

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**  
**RG-50.030\*0887**

## PREFACE

The following interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## **JAN HIEMINGA**

### **August 9, 2016**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Jan Hieminga**, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in **Nashua, New Hampshire**. Thank you very much Mr. **Hieminga** for agreeing to speak with us today, and to share some of your experiences during World War II.

Answer: You're welcome.

Q: Before we get there, we're going to talk a lot about your pre-war life, and what was the world that you were born into, and grew up in. So I will start with my very first question, and that is, can you tell me the date of your birth?

A: July 1, 1920.

Q: July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1920?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And what was your name at birth?

A: **Jan**.

Q: **Jan**. And your last name **Hieminga**?

A: **Hieminga**.

Q: Okay. And where were you born?

A: In **Amsterdam**.

Q: In **Amsterdam**?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes, in the **Netherlands**.

Q: Okay. Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I had one brother and two sisters.

Q: Ga – were you the youngest or the oldest, or in between?

A: In between.

Q: Okay. Can you tell me about your other siblings, their names, and about how much age difference there was?

A: My older brother, his name was **Wiepka**(ph).

Q: **Wiepka**(ph)?

A: Yeah, **een Friese naam**. My father came out of **Friesland**, and that is the reason they had the **Friese naam**. And then they –

Q: A – a fre – a fre – is **Wiepka**(ph) a **Friese naam**, is that what you're saying?

A: Yeah.

Q: So your older brother had a name that was particular from the area of **Friesland**(ph) –

A: Yeah.

Q: – in the **Netherlands**.

A: Yes.

Q: And how many years older than you was he?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Nine years.

Q: So he was born in 1911?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, and then came you, in 1920.

A: No, then came my sister, **Wilomene**(ph).

Q: **Wilomene**(ph), okay.

A: Born in 1916.

Q: Okay. And then came?

A: And then came my sister **Truus**(ph), born in 1926.

Q: Okay, and anybody else, or is this it for the chil –

A: That's it.

Q: That's it.

A: Four of us.

Q: Four of you, and you were the second from the youngest. The second – in other words, you had a younger sister?

A: Yes.

Q: One younger sister. And her name was **Truus**(ph)?

A: **Truus**(ph).

Q: **Truus**(ph). Your father and your mother's name?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: My father's name was **Bouwe Hieminga**(ph).

Q: **Bouwe**?

A: **Bouwe, b-o-u-w-e, Bouwe.**

Q: **Bouwe**, okay.

A: Also, **Friese naam.**

Q: Okay. And your mother's?

A: My mother was **Maria Johanna**(ph).

Q: And her maiden name?

A: **Vanderbundt**(ph).

Q: **Vanderbundt**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, was she also from **Friesland**(ph)?

A: No, she came [**indecipherable**] the southern part of the **Netherlands.**

Q: Uh-huh. How did your parents meet, if one was from the north, and the other is from the south?

A: I don't know, they met in am – in **Amsterdam.**

Q: Okay.

A: And –

Q: Is this, **Amsterdam**, also where you grew up?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your family life. How did your father support his family?

A: Well, he was an – an craftsman in carpentry, and he was an – oh, how would you call it here in English?

Q: Say it in Dutch.

A: The – the **leager**(ph) – the leader from the group of men, the craftsmen.

Q: Oh, was he like in a guild of some kind?

A: No, no.

Q: Was he a master craftsman?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And what kind of things did he make, with his carpentry?

A: Well, his daily work was in the building trade, but at evening, he did fine work.

Q: So, in the building tr –

A: So he made – he made his own furniture and cabinets, and so on, table, whatever he did.

Q: Was it nice furniture?

A: Very nice.

Q: So it must have made your mother very happy that she had such nice furniture.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes, yes. And he, in the **oldern** days [**indecipherable**] rebuilding an – an building, they took the doors, and those doors were two inch thick oak. And I put on behind – around the front, they put in – what is it then, the skirting –

Q: Describe –

A: – that the peop – that the – that the people would not go into the building, and would be safeguarded, how's that?

Q: Oh, so like an –

A: A fence.

Q: A fence.

A: A fence.

Q: An iron – a gate, of a kind.

A: Gate, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they use those doors. And when the door – when the job was finished, my father took those doors, they were all oak –

Q: Okay.

A: – and then he –

Q: Made furniture.

A: – he – he made furniture out of it.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: How wonderful.

A: And that was all – that was all beautiful **kwadet**(ph) oak.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, in – in the early days, **kwadet**(ph) oak was used for everything.

Later, no more – well, there was no more.

Q: Yeah. What ama – wh-what an amazing way of reusing –

A: Yeah.

Q: – the material.

A: Yeah.

Q: So i – he was involved in construction work.

A: Yes.

Q: Did he work for somebody else?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Had your father finished any schooling?

A: No.

Q: Okay. But, did he know how to read and write?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Oh yeah, he had schooling, that schooling, yes. I thought like you meant as an craftsman.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: No, but he went to school regularly.

Q: He went to school.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did he go to higher education?

A: No.

Q: Okay, okay. And did your older brother also work in the same trade with him?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable] with him, but in different firm.

Q: Okay. And he worked for a different pers – that is, your father didn't work on his own, he worked for somebody else?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And your mother, did she work outside of the home?

A: No.

Q: Okay. She took care of the four children.

A: She took care of the children, yes.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: All right. And, tell me a little bit about your home. Were you – did you live in a single family home, or did you live in an apartment building?

A: An apartment, we lived in an apartment in **Amsterdam**.

Q: What part of **Amsterdam**?

A: In **Amsterdam** West.

Q: Okay.

A: In western part.

Q: And, can you describe your neighborhood a little bit for me? Was it only apartment buildings there, or –

A: Yeah, apartment buildings, and it was – besides a waterway, and there was also causeway, and – and [**indecipherable**] now. What is that in [**indecipherable**]. They sold wood. What is that in –

Q: A lumberyard?

A: A lumberyard.

Q: Okay.

A: With – with – but only fine wood.

Q: Was it a newer – was it a newer neighborhood, or an old –

A: No, old.

Q: Old neighborhood.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: So the image that people have of **Amsterdam**, with canals, and narrow houses, and so on, was this your type of neighborhood? Is that where you lived?

A: Well, not the narrow houses, that is in the center of town.

Q: Okay.

A: But the the [**indecipherable**] was the regular apartment buildings.

Q: Okay. Okay. And was it in – by social, I'd say, if not status, but by social standing, was it a working class, or a middle class?

A: Middle.

Q: Middle class.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Would you say that your – your family was a well-to-do family?

A: No. On the lower side from well-to-do.

Q: Okay. What we say, lower middle class.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Were your parents very religious?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they –

A: Both of them.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Both of them?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what – what denomination did they belong to?

A: Well, they were – my mother was – I don't know ho-how to express that, but let's say Reformed, and my father was Christian Reformed.

Q: You know, people outside the **Netherlands** aren't really aware of the m – the many different kinds of denominations within the **Netherlands**.

A: Oh yeah, yeah, they were all fighting each other.

Q: Can you –

A: They're not – not like the Roman Catholics [**indecipherable**] they were all one, yes.

Q: Can you – can you tell me a little bit about these – th-the religions? They're Protestant denominations.

A: Yes.

Q: But what is the difference between the church Reformed, and the Reformed?

A: Well, I don't know how to express that, but the Christians for – Reformed, were more particular in their Bible study, and reading [**indecipherable**]

Q: Ah, were they stricter?

A: Yeah, very stricter.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. Okay. Did you grow up in such an atmosphere, too?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you go to Bible studies every Sunday?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Did you go to a religious pa – school, when you went to school?

A: Yeah, Christian school.

Q: A Christian school.

A: Yes.

Q: And, how was it expressed in your home? How were – how was your reli – your family's religious belief? How did it play a role in your everyday lives?

A: [indecipherable] of one another, and like you are honest.

Q: The values that you're supposed to have.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah. Di – was there Bible study in the home?

A: Not study, but reading.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, it was after – after dinner, my father read the Bible, and prayed.

Q: Okay, okay. Did you go – start school in **Amsterdam**?

A: Yes.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: And did you finish your schooling in **Amsterdam**?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, my father had an other job in **The Hague**.

Q: Okay.

A: And so we moved to **The Hague**.

Q: And that's about how much –

A: That was in 1934.

Q: Uh-huh. You were 14 years old.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: My school was not yet finished.

Q: Okay.

A: And the school was not too good in **Amsterdam**, but when I came in the school in – in **The Hague**, I – I really learned something.

Q: It was a better quality school?

A: Yeah, better quality school.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: And of course, the Christian schools were all private. They were not – they were su – they were supported by the state [indecipherable] but they were handled privately.

Q: When you say supported, did that mean they got monies –

A: Yes.

Q: – financing from the state?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But they were – but they were administered then, through the churches?

A: Through the churches, yeah.

Q: Okay. Was most of the **Netherlands** very religious? Was it a very religious country, at that time?

A: Half and half, I would say.

Q: Okay.

A: But I can't remember.

Q: Okay. In **Amsterdam**, did you live in a neighborhood where there were – that was diverse, or that was pretty homogeneous?

A: [indecipherable] I would say, everyone.

Q: Okay. Were there Jewish families in your neighborhood?

A: Oh yeah, there must have been. I – I can't remember.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay, you don't know.

A: No.

Q: Okay. What about **The Hague**?

A: No.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: No, **Amsterdam** was really Jewish, but the main – that was more in the city part, where they were. But I mean, at that time when I grew up, there was no difference between Jews and je – and the Christians, I mean.

Q: In –

A: We went along fairly well.

Q: Okay. So there were – nobody felt that they were – they were somehow or other less Dutch if they were dewi – Jewish, or if they were Christian?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: I can't remember that, you know, that's – no.

Q: Okay. Now, in 1934, when you moved to **The Hague**, you're 14 years old. And a year before then, **Adolf Hitler** came to power in **Germany**.

A: Yeah.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Was this something that people talked about in the **Netherlands**? Of things that were going on in **Germany**?

A: Not at that time.

Q: Okay. It was far away.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Were your parents ha – did they have any political kinds of beliefs, or adherence to anybody?

A: Yeah. **Anti-Revolutionaire**.

Q: What does that mean? **Anti-Revelutionary**(ph), what does that mean?

A: Yeah, but how do – can I explain that in English?

Q: I know.

A: **Anti-Revolutionaire**,

Q: Well, there's a word revolution in there, **revolutionaire**.

A: Yeah, yeah, ma – anti – so, what do we have here? Democrat and republican, I would say that you are republican, you know, in that kind of direction.

Q: Okay, so they would have been more of a conservative adherence –

A: Yeah, very conservative.

Q: Very conservative.

A: Yeah.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Very conservative. What about the children? Did you kind of accept that as well, that this is the –

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, okay. What kind of work then, did your father do in **The Hague**, continued with the construction work?

A: No, he was a supervisor over an – an block of houses, you know, the – to take care of it, maintenance.

Q: Okay.

A: Getting the rent.

Q: Okay. Did you live in one of those houses, too?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you describe to me the house, what it – you know, what your apartment looked like?

A: Was an apartment with a – a living room, living – dining room, kitchen. Three – I think three bedrooms.

Q: Running water?

A: Wow, this all long ago.

Q: Yeah, I know, I know.

A: Wow.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Was it, again, the same questions, there was running water?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Indoor plumbing?

A: Yes.

Q: And there was electricity?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And the heating was through –

A: Through an – an – a stove in the – in living room.

Q: So, a coal oven?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, so was through coal.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Did your family have a radio?

A: No.

Q: No, no radio.

A: Not at that time. Later on. Later on, yes.

Q: Before the war?

A: That was still – was that before the war? Yeah – yeah, I think – m-maybe.

Q: Okay.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Maybe. I know I built a little radio, you know.

Q: You did?

A: Yeah. It's a builder – I don't know how you call that in [indecipherable] days.

Q: But you made your own radio?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was this before the war as well, or –

A: Before the war, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And during the war, more.

Q: That might be very – even more significant.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. As I asked Mrs. **Hieminga**, did your father or mother read the newspapers? Did they –

A: My father did.

Q: Okay.

A: I think my mother didn't.

Q: Okay.

A: Maybe once in a while.

Q: Okay. Which parent – which parent had the greatest influence on you?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: I think my father.

Q: In what way?

A: In a bad way.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you describe that for me?

A: Well, I was nothing. I was a nobody.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's how he would – that was his manner.

A: Well, yeah.

Q: It's not very Christian.

A: No.

Q: And it must have hurt.

A: Still hurt. I never got over that.

Q: I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

A: It's never easy, is it.

Q: You know, some of the early influences somebody has.

A: Yeah.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Did your mother counterbalance that at all?

A: Tried to, yes.

Q: Yeah. Did he abuse chil – you – did he abuse the children, your father?

A: No – well, he had a strong hand.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Were you close to your siblings?

A: Yeah, to my brother, yes. To my youngest sister, not my middle sister.

Q: Okay. And why not to your middle sister?

A: I don't know.

Q: It just didn't develop.

A: It just didn't develop, no.

Q: Okay.

A: That was a good way of saying it.

Q: Yeah, okay. Was school something that was very important for you?

A: Yes.

Q: What were some of the study – what were some of the subjects that you found the most interesting?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, when I came in **The Hague**, I actually learned arithmetic. There was an principal, as you call it, the wa – head of the school, who was not in his office, no, he went to the classes, and helped the kids to –

Q: To learn.

A: – to learn.

Q: So, he was very involved.

A: He was very involved, and I-I was busy with things what I could not understand. And then I ask him to give me a row of questions that I could take home, and see if we could figure it out. And that took a couple of days, and then –

Q: You figured it out.

A: – I figured it out, and that was the break that came, that I became an arithmetic nut, and an algebra nut.

Q: Really?

A: Through that man.

Q: Well, that's wonderful.

A: Yes.

Q: So, he was a very significant teacher for you.

A: Oh yeah, very. His name was Mr. **Hashma**(ph). I nev – I n – I can't – I can't forget.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: He was – he meant a lot to you.

A: Yes.

Q: More than just as a teacher.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think he also, in some ways, provided a role model that your own father maybe didn't? Was he somebody who –

A: Must have been.

Q: Yeah.

A: Thank you.

Q: You're welcome. Who – were there other people who were important influences for you? Other adults, as you were growing up?

A: Yeah.

Q: Who would they have been?

A: Well, part of the people where we went to – to – what do you call that? A **cateras**(ph) – you know – you know, there is catechism [**indecipherable**]

Q: Yes, yes, yes.

A: And you had an catechism school.

Q: That's right.

A: And that is where I went.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. And so, some of the people where you went for religious education –

A: Yes.

Q: – they were helpful.

A: Yes.

Q: Did your parents have brothers and sisters of their own?

A: My father had one brother, and my mother had oh, three sisters.

Q: Were they part of your life?

A: In the vacation time, yes.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: They went – I lived in the southern part of the **Netherlands**, and – and there we went.

Q: Okay, you'd go there on the vacations.

A: Vacations.

Q: So that would have been your mother's relatives?

A: Yes, my mother's side.

Q: Okay. Did you belong – were there things like Christian youth organizations that you belonged to?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of activities would you – would you take part in?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, that was mainly – mainly [indecipherable]

Q: Well, did you go on hikes with them? Did you have like Boy Scout activities?

A: No, no, no.

Q: No, no. It revolved around – around learning more about the Bible?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Okay. And, in the late 30s, you're already a teenager. You know, like ni –  
by 1937 and 1938?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there something like a draft, a mandatory draft in the **Netherlands**? Was there  
something like that, where young men are called into military service?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you going to – were you part of this, were you old enough to be drafted?

A: No, I – I went as an –

Q: Volunteer?

A: – volunteer.

Q: Okay.

A: But, I was going to be in the air force. But then the war started, I start to go in  
June in the air force, and in May the war started, and that was it.

Q: So this was –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: So I was never in the war. I was never in it.

Q: Okay, so you were going to be in it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Was your brother somebody who served?

A: No, he was free.

Q: Okay. By the time the war started, were you still living in **The Hague**?

A: No. In 1938, we moved to **Schiedam**.

Q: **Schiedam**?

A: **Schiedam**. That is an – an place outside of **Rotterdam**.

Q: Okay.

A: The gin city.

Q: The gin city?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: And why did you move there?

A: My father got another job there. He lost the job in **The Hague**. And so, somehow he found that out in **Schiedam**, and we moved to **Schiedam**.

Q: And what was his job in **Schiedam**?

A: The sen – the same as in –

Q: As in **Rotterdam** –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – I m – as in **The Hague**.

A: And then he studied as an – as an **makelaar** – as an – how do you call it here?

Broker, an real estate broker.

Q: Oh, he studied to be a real estate broker?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did he become one?

A: Yes.

Q: Did he have any deals that he did, before the war?

A: No. He was not a salesman.

Q: Doesn't sound like it.

A: No.

Q: So, how did he use this – these studies, or did he use them?

A: Did – did use them actually [**indecipherable**] registration from the houses, and the bookkeeping and – a-and – and got the money from the people, you know, how –

Q: Sure. Your brother was already significantly older –

A: Yes, he stayed – when we moved to **The Hague**, and later to **Schiedam**, he stayed in **Amsterdam**.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: He stayed in **Amsterdam**.

A: And he was studying for engineer.

Q: Did he go – did he go to ha – university?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Did he get along with your father?

A: He was more – well, how can I say that? My father did not get **[indecipherable]** over him. He was very independent.

Q: Okay.

A: And I had nothing to say yet.

Q: Yeah. You were much younger.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so, there was a big difference that way.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. So when you moved to **The Hague**, and then to rot – to **Shaiven**(ph)?

A: **Schiedam**.

Q: **Schiedam**.

A: Yeah.

Q: It was the three children, your sis – your older and your younger sisters, and yourself –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes.

Q: – who moved there.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And, did you continue school in ni – in **Schiedam**?

A: Yes.

Q: All right. And was that school as good as the one in **The Hague**?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: All right. Did you have also ambitions to go to – for university studies?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What did you –

A: But I first went to – to an trade school.

Q: Okay.

A: My father want me to go to a trade school, and that's what I did.

Q: And what trade?

A: That was two years in carpentry.

Q: Uh-huh. Did you enjoy it?

A: Yes, but I – I enjoyed the fine part, not the rough part, as you can see here.

Q: Did you make this furniture –

A: Yes.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: – in your home?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: That's so impressive. It's beautiful.

A: It's –

Q: So you learned well.

A: Yes.

Q: So you – what did you want to study?

A: I want to study for engineering also, and I went to university, and I – in 1940.

Q: So, the war hadn't started yet?

A: No.

Q: Or had it? Okay.

A: No. And so, I was there, and then the war started, and the university was bombed flat. And so that was the end of that.

Q: During the German occupation of the **Netherlands**, were any of the universities opened? I mean, were people able to go and continue university studies?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: In the beginning yes, later on not, for the reason, there was no food, and so they closed.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay, okay. By the time you entered university, were people then talking about what was going on in **Germany**?

A: I – not that I can remember.

Q: So you – did you have any political – were there any political discussions of world events, or –

A: No, no.

Q: Okay. So again, it was very distant?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Were you expecting a German invasion of the **Netherlands**?

A: Well, I can't remember that – that's that far back.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So, were you surprised when the – when the invasion actually happened?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Do you remember what that first – those first days were like?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Could you describe some of that for me?

A: Well, by that time, I worked for an – an construction firm, and I was the leader on a group of men, when I was that young. And when the Germans came, the schools were made empty, and made into places for the Germans to –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: To live.

A: – to live. And so, I was involved in that.

Q: In making – in reconstructing –

A: Yes.

Q: – the schools for this?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. What about the – the day, or the night of the bo – the first bombings. Do you remember that?

A: Yeah.

Q: Where were you?

A: I was standing before an Catholic church in **Schiedam**, where once the – the sirens were going, and then everybody stops, and you know, to – to – to – to find a place to –

Q: To hide.

A: – to hide. And from there I could see that the bombers were bombing **Rotterdam**. And that was – that was in '40.

Q: Wow, that was in – May 1940?

A: May '40.

Q: Okay. What were the next several days like for you?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: I think it – it was just terrible, I – I don't know.

Q: Did you go home?

A: You don't – you don't know what happened actually, and you are not prepared for that, and –

Q: Did you see – when did you see German soldiers for the first time?

A: Well, the next day.

Q: The next day they were already there.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. What kind of impression did they make?

A: Well, for me, I thought, get out of here. You know **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah, yeah. Were there people who welcomed them?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Did you see this?

A: Yes. The **NSB**.

Q: **NSB**, what was – what's the **NSB**?

A: **NSB**, national – **NS**, socialistic, **B** – I don't know what the **B** stands for.

Q: Okay. Well, was it the Dutch –

A: **NS** – an **NSBer**. They called them all ene – **NSBers**.

Q: Okay. Was this a Dutch Nazi party?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: Had it been active before the war?

A: Well, it's – I think so, yeah.

Q: Okay, but it didn't touch your life?

A: No.

Q: Okay. People knew about it, but it wasn't – or did the people know about it, or did it simply appear?

A: Yeah, that was – it appeared [**indecipherable**]

Q: Okay.

A: But when the Germans came, of course, then they came up.

Q: Okay. Did you know anybody personally, who belonged to it?

A: No.

Q: Okay. In what way did they – in what way did this **NSB** become part of daily life?

A: You was not sure from anybody. You don't know if it was an **NSBer** in front of you, or s – you don't know. You know, you – you wouldn't know.

Q: So fear? Sort of distrust came in?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Were people being arrested?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Oh yeah.

Q: What kind of people?

A: Well, especially Jewish –

Q: Okay.

A: – were taken away, and of course they all had –

Q: Armbands?

A: – an armband.

Q: Okay. By this point, you're already a young man.

A: Yes.

Q: Had you known any Jewish people?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Well, maybe I did, but –

Q: But nobody who was really close in your life?

A: N-No, no.

Q: Okay. Okay. Did you continue working in construction?

A: Yes.

Q: What are – what were some of the other things that you'd be doing?

A: Well, we worked for the na – the firms who were ordered to German work.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay.

A: So you were automatically working for the Germans –

Q: Was –

A: – even if it was an – an Dutch firm, and who didn't like it, or didn't want to.

They had to.

Q: Okay.

A2: Can we stop for a minute? I have to go to the bathroom very badly.

Q: Sure, sure. **[break]** Okay, before the break, we were talking about the work you were doing when the Germans first arrived, that you were in construction work, that you had to refurbish a school so that it could be a place that the soldiers had to sleep, and so on. Do you remember some of the other projects that you're – that you had to work at?

A: Yeah, I worked on the coast, and the Germans thought, oh, that is just an – we can do that with the rowboat, and we'll go to **England**. But that canal is in between, and that is not a small piece of water. So, we made places where they could put their cannons, and whatever you call that, in the ground.

Q: Okay. So, sort of like bunker type –

A: Bunkers, yeah.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Yeah, mm-hm. And thi – was this as part of that Dutch company that you were working with?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Okay. Did you meet people on the job who were not happy with the situation?

A: Well, none of them.

Q: None of them.

A: None of them wa – was happy with it.

Q: Did you meet people who were starting to be involved with resistance activities?

A: Yes.

Q: And can you tell me about that?

A: I – I can't remember their names, but –

Q: It's okay.

A: – about three or four persons who were underground.

Q: Okay.

A: And in the resistance.

Q: And they were part of this organization, as well, this construction organization?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No, no, that were people that I knew through church, or – or whatever.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. Was your church involved in resistance activities, and underground activities?

A: Ne – no. At that time, I did not go to church.

Q: You did not?

A: No.

Q: And why not? You just di – it wasn't part of daily life?

A: It was not part of that, it was as of everything, when the war started, that was – the churches were closed, and you could not gather.

Q: Ah, I see. So all that – so that people weren't able to go to services?

A: No.

Q: They were – they weren't able to go to church services at all?

A: No, no.

Q: Wow. In 1940, were you already married?

A: No.

Q: When did you marry?

A: In '43.

Q: You married in 1943.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay. So your wife was, at that point, like 21 years old?



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you were 23 years old?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh, you figured that out fast.

Q: So, can you tell me when you met her?

A: That was in 1938.

Q: Ah, so you were together five years, you dated for five years? Yeah.

A: You know, that was when the Queen's birthday was. It was first with – Queen **Wilhelmina** was 40 years queen.

Q: Okay.

A: And that was at that day, and it was 31<sup>st</sup> of August, in 1938.

Q: What a good way to remember the date, the date that you met.

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of festivities were going on during that day?

A: Oh, everybody was crazy.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. Parties overall, and – yeah.

A2: Drunk people everywhere. Drunk people.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Drunk people.

Q: Drunk people, yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: So between when the war started, 1940, and 1943, when you got married, did you get involved in resistance activities?

A: No.

Q: No. Did you ever see anybody being hurt by the Germans? **[break]** Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: So –

A: Okay?

Q: – your wife mentioned somebody. Can you tell us a –

A: Yeah, two – two boys who are in the underground, and were found out by the Germans, and they were – they lived – oh, at – at – almost across from where we lived in the – in **Schiedam**. And they were called down, and when they on their way down from the stairs, they shot them, so they tumble down and were laid on the street, as an example not to do it, not to hurt the Germans.

Q: Did you know the boys?

A: No, not by name.

Q: No, not by name?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No.

Q: But by sight, did you –

A: By sight, yes.

Q: Okay. Young boys?

A: I think at that time my – my age.

Q: So young men.

A: Yeah.

Q: Young men, okay. Were you involved in any rescue activities, rescuing people, hiding people?

A: Hiding people, yeah.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: Well, we – we lived in an – in **Schiedam**, in the **passagia**(ph). And that was on – an passage what you could go from the front to the back, from one street to the other, and inside were all store.

Q: Okay.

A: And we were living there. Also in there was an theater.

Q: So this **pasagia**(ph), was this when you lived with your wife –

A: Yes.

Q: – or still with your family?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: No.

Q: Okay, so this is after 1943?

A: Yes.

Q: After you're married.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And describe to me the layout, a little bit.

A: Well, that layout was there, was [indecipherable] and we were in our bedroom upstairs. And the doors from the gallery [indecipherable] they were open, we can see the movie.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: From your bedroom window?

A: From my bedroom window.

Q: What good seats.

A: No, no, not hear it, but –

Q: You could see it.

A: We can see it.

Q: Isn't that interesting?

A: Yeah. It was funny.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Yeah.

A: But anyhow, that – the Germans was there, but downstairs was a big basement, and there were Jews hiding.

Q: In that – in that basement?

A: In that basement. Without that the Jews [indecipherable] of course. They didn't know. They couldn't see them, nor find them.

Q: And who hid those Jews there?

A: Well, the underground people.

Q: And how were you involved in that?

A: Well, being that one man, he – one was actually a friend of mine, he was involved in that. But he was really an gun man, who liked to shoot, and I was afraid of guns.

Q: Okay.

A: So I – I didn't want to be involved.

Q: Okay.

A: I was involved more or less with – with the stuff what – what I could handle.

Q: Okay, what were some of those –

A: And that was with – with – when we had that in the basement, we had all that coal, anthracite, for the heating system, and from the whole building. And then the

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Germans told them we couldn't use it [**indecipherable**] that had to be stopped for us. The water was high. The mills had to go on, and they went by coal. Later on, that was all. Of course, gasoline and – and you know, the pumps on the water.

Q: Well, I – you have to back up a little bit and explain this to me, as if a – you know, I'm hearing it for the first time. Can you tell me what kind of – what kind of coal this was, who did it belong to? Where was it placed?

A: Well, it belong – it belonged to the – to the administration of the **pasagia**(ph) where we lived.

Q: Okay.

A: The whole building.

Q: Okay.

A: There were apartments, and there were stores, and above the stores, the people lived.

Q: Okay. And in the basement there was –

A: And there were basements, and that was, of course, for the people who had the stores, and was that important, but our store was empty.

Q: Okay.

A: And that is the reason, and being that my father was the administrator, I got the – we got the – the apartment, and we could live there.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Ah, okay.

A: And being that the basement was empty, and not used, it was stored for the coal.

Q: And the – and the Jews were in the theater across the street, across the **pasagia**(ph)?

A: No, i-in the **pasagia**(ph).

Q: They were in the **passagia**(ph)?

A: Oh yeah, there was an – an – an entrance from the back of the building.

Q: Okay.

A: And there was [**indecipherable**] you could go in for deliveries from the people who had it – their storage in the basement. And there –

Q: And so this coal was – was supposed to be used for the heating of that building?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: But on it later, it was prohibited by the Germans, for the reason that if the water would ever overflow, and that we get high water, and that we needed the pumps to go, there were no coals for that, would we have – they would have coal to –

Q: See, this is the part I don't understand.

A: Well, the heat – yeah –

Q: If you have coal in the basement, and –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: – yeah.

A: The pumps.

Q: The pumps?

A: The pumps were – were going by coal, and by fire.

Q: Ah, and so that you needed to have enough coal to be able to use the pump.

A: You needed to have the coal to get the pumps going.

Q: Okay.

A: Later on that was not gasoline, but what do you call that other?

Q: Another fuel.

A: Yeah.

Q: It was another fuel that was used.

A: You have – you have automobiles with gas, and –

Q: Diesel?

A: Diesel, that's the word.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: But later on, that was, of course, all diesel, and coal was no more.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: And you, what did you used to do with this coal? You used to take some of it?

A: Yeah, we – we had – well, we – we used it, of course, for ourselves, for to trade with food or meat. And we used it for people who had children, had no milk, and we could trade it for milk for the kids. And wherever we could trade and – and help.

Q: Were you involved in maintaining – you know, in feeding the Jews who were hid, in the theater?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you ever see any of them?

A: No.

Q: Do you never – do you know how many were down there?

A: Yeah, sometimes 20, and sometimes 10.

Q: Okay. And it was – was it sort of like a transit place of hiding, or were they permanently there?

A: No, no, no, no. Only in transfer place.

Q: Okay.

A: So, there were no sleeping availability.

Q: Okay, so they were there just for a short time, before they could be moved somewhere else.

A: Yeah. They were brought in that, that it was safe.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay.

A: And then they – the underground – I just now remember all of this [indecipherable] they killed the Germans [indecipherable]. The Germans were going – trying to get of – of stealing the wood for themselves.

Q: Okay.

A: But there were underground people who change – who killed some Germans, however, I don't know, they took the truck and went to the gin mill, and let them fill it up with gin, and down they went with the gin away, and they sold it to the Germans, who had food, and so on. So, I mean, it was –

Q: It was a bit of mar – sort of like black market business.

A: Black market, yes. To be – just to kept people alive.

Q: Okay.

A: And especial kids and – and older people.

Q: And what about the – the – you – when you say they killed the Germans, what were the circumstances? The Germans were stealing wood from where?

A: Food from the stores.

Q: Oh, the Germans were stealing food from the stores.

A: From the stores.

Q: And they found some, and I mean, what did the underground do?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: The underground killed the Jews, and –

A2: No –

Q: No, no –

A: – took the uniforms, took the truck, and went to the gin mill.

Q: Okay, I'm going to repeat this. The underground killed the Germans?

A: Yes.

Q: Dressed up in their uniforms.

A: Yes.

Q: Went to the gin mill.

A: Yeah.

Q: Got gin.

A: Told them to fill the truck up with gin.

Q: Gin. And then traded this –

A: On the gunpoint.

Q: Okay. And then traded this for food –

A: Yes.

Q: – for the children.

A2: No, no, no, the Germans didn't do that.

Q: No, no, no, that's not – he's saying that the underground did that.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A2: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah. Who was the person, or why was it that this theater was chosen as a transit point? Why there?

A: That I don't know.

Q: Was there somebody who was running the theater, who was part of the underground?

A: Could be. That I don't know.

Q: You don't know why this place?

A: No, no. I know they were there.

Q: Okay.

A: But I know that from my friend, but, I mean, otherwise, I don't know.

Q: This is the friend who didn't mind using a gun?

A: Yes.

Q: The one who was –

A: He was – he was – later on, when we were free, he was **[indecipherable]** I don't know how they call those people, but that were the people who had blue suits, blue coveralls.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And – and a thing –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: This is after the war is over?

A: After the war, when the war was over.

Q: How were they called in Dutch, with the blue overalls? What was the name in Dutch?

A: I can't remember their name.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: But probably later on that comes back in my mind, but now we, at this, I have to turn from English to Dutch, and then my mind doesn't tick – tick in the right time.

Q: It can get confusing. It can get confusing.

A: Yes, it gets confusing.

Q: So, this apartment that you lived in, did you stay there for the duration of the war, in this **passage**(ph) –

A: Yes.

Q: – above there?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Can we cut? [**break**] Okay, what were the circumstances of you getting picked up? What happened?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, I was picked up, I was actually cashing in the rent for my father, for the houses that he had in care for, and then I went – then I went to your store, and when I came out, two guys from the police were there, and –

Q: Dutch police?

A: – they were looking for me.

Q: Dutch police?

A: Yeah, but I mean, they didn't look like police, they were in regular clothes.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah.

Q: They were – they were in plain clothes?

A: Yeah, plain clothes. And that – if I had an – an – an **V**-card was it? An **V**-card, or a **C**-card.

Q: What's that?

A: That is if you have a card like that, you have to carry that, that you are allowed not to be here. To be in [**indecipherable**] and not in **Germany**.

Q: I see.

A: You don't have to go. And I said, I don't have that. So, that was in 1943 – no, '44, end of '44, I think, or around '44.

Q: Was it around the time you were married?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Now we are already married.

Q: You are already married?

A: Yes, oh yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: But – but we – so I had to go with him, and we – I was put in jail there, in the police office. And of course you have to empty your pockets, and well, I had all that money.

Q: From the rents?

A: From the rents. And I counted it out, and I marked it exactly as it was. And so, the men did that too. And later on I found out that was a man from the good side, so anyhow – so – and so I was there. In the meantime, an girl mind the store, when

**Jacqueline** was home –

Q: So **Jacqueline** worked in a store you had just –

A: No, she was not there –

Q: Oh.

A: – in this store.

Q: Okay.

A: She was home, and a girl, one of her –

A2: Employees.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: – the – one of the employees she worked with, saw that, that I was picked up, and went up her bicycle – that was in **Rotterdam**, went to **Schiedam**, went to wherever. And then **Jacqueline** went to the – a friend of ours who was underground, and worked for the Germans. And – and so they made an false C-card, and signed. And when they found out that I had a C-card, then that evening, I was left free. So, I got the money ready in my pocket, all counted out, all the papers what I had, and [indecipherable]. And I went home, and I went with the last trolley car, I went home, and they were all waiting in the – with other neighbors in – they said, well then, it's the last trolley, let's see if **Jan** is in there. And so I was, of course, he's walking, I was running.

Q: Yeah. Cause it was going to be curfew? Was it going to be a curfew soon?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And so I was running, and they said, oh, there he is. [indecipherable] my footsteps.

Q: Okay, okay. So, what was the store she was work – she wasn't working that day, but what was the store you had gone to? Was that the office supply store?

A: No, that was the bakery.

Q: That was the bakery.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: To pick something to eat.

Q: I see, I see, okay. Was this the only time that you were in danger of being sent to **Germany**, or was there any other time?

A: Yeah, there was another time that I – I had to go, but that was before we were married.

Q: And did you go?

A: And – no.

Q: How did you get out of that one?

A: Well, we were – I think **Jacqueline** told you that we were married, and the next day, she was sick.

Q: Yes.

A: And that so, her mother called the doctor, and she said – and he looked at her, and he said, she has typhus.

Q: Ah, she has typhus.

A: Typhus.

Q: Okay.

A: And he said, well – and then her mother said, well, they were together, so that may be he has it too. So he wrote a note that she had typhus, and I had maybe it too.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

And I went to the office [**indecipherable**] to go out, to extend it. And I had – they had given me five **guilders**, you know, for going, for if I went to **Germany** to –

Q: For the trip.

A: – for – for the trip. And that was with an train for the – for the Germans. And so – but they said, no, keep the money, so I kept the five dol – five **guilders** and went home. And of course, from there – and that was to the end in '44, was for the end.

Q: Okay, so that was when you got married in '43, and then the end of '44 was the second time.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And did she have typhus, or did the doctor just say so?

A: No, she not either.

Q: Okay, okay. So it was a way to help you from not getting there.

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: That's how the doctor was on our side.

Q: Do you remember when the war ended?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was that like?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Well, of course we – it were – the sirens were on no end, and while we lived at the front of the building, there were two towers, and each tower was a flag post. And you could climb the rope [indecipherable] water on the side, and put a flag over. There was never a flag over on there, the Germans didn't want that, of course. But then I went the rope, on the tower, and the fi – th – I saw the planes go over from the – from –

A2: From **England**.

A: No, not **England**, the north. **Denmark** – was **Sweden**. **Sweden** flew over with – with planes and parachutes full of white bread, and butter.

Q: White bread and what?

A: And – and butter.

Q: And butter.

A: And butter. All in big parachutes, they threw them out, and they were – threw them out on – on – on what it was in big grass field for the cows, but [indecipherable] of course. And so – and of course from there, it was divided, and stolen and so on, of course, as you can understand.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I know that the bottom of the plane was go – glass, and I know that –

Q: People were waving?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes. I was.

Q: Really? You were waving?

A: And I – and they were waving to me.

Q: What a feeling that must have been.

A: Amazing. Amazing, yeah.

Q: Did you see these planes many times?

A: No, a couple of times, but then, of course, later I could come to an airfield.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, but in the beginning there was no airfield.

Q: Okay.

A: But later on there –

Q: And there was – and there was no anti-aircraft –

A: No.

Q: – to shoot them down?

A: No.

Q: And so, what had happened with the Germans, had they retreated by that point?

A: Well, of course, they were by the underground army, they were – well, put on the side in someplace that I – in the schools where they were sleeping, they were all

–

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay, this was –

A: And of course, no guns, no nothing.

Q: I'm sorry, I don't understand. Who –

A: Well, the schools, where the Germans yu – were in sleeping, and –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and – during war. But I was involved with **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: And those – and that was now the Germans, their jail.

Q: Ah, okay. So the Germans started being rounded up.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you involved in any of that?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: So the – the place that had been the school, that then became the barracks, now became the jail.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember the name of that school?

A: No.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. Do you remember what street it was on?

A: No. Yeah, that is by you, but I am talking in **Schiedam**.

Q: Oh. Okay. And were there many – did they s – did many succeed in running away in time?

A: You mean the Germans? I can't remember.

Q: Okay. Okay. And who then – who then started to control the area, if the –

A: The underground.

Q: The underground?

A: Yes.

Q: The underground.

A: Yeah.

Q: And how long did they control it until –

A: Until the mil – til – til again, the military were in **England**, of course, and the queen was in **England**, and of course the military came right over.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and troops, and then started, you know, to set up the army again.

Q: And what – around what time was this? Was this in 1944, or already 1945?

A: Yeah, '45, when the war was over.

Q: Oh, you mean in April and May, 1945?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yes. May, '45.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Five May, '45.

Q: Okay. And what were – what were those immediate days like, after the war being over?

A: Well, everybody was free. You could walk free **[indecipherable]** and nobody was bothering you, and –

Q: Was – can you cut for a second? **[break]** You're saying there was no curfew any more?

A: No.

Q: And people were up all night?

A: Yeah.

Q: What were they doing?

A: Who has an instrument still, what was hided from the Germans, you know? And they made music, and I danced, and where it came from, I don't know.

Q: Okay. And what about – was there revenge taken on the **NSB**ers, or –

A: Of course.

Q: And what kind of revenge was this?

A: Well, that – in jail.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Okay. Were there any revenge killings, as far as you know?

A: I don't really –

Q: Revenge killings, as far as you know?

A: That – that I – I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: If I would know, I couldn't remember.

Q: Okay. Were there trials after the war?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: What kind of trials were these?

A: Well, of course, the people on the **NSB**, and all **[indecipherable]** and the girls who went with the Germans, you know. Yeah.

Q: How many – when did you have children? When did your children start being born?

A: 1947.

Q: And that was a girl or a boy?

A: Girl.

Q: And what's her name?

A: **Louise**.

Q: **Louise**. And do you have any more children?



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: When was – okay, when was this child born? The next –

A: In '53.

Q: In 1953.

A: Yeah.

Q: And this child's name?

A: Li – **Ellen**.

Q: **Ellen**. So, two girls.

A: Two girls.

Q: Any more?

A: No.

Q: Okay. Did you tell your two daughters about your wartime experiences, as they were growing up?

A: Must have been. I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: Can't remember.

Q: You don't know. Okay. Did you stay in – in the **Rotterdam** area, after the war?

A: Yeah, we stayed in **Schiedam**.

Q: In **Schiedam**?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: All right.

A: I went back to the **academie** of beautiful art.

Q: Okay.

A: And studied for binna – in **binnenhuisarchitect**.

Q: Oh, so interior architecture.

A: Interior architecture.

Q: Okay.

A: And then, after that, I had an year and a half for engineering. I got me an engineering's degree.

Q: Okay. And where did you work, or how did you work, after the war? Did you work in construction, did you work in interior design?

A: In – in construction, and interior design and then I started my own business.

Q: In the **Netherlands**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. What kind of business was that?

A: Well, in the be – in the beginning, it was – being that it was more open, was construction. And with friends who are construction people, we could work

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

together, and that's what I did. And then later, I – when it went more easier, I went to interiors, store interiors, and – you know.

Q: And you eventually moved to the **United States**.

A: Yes.

Q: When was this?

A: In 1956.

Q: And why? Why did you move here?

A: My father.

Q: Your father wanted you to come here?

A: No.

Q: You f – you wanted to get away from him?

A: I want to get rid of him. We wanted get rid of him.

Q: You wanted to put distance between you.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you succeed?

A: Well, we are here. We succeeded.

Q: Okay. And when you came here, how – what kind of work did you do in the **United States**?

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: Ah, that's funny. We – we got an apartment, and of course the first couple of weeks, you are trying to – to find yourself, and it was all English, and I had an year and – and a half English, in the **academie**, and – and so I – I knew some. I could at least make myself –

Q: Understood.

A: Understood. And she didn't. She didn't know any –

Q: **Jacqueline** didn't speak English.

A: Nothing. The kids didn't either. When the kids went to school – have the school, and they didn't understand, and they got the schoolbook at home, and she didn't understand, and they were all three crying.

Q: Oh, oh, yeah.

A: And I want to do it with – but that – after an – a month or so, then it developed, and –

Q: Became easier.

A: Yeah, came easier.

Q: And you first lived in what state?

A: In **New Jersey**.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, ima – in – in – I've lost it.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: I think you told me off camera it was **Westwood**. Was it **Westwood, New Jersey**? No?

A: Yeah, **Westwood**, we lived in **Westwood**, too, but before, we lived someplace else. I can't remember the name. [indecipherable]

Q: It's okay.

A: All right.

Q: It's okay.

A: So – but – and we were living, we find an apartment, and I saw an – and – on next block over, when I looked in the front, by the front door, I saw there were men working on a hou – building a house. And I thought, well, let me go and see if I can help. So we ask him, do you need any help? And he said, do you have a hammer? I said yeah. He said, come on up. I – just like that.

Q: Just like that.

A: And I went home, I had tools, brought tools with me, in a toolbox. So I got my toolbox and went over there, and well, of course, he was busy with framing, and so on, and siding, and – and so – and the man had hands, they were three inches longer than me. Big hands, he was big fellow. And I thought, well, ma – I'm not coming up on him. I show him that I can do something too. And so – so we work good together. So, we built the house. And he says, did you ever build houses, and I said

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

no. He's – he said, you are an damn liar. That's what he said. I said, well, I did

**[indecipherable]** it was all in **Holland**, wooden houses were not allowed.

Q: That's right.

A: It was all brick. Brick and concrete. And so –

Q: Different construction.

A: – that total different. Concrete floors –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you know. And so I said that – I explained it to him, that it was not allowed in

**Holland**, wooden houses. Maybe as a little townhouse or something, you know, or a little thing in the backyard.

Q: Yeah.

A: But otherwise, no wood.

Q: So, tell me this, when did you start – you came to our attention because someone sent me a tape of a talk you had given in a school.

A: Yes.

Q: When did you start talking in schools, about your wartime experiences?

A: I don't know actually how it came, but I mean, the people asked, you come from **Holland**? Oh yeah. You are in the war? Yeah. Can you tell us about it? And then

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

that's the way it went. And then an teacher found out, and then they invited you, and – and you came to the class, and we went both, and we went there.

Q: Did you go more than one time, or several times?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Five or six times, maybe more.

Q: And what kind of questions would the children ask you, that you found in some ways unusual, or you remember, in particular? No? Okay.

A: It was all – all about the war. How did you eat, and how did you do – how did you – how did you dress yourself, if you have no clothes, or – all kinds of –

Q: Those types of questions.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. What would you want young people to understand about the experiences that you had, and the things that happened?

A: I'd hope that it never again happen. It is no pleasure. And you see what we do, we have now already with the shooting and the killing. That was there, you know, that was the war.

Q: Yeah.

A: Terrible.

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Have you been back to the **Netherlands**?

A: Yeah, different times.

Q: Okay.

A: But time – I have no relatives there any more. I am the only one left, she is the only one left from family.

Q: Okay.

A: We have some nieces [**indecipherable**] I correspond with still. And – and the daughters or nieces, what we got now, when we visited them. And then there's – so once in a while we write [**indecipherable**]

Q: Yeah. Well, is there anything else you'd want to add to what we've talked about today?

A: No. That I – I in buni – I went for myself in business, and –

Q: You raised a family.

A: And I raised a family, and in the meantime they married. We have grandchildren.

Q: Did they ever ask you about your wartime years?

A: Sometimes, but – **Peter** was – was interested in it. My – my daughter [**indecipherable**] by her husband. And that was it, and I know I – I really don't want to talk about it, and you know, I want to forget.



**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

Q: Well, I'm glad and I'm grateful –

A: Yeah.

Q: – that you have agreed to talk about it with us today –

A: Yeah.

Q: – you know. We know that the – the – the topics are not pleasant.

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: No. Very unpleasant, but anyhow.

Q: Thank you.

A: There are plenty of people who say, the war? There was never a war. There was no second World War. The Germans never did that.

Q: No, there are many who say there weren't – there wasn't the Holocaust.

A: There was no Holocaust.

Q: Yeah. And yet, you saw it.

A: Yeah. And I made – I did many, many Jewish temples, and made – made cabinets to remember what happened to the six million Jews that were killed.

Q: As an interior architect designer carpenter –

A: Yeah, I designed that –

Q: – you designed –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: – and we made it in our shop.

Q: Okay.

A: And they are in the – in the different synagogues, what we did.

Q: So this was your business after the war, here in the **United States**.

A: Yes.

Q: It's a very special business.

A: Very special.

Q: Very special.

A: Very special.

Q: Okay.

A: Churches are special. I did some different jailhouses where – the chapels were in – I did the chapels in jail, even in **New York**, and – and the island in between, there's an island there.

Q: Oh, I know what you – **Roosevelt Island**? Or is it **Governor's I** – no, I don't remember which one.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I know the island.

A: Yeah, there's an island, and there's a jail in there, and I did a chapel.

Q: Well, thank you. Thank you very much –

**Interview with Jan Hieminga**  
**August 9, 2016**

A: You're welcome.

Q: – for sharing what you shared with us today, and it is much appreciated.

A: Very good.

Q: And I would say, this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Jan Hieminga – Hieminga**.

A: **Hieminga**.

Q: **Hieminga** – on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

A: Sixteen. That's it.

Q: Thanks again.

A: You're welcome.

Q: Okay.

**Conclusion of Interview**