

INTERVIEW WITH COENRAAD ROOD

JULY 1, 1992

PHONE INTERVIEW

Eighty-five next month and he was--

Okay, yes, your birthday?

My birthday, August 12, 1917.

Okay, where were you born?

In Amsterdam, in the downtown center where mostly Jewish people lived. We called it the ghetto but it was not a ghetto at all because everybody was free to move out or to move in and there lived a lot of non-Jews. But we called it the ghetto because a lot of Jews lived there. The Jews who were in better financial status, they--slowly they moved out to better parts of the city. But people who without means, like my family, we stayed in town. till--about the downtown, you call it downtown there; we stayed there until I was about nine years old and then we could move out. My father, he was born in 1875. His name was Herman Rood and he was married to my mother. My mother was born in London, England. She came later with her parents to the Netherlands. Her mother was English also. They came to the Netherlands in Amsterdam because they were what you call a diamond family. They worked in the diamond industry.

What did they do exactly?

Diamonds, polishing, cutting and polishing. Whatever comes to pass in the diamond industry, my grandfather was in that work, did that work. It was his trade. I haven't known my grandfather because he died when I was about two or three years old. My grandmother the same thing. They died shortly after each other. So where we lived in Amsterdam, my mother was born in--I told you when my father was born, 1875. My mother was born 1881. So it was a six-year difference. They got married, my mother was thirty when she married and my father was about six years older than my mother. My oldest brother Aaron was born in April, 1912, he was born, so five years older than I am. Then my sister came two years later, Maria Rood. She came also in April. That will celebrate a birthday in April. My sister, as I said, two years younger than my brother and then I came. I, 12 August, right? Another brother followed two years after me. My father and mother

kept strict distance between the children. Two years after each other all the time. Then my brother. Jonas, was born 1919, August 23, 1919. Then came my other brother, Machiel, two years after that and he was born 12 October 1921. Then my mother took a pause. In 1925 our baby sister came. That was the most darling little girl that you ever can imagine. We were all very proud of her and her birthday was in March, shortly after my mother's birthday and she was born 1925. Elizabeth, as I said, was the most beautiful girl that you can imagine. She had four brothers who spoiled her rotten but she was not spoiled. I never--that I have known her till I got deported when I saw her for the last time. I cannot remember that we--where you saw her, you had a smile. Such a lovely girl, she was. She never complained about things that girls do sometimes, you know, especially adolescents. I cannot ever remember hearing a complaint from her lips. Even as I said, when boys start looking at her when she was sixteen years old, 15, 16 years old, and the war was already in progress--boys start looking at her. She had four brothers to look after her and nobody could look too long on her, believe me. We were all there watching it. She was our baby, she was our little angel. You will see her picture, it will be enclosed.

Okay. What about your--was your father of Ashkenazi descent?

Yes. My father was what we call high-Deutsche, high German. That doesn't mean that he came from Germany. They came via Germany.

Do you know when his family came to the Netherlands?

In the sixteenth or seventeenth century, the name was already known. In the beginning of the 16th century, the Netherlands Jewish population started out about 1492 when Columbus sailed to America. About the same time, Spanish and Portuguese Jews got the order that they had to leave the country if they did not convert to Christianity. They had to leave the country within three months. They formed a community in the Netherlands, in Amsterdam which was open because the Netherlands, that was north Spain then; Spain was all over Europe. The Netherlands protested against the yoke of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church had a hold on the state, on the government. The Spanish king was wax in the hands of the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church. In the north of the Netherlands, Belgium at that time was also the Netherlands, yeah? They revolted, they had a revolution. They followed the doctrine or they followed the example of Jonah Huss from eastern Europe and Martin Luther who protested against the Catholic Church. The Netherlands followed that up. The leader of the rebellion was a prince, a Spanish prince, but he was born in the Netherlands. He was Spanish prince in the order of the royalty, Spanish royalty, but he was also the prince of the Netherlands, also a prince of part of Germany, also a prince of part of France. The name was Orange and you have a part of France that is still called Orange and we call that family--we still have that family. We call them by their last name, that is Orange. From

Orange, from France that is how they are called. Well, during that revolution there were also big pogroms going on in the east of Europe.

Right.

Poland, Russia, Rumania, Hungary. People start fleeing to the west, Jews, away from the pogroms. They arrived by hundreds and later by thousands in the same city, Amsterdam. But the Spanish Jews who had money, who were very educated, and were, many of them, from Spanish nobility. They formed a congregation there and the Spanish had a big synagogue, which we called a shul which is a German or Yiddish word for synagogue--school that means--house of learning. The Ashkenazim grew and lived in a short while in certain amount that they didn't need to search to pray with ten of them, 10 or 12 people anymore. But they had the means to build a church of themselves and they built it right across from the Portuguese, the Spanish we call Portuguese Synagogue. So now you have two big synagogues across from each other. The Ashkenazi grow so fast that they had to build another shul next to it. So you have the Great Shul, this was in competition with the Portuguese, Spanish shul. They called it, the Ashkenazi called themselves the Great Shul, and next to it there came another shul even bigger than that and that is called the Neie Shul, the New Shul. That was too small. They built especially for service through the week, they built a smaller shul next to it and kept mostly the big shuls for holidays, big holidays. They build a small weekly prayer shul next to it and that became, got the name of the Dritte Shul. The Dritte Shul that means the third shul. They still have not room enough. So they built a shul on top of the Dritte Shul and that became the Abovene Shul, the shul above. That were the official names. Next to it they got their own slaughterhouse so the Ashkenazim community grows much faster than the Portuguese community but the Portuguese community always was the richest. The Ashkenazim has mostly very poor members. My father was one of these.

Did he work in the diamond industry also?

My father was not a diamond man. My father had, as as a small child, an accident. He was about six years old and that cost him a part of his foot. His heel was missing so he was--his mother thought he was not ready for that. Old time children, six years old had to work for a living. They were put in the family labor force. He was already--he had to go out already and make a living. He liked nursery business, plants and flowers and trees. In the middle of a city where there was no grass growing no more, you know, so crowded it was with people and houses. But that's what he did and that's what he grew up in. When I was a child, my father was always in the nursery business. If you know the Dutch climate, that is not so good for a peddler because he had to be a peddler with a hand-push cart and peddle his wares around the houses, mostly on the outskirts of town because there is where the people had little gardens and that is why he also could sell his merchandise. The weather is rainy, windy. If the sun, it is too hot so most of--at least half of his

merchandise could not be sold any more by the end of the day because it was ruined from the climate. So he always barely scraped a living for his wife and six children. The street where we lived was a very long street and that was called the Rapenburger Straat. That's just a Dutch name. In the center of Amsterdam this street was a little better than other slums around it. Where people lived in apartments, that means one room, barely any windows and no sun there. We had sun there, we had a kitchen, we had one room with built in the walls, cabinet-like beds. You could open up the doors and there you had a kind of a bed there. That is what we had. Furthermore, when the family grew, in the apartment, we got some beds set around the walls. It was a big room, very light. In the back of the building was a home for the older people and they had a beautiful garden. We lived, you could say, in the top of the trees because we lived on the third floor and the trees just reached up to our windows. We had the doves and the birds always in front of the window and beautiful flowers to look at in the middle of the city. We were not that bad off although we were very, very poor but that you only realized later because everybody was poor. So you didn't know you was poor. Everybody had the same struggle to make ends meet. Always.

Can you tell me about the observance, the Jewish observance? Did you keep kosher?

That is what I just wanted to start with.

Oh, good, okay.

The street where I lived, the Rapenburgerstraat had seven shuls. The street came out on the market, on that square where we had the big shuls across from each other. But then you also had the little-- what you call a gevere shul. You understand that, gevere shul from Gawwer?

Yes.

Chaverim. If you have ten people together, they could form a kehilla, a gemeinda and a community. So we had seven of these in the street and we have a seminary where people were trained to be rabbis. We had across from there a big shul where we went to school with hundreds of Jewish children. We used to work for the Hebrew work____(143) for a Jewish school. We just said Jewish, the School of the Jews. That is how we called it. In fact I said there were hundreds of children when we were at that school. The education at that school was not too much. We learned Hebrew but we never knew what we were saying. We didn't learn too much of translation. We were too young for that--already at nine years old I moved to the outskirts. As I just said, we moved to another part. That is how it was downtown for people to scrape a living together and where

people were also watching out for each other. If there was a family, they knew they had no food, then they always get something from the neighbors.

But did you keep kosher?

My mother tried to; my father had to work on Shabbos because on the weekend people had money. That was his best day. My mother tried to keep kosher. We called ourselves the Jews of the white Hamoutse tablecloth. On Friday night, moutze was made, kiddush was made and there was a white tablecloth on the table. If you didn't have much food during the week, on Shabbos there was always something to eat. Shabbos was always an extra thing. We had a wonderful family--my mother had several sisters and brothers and they hung together like glue. Saturday night, I remember, that we always came together by one of the sisters or the brothers in the house. All the brothers with all the children and believe me, there were more than forty children sometimes in the small houses. We slept everywhere because it was too late for the children to move out and the parents wanted to sit around a little bit to tell--to mind each other's business, you know, and to tell stories and sing together a little bit. We call that shabbosmachen. Then the children, they slept wherever they could find a place and by eleven or twelve o'clock, every parent picks up his own children and then we went to our own house, the children sleeping. I remember my father always two children in his arm, my mother had one, my oldest brother had one. That is how we went to our own apartment which was not--we lived a few blocks from each other. The distance was not very much. But it could be that there's a small child; he was playing in street; that was our place to play, in the streets. Then suddenly he was picked up by somebody and you heard the voice, oh, Shatsy, Shatsy, Liebling, you know. They are the wonderful names that they call small children; by my treasure, by my wonderful baby, you know. There you was in the arms of an aunt or an uncle. They just have to pick you up, they recognize you, you was one of the brothers' or sisters' children. They have to hug you a little bit and kiss you all over. You sit down wet from that and then they always give you a penny or they give you a piece of candy. Yeah, we were--the families were wonderful together, wonderful.

That's nice, it sounds--.

If I can, if I find a way to do it tomorrow morning, I will make a little statistic, how many brothers and sisters my father and mother had; how many children all have together and how many came back after the war.

Oh, that will--.

I will try to make a statistic tomorrow morning and enclose it.

That will be great.

But it will be handwritten.

That's fine.

Because I hate to use the typewriter.

Me too.

I'm a one-finger typewriter man.

No problem.

So when we were nine years old--, when I was--. We went to shul, the shul was such that, I say shul, I mean the religious school, the Jewish school. It was such: in the morning, 7:30 I had to go to one of the seven little shuls in the street where we lived and say my morning prayers. I was not yet 13 years old so I did not wear a tallis but I wear, I had to wear a arbcanfous. You know what that is?

Yes, tzitziot.

Yeah. I used to wear that, my brothers and me, we all did. My mother used to knit them together and a neighbor who know exactly how to knit the tzitzis we called them, he know and he made them on the corners. We had to wear them under our clothes. But I remember that we never showed them. We put the tzitzi in the clothes that you can see always a picture, you see of Jews, tzitzi are hanging out. No, we didn't have such a thing. We used to--well, the law said, the Jewish law said you have to wear them visible. No, we didn't do, we just put them in our pants. Then at the school, they also took care--very several charity of these people, also organized charities that we, the poor kids, got by Chanukah, that we got some new clothes. Our whole school, all the boys wearing the same sweater. Because that was bought en masse and handed out to the children. And

the same shoes, the same kind of stockings, the same cap. Then that became uniform in the time that I remembered.

So you attended--?

(Interjects) Excuse me. In the morning, we did our morning prayers, that was about thirty minutes. Then I went home I got my breakfast from Mother and by nine o'clock I had to be at the elementary school, public. That was the government school. You know where you had to--the deal was--nobody could get away from that. You had to be at school and get your education, your Dutch education. By 12 o'clock we were out and we were expected to be, by 1 o'clock back, in the Jewish school. So we had time from 12 to 1 to eat, go back to eat, _____. Until about a quarter to two, we got our Hebrew lessons and then rush up to the elementary school back till 4:30. Five o'clock, Jewish school again. Six o'clock or 6:30, they let us go and we could go home where we got a bite to eat and I had to be for my night prayers, we call it xlaymen, what we said, okay. At eight o'clock we had to be back at shul and by nine o'clock I came home and you didn't know no more the whole day because everything flooded to each other. Then by nine o'clock we were back in bed. That is in that part of the city. Then when we moved to the outskirts of town because the houses were so dilapidated while we lived downtown that they razed that part of the town. They razed it and built new houses. The city, the government city, the city government found us new places to live. That was on the outskirt of town. Also was a little Jewish congregation, I right away became a member of. We lived there for three years on the outskirt of town where we played, just like downtown, we played in the street. We fought with the non-Jewish children like you have to. That didn't fight us because they were antisemite. No, we were not of their religion so they had to fight us and we had to fight them because they were not of our religion. Sunday morning, we had also some Hebrew school. In order not to disturb the citizens who wanted to go to church, we could not play in recess out in the street. We had to go up the roof of the school. It was a high building and a big fence around the roof and we had to play there till recess was over. The few people--I was not the nicest kid--we wanted to play tricks on people, you know, like young people do, all kind of little, mean things. So as soon as we were up on our way to the roof, for recess, we slipped out with five or six boys from the same class and we went to a school that was just around the corner; a Sunday School for the Catholic people. The Bethesda school, they called it. That's where we got a cookie, that's why we went there, for the cookie. They knew we were coming and they had a few chairs ready for us and we ate the cookie and then they let us go, real fast. Then we went to another street about three blocks farther and there was a Salvation Army Sunday School That was much nicer because they played music there, the trumpet and the drums and we listened there and then we got a cup of chocolate. So we got a chocolate and we got a cookie and they let us go because everybody knew that the Jewish children had to be back at recess on time. Then we went up to the roof just in time to make it back in class.

Oh my.

Yeah, that is how we spend our Sunday, our Sunday mornings. Like I said, I learned, I start learning Hebrew when I was three years old, I had to go already. That was normal and I was about 13 years old when I had my Bar Mitzvah; we lived already in the other part of the town again. So I had about nine or ten years of Hebrew education. When I was through with it, I still didn't know anything. I had a wonderful Bar Mitzvah--at that time we lived also in another part of the town. There were also government houses, you would call it here projects; were for poor people who couldn't pay the normal rent. We lived there and then when I was 13 years old and I did my Bar Mitzvah in the neighborhood where we just came from, that was the Indies (262) quarter. We called it the Indies quarter because all the streets there had names of the Netherlands Indies. Where we lived, now that was what you call the South African quarters, the Transvaalbuurt quarter because that's where all the streets have names from South Africa. Because they live so many Dutch there. I went back to the Indies quarter to do my Bar Mitzvah. Right after that I quit the whole thing and became a member of a Social Democratic Youth organization. I will enclose a picture in there where you see me about that age.

Oh, okay.

Yeah, when we were members of that organization. This was-o-you can compare that if you have ever heard, with the Bund in Poland.

Yes.

You have heard of that?

Yes, of course.

Well, our organization was something like that but we were not strictly Jewish, that was not in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, I don't know if you know that, but the big organized movement started about out in the Netherlands and we had several Jewish leaders who really built a labor movement in the Netherlands, better than in Germany or in France or in Belgium.

No, I didn't --.

We had a very strong Social Democratic movement and when I became an adolescent later on, I went to--I tell you my story there in a minute from the school. In my adolescence, we fought on the one side the communists and on the other side, we fought the fascists, but that was already in the thirties, I guess. I was eleven years old when I finished elementary school. My oldest brother was sure he was already through with school and he learned how to be a baker. My sister had to be a seamstress. When I came from school, the principal told my father that I had to go to a school for higher learning. In the higher learning, my father didn't see too much of a future in that because the Depression was on that time. Remember, I was born 1917, 1929 the Depression started. So by the time I was out of school people started roaming the streets for work and for food. All over the world. It was very bad in western Europe too. My father didn't want me to roam street; he thought if you go to higher school, you don't learn a trade and only with a trade you can make a living. So I had to learn to make a living and I went to a trade school. I was close to fourteen years old, I was still 13 years old, when I finished that trade school but it forced me to learn--to be a pastry maker. I wanted to be a tool and die maker, I liked that very much, to build machine and machine parts but they told me that I was better to be a pastry maker. I became a pastry maker and after I came out of school, they took care that I had a job in a place. That was a place where I got very sick because I couldn't stand--I couldn't handle the atmosphere, the climate in a bakery, hot, dusty, stinking, dirty, terrible, always floating dust. The air was always thick from the flour and the sugar and the baking from the oven. I got very sick and after about a year, my father took me out there. My mother said let him go back to school now. You know what the principal said, he needs to be in education, in higher learning. My father said no, he's going to be a tailor. Everybody needs a patch in his pants. By then it was 1931, about, and I became a tailor. I cried my heart out but it didn't help; I had to be a tailor which I still am.

Oh my goodness.

I'm in the tailoring because I have a very--my ability to learn is pretty good--and since I had to be a best tailor--if I had to be a tailor, I wanted to be the best that there was. I studied hard and later on I became a master tailor which is a high degree. Then I got my business diploma but that was afterwards.

But it--.

In 1939 I started out for myself. All this time from 1931 till about 1937, I was an apprentice. In 1937, I had to go for the military draft but my brother--it was still Depression--my brother at that time planned to go to Spain to fight in the International Brigade against Spanish; there was a civil war going on. He wanted to fight against Franco, the fascist. There was some problems, he never had work, my brother, so I was practically the breadwinner in the family. I didn't make much but I

was the breadwinner so I got a year's suspension from--I don't know how you call that, suspension, a year later I needed to come into the draft, military.

Deferment.

Deferment, okay. I don't even know that word.

Now you do.

Now I know. In 1938, it was my turn to be--to go back into the military but then I decided instead of going to be back in the military, I wanted to take an extra service, a special service. That means you stay civilian, but always ready to be called in and do your duty as a military. Meanwhile you can go on in your civilian duty as long as it is social work, you know, doing--. I wanted to do that anyway so I became a nurse in the Jewish Invalid which was a hospital by that name. The only hospital in the whole world that we know, that took care, that took people from the street, out of the gutters, homeless people as long as they were Jewish and gave them a home. Paralyzed people, demented people, mentally ill people; they all found a home in that particular house. It was a big hospital right in the center of Amsterdam and I became a nurse there. One of the nurses there, the most beautiful one, she became my wife. She pushed me out after about a little over a year and she said if you want to get ever married with me, then you better make a living as a tailor because here you don't make a penny. In the hospital, they work for just board and room and since we couldn't get a room; the male nurses couldn't get a room in the hospital, there were the female nurses. That is the thing, why should you, you could not sleep in the same house, you could not live in the same house. The female nurses had a place to sleep, they all had their rooms but the men you had to find them outside and for that you got five guilders a month to pay. And they would send the five guilders to my mother because I slept at the house. But I ate, always came from the hospital where I lived. Then I went away from the hospital. My older brother took my place; he finally got a job that way and I went back in the tailoring business. Right after that, the mobilization started because Germany made noises and you know it attacked Poland in '39. The Netherlands start mobilizing and I thought that since I am a tailor and most of the people in the private market, they started to work in the black market because a lot of things--imports were forbidden. A lot of things had to be done for the government. I decided I go to the military warehouse and apply to be a tailor there. I could better work there, you understand. That somebody you get together had no means to prepare to compare with what you could make on the black market but I was never a black market man anyway. I thought that I will do my duty for the country and I will help with the mobilization and make uniforms as fast as I can. By that time, I became a cutter in the warehouse and within a week that I was there I got my draft notice because I was still in special military, you know, civilian military. I went to my major, the manager of the warehouse and I said I have to go and report to my detail in Utrecht in another city. He said what are you going to do there? I said well, as I see here, I

am going in air force. That means we have to shoot airplanes down from the ground. How you call them, the ground service, you know. But it was part of the air force. As I see here. He says what do you know about it. I says nothing, I never served. It is the first thing I get about it. So he called the commander in Utrecht, the other city, and he said I have a tailor here who is a good tailor and knows more about tailoring than he knows about shooting planes down. I keep him here and let's change services and make him a military here. I became a civilian military in military service in Amsterdam in the military warehouses where I was a cutter and we cut uniforms as fast as we could, thousands a day. They were sent out to sweatshops where they made the uniforms so the military could get dressed. The same way weapons were made, we were part of that complex. When the war started, May 10, I was in the night shift because we worked two shifts, three shifts in 24 hours. Early in the morning, it start dawning a little bit, light enough, four o'clock in the night, it start getting away, light enough. We saw the Germans planes coming over; we were also a target because we were military warehouses. I was trained already, a few months before, as the head, the commander of one of the air raid shelters, we had four air raid shelters, 350 persons could sleep in an air raid shelter and I was the commander of one. I had to stay there for the eight hours service as tailor and then eight hours service as an air raid shelter man. I still had eight hours left in the 24 hours and I repored for the city and became an ambulance man for the, what you call the National Guard. I became part of the National Guard. Because I had the training as a male nurse so they could use me in the ambulance. My mother never knew in this five days' war that we had, was where she could me bring me food because nobody had food for you. We just went from one place to the other to do our duties and my mother just had to find out, since one of my brothers had a bicycle, find out where Rood is and bring him his lunch, or bring him his dinner, or bring him his breakfast. That is how we went though the war and then the war was over and everybody was very distraught about it that the Germans won. Lots of Jewish people, especially prominent Jewish people, killed themselves. We had a big contingent of German refugees, Jewish, in the Netherlands. They knew what was coming. We heard a lot before. When I worked as a male nurse in the Jewish hospital, that was on a square in the middle of the Jewish neighborhood in Amsterdam. Very modern hospital, very modern, beautiful building, grass all over. Across from that hospital, there was a hotel, in the middle of town, Hotel Rotterdam was its name. The leaders of the hospital put me in the night shift because they figured I was politically motivated for the following jobs. In the Hotel Rotterdam, across the street, German refugees who came over the border without passports, without clothes many times, were chased out of Germany, fled out of Germany, many times broke, desperate at the borders and chased into the Netherlands while the state police was waiting to send them back to Germany because they had no papers, they had no nothing. So they had to be smuggled into the Netherlands. Already a few years before, especially since 1938, Kristallnacht, I was part of the--a member of a group that caught people that came over the border and smuggled them farther in to Amsterdam where there was shelter available for them. The Jewish community took care of them. It was forbidden so we were always chased by the state police. In the Jewish hospital, they know my background. They put me in the night shift in order to catch the people, to receive the people which Hotel Rotterdam sent over to our hospital. It was such, Hotel Rotterdam that they harbored illegal German refugee Jews. The police, once in a while, raided that hospital. When they catch these people, they put them in prison and drag them back to Germany where they would be killed. There was also in the police--we had some good help. They warned Hotel

Rotterdam in advance that there was a raid coming; that the police would come and catch whatever they had in the house, that were not legal. The Hotel Rotterdam right away called across the street to the Jewish hospital and said open your doors, five men are coming over, ten men are coming over, two men are coming over, whatever he had in the house. I rushed, I got the calls and that is why I was placed in the night shift, I got the calls, rushed downstairs to the back entrance. It was in the middle alleyway down to the street, open the fence doors, the gates, we had a little gate there. I had the keys, opened the doors and then I saw these people dressed in a bedsheet, without shoes many times, some of them are dressed. They start running over, there were little grass fields on the square, running over the grass fields, I had the door open, got them in there, put them in the elevator, upstairs and put them in the beds between the other patients. Many times we had the police checking because there was a suspicion that we smuggled patients into the country--that is refugees into the country. Then we gave these people many times, very hot coffee or very hot tea and then they blew up. We said drink, drink, drink, and they look like they have a fever and then the patrol came, you know, and they check the beds in the wards and in the rooms where we had these people hidden and they saw them laying. We told them, we looked at the so-called police and said, high fever, oh, boy, nah, this is contagious. Then they went back. That kind of tricks we have to play to save the people life. As a matter of fact, the men that came later, my brother-in-law came into the country that way, a German Jew. In one of the statements, I think he will be named in there. Julius Stern, he married my sister-in-law, my wife's youngest sister. He was a German Jew. later on he opened a business. He was a butcher, what they called him a meisterwurstmacher, you understand that?

No.

Salami-maker. He was a master in it like I was a master in my trade, he was a master in that. He opened his business and did very well till he got deported. German Jews got deported first. But anyway, --

Is this--, is your wife's sister, Ursula Stern?

No, no. They are not related.

They're not.

You are talking about Ursula who was in show before?

Yes.

No, no. I do not know about that lady because I think she went to Israel. I only know from Weinberg-- what is her name--

Yeah, Selma Engle, right.

Engle, Yeah Weinberg. Only from her I know; I spoke with her several times.

Oh, okay.

Anyway let's go back to 1940. The war was over in five days, not because the Dutch couldn't fight but the Netherlands is not a country where you can fight.

I have to stop you because I have to flip the tape over. Okay?

Okay. (End of Side A).. . . by the warehouse. A lot of Jewish tailors, we had lots of Jewish tailors in Amsterdam and also diamond workers, but the tailors that were working, we went to our work. We were closed out. The Jews were closed out, only the non-Jews could come to work. But we have to report two times a day, every time on a different location. We had to put, there was a stamp to place on our card, that we reported for work. We were not allowed to work because the Germans did not want any Jews in that place of work. That went for a while. We got our salary paid because we were still Dutch employed, we never got fired. We just wanted to work. Then came the time that I wanted to get married and we should get married September the first, the 4th, the 4th. September 4, my father was very sick by that time, the year before he was already in the hospital, he had a bad heart and stomach ailment. The doctor said you can keep the diet and live for, I don't know how long, but you can eat all you want and I give you just one year to live. My father said, I have so little to eat in my life, I can eat all I want. A year later, he died. Now September 4, we should get married. My father was very sick the night before. There was curfew' by eight o'clock you had to be into your house. My wife-to-be and me, we had an apartment fixed. _____(16), you didn't live off your parents. As soon as you could, you let your parents live off you. You took care that money came into the house so that everybody had a bite to eat. Also an apartment, a good apartment, yours! We put furniture in there, we put food in the cabinet, put your beds up there. You know, make an apartment living, able to live in. You did it all yourself. You saved your money for that. So we saved our money for two years in order to have a house of our own, a decent apartment. The last rent (22) we put on the apartment, it was now about seven o'clock at night and

we were waiting for my father and mother to come and look at our apartment and say ah and oh, you know, like parents are supposed to say. It became seven o'clock, my wife had to be back in the hospital where she still worked as a nurse and it was curfew, she couldn't be on the street. I took her to the hospital but it was not too far. You had to do everything real running. I went to the hospital and then I went straight home from the center to the east part of the town and I just made it at eight o'clock. I came in the house and told my mother you should come and look at the house, you didn't do it, what happened? She said Father just got very, very sick. Look at him. There I saw my father laying down and covered with black blood. When we know black blood, that was the stomach. He had a, how you call that, a rupture, a stomach eruption? you know and the blood come out on the top and on the bottom. My mother said, we had big bedrooms in that house, let Father sleep in the bed next to it and you and Aaron and all the brothers sleep together tonight so you both can keep an eye on Papa. Because if something happens, I have to make--I cannot help him by myself. That was too heavy for her. That is what we did. My father went, he was not conscious that time and he went to sleep in the bed next to us. In the morning, as my habit was six o'clock I came out the bed, first because that was my wedding day, my suit was hanging already that I made for myself special; we didn't have many things. The good suit you made for yourself, to get married in. It was hanging there, beautiful and I went to the bed of my father and I saw that he was dead. I had to tell my mother that Father passed away and then we couldn't get married. I had to go to my fiancée to the hospital to tell her that the wedding for the day was off because Father died. Now that week came out an order from the Germans, the Germans now, that was the people what told the government what to do, the Dutch government. The government itself, the cabinet and the queen they fled to England. We had a skeleton government left in the Netherlands who had to do the German orders. The order came that gatherings were not allowed no more for Jews. Jews could not be seen on the streets demonstrating. Now the lawaaye, the lawaaye that is the funeral, the procession had to go from our house--my father was laid out in our house. Lawaaye, you know what that is? And chewre kadusja?

Yes.

Yeah, okay. They came to our house and took care of everything. They coffined my father. I was the only, at that time, I was the only one who had a tallis because you remember my past, I was very orthodox, my past. We tore the tallis, you cannot put a good tallis into--with a corpse--you have to destroy it partly. So we tore the tallis up and we buried it with my father. My father, it was forbidden to have behind the hearse more than one automobile. It was forbidden because more automobiles would be a demonstration. The people from everywhere know that this was a funeral that could not have a procession. People came from everywhere and walked on the sidewalks up with the hearse. The hearse in the middle, we, the family in the automobile and then on the sides were people walking. The few streets and then we have to speed up and go to the cemetery. My wife and me, we had to get married because we have an apartment. If you have an apartment in those days, every thing was very suspicious. Those days you wasn't trust for anything. If I have an apartment and I didn't move into it, I could be arrested. They arrested you first and then ask let's

find out what you did. You was arrested first. We know already by experience, once you were arrested by German SS and the Nazis, it was very hard to get out in one piece. A week later we got married for the city, my wife and me. Then we could move in our apartment. We didn't but we made it as somebody lived there, it looked like. then a week after that, the 18th, we got, what we called our chuppah, you know, for the Jewish community. Same thing, no demonstrations, no gatherings. In the street where I lived as a child, that long, long street with the seven shuls, there was the seminary as I told you already and both of next door was the central rabbinate. The head rabbi had his office in the house where the shul was. That's where we got married. The shul, itself, didn't held too many people. I think two hundred people could go in that shul. That was not too many for what you were used to in the old country. They opened the windows wide because people gathered in the streets, not for our wedding but for the demonstration. To defy the German occupiers, you know, and they over in the street to be part of our wedding. The whole wedding was broadcasted out of this window. We didn't have microphones or radio, broadcasted out in the street. My father's funeral and our wedding was the first public demonstrations against the Germans. We defied the Germans. That is how we got married in 1940. The next morning I had to go--remember we had to report to the warehouse that we were still there, we had to get a stamp on our card; otherwise if you refuse to go to work, you could be arrested. Somewhere else you would be fired. No, they--whatever reason they could find, you would be arrested. We went there and we found out that we are fired, all the Jews were fired so that was a very pleasant no-work. The same day I found very sarcastic no, no, sarcastic is not the word, ironical, very ironical. I found work for a place that took old suits and turned them inside out. Made new suits with the inside out. That people, that was a company that also cleaned clothes for citizens, normal cleaning, dry-cleaning but also had a lot of work for the German army. They put me to work. I got to work in a business that lived off the Germans and I had to put suits inside out, you know, the inside out. I made so good money that time that I could have--I was out of the house, I could take care of my mother, a widow by then and she had a stroke by then, too and my little sister and my younger brother. I could hire a few people. My second brother, Jonas, was still POW by the Germans but if they could get work, if they had guarantee of signed declaration that they could find work, they could go in the city of--society; they let them go. I signed the papers and I got my brother Yonas work so a lot of people got work in my little business which I was very proud of. That went on till I was deported, till I had to report myself for a labor camp which I sent you also pictures of.

Oh, great.

With, you will see me. I will cross, you know, mark the one who I am when I send you the pictures. That's about it. The 1930's, the depression years, I was a member of the Social Democratic Youth Organization which, by the way, this year, in September, in the Netherlands, we will have a reunion. We are all in our seventies and eighties then. At that time, we were very young people, very demonstrative, very hard, active in the Spanish Civil War, fighting against the Germany, we had Nazis in the Netherlands too, fighting against the German influence, fighting against the Nazis, and on the left side, fighting against the communists on the other side. The Social Democrats were right

in the middle. I was already, when I was 15 years old, I stayed out all night. Father and Mother didn't even know that I was not in bed. I snuck out of the house with my older brother and we painted and we put on posters on walls, you know, and put fliers up. All political work, that's what we did. I got a very political but also a very cultural education in that youth organization because they thought poor children who barely got an education; we have a duty to educate the poor children. I was one of them, got a good education in that organization. We learned a lot about world history, nature, education that you would get in the lower classes at the college, at the college, yes. That is the kind of education we got.

Can I ask you--your organization it was called the Social Democratic Youth or did it have a specific --?

No, our organization did not have the name Social Democratic in it although we were. We were called AJC. Just like here in American Jewish Congress?

Yes.

The same initials. I am a member again of the AJC. The Dutch name is Arbeid Jeugd Centrale. That means Labor Youth Central. That was international, that organization. I know a closer picture when I am very young in that organization, about 13 years old, 13 or 14 years old, I will have a picture in there that we are of a little group. That will be that.

Great.

In that organization, as I said, we got a very cultural education. They saw in me somebody who could use his mouth a lot, not always for the good, but I did. They decided that besides me to become one of the leaders, I had to get an education in theater and get a training to be an actor. That is what I learned, you got it from professionals, yeah. We played in a lot of plays, we played a lot of Shakespeare, we played a lot of Lessing, we played a lot of Moliere. Oh yeah, we played all Greek plays, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, that was one of our favorites. That is what we got and for a little poor boy who had to go to work when he was not 14 years old, had to go to work, that was quite a bit. I'm very proud of it, that I got that education.

I'm sure. It's very interesting.

It made me very strong-willed, not stepping aside for anybody which I still don't.

Good. Are there any incidents or episodes that you didn't recount to me. Perhaps something that happened in your family--?

That happened in my family--. As I said we were very poor, but that was normal. Sanitary, my mother always took care of that, that we have that. She was a very strong, willing woman and very good brains. I was very sick already when I was three years old. I got an eye sickness. Amsterdam is a sailor town and big harbor was there. Sailors brought the sickness in which they called trachoma. They brought it in and it became an epidemic in Amsterdam. My little brother was barely two years old and I was close to four years old. No, we were--he was two years old when I was four, we both got that sickness. We suffered on that for a long, long time. Hospital in and hospital out. The medicare, no medicare is here, the care, the medical care for poor people was quite organized. That was taken care of. There was a professor, a doctor in Eie Care. He was always one of the leaders in the Social Democratic movement and he took care of poor people a whole lot. He healed us, my brother a little faster than me. We both were blind for awhile and then when I was ten years, that was the last I saw him. Still when I go to the doctor that finds leftovers on my eyelids, they can tell that I have trachoma when I was a child. There are scars on each side of there. Then I have several children's sickness, juvenile sicknesses, like the measles and diphtheria. I was quite a long in the hospital as a child. My mother always, day and night, she was in the hospital. Then I had several operations like all children have -- appendix, and the throat, you know, what you call them, throat operations?

Tonsillectomy?

Tonsillectomy and all time there was no--few years was operated without any sedation. Well, the appendicitis, yes but my throat no, they just open your mouth, they cut the ____ (170). They cut your ear and that was how it was.

I guess so.

School, sanitary care at the schools was very good. A lot better than I see here in the United States now. I'm talking about 70 years ago. There were--nurses came around from the government, from the city or from the government itself, came around always checking out children. When they found something that they didn't like or that was suspicious, you got a little note to the doctor and you went to the doctor and you was treated. There was no cost, not that I ever remember. We were

treated a lot, especially the poor children because there was a lot of undernourishment. What else can I tell you?

This is probably, in terms of what I will need to fill in the information for our project, this is probably very, very comprehensive.

My wife that I married, my first wife, she was not from Amsterdam, she worked in Amsterdam as a nurse but she was way out in the south of the Netherlands. Her father was a farmer, a cattleman, a Jewish cattleman in that little village, yeah it was a village. A very old village, older than 800 years at least. The Spanish were, there was a--they made a bridge there over the river, then the Spanish were fighting the Netherlands. The Netherlands revolted against the Spanish, the armies came in. That was one of the fighting points there. That little city, Geertrvidenberg, that's where my wife came from. At the time that I knew her, there were two Jewish families and there was a little shul smaller than a bedroom. That still is there but now it is a monument in the city of Geertrvidenberg because the Jews are no more there. There were two Jewish families. My father-in-law was a farmer, my mother-in-law, her brother, a bachelor and several sisters, they lived--that was all the family. They lived close to each other. My wife's oldest sister, she was kind of sick always and the Uncle Sam and the sisters took her in because they thought my mother-in-law had enough to do without her four children. They wanted her, they wanted the child in the house too and they lived close together anyway. So Betrina, the oldest, came in their house and was deported with them when the Germans deported them, they deport with them. My wife's--the next daughter--the one who was two years older than my wife was, she still is alive. She went safe underground and made it through the war. The next daughter, she went with the German vurstmacher, Julius Stern, went away. She lived in Amsterdam too. Her name was Hennie; Hennie that was from Hendrika. She lived next to the Franks--Anne Frank's house.

Oh, really.

When the Franks were underground, I have known these people. I have seen them. Because my Hennie, she lived in the family. She was at Meyer's the housekeeper and the family Meyer lived next to it. Same canal, same gracht. Then there was a brother, the youngest brother and he came through the war. He died beginning of this year, 1992, but he made it through the war. During the war, my father-in-law, my mother-in-law, the second daughter, my wife and the youngest daughter, they all went underground. My wife was the only one active in the Resistance. The rest of them just were helped by other people and stayed underground until the war was over. That is my family-in-law.

They were fortunate.

They lived way out in the country and didn't follow any orders from the Germans that they had to go to Amsterdam to be registered and live in another house because that was promised. We take care of your house and we take care of your work, you will be working. That was all the lies around the deportation. They didn't believe them and they didn't do it. By that time, I was already in a labor camp, April 25, that you find in my register.

I want to thank you very, very much.

Did you get enough?

I think so.

Okay. Now I'm going to take from you. . . . My sister was married to a non-Jew who was born in Germany. This Dutch people lived in Neurenberg, Germany. There he was born so he grew up a German. When Hitler came in power, all the--that is how Hitler had a solution to the unemployment in Germany. Sent all the people who are not Germans out of the country. So my brother-in-law Norbert, he had to go out of the country. He came into the Netherlands where he knew he had family and that's where he met my sister. He got a job, he married her, not my wife, my sister. He married her and saved her during the war. She was arrested once and he stepped into the headquarters or in the office where she was in the cell. He bossed them around because born in Germany, he know exactly how to talk to them and bawled them out, barked like a dog, you know, Let my wife go, what is the matter with you people? That is how he went. When he tried to save my mother, I was already in a labor camp, he only could see that the truck that was loaded just left the street. And he came to save her and he just came too late.

Well, that's too bad.

But he saved my sister during the war, my sister during the war. We are very grateful so he was my brother too.

Is it okay if I stop the tape now?

That is fine. We had it all.

NOTE: Corrections, both typographical and grammatical, were made by Mr. Rood to the original transcript.