holland which was a relation and we went in a wagon which was covered, like a covered wagon which the American people went west with and that’s how we went to the church.

First they went to the city hall because they had to get approved for marriage and from the city hall they went to the church and finalized the marriage but it was all done in a covered wagon and there's this and other about five -six different cover wagons, where all the guests and relations were taken in and then of course we had the festivities at the home of the foreign people wherever that was that time- who was getting married you know.

**Janet:** What church was it? Did you go to church as a family?

**Breure:** Yes, that was reformed church, they call it [unclear 00:10:52] that’s the Dutch word but it’s reformed, that’s what the word is, reformed church. That was my religion of the protestant faith.

**Janet:** Did you do any kinds of religious rituals? Do you remember like confirmation or any other events around the church?

**Breure:** No, I couldn't say that no. Just a question of attending maybe twice on Sunday morning and afternoon services they had and you went regardless.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about the home you lived in right before you came here? What it looked like.

**Breure:** The farm home not so much, the other home I can recall a little bit because being I lived in the home itself but mother was doing and washing [unclear 00:11:58], washing and sometimes cooking and making in the jars of fruits and vegetables for winter supply or something like that, that I can recall.

**Janet:** Do you remember what kind of stove your mother had for cooking?

**Breure:** Yeah, they call it kakle which is a black castor and stove of course like we used to have here in the country too and then firing it up I used to help bring the firewood and coal to start up the fire and then of course she made homemade bread and [unclear 00:12:31] what have you and then always good Dutch meals because Dutch people did eat hearty, like I said potato and meat people.

**Janet:** How do you spell Kakle?

**Breure:** Kakle I think is K-A-K-L-E.

**Janet:** And that was typical, that kind of stove?

**Breure:** That was, that’s what they called and then it had an upper parts oven [unclear 00:12:56] where you could keep it warm while you're preparing the other stuff that had to be done too for supper.

**Janet:** So let’s see, there were seven children?

**Breure:** Seven children.

**Janet:** Well, six there, right.

**Breure:** Six boys and one girl.

**Janet:** The place that you lived in, was it big, was it small?

**Breure:** I would imagine it had about two- three bedrooms, kitchen, parlor and then after the back of the house was like a shed where they kept stuff supplies. My father used to park his motorbike in there and the attic was like a storage for your vegetables and what have you like pears and apples you kept on the floor of the room so they would not spoil and once in a while we'd help ourselves to an apple or pear if it was ripe enough and eat it, that I remember.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about your father's mail man motorcycle job?

**Breure:** Once in a while he used to take me on a back seat and give me a ride from nearby little village just where he was to drop off and then just coming back or so. I do remember once in a while having a ride.

**Janet:** Was that like a real treat for you?

**Breure:** You bet, that was a treat because we always fought to who'd be the one to get the ride because he would only take one at time on that motorcycle.

**Janet:** Can you remember any other things that were like a treat when you were little?

**Breure:** Not necessarily so, no.

**Janet:** Were you closest to any particular brother or your sister?

**Breure:** I was mostly close I guess to my second youngest brother because were two or a year apart and we used to always do things together more or less.

**Janet:** What were the kinds of activities, can you remember any?

**Breure:** Well, like playing different games or riding little bikes or something or going up the street or so and visiting a farm or something and playing with their children over there, I do recall that. Going to school when I was five years old in Wooden Klompen and then going on into the school you would automatically take off your jacket or coat and your Klompen and you would pack under your coat in the hall way and your socks had a leather bottoms. So you would walk into your classrooms with your socks with leather bottoms and that’s how you got into the classroom and sat down. When you came home you picked them up, your shoes and your jackets and went back home.

**Janet:** Were the Klompen taken off because they were noisy or was it for cleanliness in the school room or?

**Breure:** I guess more so kind of noise if you would be in the classroom and you're up and down and moving around. I would think so yeah but that was the custom that’s where as far as I remember.

**Janet:** What do you remember about wearing wooden shoes?

**Breure:** Wooden shoes I remember as afar as winter time we would slide on the canals and the wooden shoes were very much like a very slippery slide in time and then we enjoyed that especially going down the dyke and snow and then ending up in the canal which was frozen and then seeing how far we'd go with the shoes and sliding and then once I remember breaking my wooden shoes in a half and my dad had to take wire and tie them because he couldn't afford to buy another pair of shoes.

**Janet:** Do you remember how you broke them?

**Breure:** By hitting the ice the wrong way you know sliding on the ice I guess. I must have hit something hard or stone or something and they split right down in the middle and my dad said, "Now what do we do?" The solution was to tie with wire and wear them [laughter], absolutely that I recall and that was school.

**Janet:** Do you remember getting in trouble in any ways when you were little?

**Breure:** The only trouble I remember is getting ready for school one morning and my mother was putting the bucket of water on the stove to heat and dad picked it and dropped it down and I was combing my hair on the top of the cabinet which I jumped up on to get by the mirror to comb my hair to go to school and automatically I jumped off with my right foot in that bucket of hot water and the skin was scalded on my right leg and I can remember sitting by the front window and wrapped up and the kids going to school and I was waving and saying I can play hooky today [laughter].

**Janet:** You just got one day out of it?

**Breure:** No, I got more than one day out of it because--- [laughter].

**Janet:** It was bad.

**Breure:** The burn was more or less second or third degree. That I remember. That was one of my experiences as far with my foot [laughter].

**Janet:** Do you remember the social life of like your mother and father? Did they get together with other people? What did they do?

**Breure:** They did more or less in the neighborhood I would say yes, with church and different people of the church you know they would have like coffee clots where they would go, coffee times together. I remember that a little bit.

**Janet:** You remember any singing and dancing?

**Breure:** Singing in church I remember, dancing no but singing in the church and attending church. Walking to the church and back but festivities I only remember as far as the wedding was. That’s about the only thing that sticks in my mind.

**Janet:** Do you know what prompted your father and mother to make the decision and plan to come to this country?

**Breure:** With the farm burning down, I would think that was the biggest decision. It took a while I imagine for them to make the preparation as far as the cost and so forth, to have ship board passes and that was about it.

**Janet:** Did they ever talk about America or did you have any idea of what you were coming to?

**Breure:** No, I had no knowledge. Being five years old I think at that time I didn't have no idea even later on which was when I was near eight when we did we make the break. I imagined my parents saved someone to make the decision to come and then being sponsored. We were sponsored by our Reformed church here in America.

**Janet:** Where was that?

**Breure:** In [unclear 00:20:11] the reformed church was next to our town in Clifton where I live in [unclear 00:20:16]. They sponsored Dutch families to come across and then they helped us after we got here, put us up in a place, a house and get us settled more or less.

**Janet:** I see, do you remember your mother’s and father’s preparations? Do you remember for example what happened to where you live or did they sell it or were they renting it or?

**Breure:** Yeah, they were renting at the time I believe, they did not own it.

**Janet:** Do you remember what they packed to take with them?

**Breure:** Not really much no, it didn't inscribe in my mind any because just that you were that young and you didn't realize what preparations were.

**Janet:** Do you remember actually the departure?

**Breure:** Departure I can recall because we were inoculated, we had about five needles into our arms for different diseases which we were prone to get fortunately nothing happened, we stayed healthy until we got here in Hoboken.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving the town Skeerzee?

**Breure:** Rotterdam.

**Janet:** You went to Rotterdam.

**Breure:** Went to Rotterdam.

**Janet:** How did you get to Rotterdam remember?

**Breure:** They took us I think by car if I'm not mistaken.

**Janet:** And do you remember like saying goodbye to anybody?

**Breure:** Yeah, I remember being on board the ship and waving goodbye to relations.

**Janet:** What ship was it?

**Breure:** The Statendam.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything of that voyage?

**Breure:** The voyage I remember, we crossed the channel and went to Southampton England where we picked up more passengers and crossed the ocean which was rough at the time and my mother never left her bed except to go to bathroom because she was carrying the youngest brother and she was seasick plus being pregnant sick.

So my older sister and only sister always helped my mother on the whole journey which lasted about 14 days at that time. We did stop in Halifax in Nova Scotia which was the first stop, we had snow on board when we got on the deck me and my younger brother made a snow ball and all the dignitaries around the dock there and I know throwing a snowball and I knocked a guy's top hat off and I can still see him waving his cane at me as if to say, "I'll get you [laughter]," and we laughed and of course ran back down to our cabin because we wanted to get away from being caught. Then we left there and moved into New York harbor and Hoboken.

**Janet:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

**Breure:** I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty coming up the narrows, when we came before the Vera Santa Bridge was built and approaching the statue of liberty. We were all on deck here.

**Janet:** What were people doing? Can you remember then?

**Breure:** Laughing and clapping and singing of joy. That was very anxious moment for all people.

**Janet:** Did you and your family know about Ellis Island before? Did you expect anything there?

**Breure:** I don't think so at the time, no. We didn't know that my parents would go to Hoboken and be met by people that sponsored us from the church but of course it wasn't to be because my second oldest brother had to come down with the mumps, so they took the whole family and quarantined us, put us on a ferry boat from Hoboken took us here to Ellis Island and I was in this building here where we are now and sleeping up on the second floor in one of them rooms and going down for meals and long tables of soups and whatever that was made that day and we spent a good four days before we were allowed to be picked up again and taken home.

**Janet:** Was it discovered aboard the ship that your second oldest brother had the mumps?

**Breure:** I imagine it was discovered on the ship after we docked on the board, I think they checked you before you were allowed to go off you know as a group of family.

**Janet:** So you would have gone off in Hoboken but when they checked him they discovered the mumps?

**Breure:** Yes.

**Janet:** When you were in the dormitory room here in this main building at Ellis Island, was your whole family in the same room?

**Breure:** I recall the men were on one side and the women on the other side.

**Janet:** On the other side of the balcony?

**Breure:** That’s right, yeah.

**Janet:** But you were allowed to go down where the other people were for meals?

**Breure:** We were allowed to go down where the tables were all set up, I guess for eating and also they had side rooms where they had play rooms. I remember playing with Buddy Al trucks and different toys, so I do remember playing with toys there, that I remember.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything specific about the food they served you here?

**Breure:** Not really no. I know it was soup, potatoes and maybe a stew meat or some kind but mostly I think if I remember anything it was soup.

**Janet:** Now was it only the one brother that came down with the mumps?

**Breure:** It was only the one brother?

**Janet:** Now where was he during the time the rest of the family was here in the dormitory?

**Breure:** He was in the hospital part I think of Ellis Island and my mother and father were allowed to visit. I don't know whether it was every day or so but I know they were allowed to visit.

**Janet:** When you think about those four or five, whatever days you spent here. How do you think of it? I mean what are you’re feeling about that?

**Breure:** Well, it was just a natural thing that had to be done with the circumstances that involved at that time which they were very careful of because there were certain people that when they were checked out they were sent back even to the countries where they came from and they were just I guess a precautionary measure of not bringing any foreign disease into the country, of anything and once they analyzed it and there just being a normal sickness which was not serious then we were released, about four or five days.

**Janet:** As far as the guards or anybody who worked here, were you treated well or not or what?

**Breure:** Yeah, I don't remember being treated harshly or anything like that. No way, no I don't remember that because there was other children that I remember playing with downstairs wherever it was in the playrooms. We had the toys and we just did our normal thing like children.

**Janet:** You didn't know any English when you first came?

**Breure:** At the time no.

**Janet:** Did anyone in the family?

**Breure:** I think my father had a little English knowledge of talking you know yes and no and understanding somewhat some words.

**Janet:** So do you remember the moment when you were told you could go and what happened?

**Breure:** From?

**Janet:** From Ellis Island?

**Breure:** No, I couldn't say I remembered it as a child, no. Just that I got told by the parents that we were ready to leave and we left.

**Janet:** Where did you go?

**Breure:** We went to Clifton, New Jersey. They took us- it was like a wagon truck, what they call little pickup truck today. I remember the stuff going on there, the luggage which was always brought here from there. So that was on board and then there's was a couple who had a car that took us the family and brought us to the home that they had prepared for us from the church.

**Janet:** So the church had provided you with a home in Clifton.

**Breure:** A home in Clifton.

**Janet:** Okay, we're going to pause here and turn over the tape and then we'll continue.

**Breure:** Okay.

**Janet:** Okay, we're continuing now with your first remembrances of life here in this country. So do you remember the house that the church provided for your family?

**Breure:** Yeah, I pass it once in a while going through Clifton in my rounds and it’s still there standing. Fixed up some while of course with a little in siding and have you and I'm sure the interior was made different too.

**Janet:** Do you remember how it was different from the place you had been living in before you came here, when you first got here?

**Breure:** Different in the sense that maybe it had more rooms, with bedrooms upstairs which we never experienced over there really but it still had what we call a Kakle, the black iron stove in those days which a lot of had and where mum did her cooking you know.

**Janet:** Was there a large Dutch community around where you were living?

**Breure:** Very much yeah. The section where we live is called Dutch hill so the whole area was mostly Dutch, German maybe some polish but mostly it was called Dutch hill because most of the people were Dutch in that area.

**Janet:** Do you remember your mother's and father's attitude like did they want you and the whole family to become Americanized quickly or did they want to hold on to their ways from Holland?

**Breure:** The language was Dutch spoken of course and [unclear 00:31:24] when we had to go school we had to learn, so first word I learned was yes and no and from there on you picked up your friends in school and you learned the language slowly on plus what your teachers taught you but it was rough at first because while we learned we had to explain to mom and pop and they learnt of us what we gotten in school.

Finally, you did manage to help yourself plus the school was a Christian school and the teachers and the principles I recall could also speak Dutch, so if you were stuck with something in class, he would explain it in Dutch and help you understand it to the fact that it was the beginning of learning English but we managed.

**Janet:** Did you go to a Christian school in Holland as well or was that a public school?

**Breure:** No, I think in Holland it was also a Christian school, Dutch Christian School.

**Janet:** Do you remember how the school here was different in any ways from the school you had been in in Holland?

**Breure:** Not that I could say really no. Not that I could recall and say, "Wow that was so much different."

**Janet:** Were there a lot of children who had immigrated in your school here?

**Breure:** Not really that I could say, "He came from Holland or so," No.

**Janet:** So when you first came most of the children were actually speaking English when you were learning?

**Breure:** Most of them were speaking English and I was what they call a green horn and they'd call you green horn.

**Janet:** They did?

**Breure:** Yeah and they'd call you green horn but maybe a couple of scratch once in a while and then moved on from there, did our learning of English.

**Janet:** Do you remember any impressions of things that were new and different to you when you first came?

**Breure:** That I didn't wear Klompen anymore and that I had leather shoes and I kept them on all day and going in out of class of course was normal like you do in any school room and your jacket up and hook on the outside hallway and you went to class but you had your leather shoes on that time. No more wooden Klompen [laughter].

**Janet:** What kind of work did your father find in this country?

**Breure:** My father started off working in a dairy farm and my two oldest brothers also.

**Janet:** Did they start work when they first arrived?

**Breure:** Yeah, they got help through the church and the person that owned the farm was a Dutch [unclear 00:34:38], so they were asked to work on the farm. My dad worked with the horses, they had about 40 horses I remember because I used to visit the farm after school sometimes and my brothers would milk the cows and they had quite a few cows at that time in all and then they did their own pasteurizing too and delivery milk, that I remember.

**Janet:** What about your older sister, what was she doing?

**Breure:** She became a maid for the people at home, that farm where my parents worked. She was a housemaid and helped to wash and iron clothes and then of course came home and helped mom with the housework there also because she was 17 years, 18 years old at that time and that’s what she did.

**Janet:** So except for the three oldest, all the other children were starting school.

**Breure:** School age, some were in school age. We went to school.

**Janet:** And as far as the church was concerned, were the services in Dutch or in English?

**Breure:** English in the morning and Dutch in the afternoon and we attended both. That was a ritual, sometimes I didn't like it but that was the normalcy, you went to church on Sunday in the morning and in the afternoon.

**Janet:** What was the social life like for your family in this country?

**Breure:** The Dutch would get together, the Dutch congregation people of course from the church, they would invite you over for coffee and what have you. I do remember going to different people’s homes and they became friends as a family later on of course because we stayed there for 50 years that I know of and I'm still there to this day and that’s going over sixty something years.

We often talk about selling and moving out and going to North Carolina or something or somewhere south where it’s more temperate climate but haven't gone that far yet.

**Janet:** What did you do after you finished school, what did you do?

**Breure:** I went to high school I think about two years and then we had the war break out of course, first the depression.

**Janet:** Do you remember the depression?

**Breure:** Depression in 1939, my dad was out of work and my two older brothers still worked on the farm. My dad had in the meantime moved out of the farm and went to work for the Manhattan Rubber mill and he worked on the dock loading and unloading different supplies, I do remember that.

**Janet:** In Manhattan or in Jersey?

**Breure:** In Manhattan Rubber mill, in Passaic, New Jersey.

**Janet:** And then he was laid off in the depression?

**Breure:** And then he was laid off for about three years and then he went back to the farm again and worked on the farm and my sister stayed there as a nurse maid to people that owned the farm.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything that were rough particularly on your family during that depression period?

**Breure:** I remember we rented our home down which we did, we paid a certain amount of rent, how much it was I don't recall but times were tough because not much in work with the fortunes of the older brothers working and helping they make food on the table so forth during the depression and times were tough.

**Janet:** You were still a student at that time?

**Breure:** Still a student at that time yeah and like you say there was times when I recall that you get to the city and get a pair of shoes or something. That’s how bad times were or grocery, different parts of grocery you sell to help out but you would have to have certain stamps I think from the town proving that you were a resident of that town. So you would collect food supplies and shoes and then you didn't know if you'd get the shoes that fit you properly either. My wife can tell you about that, she's got coins from it today.

**Janet:** What happened? How did it come about that you went into the service?

**Breure:** When the drafts started with Franklin Delano Roosevelt pulling their numbers and I think I was something like number eight on his pool that we were drafted in February of 42' and yeah it’s in February 42 that I was called into service. I was already working part time then already and got called and then I had been married only about nine months and I was told to break up house and leave for service, which I did and went to Fort Dix of 42’ in February in the cold, sleeping in canvas tents which were hard to heat and eight to ten and then stayed there about a month.

I managed to come home twice I think with a pass and after that we were shipped by train to Camp Rose, South Carolina where we did basic training. After basic training I came up to Fort Meade, Maryland, I was picked for a military police duty there of Fort Meade and I stayed about a year and then was called to active duty because they needed more troops overseas.

So we came from Fort Meade to Camp Kilmer, stayed, processed, got our gear, got put on the train, came right back here to the Jersey central rail road. Hoped on the ferry taken across, boarded the Normandie with 8,700 troops, we pull out of New York harbor and made for Liverpool England at 22 knots which was very good for not being hit by submarines. Of course I saw a big oil tanker. It put down by [unclear 00:42:15] right outside in Liverpool, burnt into flames and sunk. So being that we were able to do 22 knots and I think it saved our skin with 8,700 troops.

**Janet:** What was it like being on the ship with 8,700--?

**Breure:** Terrible, we had Chinese cooks aboard that cooked mutton and tea and one day out of New York harbor all the troops got mad, threw the tea pots over board and demanded different food and I think out of Boston they came with supplies, K-rations and what not and stocked up the boat.

**Janet:** What was the feeling of all these men going to war?

**Breure:** To war, the war. Well and you were put down below decks in a hammock, the swinging hammock that was your bed which most of the guys stayed in because of the rough weather at that time. There was a lot of people were sick and you can imagine being sick and then been down in the lower decks.

**Janet:** Rather like the immigration experience [laughter].

**Breure:** Just like immigration, being packed in a boat and like GI used to say cattle. We were stuffed like cattle on a boat but fortunately safe enough to get where we had to go right.

**Janet:** Where were you sent when you got to Europe?

**Breure:** We landed in Liverpool England and on dock and boarded a train directly to Southampton England where we boarded LSTs and transported to Omaha beach which was the plus four me, four days after the initial landing of the day and we were put into service immediately and did so for 127 continuous days before we were relieved.

We were relieved when we made the breakthrough with general Patton in Liège Belgium where we ran out of gas for tanks and trucks that pursued and we held our positions until we were relieved which consisted of about 127 days and then we were brought back, re equipped just in time for the battle of the Bulge and I was brought up on the southern part of Alsace- Lorraine where we protected our southern flank from the Bulge, winter of 43' 44' in the Vosges mountains and we hand over our positions over there until they were able to push back with new troops, the Germans back, [unclear 00:45:30].

**Janet:** When you look back at that time, is there anything you can say about either yourself or human nature when you're in a situation like that, a fighting situation?

**Breure:** Yeah, life isn't much really, you know when you're in a war and you're living in a fox hole, if you do live in a fox hole because mostly you did that to dig yourself and to protect yourself from shelling and attack because there was always a counter attack by the Germans because they weren't going to take no defeat no more than we were going to defeat them. So it was nip and tuck all the time no matter because they were determined people you know they thought they were fighting for [unclear 00:46:25].

**Janet:** What was the moral like of the fighters?

**Breure:** Moral could be rough at times because of the conditions you lived under especially in winter. GIs get frozen feet, hands you know not getting food because when you're up holding alliance sometimes they couldn't get food to you. I experienced two weeks where I didn't get food, at night we would sneak up to the fields and dig up sugar bean or something and eat it raw because you couldn't make a fire, so you ate raw and chewed on raw sugar bits to exist and then like as you said you're always pushing ahead on your fighting, you come back, retreat the men but re-supply and then move again.

**Janet:** Now was it during the Second World War that you went back to Holland?

**Breure:**  Finished the battle of the Bulge we were pulled back, regrouped after a week of R and R what they call resting and recuperation, re-supplied.

**Janet:** Where did you go for R and R?

**Breure:** In the fields of France, outside the relieved area where tents were put up and you were timed to re address yourself and make yourself more or less a human being again. Take a shave, take a bath, portable bath or so, be re-fed, clothed right and then we moved from Port of Montana in France which was the area and moved through Belgium into Holland where I did training in the rear area of course we had the British and the French with us in that section and then we retrained on the Marsh river for the actual crossing of the Rhine and we lost more people in the Marsh river than the actual crossing of the Rhine.

**Janet:** In the training.

**Breure:** In training and March 23, 1945 we made the initial crossing of the Rhine in tank boats, boats in tanks which could cross the Rhine which was very dangerous because its loud north at a very swift rate and instead of landing where we're supposed to we were maybe a mile up the river, mile a half- two miles from the current of the Rhine before we got across at 3 O'clock in the morning then we made the land and we came in to what they call the Rhine land of Germany, proper and like Ison Harris said the battle of Europe would be decided on the western shores of the Rhine.

Which was so because we came into the Rhine land there was all confusion, disbursement of people which were a lot of slave labor of all different nationalities even my own Holland people I met working in factories and made to work slave labor whatever you want to call it and the German army was in disarray, white flags were hanging out of buildings, once in a while we would catch sniper fire where stubborn Germans held resistant pockets, machine guns fire down on the streets at you but we would call in artillery or motor and disperse and then advance that way and then finally circumnavigate the whole rural pocket which we did and then brought about 450,000 prisoners and displaced people.

So from there on we just had one of the biggest jobs of the war, supply and demand of food for people that was displaced, foreign people of all nationalities, Turkish, Italians, Polish, Swedish, Dutch, Belgium, French all kinds. It was just one big job, biggest job at the war.

**Janet:** Well, we're getting close to the end of the tape but let me ask you what did you do when you got back after the war?

**Breure:** After the war, I did occupation duty, they kept me for about six months, of course I spoke Dutch and I was used as an interrogator even in that Rhine land Park where we had all these different nationalities then after six months I was brought back to France.

I visited Paris for about three- four days and we were taken to camps which they named by cigarettes, Lucky strike, Camels whatever the name of the cigarettes that’s what they called the camps and I was high on points with my service in the military, I had about 89 points, so I was slated to go but then they didn't have no navy transports ships ready.

So I ended up staying three months longer than what I should have stayed but finally I was told we had a navy transport ship out of Marseille France which was on the Mediterranean Sea and we were transported by trucks to Marseille and taken on board by navy transport ships with 4,300 troops.

**Janet:** What was the difference in the voyage going back?

**Breure:** Very much different.

**Janet:** How so?

**Breure:** Although it was rough. We crossed the Mediterranean sea and got to the rocket Gibraltar and they announced that, “The rocket Gibraltar is on your starboard side,” so most people went on board to see the rocket Gibraltar and after that we came in and we got out to the Atlantic ocean and ran into one of the worst storms off the [unclear 00:53:03], 44 waves and the ship would go up and slam down and then I would cringe and groan coming back up and then there was repeated the same for about two days which I remember which was also the week of thanksgiving.

So they were cooking turkey on board but nobody ate turkey. Two days out of Boston where we were headed for, the ocean became as calm as a board and everybody ate cold turkey [laughter]. Then we landed in Boston, that was our experience coming back home.

**Janet:** Tell me what do you consider like the high and the low points of your life?

**Breure:** Of my life, that’s hard because there so many factors.

**Janet:** Well is there anything that you can think that gives you particular satisfaction? That you've done or.

**Breure:** All that I was in the army, that we were able to defeat the Germans sure, that it would make a better place for us upon this world.

**Janet:** Do you think coming here as a little boy as an immigrant to this country, do you think that affected you later? I mean in the kind of person you are or the person you've become?

**Breure:** I would think so.

**Janet:** Do you have any sense of what that part that played in your own development?

**Breure:** The appreciation of life and what it has given to you over the years. After I came back from the service, I had already my wife and two children and I knew I had to get to work and I decided to become a carpenter and to this day I am still a member of United Brotherhood Carpenters of America.

**Janet:** Wonderful, what’s your wife's name?

**Breure:** Ann.

**Janet:** And her maiden name?

**Breure:** Was Van Beveren, also a Dutch family but their parents came before we did and she was born here.

**Janet:** How did you meet her?

**Breure:** I met her through her brother, she had a brother I used to go with and she caught my eye and he was mad because I went with the sister.

**Janet:** Oh, you stopped paling around with him you mean?

**Breure:** That broke the friendship in a sense you know [laughter]. Today we're not mad at each other anyway.

**Janet:** And your children’s' names?

**Breure:** Our oldest was Beverly, Ruthy then my only son same as my name Cornelius, a daughter Dorothy and a daughter Karen. The youngest one moved away the farthest, she's in North Carolina and that’s my family and we just celebrated 50 years of marriage and my children donated money for me to go to Alaska because I always talked Alaska. So [unclear 00:56:32], they said, "Dad, mum for your 50th anniversary you're going to Alaska?"

**Janet:** Oh that’s beautiful.

**Breure:** So that we did, 50 years married. Now we're married 52 years, no I'm not going no place [laughter].

**Janet:** What would say about the part of you that’s Dutch and the part of you that’s American? How do you think about that?

**Breure:** I have my sister to thank because she always says, "Breure, you talk yanky Dutch." But my two cousins came from Holland this year in July and they were fluent English speakers but I felt obligated to talk Dutch which I did and when I invited them to visit the statue of liberty and Ellis Island I said, "We're going to talk Dutch because that’s what we did when we came here." And they said to me that they were surprised of all this years I could talk Dutch fluently as I could. I made a few mistakes by putting English words in but they knew where I was coming from [laughter].

**Janet:** What’s it like for you to visit? I know you've been here a few times before today but what’s it like visiting Ellis Island now, at this point in your life?

**Breure:** I came here once when this Ellis Island building was---

**Janet:** Abandoned still in those days.

**Breure:** Abandoned, let me put it that way. I looked at the kitchen that time and I see the pots and pans lying all over the place, the broken benches, the walls, the plaster, the paint and I looked at the tile I said, "What a beautiful job they did here." And I read in the book later on only eight tiles were missing and I said them Italians did a good job putting that tile up.

Really to be congratulated on a job so well done, really and I explained that to the people that I had there from Holland there, I said, "Would you take a look at that herring bone ceiling how beautiful it looks." I said, " I may have remembered the mess it was but after joining with [00:58:52] as a member, I said, "I got to go back and see it," which I did. I was very much impressed but they cleaned up.

**Janet:** Wonderful, and this is where we're going to end. I want to thank you so much Mr. Breure for a most interesting interview. Today is September 25th, 1995, this is Janet Levine and I'm signing off