**Janet:** Today is July 3rd 1995, I’m here in Whitinsville, Massachusetts with Agnes Vander Baan who came from the Netherlands in 1914 when she was seven years old. She’s now 88 years old at the time of this interview. I want to say I’m delighted to be here. I’m so happy that I found you and that I’m able to talk with you for this Ellis Island tape.

**Agnes:** Thank you.

**Janet:** You’re welcome, if you would start, Agnes, at the beginning with giving your birthdate for the tape, your birthdate?

**Agnes:** When I was born you mean? April 5th 1907.

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

**Agnes:** In Ylst, Friesland.

**Janet:** You spell that.

**Agnes:** Y-L-S-T.

**Janet:** You lived in Ylst?

**Agnes:** Ylst all of the time that I was in Holland. We never moved out of that town.

**Janet:** What do you remember about the town?

**Agnes:** I remember the streets were always very clean, they were always scrubbed every day, practically everybody scrubbed in front of their house.

**Janet:** Did they scrub …

**Agnes:** They were brick.

**Janet:** They scrubbed on their hands and knees?

**Agnes:** No, they had heavy brooms or something. They made the brooms out of branches of trees that grew on the street. My father worked for the city at one time towards the last when I was old enough to remember. He had other job before that, but when I was old enough to remember he was working for the city.

Once a year these trees, and I can show you in this book what they look like, they were called [Linda bowman 00:02:08], which Linda is the name of that and bowman means trees. They were really quite attractive, but they were kept trimmed, like you would trim shrubs.

They have this big contraption that they had to climb up on, a sword it looked like. That they trimmed these trees all off so that they were no branches sticking out over the street, they were on the side of the street. To realize [inaudible 00:02:39] beautiful, you have to see it to realize what they looked like.

The houses were all right close to the street. There was really no sidewalk to speak off because all they had there was horses and wagons. Then the boats in the canal, which ran right through the middle of the town. A big canal ran right through the middle of the town.

**Janet:** You started to say about people cleaning the streets with those plants?

**Agnes:** They were paved with bricks, as you would put in a brick walk. They would clean the streets off with animals running through and everything else. They were kept very clean and then you would clean in front of your own house. See what I mean?

**Janet:** You lived in one of those houses?

**Agnes:** Sure, on the side of the street.

**Janet:** Can you describe the house?

**Agnes:** I can remember we didn’t have central heating or anything like that. We had kerosene lamps like they have out here. I can remember we had one big room in which we lived and then we didn’t have bedrooms.

The beds were built into the wall. Then they’d have curtains to draw them and through the day they had doors that they closed. We all had feather beds just like they do in a lot of foreign countries. I can remember that very well.

**Janet:** Could you describe that room in which the beds were built in the wall?

**Agnes:** We didn’t have any sink or anything like that. I don’t remember too much about -My parents carried the water in, I remember that. We had quite a few windows, the last house that we lived in that I can remember across the front of the house so we had plenty of light.

We had one great big cabinet with doors that opened up and all our clothes hang in that -It reached almost to the ceiling, the top head shelf. All our clothes were in that cabinet. I had a sister older than I and a brother older than I was. There were five of us in the family.

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

**Agnes:** Rimmert is the Dutch pronunciation of it, its R-I-M-M-E-R-T. They translated it into Raymond in this country when we came out here.

**Janet:** Your mother’s name?

**Agnes:** Diewka, I don’t even know how they spelt that, but out here they call her Dora.

**Janet:** Would you just make a guess of the spelling if [inaudible 00:05:34]?

**Agnes:** I think it was D-I-E-W-K and I think there was an E or an A at the end of it, but I’m not positive. It’s so many years ago and she never went by that name here.

**Janet:** What was your mother’s maiden name, do you know?

**Agnes:** DeBruim, D-E-B-R-U-I-M that was spelt DeBruim.

**Janet:** What was your father like? Can you describe him when you were a little girl, when you were about seven years old, when you were coming here?

**Agnes:** He was pretty special to me because he was very fussy about our bringing up.

**Janet:** In what way?

**Agnes:** He was a strict Christian man that lived by the bible. He was a great reader as I am too, you see a lot of books around, I like to read too. He used to have me on his knee and read to me when he had in his spare time and often times nights before going to bed. Then he would also read bible stories to me before I went to bed.

This was in the old country and then of course that continued after we came to this country. Very much for children going to Christian school, we had a Christian school there, I went one year. School started, let’s see, I think there was one month that we had off, but it’s started in April and would go through the winter.

Then we’d have one month off about four weeks that we had vacation. Then you would be advanced to the next grade. We came here in May and I had just, in March, finished the first grade and I was in the second grade one month. I can remember all that.

**Janet:** What do you remember about the school?

**Agnes:** They dress different there than we do here.

**Janet:** Describe how they dress there when you were little?

**Agnes:** We always wore dark dresses to a certain extent, but we always wore a white apron over it. Everyday my mother would give me a clean apron fit knitted. We wore homemade woolen knitted stockings and wooden shoes.

**Janet:** This dress with the apron, that was because you went to the Christian school?

**Agnes:** No, that had nothing to do with that. It was a type of dress that was common there. It was not a uniform, no.

**Janet:** Did you knit? Did you knit stockings too?

**Agnes:** I learned to knit when I was a little girl, because when we came to this country when I was seven years old, I knew how to knit socks. I don’t know now how I ever did it.

The way I remember it, the only relatives we had here in this country were my mother’s aunt and her family. She was already a widow, she was an elderly lady. Most of the children around here couldn’t talk Dutch and I could talk Dutch. We lived right near her.

She used to love [inaudible 00:09:17] had me come over and of course the kids didn’t talk Dutch and I had to learn all that. I didn’t have too much in common with them to begin with till I had gone to school a while and learned the English language. It was at the time, shortly I don’t know how long after, but the war broke out. You remember that First World War?

**Janet:** Right.

**Agnes:** A lot of the older people used to go to the town hall here and knit for the soldiers. She told a lot of those women that I could knit and I was only seven years old. She insisted on taking me along. They were amazed.

Would you believe this? My dad taught me to knit, because when he was a boy growing up, his father was in a business, he died young, his father did. They used to, rather than using a horse and wagon or a truck as they do here now, to move loom from farmers to another place or they always had what they called turf to burn.

Maybe have Edith maybe told you about that, did she tell you about that that they [inaudible 00:10:44], the turf they called it? That came from the ground, I don’t know how they did it, I was too young for that. I can remember I had an uncle that did it too.

They would use these badges like flat boats to, they might have a little place on one end where they could live and sleep when they moved around. That’s how they moved the …

**Janet:**  Turf?

**Agnes:** Stuff around like truckers would today. Then of course it gets cold there and the canals are all frozen over in the winter. It was a long time then that my father as a young boy didn’t have work to do, but my grandmother did not believe in idle hands.

My father had to learn to knit, as well as his five sisters. He had five sisters and one younger brother who was younger than he was and he was a cripple. My dad was the only other boy. He knew how to knit so he taught me how to knit.

**Janet:** Do you remember your father’s mother, your grandmother?

**Agnes:** Yes, she was tall and very thin I remember her and she had white hair. How old she was I couldn’t tell you, because as I say I was only -She died when I was about five. She lived across the street from us and I was named after her.

**Janet:** Do you remember any experiences with her?

**Agnes:** I know I used to go over to her house and she used to make apple sauce. That was her nickname for me because I always would say, “Have you got apple sauce?” She called me apple sauce as a joke.

I remember when she died. I remember that clearly, she was laid out, they didn’t have funeral parlors, laid out at my aunt’s house, my father’s oldest sister who lived the other end of the town. My mother and dad took me over to see her in the casket and she didn’t look like grandma.

They had parted her hair in the middle and she had two long braids down here. That was not the way she was used to wearing it. We talked about it, my mom and I and my mom thinks she had a ruptured gall bladder or something like that, because she turned yellow from the bile.

In those days they didn’t do operations either. She’d been sick before she died and she turned all yellow. When I looked at her, I said, the Dutch word for grandmother is Beppe, that’s the Friesian word for grandma.

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

**Agnes:** I think they spelt it B-E-P-P-E or something like that. I can read the Holland language, but not the Friesian language. There’s all these different languages and maybe Edith told you that too.

**Janet:** Now this Beppe, is that a Friesian word?

**Agnes:** Yes, that was what we called her. That meant grandma. It was not her name. I pulled on my father’s leg and I said, “I want to go home and I don’t ever want to ever see Beppe again.” Those are the words I used, I remember that. That’s all I remember about her, always going to her house and always looking for apple sauce.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything else about funerals there that maybe is different from the way they are here?

**Agnes:** Yes, they are different. In fact, towards the last when we lived in Holland, my father was caretaker of the cemetery. It was right near where we lived, we lived, this was the main street where the canal went through. I can show you in the book.

Then there was a street that turned off right at the corner where our house was. At the end of that street was a cemetery, my son was there. He said, “You described it perfectly mum.” They thought I was pretty good, my son and daughter-in-law because I had described it and they found it just the way I said it.

**Janet:** What happened, how did the funerals differ?

**Agnes:** They would always have the funeral part in the church. It seems as though people had the bodies were at home. I never went to a funeral myself that I can remember well, but we used to see them go by. Then they would carry the casket and all the people walk behind it.

Would go down to the cemetery and what they did on the cemetery I don’t know because I wasn’t there. You didn’t see a lot of upright stones, they were flat stones over the grave.

**Janet:** How about things like marriages and other significant events in the person’s life? Do you remember anything of those ceremonies?

**Agnes:** No, I was too young for that. I know that they had to go to the State House. A church marriage wasn’t valued there at all, not unless you went to the State House first. I can show you a picture of one in here of the one we had in our town. This is from my parents.

All the records were kept there of marriages and everything else. You were married there by somebody, I don’t know whether it was a judge or what. You would not consider yourself married until you’d had, as the Christians didn’t, until they were married again in the church that they considered valid. They wouldn’t go live together until that time. That’s all I know about marriages and I got this from hear say.

**Janet:** How about the church, can you think of any events connected to the church that you remember from when you were little? Any festivals, religious days or observances?

**Agnes:** Not too much. The only thing I know of something they didn’t do here when we came here is, the women all wore longer skirts anyway. Then it was cold there and the churches were not heated.

They all carried these little boxes along that had coals in it, with openings in the top. They would have them under their feet to keep them warm. All of the women having them it did give some heat off in the church. I can remember that, but that’s about it.

I do remember the organ in our church was up away from the audience, it was up. It was when they had to have somebody pump it, it did not work by electricity. They had somebody that, I know I used to say, I heard my mother said a lot of times, “Such and such a man would pump it.” That they could play it. If there wasn’t that guy to pump it, nobody could play it.

**Janet:** During the church service somebody would be pumping the organ?

**Agnes:** Yes, they would sit up right near there and then whenever it came time to sing a psalm and they always sang the psalms. There were some churches that didn’t even have organs. They would have someone that led the singing. Someone with a good voice and knew the tunes would lead the singing. Our church did have an organ, I remember that. We considered the church being quite advanced, I guess I don’t know.

**Janet:** How about your mother, what was she like as a person?

**Agnes:** Hard to explain, she was a very hard worker. She had worked for a farmer as a young girl. At that time, this is all hearsay of course, when she first went there, she only went to school three years. Then she had to go, she came from a big family one of the oldest. She never lived at home again after that. She was 11 years old, can you imagine that?

She had to take care of the children, she was a nurse maid type of girl. Then she also had to learn to milk. When it come milking time, she had to learn to milk. Then as she got older, I suppose accomplished in milking and everything, she was made to do housework and go to the barn when it was milking time.

They had out there, the village where we lived in, farmers would always have a herd of sheep too. There wouldn’t be a great big herd, but they’d have sheep. I can remember my mother crossing over from our house over the bridge to a farmer’s house to milk the sheep every night and she’d go every morning. Then they sold this milk and they made delicious cheese out of that milk too.

**Janet:** The sheep’s milk?

**Agnes:** No, she didn’t do that, the farmers did. She would often bring a little home for us when she’d been milking, I can remember those things.

**Janet:** How was she with you as a mother?

**Agnes:** She took care of our home and everything. They didn’t have anything to do with, they had to do their washing, everything had to be [inaudible 00:22:02], everything had to be scrubbed. They didn’t have all the conveniences and everything, we don’t have any work compared to what my mother had.

On top of that when it came to being house cleaning time, Dutch people were house cleaners, I’m telling you, she’d go working for other people. One thing that she told me about was after my brother was born. They had a friend or people they knew very well that she used to work for some that were quite wealthy in town.

The woman was very sick and she had a baby born right after my brother was born and she couldn’t nurse it. They came to my mother, she’d come twice a day and go there and nurse that baby as well as nursing my own brother. She did that until he was a year old, imagine that.

**Janet:** Can you remember any experiences with your mother when you and she were together, things that you did or any activities or just … ?

**Agnes:** Not too much, I was only seven when we left Holland. I remember my mother wearing a Dutch cap. Then, I don’t know if you are interested in how it happened that we left Holland?

**Janet:** Yes definitely.

**Agnes:** My mother had, as I say, the aunt out here. One of her cousins was a very brilliant man, in fact he owned a store right here in town. He was also agent for the Holland American line.

He came to Holland and visit all of his relatives that he had out there and also stopped at our house. I remember he was a tall man, I remember this strange tall man coming and my father getting quite excited.

My dad had been talking about leaving Holland, he’d heard a lot about the United States. He was interested because he figured they had to work hard there in Holland. He felt that the children growing up, my sister was 15 when we left there, my brother was 11 and I was seven.

This happened about, I would say at the most two months before we came out. He said to my father, “If you are interested this is what this …” I always called him Uncle Arthur because to call him by his name I was too young. When we got here the kids out here were all calling him Uncle Arthur.

He’s coming to the United States, “I’ll help you all I can.” It’s all that my dad needed. He said, “We’ll find a house for you.” He said, “I will send you the tickets.” That was the first thing he said, but then he said, “Don’t wait too long.” Because he said, “As long as you have the two children under 12 they can go on one ticket.”

Then he said, “That will only mean a ticket for you, your wife and your oldest daughter and then one for my brother and I.” It meant a lot, that did it with my dad. Then he said, “I’ll send you the tickets and you can pay me off when you get to work in the United States.” What could be better? Right.

My father and my mother both decided they would go to the United States. That was something. A whole family packing up, they had to have an auction.

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

**Agnes:** I remember all of the junk around. Children don’t pay that much attention, not at seven, but I remember a lot of going on. My mother wore one of this white caps and she had to let her hair grow because she couldn’t wear that cap here.

They always kept it cut short so they could tuck it under their hair. Her hair grew pretty good, she did buy a switch that she could tuck it under that knot, braided it. I remember all that because she had to go to the city to get that.

Then we had to go to all of the aunts and uncles to say goodbye. My grandma lived in another town and I can still see her and I think of her so often.

We were all getting on the tram way in front of her house to go to where we had to go and she was crying. I thought it was a great excursion, a kid of seven years old, never been on a tram before. It was like a train, they called it the tram.

She was crying and I said to her, I asked her, “Beppe why do you cry?” She says, “This is like a funeral of five.” I’ll never forget she said that. It was like she said she was burying us, she said, “I’ll never see any of you again.” I couldn’t understand that. I couldn’t understand why poor grandma cried, but it was true, we never saw her again. These things come back.

**Janet:** How about your brothers? What were their names and what were they like at the time you were leaving?

**Agnes:** My sisters name was Jantje [inaudible 00:28:34] that into Jennie when she came out here.

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

**Agnes:** J-A-N-T-J-E. A lot of the Dutch women’s names ended with J-E in the end, that was very common, or T-E, J-E or T-E. My brother’s name was Jacob and they kept it. No, he stayed that, they pronounced it Yacob in Dutch, but it was spelt the same. That was their names.

**Janet:** What were they like when you were seven and they were however much older?

**Agnes:** My brother turned 12, we got here the 6th of May and he turned 12 in the 19th of May. We got here just in time, that’s why everything had to rush. My father was going to save all that money for that half of a ticket.

My sister was 15. She finished all of the grades in school in Holland, through to the sixth grade I guess it was. Then she had worked for a while, taking care of children for some people that had money. I think she always came home at night.

**Janet:** What was her name?

**Agnes:** Jantje and they changed it to Jennie.

**Janet:** Do you remember the auction or do you remember things that your mother packed to come here with?

**Agnes:** They had trunks full of stuff I know, because my mother took along all of the bedding. I can remember blankets and stuff that we had and they had good woolen blankets and stuff there.

They came here, but as far as the packing of it is concerned, I wasn’t interested I was out playing. Seven years old, just turned seven in April and we moved in May.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything she brought that you noticed once you got here and got older? Any treasures that she kept around from your home?

**Agnes:** Yes, sad to say I don’t have any of them. My sister got them all. I don’t want to run my brother-in-law down, but he was one -My brother had a good job. He worked himself up and he got a good job. He was one of the assistant supers in the Whitin Machines Works here.

A smart boy like my dad, very smart. He had no family, that is no children, he was married but he had no children. He didn’t care about a lot of these things that would have interested me and did interest me, but they disappeared.

Three things that bothered me, one of them was my mother had a beautiful necklace. It was three strands of a dark red bead and they had a gold clasp in the back. The gold clasp, it was gold was real Dutch gold, which was not 10, 12 carat. What I mean to say it was really pure gold. We don’t know what happened to it.

Another thing she had, maybe some of these other girls have got them, I don’t know but they called them a Stofka. It was a thing on the table that you would put on the table and you had kerosene in the bottom and they could light it. The girls talk about them.

**Janet:** We are resuming now after a telephone call. We were talking about the Stofka.

**Agnes:** Yeah. I said there were a few things, beside the beads I would like to have had that Stofka. Because they kind of ornamental, they’re pretty, they’re unusual. The tea pot that my mother always used on top of it, that also came from Holland. I would like to have had them but they all disappeared.

**Janet:** Is that S-T-O-F-K-A, you think?

**Agnes:** Yeah, I don’t know if that’s the way they spelt it in Holland.

**Janet:** Do you know how it might be spelled?

**Agnes:** No, I don’t know. That’s what we always called it. It might be that I’m pronouncing it the way we did it in the Fries. We lived in Friesland and the dialect is different from the Holland language would be. I don’t know what they would call it in the Holland language. Those were the things that I wanted badly, but we don’t know what happened to them.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving the town and going to where you took the ship from?

**Agnes:** We went to my grandmother’s in the other town and all the relatives around, said goodbye to them, my mother’s side of the family. I remember going on that boat, that short trip over the, if I understand it it came from England that it was the English Channel we went across. Otherwise I really don’t know, but we were on that small boat only a few hours. Then we landed got on to the big boat, the Ocean Liner.

**Janet:** You don’t remember the name?

**Agnes:** Not the small boat, no.

**Janet:** The big boat?

**Agnes:** No, all I know it was a Holland-American line. I don’t know if it even had a name. Dear girl, this is over 80 years ago.

**Janet:** I’m sorry.

**Agnes:** That’s all right.

**Janet:** If you don’t remember it’s all right, I’ll ask anyway.

**Agnes:** I know. Seven years old, you don’t pay attention.

**Janet:** What was the passage like on the Holland-American ship?

**Agnes:** They kept nationalities separate, I think they did that more for your convenience and enjoyment, than because you were on the boat two weeks. I remember there weren’t too many children on the boat.

There were a couple of sailors on the boat that took a fancy to me and another little girl. My parents said they thought she was Polish, you know how kids can always communicate. The guys rigged up a couple of swings for us somehow and we’d have a good time on those swings.

My mother and my sister were both sick. They never even got up on the deck I don’t think.

**Janet:** Were you in steerage? Were you in the bottom of the boat in like a [inaudible 00:36:29]?

**Agnes:** Yeah, almost all of the state rooms were down below. You had to go downstairs to get to your state room.

**Janet:** You were in a separate little room or were you in a big room with a lot of people?

**Agnes:** No, the sleeping quarters were like in the walls and they were private I think. Because my mother and my sister stayed in bed all the time, they couldn’t lift their heads, they were sick. My dad and my brother were all over the place and so was I. I was a little stinker I guess.

**Janet:** Was there anything that happened aboard the voyage else that you recall?

**Agnes:** One thing that I used to hear my mother talk about. The time it got time to rough and we had pea soup for dinner. The thing wasn’t fast, they were fastening things to the table so that they would stay put.

I don’t know if there was a floor or something under us, but it seemed as though the boards weren’t too tight anyway. The pot of pea soup tipped over and it went all over the floor and downstairs, they got a lot of it through the floor. That’s the only incident that really I can remember.

**Janet:** Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

**Agnes:** Not too much, it was either late at night or early in the morning. I don’t remember anything of that really. All I remember though is walking, walking and I thought we were never going to get anywhere until we came to this big barn-like place. That was Ellis Island they said. I didn’t like what they did to me there.

**Janet:** What did they do?

**Agnes:** They looked us over from head to foot. I had long hair and my mother didn’t braid it, I think it was always hanging lose. They were digging around in it and they combed. I kept telling them in Dutch, “I don’t have lice,” but that’s what they were looking for. Because the way they acted that’s all I could think of. I remember that. I don’t whether they gave us shots or what, they vaccinated us.

**Janet:** At Ellis Island or before you got on the ship?

**Agnes:** I think it was at Ellis Island, before we came into this country, before we got off Ellis Island. I think that’s where it was. My mother’s didn’t take but mine did, because I never had any trouble about it afterwards. I didn’t like that very much either. Children don’t like those things.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything else about Ellis Island, what it looked like or what happen to you there?

**Agnes:** No, only those things that were disagreeable.

**Janet:** Do you remember when you were free to leave?

**Agnes:** Yes, Uncle Arthur showed up again. He came to New York and picked us up off when we came off -You go on a boat or something from Ellis Island to New -I think to me we did. Not a very big boat, but some contraption. There was Uncle Arthur, waiting for us. Then I felt pretty good because I thought he was pretty nice when he visited us.

Then we got on a train from New York. I think we had to change or something, I don’t know just where. Then there used to be a street car would run from the station in Linwood, down to the foot across street here in town, all along Linwood Avenue, there were car tracks.

Then we all get off and we had to walk up that hill to where they lived. We went to his house. We ate in a big dining room, they had a nice house. She had a nice white table cloth on the table. I don’t remember what it was but it tasted mighty good to me after the food on the boat.

Then on top of that, it was in May, and she had a daughter that was about the same age as I was. They could afford it I guess anyway, but they were going to have Memorial Day exercises. I didn’t have any, just the one pair of shoes really, because we wore wooden shoes in Holland all through the day.

She gave me a pair of Anne’s shoes, white shoes and white stockings and she gave me a white dress. I remembered all of that, it was Anne’s maybe last year’s dress, I don’t know. He could afford it. They had two sons older then Anne was the youngest, the other two boys were already in their teens and then Anne came along.

**Janet:** How did you feel about getting these white clothing?

**Agnes:** That was just wonderful to me. Of course that house seemed like a mansion to me, but would you believe it I lived in that house afterwards. I moved out of there I moved in here, but it had been remodeled after that and made into apartments. I slept in what, at that time was their dining room was my bedroom. Can you imagine that? Often thought about it, often.

**Janet:** Were there any other things that happened soon after you arrived that struck you as really eye-opening and different?

**Agnes:** We moved down to Brook Street because Uncle Arthur had that all arranged, they had a house for us. They had it furnished with all the necessities that you really needed. Then later on my parents added more but we had everything we really needed.

Then, as I say, I met my great aunt, my mother’s aunt and I started calling her Beppe, because she was an elderly lady. I remember going with her to the town hall to knit. Outside of that didn’t take me long to learn the English language and I got along pretty good. They didn’t get away with things anymore with me.

**Janet:** How was the school different here from the one you were in in Holland?

**Agnes:** This was a public school, and ours was a Christian school. My mother worked awfully hard in Holland, she also used to clean that school, the Christian school. It got very dusty because the kids wearing the black woolen socks and the wooden shoes stayed in the hall. They walked stocking feet.

Then had no vacuum cleaners. I can remember going with my mom when she’d go there and clean, it’s not that I did any cleaning but I remember going with her. She would sweep up. Here it was so different.

The school was all together different, there was an English language. I don’t remember too much of the first weeks of school till I knew the language. My poor sister, who had already been out of school for a number of years in Holland, had to go back first grade with all the little kids. Till she could learn the ABCs and learn to read and she did pretty good too.

**Janet:** How did she feel about that, going in with the little children?

**Agnes:** She only went to school, maybe about three or four months, I don’t know I never asked her about it later on. Then she went out, she got a job and did housework.

In town they were always after the Dutch girls, because they found out that they were taught by their mothers to be very fussy and clean. In that respect they had a very good reputation. Dutch girls could always get a job doing housework with the wealthy people here. They were always after them.

**Janet:** You moved into, you might say, a Dutch community here?

**Agnes:** Yeah. We had neighbors that were Dutch too. There were some of them that had lived here for years were very helpful to my mother. She never really learned to talk the English language good.

My father worked in Whitin Machines Works. Uncle Arthur got him a job through somebody he knew in the Whitin Machines Works. He went to work right off the first Monday we were here and things were a lot better here.

Because I tell you, my father often told me he earned, in Holland it’s not dollars it’s guilder. You’ve heard of that? Guilders they called it in the English language, in Dutch it’s guilder. Here he was getting seven guilders a week, here he got seven dollars a week.

Seven dollars a week went much further than that seven guilder did, we were much better off. There was one thing that broke my heart, when I left Holland I had had a new doll, not long before we left there. I couldn’t take it along, my mother said, “We haven’t got room for it, you’ve got to leave it here.” I cried my heart out.

Then through this Uncle Arthur and them they got me a new doll. I got an album there that’s got a picture and it shows me holding a doll after we got here they gave me. Picture of us, the whole family just the way we looked when we came from Holland. That’s all I can tell you.

**Janet:** Did your mother and father keep up a lot of the ways that they had in Holland once they got here?

**Agnes:** To some extent, not as far as cooking and things was concerned. My mother learned to bake bread very quickly and she made wonderful bread. The recipe for brown bread now in Holland, we ate very little white bread, it was made with rye meal.

This brown bread, and I still make the brown bread, it’s more like our brown bread, but we don’t make it with the rye meal. When my mother first made the brown bread here, you were able to get that rye meal. She would make it with that and it was like Holland. Some things, the meals and stuff were very much like her way of cooking and everything.

**Janet:** Did she teach you certain ideas about life or about what to do, right and wrong, that were carryovers from some of the Dutch ideas of things?

**Agnes:** Not really. Because the friends that they got out here had lived here for a good many years and that rubbed off on us. No, as new things came along -My parents have been gone for years and years and years. They got some of the modern things as they came along.

My mother never had a vacuum cleaner, I had one, I had to do the vacuuming for her. She did have an electric washer, but it was one of these -Did you ever see those that the tub swings back and forth? That’s the kind she had.

I was the youngest. We didn’t live too far after I was married, too far away from my folks. I took my mother’s washing and ironing from the time I got married until the day they died. That was every week. I went there once a week to the vacuum cleaning and everything.

My youngest boy, who’s going to be 45 years old or was 45 years old in April. He’s the youngest of my two, I got two boys, the other one was quite a bit older. We lost two in between.

He was a youngster, I would say maybe about five. I don’t think he was in school yet when my mother died. Up until then, all those years, there was 14 years between this one and the oldest boy, because I had difficulty carrying babies.

The oldest boy must have been about 16 or something like that, when my mother died. He was in his teens I remember that and all those years imagine, from the time I was married. That was about 15, 16 years, married a couple of years before we had him. Until my mother died did I do her washing and ironing and cleaning for her, thorough cleaning. You just automatically did it, after all it was your mother.

**Janet:** We’re getting close to the end of the tape. What was your husband s name?

**Agnes:** John.

**Janet:** How did you meet him? When did you meet him?

**Agnes:** He was born in this country. I met him through church. Church had young people and everything, you get after a while you know them all. I had had other boyfriends off and on. We weren’t that old when we met.

**Janet:** What did you like about him?

**Agnes:** I’m very prejudiced. I was very blessed to have a wonderful husband and a good father for my children, I really was. The oldest grandchildren that can remember him say the same thing.

I’ve got a fellow that used to live with us, his own mother died when he was 13, she was killed. I can show you his picture of his family, died when he was 13, when his mother was killed in an automobile accident. In three years she had the three children. His sister was 11, his brother was 12 and he was 13 when his mother was killed in an automobile accident.

He came, joined the army, he got a stepmother and that wasn’t too cozy. He joined the army, was stationed at Fort Devens. At that time, all our churches together sent all the service men, what they call the Young Calvinist was a magazine for young people and they sent it to all the boys.

In it they had an ad saying, “Any young service man or woman too, for that matter, who was stationed at,” gave the different stations near where our church, near enough to our church, “they had time off and were interested in coming to the church, meals and lodging would be provided.”

We put our name in that we would be willing to take in a service man. We’d had different ones come and stay one weekend and wouldn’t come back. Glen, this fellow, was stationed in Devens and he stayed there the whole time he was in the service, in Devens.

When he finally came, my oldest boy was his age. Then he met him and he had been to a home where he didn’t feel comfortable, another home. Then my son said, “Hi mom, would you mind if Glen comes here?”

I said, “No, of course not, that’s why we put our name in.” He came and he stayed three years. He was with us every weekend he had off, lots of time he’d come on Friday nights. The whole family loved him from the beginning.

**Janet:** We only have about a minute left. You can wrap that up, but also tell me your children’s names.

**Agnes:** I have two boys, the oldest one is Rowland and he lives in Linwood. He’s married and he has three sons and he’s got eight grandchildren. Then the youngest, then as I said, we lost two in between, I had a very difficult time getting pregnant and carrying them.

Then when I lost that second one I went to this other doctor. The surgeon that took care of me said, “I know a doctor that maybe can help.” I went to him and he told me he said, “When you think you might be pregnant come back,” and I did.

**Janet:** What’s that son’s name?

**Agnes:** Harvey. He’s married and he has two beautiful children.

**Janet:** Wonderful.

**Agnes:** He’s 14 years younger than Rowland.

**Janet:** The tape’s about to run out. I want to thank you so much.

**Agnes:** Don’t mention it.

**Janet:** For a wonderful interview.

**Agnes:** It’s been fun reminiscing to you.

**Janet:** I’ve been speaking with Agnes Vander Baan. She came from the Netherlands in 1914 at the age of seven. Thank you so much.