Unauthenticated

Interview with Jack Trompettor
April 2, 1992
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Q: The date is April 2, 1992. We're speaking with Jack Trompettor Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mr. Trompettor, could you please tell me you name at the time of the war, your date of birth and your place of birth and anything you possibly can about your family background and you childhood?

A: Well my Hebrew name is Isaac, Yitzhak. I was given the name Jack at the time because it was not safe, I suppose, to call children Isaac. I was born in Amsterdam. I was born in a hospital which, at the time, was taken over by the Germans and used for their Wehrmacht wounded. So there was my mother lying there and having me and because the family name in Trompettor, not Cohen or Nathanson, it wasn't evident giveaway that it was a Jewish name.

Q: The date, when was this?

A: This was August 2, 1942. When my mother gave birth to me it was also the same time that my father had been arrested. He was arrested in what's called a razia which was a raid which was what the Germans at that point would do in 1942. They would come into a Jewish neighborhood, seal off the streets, and then just pick up all the men that they could find and in this case my father was caught and he was taken to Oester Park, East Park which is a park in Amsterdam where they held them. And then they transported them, to the Uterperstaad which was where the Gestapo had their central headquarters and it was a school that they took over and they had some kind of, I think, gymnasium building, or some gymnasium-like building where they had all the men lie down, belly, face down and they beat the men on the backs and on the legs. We, of course found all this out afterwards. My father was arrested. My mother did not know where he was. She gives birth to me. She is understandably terribly, terribly anxious and afraid. There was a curfew at this time and no Jews are allowed on the streets at certain hours which made it all very difficult to do shopping and even visiting someone at the hospital. But it turned out that my mother's father, he was a man in his late sixties who wasn't afraid and really didn't, I suppose, care about this curfew. He was going to see his daughter and grandson.

Q: Did he wear a yellow star on his coat?

A: You know, I don't know; it's a good question. He came to visit my mother every day during the period when my father was -- his whereabouts were unknown. My mother got ill after she gave birth to me. I guess anxiety and everything. She was beside herself. Finally, and I don't know within how many days this transpires, I think maybe three or four or five, my father is let go. He calls up his work place. They send a cart which was what you had in Holland then which was to transport goods. You had a bicycle with sort of a cart in front and they put him in the cart and they took him home. The reason they did that was because he could barely walk because he was beaten on his legs. It's an interesting story how he actually got out. And how he got out was, as he told it, all the captives were lined up. And they had the Gestapo, they had the green police, they had the Dutch police, those Dutch police who were collaborators. They had all levels of police. Everyone wanted to be a brute of some kind. Everyone wanted to get

in, in some way. The Germans were very, very concerned with TB. They were very, very concerned with that, I guess, what's the word I'm looking for, plagues or some kind of -- what's the word I'm looking for -- not a plague.

Q: Contagion.

A: Some contagious disease, thank you. And they had a doctor who was a Jewish doctor look at all the men and ask the men, the captives, questions. Based on these questions the men were let go. And to be let go meant to be kicked in behind and told to get the hell out and never come back or whatever. The Germans were so afraid of contagious diseases that their solution to contagious disease was to throw people out. This doctor was someone my father had known. In the twenties my father had some kind of a lung problem and it wasn't TB. But at the time you carried with you some kind of identity card I think that you with if you had some kind of a medical emergency you could whip it out. So he had a card with him and somehow he had the good sense to have the card out or show it to the doctor and the doctor and German officers are standing at this point in front of my father and the tension is throughout all this very, very intense and very high and a lot of questions are being asked and crisscrossed. At the same time the German asks the doctor if this man has TB because of the card. He ends up saying yes. But if turns out he's saying yes to another officer's demand who is saying, mach shnell, mach shnell, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up. The level of tension was purposely created by the Germans. This is what they did to disempower people, to terrorize them. And it was a tactic; it was a strategy. It wasn't simply people losing their temper. It was a strategy of terrifying people. So they're asking what's going on, mach shnell, yes. It seems to be misunderstood by the head officer that my father indeed had TB. So they grabbed him, they boot him in his behind, they throw him out, lucky him. He gets to a phone, calls up his work place. They send over the bicycle and the cart. He comes home to discover he's had a son. I don't think he was able to visit my mother or myself in the hospital. My mother comes home. Everybody is very happy to have me. I was named Isaac, Yitzhak, he who laughs. The first time I asked my parents, when talking with them about the war experiences why they would want to have a child during this time, why they had me. They said it was their blow against Hitler. And I have very mixed feelings about this. It makes me a little choked up as it does right now because I feel in some way it casts me in some kind of historical responsibility and there are times where I would say I wish that they didn't have me then on one hand. On the other hand I'm always grateful that they provided themselves to bring me into the world. That's the bottom line. So I am the blow against Hitler.

Q: That is a responsibility. Can you back up a little and tell me about your family history. Are they long time Dutch Jews or had they come from Germany or …….

A: Yes, my family name Trompettor. There is some dispute whether we are Sephardic which is Trompaita or whether we are Ashkenazim from the East. I don't know. I tend to think we were Sephardim. The reason for that, actually, is a number of years ago Time Magazine, the New York Times Sunday magazine had an article on Spain. On the cover they had a picture of a young boy who trained horses and it looks just like me, like I did when I was young. So there's a cast to my face that would give that some authenticity. So I think we were Sephardim although we did not speak Latino in our family nor did we speak Hebrew in our family. My parents were working class people. My mother had three brothers. My father had three brothers and three sisters.

Q They all were from Amsterdam?

A: Yes, we were Amsterdam working class people. Amsterdam by the Dutch was known as Mokum, M-O-K-U-M, which was a, I don't know how but it was a Yiddish word for Amsterdam and it got into the lexicon. The Dutch refer to Amsterdam often as Mokum. Not just the Jews use that term. And the Jews in Holland, I think I'd say you know who came from the East and came from Spain and Holland was very hospitable to them. My parents family, many of them worked in the diamond cutting and polishing industry which was the main industry for the Jews as well as textiles. You had different Jewish neighborhoods in Amsterdam. There was one neighborhood called the gold coast which was where the more well-to-do Jewish people would live. Then there was what was the Yodebrastaat which is the wide Jewish street which is, I think, also the street where Rembrandt had his tourist home right now. It was a large Jewish community. It's the southeast of Amsterdam. It's where many of the Dutch Jews lived.

Q: Do you know where their families lived, your parents' families?

A: No, I know. Yes my parents' family lived in the neighborhood of the Yodebrastaat. We lived right after the war in the Tunsvalstraat right on the Tunsvalkad which was a canal as Amsterdam is crisscrossed by canals. Is there anything else I could say about my parents?

Q: Do you know anything about Jewishly like were they religious, were they observant?

A: Yes, my parents both went to Hebrew school when they were younger. We were not a kosher home. You must understand that the Dutch Jews were mostly working class people and while my parents and their families set a table every Friday night there were no prayers said and I don't think there were blessings said over the bread or wine with the meal but all the children would be there for that dinner and some with their sweetie pies and after dinner they would all leave for their Friday night gallivanting, you know young people. There's not much talk in my family of poverty or anything like that even during the depression. There were hard times. There was always food. My father worked in the food trades, in the restaurant trade and always had food, brought home food. So there was always that. And also he was one of the brothers who always seemed to have worked during the hard years. My grandmothers did not work. They were grandmothers which was a job in itself. My mother and father knew each other when they were in their late teens. And as my mother tells it, she had a crush on my father because he was so quiet and sweet and I guess, polite. They met each other through my father's sister Maricha, Marie who perished and had become sweethearts very early on and had been very fond of each other and close to each other. It was, I guess, in those days that you paired up real early. But they were engaged for a long time. They didn't married until they were thirty and the reason for that is that they wanted to save money for furniture. And now my mother talks about how she regrets in light of course not knowing about the war that they didn't get married sooner and have babies sooner. And I always kind of wondered why they didn't have more babies and in some ways regret not having children.

Q: Do you know your parents' dates of birth?

A: Yes, of course. You know at a certain age if you don't send them a birthday card you have hell to pay. My father was born in 1911, May 25th. My mother was born in 1910, June 14th. So we're all summer babies.

Q: So that was the situation leading up to the war. Ha your mother been working, did she have a career?

A: Yes, she was a seamstress. She talks about having loved her career as a seamstress. In her manuscript which she spent seven years writing she talks about the shop she was in. She talks about the labor struggles. During this time there were many, many labor struggles. My parents were as many Dutch Jews were working class people and by and large they voted for the Social Democratic Party which here we would mistakenly call Socialist or Left. They were a liberal democratic party whose interests represented working class people. And they also took part of the culture of the Social Democratic Parties and on the first of May, you'd have picnics, you'd have festivals. You would often have camping trips that these parties of the Left provided for young people which my parents often went to. And your question before about a religious household, I do not recall ever having heard my parents talk about a religious household although there are some times now when I talk to my mother and she disputes that. And I think she may dispute it because there is some matter of pride but I don't think, and she would know better than I what happened in those years, but I never heard talk about her religious upbringing. I know we never had a kosher home. The first time I stepped into a shul was when I was Bar Mitzvahed.

Q: Really? So you didn't go for the High Holidays or anything like that?

A: Before we were Bar Mitzvahed my parents pleaded with my brother and I to go to shul for the High Holidays and we didn't. And we compromised. We said well we'll get dressed and we'll walk around temple so everyone will see us but we're not going in because we didn't know Hebrew and also being refugees and being survivors we felt in a way alienated from the Jewish community about us. And that is something that is very typical of people with our story. In some way we were met with a lot of not understanding. I always have felt very alienated from Judaism. I knew when I grew up in Brooklyn there were times where I would be beaten up for being Jewish. Easter would roll around and the Italian kids, boys, would come from Avenue X and we lived on Avenue Z and Avenue Y was a dividing line and you had the Italian people living on Avenue X and the Jewish people living on Avenue Z. And as what was popularly known then Jewish boys did not fight. They did not fight. So Easter would come around and I with my friends would be playing outside and Italian boys would come into the neighborhood and they would tell us we killed Christ. And I didn't know who this boy Christ was, I had no idea. And I certainly knew that I and no one had killed anybody recently. So they would attack us and beat us up. We didn't know about fighting back. So that happened a few times. And I guess that was one of many punctuation marks in my feeling not Jewish. And for many years I did not in some way come out as being Jewish. I did not come forward with it. I did not cultivate my social relationships based on people being Jewish. I had friends from all kinds of groups as I do now.

Q: But meanwhile though your parents had settled in a basically Jewish area?

A: Well, yes, yes. We came to America in 1949, my parents, my brother, who was really my step-brother as I'll go on to tell later, my aunt and uncle and their two daughters. We lived in Far Rockaway. First few months we had an attic and we all slept on cots in the attic. And then at some point we got an apartment in Rockaway. We got two basement apartments which were about three blocks from the ocean which us kids in the family absolutely loved because it meant

our summers we had a lot to do and to play. But in the spring when the rains came the basement would always be flooded and we'd always have to buy a new rug. So it was a sort of immigrant story. And then in 1951 when Beachhaven which was one of the first projects that Fred Trump built (which is the Donald's father) built in Brooklyn, my parents moved out there. It was a very big step. It really was an attempt for my parents to start to build something for us. At one point they talked about wanting to move to Long Island which was also considered a step up and buy a home there which they never did. I as of late come to understand that there was a subtext to our life which was around the matter of denial and that had to do with getting on with life and putting all that stuff behind us, just get on with life.

Q: I hate to stop you but could you tell me what happened to your family during the war? We started with your birth so there are two more years at least.

A: There's plenty. So I was born on August second. This was the time when people were already being deported to Vestaburg which was a transit camp in the north of Holland, in the moors, God forsaken nowhere place. From Vestaburg every Tuesday the transport went east. People went either to Auschwitz, to Treblinka, to Sobibor, to Chelmo where most of my grandparents, aunts and uncles perished. Because our name was Trompettor and as I said not like Cohen or a lot of typical Dutch Jewish names my father who belonged to a butcher's union which was taken over by the Dutch Fascists, the Jewish names would all be crossed off. Trompettor was not crossed off which meant we would continue to get their news letter but this time with the National Socialist masthead on it. So my father would conspicuously leave it on a little side table by the door in case there were raids and people would come in they would see this and think my father was not Jewish. Upstairs though in the same house lived my mother's parents. During this time the Jewish Council in Amsterdam as there were in many countries had a list of all the people who were in Holland who were Jewish and the list was made available to the Germans. And I know there is much argument about the role of the Jewish Council. Because my parents were, I guess, working class people and sympathetic to the left of the political spectrum they had a certain kind of savvy about what was happening. In Holland from '33 on you had over 25,000 German Jewish refugees so stories got around. People got a sense of the brutality that was there. When my father was arrested and beaten up as he tells it, he was of course among other things shocked. Something like this never happened to him and he felt that with this kind of brutality it was going to get worse and nothing would stop the Germans and that if they were capable of this no one was safe. And that's what he felt. Before that happened there was the curfew, there were people being taken away, there were street fights in Jewish neighborhoods. Dutch fascists would come into the Jewish neighborhoods, the ice-cream parlors, the tea houses and start fights and there would be these altercations. But when he was beaten up he understood how bad it was and he decided then he was going to go underground. He was not going to register. My mother's brother, Shok who is the name I was given, Jack, in honor of him, I think he was a very active Socialist and as my mother tells the story right before or after I was born she's in my parents' home and my mother's brother Shok is still living there she enters into his room and sees him with a tallis and he's praying. And she is shocked because she's known him as a what should we call it an agnostic, an atheist. My mother says what's going on? And he says, well he's praying so his parents won't be taken away and has decided that he will go and register in their place. Throughout the early period of the German occupations and the subjugation of the Jewish community there were continual regulations that were tended to deceive people. One of them was that if the young people in the family would register, the old people would not be taken. This was of course a way of sabotaging and undermining any form of resistance and many, many people believed it. You have to

understand and appreciate that. What some people might see as stupidity or cooperation isn't quite that. It has to be understood in the context of Holland is a country that's very much concerned with law, with rules, with order. I always feel that they're kind of caught between the anvil of Calvinism and the hammer of Anarchism and the reason for that is because cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam are international cities and the Dutch have been for a few hundred years an international merchant people. So not to register was considered an illegal act even though it was clear to many that those who were in power, who made the law, were evil. But my father decided he was not going to register, he was going to do something else. That was a very big step. It was the first step to resistance. Many people of course had no idea what was going on in the east after the transports. People really believed they were going to be settled in some farm somewhere to dig potatoes and till the soil. But because my father had a certain political savvy he knew what German Fascism meant as people did. So he decided he was not going to register; he was going to go underground. The problem was what does that mean? How do you do it? Who do you make contact with? Who do you trust? And it was all luck. So my mother's brother Shok decides he's going to register to save the grandparents. He registers. He is sent to Vestaborg. At some point from Vestaborg he sends my mother a card, my mother and father a card that says don't bring the red baby wagon which was their code for saying do not come, do not bring Jackie as I was known because even in Vestaborg which was not as horrible as the camps in the east there was constructed to deceive people. Actually when I say this I am stunned at how remarkable the deception was, to be deceived. In some way I know this is in hindsight I get very angry at it. How could people be so stupid? And on the other hand how can I say that? And all of it is a, it's a mix of feelings one has, I have.

Q: I think you pointed it out when you said how the Dutch people were concerned with order and all that and they say they came in so fast to Holland and people were in shock and they just rounded up and took them out. I don't think they had time to really think. That was my impression.

A: Yeah, but you know they had people coming in from Germany from 1933 with stories.

Q: True. True.

A: Hitler and Hitler did not have a reputation other than terrorism, cajoling, bullyism. He's the ultimate form of European bullyism. So my father comes home; I am born. They decide they're going to go underground. And one of the terrible things that also happens is that one considers the older people, the grandparents. What do they do? How do they go underground? And the family is kind of in some way the younger people start to provide for themselves. This is a question my cousins and I have often wondered about. What about the grandparents; what do you do? And I understand it's a terrible question and it's one I have asked my mother and never really gotten any kind of a satisfactory answer and I'm a little bit ashamed to even pursue it. But I wonder about it. I can tell you one story, terrible story. My father has the newspaper with the National Socialist masthead left at the table. There is a raid one day. The Dutch police, the green police which were the German police come in. They know the people who live upstairs are Jewish. They come to take them away. It turns out to be my mother's parents and it is my mother's mother's, my grandmother's birthday that this happens. And my mother of course is beside herself in shock, terrible, terrible. You can imagine how terrible something like that is. My father gathers his wits; he goes to the police. He says, we've known our neighbors for a long time could we please say goodbye to them? The Germans say yes. So here are my parents saying goodbye. My father is saying goodbye to his in-laws, my mother is

saying goodbye to her parents as if they were just neighbors. It's a terrible thing and I often wonder what my mother has done with that pain and that grief. She has written it all down. So my mother's parents are taken away. I don't know whether at this point before or after my father's parents are taken away. Some of the brothers and sisters have been taken away, some have not. Those that remain decide to go underground and it means you don't tell anyone else where you're going because it's unsafe. All you could do is tell your parents goodbye. When people went underground at the time they had no idea for how long this would be. No one knew. Some people thought weeks, months. No one thought of years. My parents had saved some money so they had money that they knew they would need to provide for their keep while they were underground. They made a connection through someone they knew who knew someone who knew someone to two people whose names are Cory and Jan Van Nomberg who are people who I now know as my aunt and uncle who live in Tilburg who we have been very close to since the war; people who I'm very, very fond of. He was in the Dutch cavalry. He was a sort of, I wouldn't say monarchist, but he was a very good Dutch patriot. They came from Tilburg, a Catholic family. Holland is kind of divided like that. The people in the south are Catholic, the people in the north are Protestant. They came from a good Catholic family but he hated the Germans. Not that he hated National Socialism but he hated the Germans because they invaded his country. He wanted to do something. My parents ended up with them. At first the story was that my father was on the run; he didn't want to serve in the army. I don't know, what you would call a deserter. So they were taken in by Cory and Jan based on that. But there is a sense that Cory and Jan did kind of know that that was not the story, that they might be Jews. At some point early on in their underground experience it becomes apparent, it's talked about and Cory and Jan decide well we've gone this far with you we're not going to turn you away. And my parents spent from November of 1942 till the liberation in May with these people. I went underground about a week, a few days or a week before they went underground. I was three months old when I went underground. You can imagine, if you can imagine what it was like for my mother to give up her child with the hope that she is saving my life with always the knowledge of the possibility I'm being offered up to destruction. We were one of the lucky families. We all survived. My parents survived. I survived.

Q: Did they circumsise you?

A: I was circumcised. It's something I don't understand why people would take the chance of doing that, would take the chance because when there were raids the Germans would pull down the pants of the men in the street to see if they were Jewish. Remarkable, remarkable, crude to say the least. Yeah, but you know I guess you circumcise your child to show your fealty. It's a practice that I have real questions about. I'm afraid that I've gotten lost in some -- I'm not in a track.

Q: You went underground. You were sent underground.

A: Yes, I was sent underground. I spent the first night with my mother's brother's wife, Ollie, who was a gentile woman, my mother's brother Morris, his first wife died in childbirth. He marries Ollie. Ollie is a gentile woman. Ollie has me for one or two nights and my parents know nothing of who has me or where I am. The deal is if the family goes underground it's best to separate the children because at least that will raise the chances of someone surviving. So I go with Ollie and eventually I'm passed on to other people. I spend a short time in a Quaker children's home, a very short time. It turns out that when my parents are also underground Cory, of Cory and Jan who are taking care of my parents, Cory goes to check on me to see how

I am. This is done without telling my mother. My father knows about it, Jan knows about it. I don't know why they didn't tell my mother. They made some assumptions. Cory goes to see how I am doing. She goes to the Quaker home. She's there. She has a bad feeling about the place. She takes me out of there right away. She spends a night with me in the woods. They talk about that there was fighting or shelling somewhere around there but it's 1942 so I don't really understand whether there's resistance activity or what but this is how it's talked about. She gets me to another place. I am finally placed in a place called Hino which is about 35 kilometers from the German border with a very poor Protestant family, people who are in their sixties, the family De Chot. Cory comes back which she does. She has the good sense to go to a place that's sort of like the equivalent of a Fotomat. She has a picture taken of me that she can bring back and show my mother. My mother, in this time, doesn't know why Cory has been gone for so long. Jan and my father know but they get worried. She doesn't come home until very, very late the next day and she lays it out to my mother. Your boy is safe. We had to take him out of there. They find out subsequently it turns out that the next day this place is raided -- that children are taken out of there. The adults there are arrested. Remarkable. So Cory has this sense, has her sixth sense.

Q: It's not all Jewish children there was there or were there many?

A: There were many, many Jewish children. What they would do is they would mix the Jewish children in with the -- it was like a Quaker orphanage -- with other children. And this was often how it was done when Jewish children were hidden in groups, in France and Belgium and Holland. This is how it was done. When the children like myself went underground the parents were told to remember the clothes that the children had on. The people who received the children like myself were told to save that clothing because it was the only way to identify a child. So the story goes that my mother had a bathing suit that they cut up. Because she was a seamstress they made a little pants for me, a little top and a little hat. This is what I was delivered in eventually to the De Chot family and this is what they kept.. So what we are all in hiding, my parents not knowing whether I'm alive or where I am. My mother tells the story that every night before she went to sleep she would pray for my well -being. They had cut a lock of hair from my head that she had and she would use this as some kind of reliquary, some kind of talisman pray for my hair, pray for me. Every night ask my father when was it going to be over was it going to be all right. And of course what could the poor man do but say yes my dear, of course. So they were hidden with Cory and Jan from the end of November till May of 1945. For almost three years I was separated from my parents. When I first agreed to do this interview, when I was told about it my first response was well you know there are so many people who are older who have more powerful, more horrible stories to tell, they're important to know. And then I thought but who will tell the story of people like myself who were at this age if I don't. So it was a big step for me to decide to do it because in the community of people who are survivors, people who are camp survivors, people who are underground survivors, there has been a kind of presumptuously established hierarchy of suffering, that those who were in the camps suffered the most and they probably did. They did indeed. But it meant that for those of us who didn't suffer like that we couldn't really tell our story because it was not as bad because we had that one potato that we should be happy for. And this has been very problematic. Because of the conference last May this was a subject that was brought up and talked about. And even at the conference I had an instant where I was in an elevator and there was an older woman standing there, a short woman, and she had a little identity card which we all had which said our name, what country we were from, where we were hidden and what years. And she's squinting up and she is Dutch as I can see and I chat with her and she's

squinting up and looking and says oh you were just a baby. And I was very angry with her and I thought how can you be so thoughtless at this place. But it is part of the problem. It is the problem who were in camps -- although to feel and I can't be anything but sympathetic with that but it doesn't allow me to tell my story. And I think this is an issue that has now been brought forth and dealt with as being one of the issues that we all have, that it's all authentic.

Q: Certainly, by all means. Did the Americans liberate your parents?

A: The British and Canadians. In Holland, I was in the north of Holland, my parents were in the south of Holland. The south of Holland was liberated some time early of '45 and people at the time didn't know what was going on in the north but in the north you had what was called the hunger winter because as the Germans were being defeated and withdrawing they took all the foodstuffs they could lay their hands on and the consequence was that something like 15,000 people in northern Holland died of hunger because there wasn't anything they could put in their stomach, remarkable. I lived on a farm. Fortunately there was some food available. I'm told the story that the people who took care of me would share everything they had with me and it was very, very little. When I was finally found I looked like a picture of what we see today of starving children. I had a swelled head, tiny little body, skinny bones. But I had my share of what other people had. And I guess for my parents to have seen me eventually like this and to know this made it difficult for them. It raised the guilt ante for them; the guilt of having given me up even though the intent was to save my life. There were all kinds of complex inter-family dynamics come out of this.

Q: How did they ultimately find you?

A: Good story. So my parents are liberated. They're living in Tilburg. Tilburg turns out to be a sort of central command place for the British and Canadian army as well as the place where all the people who survived the camps come, all the Dutch Jews who come back -- all, the few -- all, whatever twenty of them, come back to Tilburg and there; there's the Joint Committee of various Jewish organizations from America that help in finding people, in relocating people. It turns out that my father with the liberation gets a job with the British army as some kind of cook. He does this temporarily. They ask him to sign up for a year, whatever. He says forget it, he's out of it. As far as he knows he's the only male survivor of the family. He's going to find out where the children are. He knows the children are hidden in Holland somewhere. He's going to find out where. So as the story goes, he like Charlie Chaplin has a stick on his shoulder with a bag at the end of it and because there was not yet any real public transportation he hitchhikes on military vehicles -- goes to this village -- finds out there's a resistance group there. There were a lot of church people who were instrumental in hiding children; finds this pastor who turns him on to a priest, who turns him on to a mayor. He finally finds his way to know that there is a young boy who fits my description who's hidden in Hino in this farm. He's hitchhiking. He appears there. It's night, it's dark, it's a farmhouse. He bangs on the door. People lean out the top window, what's going on, who is it? He tells the story. My name is Gerrit Trompettor. I'm looking for a young by described so and so. Would he be here? And there is some pause and finally they say well yes. He comes in but they don't wake me, it's late at night. He sleeps in a hayloft or somewhere on the farm. In the morning I am brought to him, I sit on his lap and I say "peen in ma book, peen in ma book" which is the Dutch rural expression of "pain in ma bouk" which means pain in my stomach. Gerrit thinks I am talking about a book. The Dutch word for stomach is "book is "book" The Dutch word for stomach is "bouk". Because I'm speaking this flat rural accent he doesn't understand me. It turns out I'm

talking about pain in my stomach. I'm hungry or something. I don't know at what point he comprehends that he and I are speaking an entirely different language. But it turns out that he has a talk with the family. They find out he is my father, I'm his son and he's come to take me. And I'm having trouble right now recalling whether he takes me the first day or whether he leaves me there and he goes back and he gets Celene, the mom in this story. And it's interesting that I'm having trouble recalling that. I don't know. Anyway I am reunited with my family. I am undernourished. I am sickly. I am brought to a doctor who informs my parents that with food and care in a short while I'll be back to normal, I'll be fine.

Q: You've absolutely no recollection of any of this, is that correct?

A: No, I also find it very distressing that I have no recollection. But I'm between the ages of three months and two years. Now I know there are stories of people who remember some things two, three years. I have two recollections. One of them is that I am in a home, I am picked up and very quickly brought to a second floor and I am put in a closet. In the closet is a hobby- horse. And I sit on the hobby- horse for a while and I hear voices downstairs and then later I'm brought downstairs again. I don't know whether this is a dream or a memory. That's all I really remember. And as I said it distresses me because I really have a need to know and understand more about this period. In our family as it happened in many families after the war when there were hidden parents and hidden children the main story in the family was that the parents were hidden and survived the war. And then there happened to be the story that the children were hidden and survived the war. But we were very young; we had no story to tell. So our story kind of fell into the background. And in those years, right after the war and even in the fifties and sixties there wasn't any understanding or talk or research or literature or anything on what it was like for children who had to be reunited with the parents. I often talk about that I was adopted by my parents in 1945 because here I am a three year old kid who talks a different language. It took my parents a while, my parents and I to understand each other. And here I am thinking, I suppose, that I've been taken away from my parents by this new couple who tell me they're my parents and there's the program and I have to get with the program. I have to love them as they love me and it caused a great deal of problems. It still does.

Q: You think that was really one of the main tensions?

A: Well it has been, I have come to understand it as one of the main tensions. I have, I realize now, been a depressed man for many, many years. I have been an angry man as well and unable to commit myself to many things. And I now understand what all that is about. I mean there are psychological dimensions to all of this that I don't even know if they're important to speak about whether this is pure quote unquote history or -- there are people who to this day suffer because of what happened to them during the war. There are others like myself who have problems because of what happened right after the war because denial was the order of the day. And it meant that those of us who are younger could not delve into our story. I have always when I was a young man living with my parents asked them about the war, terrifically curious, as I am now. And there was a way of finding my own voice and my own story. But when it came to asking questions about the people I was with, what happened to them, what was it like, I always came up against some form of denial, always, always. In 1985, I think it was the year, it was the year before my father died, I was visiting my parents who since 1972 moved back to Holland. I was determined to find out more about my history and about these people, the De Chot family. And I told them, I said I'm going to find out about this. I'd like you to help me. If you don't, fine but I'm going to do it anyway. Well my parents must have conferred that

evening and reached a wise decision and said well we'll go with you. Let's make a day of it. So the next day we drive to this area of Holland and we go to a City Hall of a town nearby to find maps, names of people. We don't find much but we drive around and we drive to where my father thinks the farm was. Well it turns out it's a major highway right now. There's nothing there -- it's obliterated but we do pass through what's the other town where my brother/cousin was hidden and he was like fifteen kilometers from me and nobody knew. But we saw the house that he was hidden in and we recognized it because we had a photo that was made right after the war and it showed the same wrought iron fence, a very beautiful intricate design and it was immediately clear. My brother who was really my first cousin was taken care of by a woman, Mrs. De Fries, a very fine woman, a religious woman who had a hard time giving him up. But after the war my parents stayed in close contact with her and in the early fifties she came and spent part of a summer vacation with us. My parents in some ways were very wise. They knew that the separation between us and our foster parents would be problematic and in some way no matter what people did out of the best of intentions there would be problems. And I realize this now. I see a therapist twice a week which is enormously helpful. It's paid for by the Dutch government. And I talk about all this stuff and I never talked about this before and I've come to some understandings and one of the things I've come to understand is that we were given up for hiding with the best of intentions -- out of nothing but love and care. But it still caused us problems. And it's I feel a terrible dilemma for my parents that out of the best of intentions we were damned if we did and we were damned if we didn't and we have this to deal with and it makes me, I was going to use the word angry, the truth is I am outraged and livid that I should now have to deal with this stuff in my lifetime that I'm a man who has a hard time relaxing, who does not feel safe and secure in the world, I'm so angry at that and to be gifted with life but to be born at a terrible time.

Q: Do you want to tell me a little bit about how your cousin came to live with you?

A: My cousin Andy's parents were Cheel, Macheel and his mother Maricha, Marie. They went underground but they were caught and they perished in -- I call him my brother Andy, it's a habit. My brother's father which is not my father perished a few weeks before the liberation. He was shot on one of the marches from Auschwitz. My mother, his mother perished in '44. I have an album here, of course you can't see it on tape, that a distant relative in Holland made for us where it's a genealogical tracing of the family and in it we have listings of people and under the listing where it says when they died, where they died we have, well here it says Holocaust to say that he perished -- Judah Zomerplak some of my mother's family. People perished in Treblinka; they perished in Auschwitz, they perished in Sobibor. So my brother's parents perished, his mother in the camp. The adults at the time they were deciding to go underground made this agreement, that whoever survived would take in the children who, God willing, survived. It turned out that my brother, Andy was taken in by my parents.

Q: How did they find him?

A: How did they find him? They found him -- my father found me, my brother, my cousin Sylvia, my cousin Yanaka. Just by tracing he found us all, quite remarkable. He found us and I always remember knowing that Andy was my brother. What did I know from first cousin. Some time I think when he was ten or eleven years old in America my parents sat us down and told us the story of his parents. And I remember -- I don't know how my brother took it in. I have no idea how he took it in. I remember going to bed at night and crying and feeling very sorry for Andy. My father came in the room and said to me, just because he's your cousin doesn't mean we love

him less than you which I suppose it's the transverse saying it doesn't mean we love you less than him. And at the time I felt very, very sad. And I always in my heart felt very sad about my brother. I now have come to understand it was myself I was feeling sad for, that I was feeling sad for not knowing my foster parents.

Q: You were the same age basically?

A: Yeah we were three months different. He was three months older. He died in 1979. He had a massive heart attack. He, I feel very strongly, was a man who was plagued by what happened during the war. When he knew his parents perished and he was adopted and he never, I think metabolized any of that stuff. Unfortunately after the war the advice that my parents and many people like them was given was one of --oh you'll love your children, you feed them, you take care and everything will be okay. No one knew any different. No one knew that there was a psychological dimension that would come up. I think my brother stewed on this stuff for a very long time. He was a ferocious smoker, nervous habit. He became a puppeteer. He had a puppet theater and he traveled all over the country and he settled in Tulsa Oklahoma. He was married for a while. That didn't work out. He was a hard person. I say hard in terms of texture. He lived his life very hard and he was very troubled by it all and unfortunately we didn't have the advantage of having some kind of therapy or having the right kind of attention that we do now and I always feel bad that Andy died prematurely and that the war reached out and took him. When he died I had the task of calling up my parents late at night who lived in Europe to tell them about it. And I vowed to myself at that time that I would take care of myself so that I would never have to have someone call my parents up and tell them what happened. It was a terrible, terrible thing to do. Every time someone in my family dies, I feel it's not a matter of people passing on as nature designed it but all the memories of our losses and our feeling betrayed comes back. It's not just someone dying, it's the war again. And I don't know how other people like myself experience that. This is my experience.

Q: What did your parents do then immediately after they got the kids together?

A: We moved to Amsterdam. My father got work and even when my parents were hidden underground they talked about they decided they were going to go to America and they were going to teach each other English which they did. They taught each other a bit of English. Cory and Jan learned a little English. They were going to America. My family and Cory and Jan, the people who hid them, stayed very close after the war. There are always ironies in history and one of the ironies is that, for our family, it's been a privilege and a delight to have had these new people in our lives, Cory and Jan, who I've always called Tanta Cory and Omi Jan aunt and uncle and whom I'm in touch with and very close to. When I go to Holland I see them. And when I got married in 1982 they came with my parents here so that was fun. So we were all very close after the war. My father went back into the restaurant business. He worked for a woman whose name was De Haas who had a number of restaurants and he was her main manager. She was in the camps. She survived the camps. She opened up a restaurant again. It was on the Centeur Bahn in Amsterdam which was a well known shopping street. The restaurant was a well- known place. But while he was working there after the war he still had on his mind he was going to America and they did that because we have relatives here. We had what you would call a matriarch aunt, Rose, Rose Blitz Gossler who in 1945 right after the war came to Holland ro see who was left who she could help. At the time there was a conversation between her and my father that when he would come to America she would help him set up in the Deli business which never transpired, which became a little chicken bone in the throat for a

few years. So we had family here who sponsored us. You needed to have a sponsor, someone who could swear that you would not become a ward of the state. So we sailed here on the New Amsterdam and came here on August 12, 1949 and I remember coming and my Aunt Rose was there to greet us with some other relatives who I don't recall. And she mentioned something to me in English that I should run up to this guard, this police officer and say -- and I didn't know what it was and I went over and blabbed it to him and he smiled and that was it. So my first words in English were a mystery to me except for the police officer. My parents very quickly started to make a life for themselves here, determined to put everything behind us. And, of course, my parents are people who have had a history before the war. They've had a history that they think of fondly and speak of fondly. So the war was an interruption, a terrible interruption. For the rest of us who were younger it was our first experience in the world. We had nothing to go back to, to draw from, to support us. So it was different for my parents. They were able to say, let's build a life. Those of us who were younger had some real traumatic problems. I understand that some -- we were in some way victims of child abuse. We were traumatized children. I know from my cousin that one of my cousins had a very difficult time in going back with her Mom and Dad. She wanted to be back with her foster parents.

Q: How old was she?

A: She is two years older than me so at the time she was five. And there was an incident where I guess she got to be so whiny and nagging and impossible that her mother filled the suitcase, put it on the front steps and said, go. Get with the program or go. And the rest of us got the message; it was a very serious message. So we all got with the program. You know it's a complex thing. You wished that your parents were smarter, were wiser but they were who they were and they tried their very best.

Q: Did you ever feel estrangement this whole time in a sense?

A: No, I never felt estranged from my parents. The odd thing is my parents did very well by me. And I think of them very fondly; I miss my father terribly. I'm sorry my mother's living in Holland and we can't be closer. But I know that I grew up as a very angry person. Right after the war I was hospitalized. I was hospitalized. Let's see now, three months after the liberation I was hospitalized for three months. I had I guess what you called chorea or what's commonly called St. Vitus Dance, I had a nervous disorder. So clearly I was paying for it. I remember being very well taken care of in the hospital. It was a Catholic hospital and I remember the nuns. I remember like you see on the TV program the nuns with the giant wings on their heads, real nun, old world nun. I remember being very well taken care of and then when we came to America, a few weeks after we were here my father had a serious stomach operation, ulcer. A few months again I also had a nervous breakdown. So there was stuff going on. There's the will to survive and get along with it and then there's the body telling you I can't take anymore. There's the psyche telling you I can't take anymore. I need down time; I need time off. So I remember my parents doing very well by me. I'm not someone who complains about my parents. But I also know that I grew up as a very angry young man with a terribly sarcastic sense of humor; always saw the dark side of things first; was very politically active in the sixties in the civil rights and war stuff and even in the seventies. My anger was coming from my experiences as a child. I know that when I was born my mother was not able to really take care of me well because she was just a wreck. People around me were a wreck filled with fear and dread and I must have taken that in as they say with your mother's milk even though there was no mother's milk. I had taken that all in and I experienced myself as a very anxious

person.

Q: Now when you moved to the Brighton Beach area were there primarily other refugees in your neighborhood or was there-------?

A: I remember only one family. It was a Hungarian family with two boys and I heard from my parents that they were in the war too. But there was never any talk with those families about that. We played with their children. But if there were other refugee families I didn't know about it. People didn't talk about it to each other. You put it behind you. You deny it; you get on with your life. And I think now there was also a certain element of shame about it all among other feelings. It was like people were in the closet with their stuff. And I grew up in Beach Haven. I have enjoyable memories of my childhood also being a nervous kid but not a very intense religious quality to our family's life. We would have Passover. We would set a nice table and have a wonderful meal. There was nothing said. We would celebrate Christmas. We had a lot of intermarriage family which you have with Jewish families in Europe, a lot of intermarriage.

Q: Who did your parents associate with once they came here?

A: They associated with their family. There was my father's brother Morritz survived Auschwitz and Mauthausen. These two brothers took care of each other; they survived. They paid a terrible price for it. They died, one of heart, one of cancer. They associated with family. They didn't make friends. It was something I always found very peculiar. I suppose in Holland it was that way too. There was a large family before the war; your family were your friends. My mother who now lives in Amsterdam in Beth Sholom which is a kind of quasi retirement home has a very nice circle of about four or five women her age who have similar stories who they're very close with. It's very sweet. After dinner they sit in each other's small apartments and they'll watch TV and have coffee and chat. And then when it's time to go to bed they'll kiss each other goodnight and they'll go to their separate homes, rooms. And it's sweet. It's not something that she had as a younger woman here. Her friends were always the other -- sister-in-laws. She had sister-in-law friends.

Q: I think that's typical of the European rather than------but I was wondering since they came out—

A: My mother did make friends with the women in her shop. She worked in the garment trade for many years, mostly Italian women. And she learned to cook very good Italian food from that and she speaks of it very fondly. She says the post-war years were some of the best years of her life; I saw the boys grow up. We had a good time. She remembers it very fondly.

Q: So you never had any formal Jewish education of any sort?

A: No, I was, it's an interesting story I'm glad you asked. A few months, about two or three months before it was time to have my brother and I bar mitzvahed we had a local rabbi come to the house and give us rabbi lessons. And at one point, it was a very rote kind of lesson, we had to "zocher" we had to remember but we didn't have to understand. So at one point we said, rabbi what does this mean? And he said, it doesn't matter you don't need to know, just remember. And I can date my alienation from Judaism from that day, from that moment. A very unwise thing to say. There might have been an agenda that was just get the boys to

remember it. Nonetheless it's not an answer I would give if I were a rabbi that's for sure. So I was not a Jewish person until a few years ago when my wife took an interest in Judaism; had us join a local shul because she wisely understood it was part of the process of me being disaffected. At first we would go to shul just for the high holiday. I'd sit in the back with my coat and hat on ready to flee at any time feeling very uncomfortable always feeling like I want to cry. I would go to shul and feel like I want to cry. And that's the way I feel right now even saying it, not feeling welcome, not feeling safe. I understand now it's not feeling safe. For us to identify with Judaism was to immediately putting ourselves in touch with everything that was dangerous to us. And I at some point regretted very much that not only had those bastards taken our families they now had taken our culture. And I was determined to take that culture back within the context of being a 49 year old man living in Cambridge in the latter half of the twentieth century swept left and right by secular humanism, being a little bit politically leftist and sympathetic and liberal and feeling strongly about certain issues. Within that context I take back my Jewish culture.

Q: I think there's a lot of space for it actually.

A: There is a lot of space for it. The only problem is we just realized we joined a rather conservative temple where the whole service is like a Polish steeplechase, you know. I'm still reading the commentary and they're finished. So I'm sort of shopping around for a little more contemporary enlightened shul. Our godson who lives in North Hampton was going to be bar mitzvahed and I was going to be called up to read for the first time and decided well I'd better do this really well not to embarrass him nor myself. So Lucy and I, my wife Lucy and I a year before started taking Hebrew lessons just so we could read this. I could read this short little thing and took Hebrew lessons for about two and a half years so I could read Torah and know what was being said. And that kind of got us started and every Friday night Lucy and I have Shabbat dinner and we do a blessing and when we're not too exhausted from the end of the week we'll read something and have found it very important to have something that separates the work week from rest, to have a moment of grace, to allow ourselves some grace even though the next day, Saturday, we're still doing things we have to do. There are times where I feel I'd like to go to shul even though I'll sit there. I won't know what's being talked about but I'll sit there; I'll read the commentary. There'll be a Kiddush and I enjoy that. It's hard to lead a Jewish life because all the issues for me. I find it very difficult.

Q: When did you get involved with this… you just got involved with the survivor's group after they had the Children's Conference?

A: Yeah, the Children's Conference was the week of May 5th 1991 and we knew about it almost a year before and I thought at the time I didn't want to go to this conference. I didn't want to deal with any of this stuff. And then I had started going to therapy shortly before the conference and talking to my therapist about it to help me to understand that it was probably a good thing to do. And I talked with my cousins who were determined to go and I said well I'll come down to New York and meet you. We can have lunch and see each other but I'm not going to the conference. So we talked and talked and eventually I understood that it was a good thing for me to do. I went to the conference and it was terrific. I also sort of count for my conscious depression to that time and know that my whole life I've been depressed. But it's all very much open and on the surface right now and I give it a name. It's peculiar because there are times when people will see me and they'll say, hi Jack how are you. And the question while only a second long feels like a thousand light years which gives me enough time to think do I tell them

how I'm really doing, do I be sociable, do I know this person well enough? Because I don't feel I'm doing well, you know but understand it's a social question but now there are people who know my situation. I was at a dinner a month ago with some old friends and half the people there were therapists. And at some point this old friend who hadn't seen me in a while actually a friend of my wife said, so Jack so how are you? Are you doing any good art work, any art, what's happening. I said, well actually I see my therapist twice a week I'm very depressed, the bottom of the art market has fallen and there's not much happening, and you? And there's dead silence and it's sort of like a Woody Allen scene.

Q: I guess they didn't invite you anymore, huh?

A: No, they invited my wife back to the chorus. It's in Brookline. There's a Brookline chorus.

Q: I was just kidding.

A: I know but you know it was important for me to say it, to give an answer not to sidestep it because for people like myself who were younger during the war the matter of having a voice is crucial. And the matter of being able to feel our experience was authentic is crucial.

Q: I think the truth of it there are so few children, Jewish children, who survived the war, so few -- and then were reunited with their family or something like that. There are others who were just broken at that point.

A: I think that the numbers something like 25,000 people went underground and something like 16,000 perished were betrayed being underground. The statistics are so telling. In Holland before the war you had including 25,000 Jewish German refugees you had 140,000 Jews in Holland. After the war you had something between 15 and 10 or 25,000, terrible attrition rate. It makes me feel very badly about Europe. In the 1960's I traveled a lot to Europe. I would work here for a while. I'd save my money. I'd go live in Europe; I'd bum around. Those were the years you could do that and see Europe and I was not that aware of my feelings of all of this stuff but as time goes by I find myself very angry about Europe.

Q: I was going to ask you about your Dutch identity. What did your parents do when you got here? Did you sort of sublimate? Did you speak Dutch at home or have Dutch customs?

A: We spoke both at home. I am very good with languages. I lost my accent very quickly. What's amusing is that in being with this group of hidden children who meets -- we meet once a month -- I am one of the few people who doesn't have an accent and what I enjoy is being with these people because this is a circle of people I would have been in had things been better, been different. So it gives me a sense of what it was like for my parents, for my family and I enjoy it. So we came here and I went to school and I had -- I want to say hello to Mrs. Harris who in the third grade was so wonderful to me. She helped me to learn English. We spoke Dutch and English at home but of course we started to speak more English. And I went back to Holland for the first time in 1965 as did my parents although we went on separate trips -- we met in Holland but we went on our separate trips. And I ended up living in Holland for a year in 1965 because I wanted to learn Dutch again. You know I studied French in school and I like languages and I wanted to do that. But as to the matter of Dutch identity it's very complex for me because being a European American I like that I have -- whatever it means to be a European Jew I like that because it gives me a certain perspective about what it means to live in America

in this time in history. On the other hand I find some of the presumptuousness and arrogance of the Europeans about America really shallow and I've always sort of understood America is the European peasant's dream come true. And the only difference between America and Europe is maybe a hundred years. But the more I'm in touch with what I feel about my experiences the less happy I am with Europe. I feel we have been wretchedly betrayed.

Q: Your parents never gave you that sense. Do you think they felt that too?

A: My parents never -- we never talked about in such a national context of saying Europe betrayed us. It was Germany, it was Hitler, it was Dutch collaborators. But you can take any country in Europe and it happened. What I also find interesting is that what the European Christian community is something that the Europeans have been doing to people of color all over the world for a few hundred years. What the Germans did in southwest Africa, what the Dutch did in Indonesia and what the Belgians did in the Congo, what the English did and what the French did they did it to everybody else who was different. And when it happened in their own homeland all of a sudden it became a terrible dark enigma about Hitler and Hitlerism and I really do attribute it -- the little that I know about history -- that it was a European phenomenon and the groundwork was laid by the church, by the Christian church. And I mean people have to own up to that, they have to own up to that.

Q: Can I ask you about your art? Do you feel that in any way your art manifests some of your …..?

A: Well actually it does in so far as that my art has nothing to do with my experience. My art is a complete denial of my experience and it is such an enigma to me. My artistic voice does not in any way include my experience and I see that as a function of denial. It perplexes me. And sometimes, you know some morning I'll wake up and say boy I wish I could really express all that stuff in my art. But then I think of oh well but then I would be so literal, literal or pedantic or rhetorical and I don't want to be that. It's not what I draw on for my art. My art what I draw on is from my beauty, my love of beauty, the love of what's beautiful in the world, the love of what's beautiful between people. I also think there are aesthetic problems with dealing with horrors of such magnitude and I'm not the person to do it so I leave it alone.

Q: Have you looked at any other so-called Holocaust artists?

A: Yes, well I have looked -- there's a book of art from Auschwitz, things that were painted on walls and I'm absolutely struck by how powerful it is. It's different than people today who will make art that's about that. It does not strike a chord in me. I also in some way -- Elie Wiesel talks somehow about that you can't make art out of it, how in some way it's so inexplicable that all art will fall short and I think even successful Holocaust Shoah art falls short. To maintain a certain kind of integrity it would have to, it would have to. And I always felt for myself that art is about redemption and I don't think……

Q: It's very idealistic.

A; No, it's not idealistic. It's as I think that the way in which the creative process functions in each of us. You draw on aspirations, you draw on hope, you draw on a sense of all things in their connectedness rather than being dispert. And you look for the sacred, what's sacred in life. This is I think what motivates art and other people of course have another sense of it. And for

now the Shoah is I don't think there's a place for redemption right now. I mean I understand that in our group that we meet once a month we have been talking about among other things about how civilization has a need to deny and has a need to forget. It's a shameful period and it needs to forget and it will do this in many ways. One way will be the most banal expression of people who absolutely deny it happened. Then there is the matter of having perpetrators and victims be seen as equivocal in some way sort of like the Blitburg visit. We're all victims of war. Well that's so but that's beside this point and that over time who knows how the story of this thing will be told. We can witness the experience of the African Americans in this country, the horror of that and how that's already been glossed over. And I think that civilizations have a need to forget their shame and this is why I insist upon telling my story and say yes to being interviewed to anyone who's willing to listen.

Q: Can I ask you some more questions maybe about your parents, about their personalities? If we're going to include them in our project I would need to….. I think I'll switch the tape though. We're on the second tape of the interview with Jack Trompettor. We're talking about his parents now. Which parent would you like to start with?

A: Well I can tell you some things about them relative to the war experiences that are interesting in terms of personality. One is that my mother talks of having found my father so very appealing when they were younger because he was a quiet fellow and she liked that about him. It turns out that during the war he went through this personality change and he became a gregarious chatty chap. He's a man who loved to talk to strangers as I am and he was very sociable, he was fun, he was easy to get along with. So he went through a real personality change. My mother is more of a worrier. She does the worrying for us and it's sort of an unfair responsibility I think. It's enough to be a mother but then to have to do the worrying. And she -- well it's hard to really talk about her without defaming her.

Q: Other people have had this experience too.

A: Yes. Well you know we accept our mothers and fathers as gods and forget that they are beautifully human. What can I say about my parents? I don't really know except that I know in America my father worked very hard. I'd see him come home and after dinner he'd sit on a stool in front of the TV and within five minutes he was asleep, he was out. On Sundays he would go with the other men in the family and sometimes some of the boys. then we would go watch the soccer games. All the ethnic clubs in New York City played soccer with each other and we'd do that. And they belonged to the Holland-American sporting club which would have a New Year's party. Which would have functions, events. So they kept within their Dutch circle. Any friends that they made outside of the family were still Dutchmen. In some ways I regret that they did not branch out more.

Q: It sounds to me that like for example your father must have been extremely strong-willed to have made the decision not to register and things like that.

A: Yes, you know I experienced my father as a very ordinary person and I don't mean that "ordinaire". I mean just -- he was just a person. But he is very creative in life. In the short haul he's very creative. When a crisis would come up he would be real quick and he would be really on the case and I know when he and my mother went underground my mother did most of the hemming and hawing of course. I say of course, I don't know. And he had to really convince her as well as her brother's letter that said don't bring the red baby carriage -- had to convince

her they had to do it. So she would do a lot of hemming and hawing but she's a very expressive person. My mother is the one who I've done much of my talking with. We are both connected very emotionally in that way. It's been troublesome as well because of that. My father I've experienced a little more distantly. Guess it's very typical in that way. I always experienced them both as being very supportive but there are things I never really got into with my father that I would get into with my mother. My mother would have wonderful provocative arguments and she was the more expressively emotional one.

Q: I know its hard having observed your parents, interacting with other people. Do you know how they were generally thought of?

A: My parents in the family have had a good reputation, very good reputation. When I talk with my cousins and they talked about my parents they always talked about how friendly and sweet and thoughtful they were. And this is how I've experienced them, as a thoughtful people who were very practical at life and also had placed a premium on being a decent person. There was a clear message about you had to be an ethical person.

Q: And they behaved that way as well, it seems?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: Is there anything else maybe that you know about their childhoods or their youth or their …? You say they were involved in these social democratic -- was that a teenageerhood already or?

A: Yeah, sixteen, seventeen on. You know you're in a particular class and your social life at that time was very much involved in political groups, the young people's socialist league or something like that. And what it meant was it provided a social life with a kind of minimal political context for young people and sometimes it would serve the purpose of grooming more seriously politically committed people. But it was also neighborhood stuff, it was neighborhood stuff. My parents lived with a lot of relatives as did many people then and they enjoyed that . They did a lot of their playing and socializing with those cousins.

Q: Did they have any hobbies or music interests or anything like that?

A: Let's see now, no, I know that during the war my father got involved in marquetry, wood marquetry. During the thirties in Europe it was very popular. You'd get marquetry sets. Like let's say here its Scrabble or hula-hoop which dates me. But there it was marquetry and during the war Jan Van Nomberg and my father managed to get hold of these marquetry sets and make these little pictures. They were copies of famous old masters and my mother has my dad's. It's in my dowry. I get it when it's my turn and it's a replication of a famous Vermeer painting of the house where Vermeer lived and it's remarkable because the brick is all these small pieces of wood and the mortar in between are all these tiny, tiny little splints of pieces of wood. They did this during the war when they were underground to keep themselves from going cuckoo. I don't know of any other habit, hobbies my father had. My mother liked to sing when she was younger. I know I grew up loving opera and I attribute that to her. These people worked a lot. The message here was work, work so…. And I am an artist and that's my work and other people would consider that a hobby so what other people would consider a hobby I took on as a major -- as an occupation.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add about your own experience or that of your family, your relatives.

A: Well at the expense of sounding whiny, I would say that my family like many, many people got screwed by Europe and we came here in 1949 and my parents had to start from scratch again and never could quite build it up to where they had in Holland. They worked very hard in Holland and they did well for themselves. And I do marvel actually at my parents the ability to go into hiding, provide for themselves and survive. When I was in my teens and going through my rebellion I pooh-poohed my parents. What did they know? I knew much more than they did. And now, of course, I think what a little snot-nose I was to think that. They had to live through and make life decisions through something I have not had to and hope to God I and no one else will ever have to make. And they were ordinary people, simple people and they rose to the occasion and the people that hid them were ordinary human beings and they rose to the occasion. Those were the heroes. My parents were the heroes. The people that hid them were the heroes. And the stories they tell of what they did during the war to survive is remarkable. My mother taught Cory how to sew. What they did -- they would get clothing and they would take it apart and remake things out of it and they would sell or exchange that for foodstuffs. And when my parents were hidden underground no one on the street in the town, of course, knew they were being hidden. The parents of Cory knew but not her younger brother. It was too dangerous to let people know. And Jan would get food. He had those wide pants at the time, very wide flair pants, very popular then, like bell-bottoms in some way and they sewed these cloth bags to the inside of their pants that they would fill with foodstuffs and he would bicycle home with them. They also had to be careful because they couldn't trade for food that would be evident that there was more than two people in the household eating so it had to be all done in different places and as my mother tells it they were never hungry during the war. They always had enough foodstuffs. And she would take great pleasure going down to the cellar and looking at the shelves and seeing what food they were able to store.

Q: Interesting.

A: It is interesting. I know I lived on a farm from 1977 to 1980. Actually I did farming in New England from 1973 to 1980 when I lived with someone and we raised, we had a milk cow, we raised hogs, we raised chickens, we raised sheep, we raised a lot of our own foodstuffs. And I would go down to the cellar and I would put up forty quarts of applesauce, sixty quarts of tomatoes, freezer filled with meat, freezer filled with vegetables, cords of wood stacked up -- very New England. And I would go look at all this and stand there like a proud man with my hand in my suspenders looking at it and not at the time understanding what was going on was some kind of replication of some need that my parents went through. My parents went back to Holland in 1972 because they wanted to retire and they could do it there rather than here and it was also the year that I went to live in Vermont during the summer and ended up staying there and ended up actually having left New York City and shortly after ended up in a farm situation and I do wonder now how I had replicated my war experiences. In a way it makes me feel very bad that my agenda was so unconscious that my going into this farm and farming was a matter of going into hiding. I had a big beard, I had long hair, I looked very different than I do now. I was in hiding and it makes m feel very badly that I still had to act this out and it happened at the same time as my parents decided to go back to Europe and again it was a kind of a split with my family, a separation. I understand it now.

Q: What motivated them to actually -- you said because they could retire there now. Have you

decided to continue this interview after all?

A: Yes. I want to read this little piece, that is what my wife and I translated from my mother's journal that she spent seven years writing about her and the family's wartime experience. And what's interesting is she has said that in writing this it made her feel much better. She's really the only one in her family that even talks about this stuff. For years my brother and I even after we moved out of our parents' home when we'd come home to visit would ask them about the war. And inevitably every time we got together the conversation would come back to that and there were questions. My brother and I always had to ask questions. At one point we finally decided let's get Mom a tape recorder and see if she'd really do this. And she did. And she spent seven years writing this stuff down. And it was done without a typewriter, without a personal computer, just by hand. And she got so involved with it that when Cory wanted to go out with her shopping or something Celene wouldn't go. She really wanted to do this and complete it and as I said she felt in a way that a burden was taken off her chest. There's one little piece I want to read that could give you an idea of what it was like at the time that my parents made the decision to go underground and to provide and look for a place for me. On the fifteenth of November Eddie (which was my mother's other brother) visited us with great sadness because of what had happened to Father, Mother and our brother Jack. During this visit he told us he had an underground address for Dad and myself and a separate one for you, Jack. It's written for you because this whole manuscript was written for my brother and myself. So that's the form it takes. Very distressed with the idea of parting from our baby, Eddie tried to convince us that your chances, Jack were better without us. If we were captured he explained at least you might survive. He also knew it would be easier to find a separate place for a couple without children. They would not bring to the underground family the additional burden and security risk of children crying or needing medical attention and such. All night Eddie talked with us. What an extraordinary demand -- give up our three month old child to perfect strangers and without opportunities to visit. We had no idea how long such an arrangement would have to last, a month, half a year, longer, who knew. The next day we talked with my brother Maritz. In the serious way that's so typical of him he asked Dad and me to consider the following : imagine the German police catching you, he said, this could happen at any moment. The baby will fall into their hands. Wouldn't you rather have a child with Ollie and me (Ollie was his wife) until Eddie takes them to a hiding place? Dad and I found a lot of truth in what he said. Here was a chance so many people wanted but had no opportunity of getting. How could we pass it up. We felt that no matter what we did we would be doomed if we didn't do anything. Already the families of several of our brothers and sisters had been torn apart by arrests and deportations. A few months ago, Case, the husband of Dad's sister, Bepe, had been taken to Camp Westerbork leaving Bepe at home alone with their two year- old daughter. Westerbork was located in Northern Holland and the Jews were sent from there to the different concentration camps, Auschwitz, Sobibor. Maritz Trompettor, who was my father's brother, had been in the same camp for half a year by then. His wife, Femma and their daughters were still at home. The children's home in which Femma worked was soon seized by the SS and the Green Police. They captured the Jewish infants and sent them with their mothers to be gassed or destroyed in one way or another. But Femma protected herself and her daughters and then found underground addresses for each of them. This is my Aunt Femma who died a year ago. She was very active in finding hiding places for children. She was a very brave and very strong and feisty woman. The thing is many people were brave and feisty and strong and everything but in some way it was luck. It was luck that you survived but it didn't necessarily mean that you were lucky or that being lucky meant you were better than anyone else. My brother Maritz and his family were still intact and living at the Transvaalstraat. My mother's brother Maritz

was born in England because his parents took a trip to England and he was born there so he had dual citizenship. He had British and Dutch citizenship. He eventually ended up in Bergen-Belsen but Belsen was not an extermination camp and because he was a British citizen they didn't kill him. It also allowed for his wife Ollie to bring food packages to him which helped him to survive. Eddie, another brother, because he was involved with the resistance moved around from one temporary hiding place to another. He never went permanently underground. Indeed with his pure blue eyes and curly blond hair he thought he would be taken for a German rather than a Dutch Jew. Brazen as he was he had been riding trains filled with Germans and these experiences gave him this idea. Of course he did not know that in time he would be the victim of betrayal. He was betrayed. My close friend Marie which is my brother's/cousin's mother which is Andy's mother, another of Dad's sisters was still at home with her husband, Cheel and their six month old infant Andy. Like us they lived with all the worries and fears of keeping Andy out of the hands of the pack of thieves. By now Dad's other sister, Judith, her husband and their four year old daughter Laney had been underground for three months. With great difficulty and sadness we struggled over our decision to go into hiding. There was not even a guarantee that all would go well underground. Inasmuch as no guarantee was to be found with any choice we made we finally decided to go ahead with Eddie's plan. He promised that within a week we would be told all the details. This was the best of the worst of situations. Maritz's wife Ollie also had to agree with the arrangement because she would be also responsible for caring for our son, me. No one knew for how long. It could take two days, it could take a month. But Ollie agreed without talking to us. It was good enough for her that my brothers wanted it. We have always been grateful to her. Ollie died two and a half months ago and I wrote her daughter and her step-daughters a letter saying something like this about what a decent person she was and how we owe our thanks to her and I wrote this letter as -- it was ostensibly a condolence letter but I wanted to say something to her daughters about what a fine person she was. We cared a great deal for our family. Sisters, brothers and children were heavy on our hearts and particularly the old people. What did one do with the old people. Grandma and Grandfather Trompettor were still living at home. They were fortunate for the moment because Shuls, one of their sons, one of my father's brothers, and his family lived nearby allowing them to help his parents through thick and thin. But with his loving attention to them and his recent service period away from home (he had to serve in the army) he hadn't been able to find an underground address. The old people understood that for them life was finished. One sees this now on the photographs taken of them for their identity papers. Even if they went underground, which seldom happened, their chance for survival was very slim. As long as the war continued it became clear to them that they would eventually be left by themselves, most likely never again to be with the people they so dearly loved. Often enough there was talk of the underground and so with great grief they began to live with it (meaning the children going underground). Thus was something we simply could not continue to think about. If one became too sensitive and afraid then one might let an opportunity go by. We grew resolute. We did not tell anyone about our plan other than Father and Mother Trompettor. You, Jack and I had recently visited them and I did not expect them to say goodbye to us again. From their gestures at our departure I saw that for them it was a real goodbye, not just a good-day until the next time. Clearly they suspected something. Every evening for years Dad visited them for a few minutes. Now he went to tell them of our decision. How does one present such a sad prospect. Like their other children we too kept the details for ourselves for the sake of security. You took nobody into your confidence. This was what the bad society had made of us. Later as it turned out all those who were still at home except for Uncles Jules eventually went underground but it consoled us little to learn that we were not the only ones who had to leave parents. This is a very telling piece which always perplexes me. For me the leaving was not so

difficult because my parents were not here anymore. This is my mother talking because her parents were already taken away. What I have left if they were still at home. Dad asked himself this question. No good answer was found. Today, forty years later, I do not think I would have made this choice again. The twentieth of November 1942 arrives. It is early in the morning and I am home alone when Eddie comes to our apartment. We must be ready before eight o'clock that night, he says, to begin with the first part of our journey into hiding. As we had originally agreed he himself--------- (let's see if I can find the other piece of that). Eddie himself would bring us. Everything was planned that way. Jackie, that's me, would be picked up by my brother Maritz at seven o'clock in the evening and from thereon a place would be found in the children's house in Neimachen. This was just as Eddie said it would happen from the agreed upon plans made earlier on. We were expected to pay 300 guilder a month to the children's house. We did just this even though in this time this amount of money was a large amount for working class people. It was organized so that we would have a particular amount with us and Eddie would hold on to the rest. In case something went wrong with us there would still be enough money for a definite time to pay the kinder house. In the beginning we could know if we had enough money or not for the duration of the war. We naively thought it would be possible. As I have said as soon as I knew the plan that morning Chait ver Kike the neighbor and I delivered our household goods to her apartment with the help of her husband. This is a neighbor who was very friendly with my parents who agreed to buy their furniture so my parents could raise money and they knew what was going on. When you went underground and you left you couldn't leave abruptly because then immediately someone would be on your tail so my parents planned this over time so they could slowly leave.. They would leave someone paying some of their bills and it would be months before it was realized that they were gone. And my mother has often talked about how she felt she had to be like a criminal. She had to think like a criminal because the law was in the hands of the criminals. She as an ordinary person had to think like that to survive. Dad was quickly warned at work I do not know by whom. At four o'clock he came home which was very unusual for Thursday when he usually came home about eight o'clock or later. He just told his boss he had to go away for a little while. Because it was so busy on Thursdays this boss told him to be quick and come back as soon as possible but Dad knew better. He then went for the last time to his mother and father who were in a dejected mood and not without reason. They had just before found out that their daughter Judith, her husband and child, Yope and Laney were betrayed and handed over to the Germans. We will never know if the Trompettor grandparents knew that Laney was in fact still with her benefactor having gotten away from her executioners. This is my cousin Laney who lives in Holland. I'm almost absolutely certain they did not know otherwise we would have heard it from Uncle Jules. For Dad at the moment while this was indeed a grim message he tried not to be disheartened. On the contrary this news of his sister strengthened him in his resolve to go into hiding. In answer to your question about their character. You never really know the full depth I suppose of your character until something extraordinarily intervenes and then if you're lucky you rise to the occasion. Dad also told his parents what we were going to do that night but what could these poor people do but accept our leaving them. This was the last time that Dad was ever again to be with his parents. Here was the new episode between parents and children finished under the saddest of circumstances. Still to come were many more moments of separation. Dad came home and told me that what he had just learned from his parents about his sister and her family. I felt very sad but now realized that we had come this far and we definitely had to continue with our plans, the sooner the better. And this of course then is my mother's moment when she too becomes resolute. We ate something and got dressed as if we were going out. We put on our best clothing because you never knew. Seven o'clock in the evening November 20, 1942 my brother Maritz came to take Jackie away. What

a moment. Would we ever see you again? We embraced you; it had to be. It was for us to say the least the only chance. We had to try but how do you do something like that. Who gives you the strength to hand over your three month old child a bundle that you love so much and have learned every gesture in those three months. When we gave you to Uncle Maritz Zomerplaag we knew there would be a place prepared for you in the Catholic children's home. Later as it turned out we found out it was a non-denominational. It was a Quaker house where the director took in various children but mostly those in Catholic families. My brother Eddie found that he made more of an impression on us when he said it was a children's home. I surmised this at the time. It did indeed make a better impression on us. Eddie said that it would still take a few days before there would be a permanent place for you there. Later we learned that those few days turned into a month but it was a good thing that we didn't know that at the time. In those four weeks of waiting you were almost a fatality. I will return to this later. (This is where I talked about that). It's remarkable to me. It helps to explain what I feel about my anxiety and insecurity in the world that as a baby I took in all this near destruction of stuff and from what we know now about children take in the world. It was our wish to survive this drama with Jack back with us. Therefore it was necessary to arrive at our destination safely. This wish was for us so strong and so consumed us that it became for us the strength needed to give you over to fulfill this unbelievable and horribly sad task. Without exaggeration from that moment on we thought about you every day. I would like to read a little bit more. I don't know if there's a……

Q: We have more tape.

A: Okay. I read this to give you a sense possibly of what it was like for my parents and for me and what people lived with. Now we were again alone without you.. What torment. Do not think that it is easy to write about this now. To imagine that so many parents had to go through the same and even worse including Marie Cheel. When they had to take you, Andy, with the best of intentions of getting you back. Where your parents brought you we did not know. This was logical since we were already underground. Later I will write about some of the details, our dear departed son. My mother finished this -- was writing the story at the time my brother died so it changes-- what do we call that the transitive…..?

Q: The tense.

A: The tense, the transitive chicken, I don't know.

Q: With regard to him?

A: Yes, yes. As soon as Maritz took Jackie out of the house we too went on our way to the Umstel train station just as we had planned. This took ten minutes. We closed the door on the largest part of our household's possessions and most of our clothing. Obviously they must not have had their yellow star on because they could not have been out. In the meantime Dad had left a half-year's rent money behind with our landlord. The landlord knew we were going away but not when. If this helped us we don't know. It did give us the idea that we would say the lease not be looked at for six months although certainly not out of dispute with the landlord although betrayal or discovery was always naturally a possibility. In any case later on we heard of the first raid of our apartment and that it was sealed up by the Germans. Thus we were not searched for in the first raid. From this we conclude that paying the landlord that way we did serve our purposes well. I would like to read about when my father found me. I feel I need to have my voice back again. That's the problem with this. My brother and I were instrumental in getting

my mother to do this and it means a lot to me and I'm very pleased she did it but in reading it, it also pushes my button about what about me -- now. Dad felt it was now time for him to begin his own search for you. We are reading now about the part where my parents have been liberated and my parents decide to look for the children, to look for whatever children are still alive. We had no idea how to do it. We had no guidance but our patience was up and we could not wait for information that would inform us about what happened with you and Andy. Because of the behavior of your step parents we later understood that they would not take any action making known that during the war-time they had hidden a child. Many people like them were attached to the children in their care, very understandable. The family De Chot presumed that Dad and I were no longer alive. We now know that in our situation regarding you that you would have then been returned to us. What happened during the war too is people did get attached to their children and there were many legal cases in Holland after the war where the families who survived had to go to court to get the children back. The nature of some of these cases is very telling about Dutch ethics because after the war the way people survived was through the black market. There was no doubt about it, that's how you survived. My mother feels embarrassed about it. She thinks it's shameful. She prefers I not saying anything about it but the fact is that's how people survived. Gentile families who did not want to return their Jewish children would often use that as an argument why the parents were not responsible parents and could not have the children back and in many cases did not get the children back because of that. Many of the people who hid the children also had a religious agenda. They felt they needed to convert these children and it wasn't always a self-serving sentiment. It was also the sentiment of how to save the children. To convert them would be to save them, so it was mixed. The reason there was a high percentage of Dutch Jewish children who were able to go underground was because to save the people of the Book would be considered a mitzvah. The Jews were known as the people of the Book and for many of the Protestants in Holland they took their bible literally, it's interesting. With Andy it would have turned out differently because his parents were no longer alive. More about that later. Dad didn't want to wait any more while the information just dribbled in and as I said went out on his own. After enquiring he found out where to go to the military authorities and get a special pass that allowed him to hitch rides on military transport. There was no other transport at the time. You didn't have buses, you didn't have subways, you didn't have zip. This meant only army vehicles. The fact is there simply wasn't any other transport yet. Still this meant quite a bit. Again Dad left the house with nothing but a little money for necessities which themselves weren't easy to buy. The military authorities gave Dad very good advice. The told him he must begin his search north of the rivers because Holland is in the middle divided by a bunch of rivers. Because there was known that in the province Overeisel there were children who had been bought for hiding so the story goes light haired children above the rivers which wasn't true of you at all. What Celene is talking about is that the people who hid children during the war had a policy that dark haired Jewish children would go to the south of Holland where most of the people were Catholic and were darker and the lighter skinned, lighter haired Jewish people would go to the north because there were Protestants who were lighter. So Dad began with the purpose in front of his eyes, good or bad from one empty army truck or another finally ending up in the city of Naivadol in Overeisel. We had never heard of this place before. Once in Naivadol Dad immediately went to City Hall. There he spoke to several bureaucrats. One of them, Mr. Bucker, sent Dad on the way to Mrs. De Fries Andy's foster mother on the large street in Naivadol. The man knew that there was a young boy that had been hidden. When he arrived at Mrs. De Fries's home Dad was allowed in and saw to his stunned surprise a little boy of whom he though thought this could well be Andy, his nephew. He had the family face and the age was also right. Dad spoke with Mrs. De Fries. He explained his relationship telling her his name

which at the moment was unknown to her. After a while and for different reasons she understood that Dad was the brother of the mother of this child who she had taken over under her protection and who she was very fond of. Dad was very lucky to have found Andy. For Mrs. De Fries this was not a happy day. Dad could see that it would not be easy to get Andy from her but that's a tale apart. It got to be late in the day and thus Dad was invited to supper and slept there. The few hours that were left Dad played with Andy. Andy sat on Dad's lap and began to play with his ear lobe. This was a habit that Dad's younger brother Yope one out of eight brothers and sisters always did as a little kid. Mr. Bucker from City Hall also knew to tell Dad that a few kilometers between Naivadol and the town of Chaino stood an old small farm where there was also a young boy brought underground. He suggested that Dad should check this farm out because that in any event he left Mrs. De Fries and planned to return for Andy. She actually didn't give Dad any indication that she understood that she had to be separated from Andy at some point in the future. Dad departed from Andy with mixed feelings from this complicated situation. It was early in the morning when Dad continued his search for you. He had to travel the long kilometers on foot. He often said to me how he walked and walked and in the evening dead tired arrived somewhere on the side of a road in the village of Chaino. He rang the bell of the farm. It was already dark and about ten o'clock. He waited for someone to answer the door which didn't happen right away. They were people who were used to going to bed early and they were by then fast asleep. Dad kept ringing the bell and finally a man stuck his head out of the attic window and asked what was going on. In the hope that the sound of a child crying was your crying Dad screwed up his courage to begin a conversation with this man. He told the man who he was and why he had come. They didn't plan to open the door right away answering Dad. The child's parents died and that's why we took him through the intervention of our pastor. At this point Dad asked to be let in, in any case. He wanted them to know who he was by comparing something he had with him. Oh I guess from reading this I see that they brought me to him that evening. I thought that he slept over. Dad was allowed in and right away showed the man a lamb's wool baby shirt because a similar one had been left with the baby boy when he was sent underground. This was from the lamb's wool bathing suit that they had made. The organization that provided contact with underground hiding places had told the family to save it in case the child had to be brought to another place. Luckily in your situation this advice was heeded. After comparing the two pieces this was evidence enough that the truth was being spoken here. Only then did they bring you forth, a crying young boy of about two years old. Dad saw in the blink of an eye that it was his son. What a moment it must have been. It was and is to value how these people didn't clam up but in one night were made 100% certain before believing something of the parental bond that was being talked about here. This is understandable. Here I could write some things but that I won't and don't want to. I'll leave that to imagination. The truth is I don't know what she's talking about here and I'd really be curious. What Dad told me about this after he took you in his arms that is not to be described except by Dad himself. And so that was the first contact for Dad with the family who played a large role in your and our lives. After an emotional discussion Dad was allowed to sleep there overnight. You and the family slept upstairs while Dad was given a hay mattress and a small room downstairs. From everything that Dad could see these people were very simple farmers, in fact poor people who notwithstanding the poverty knew how to hold themselves together. The family consisted of a sixty five year old man who looked like he was eighty. His wife who was also in her sixties wore a wig which was very unusual in those years. They had an unmarried son who was about twenty eight years old who could be mistaken for forty and an unmarried young daughter. When I saw them later I could see that they were a very stiff but decent people. When she says stiff she means that they were Dutch Reformed, very conservative. The people were as good for you as they could be because with them there

was also great hunger which was readily apparent. They had one horse and a few chickens left over. The woman told Dad that her man still had to work on the land for other farmers. For this he would every day get a plate of oatmeal and once in a while an egg. You Jack, would sit by him and he would share his oatmeal and egg with you. Mrs. De Chot told how she took apart one of her bedspreads and used the thread to make a coverall for you because all of your clothes were too small. She also said she cut the tips of your shoes off so that they would still fit. (Laughter) Remarkable. You know I haven't read this in a few years. This can be seen from a photo that she made of you, her son and herself. When I look at the photo and when I had first seen it I had the impression that she had made this coverall for the occasion of the photograph for which she derived great pleasure. I've never seen this photo. Not knowing that she would have to give you up. Later at our first meeting she said that she never would have given you up had it not been your real parents who claimed you. She had planned to have you baptized but our appearance had prevented this. Too bad I would have been covered there too. There was no doubt at all that these people were very fond of you and the son played the role of father even more so than the older man. This became quite clear later on. The family came out of a Reform Protestant background. They were very formal and lived just like Mrs. De Fries with her bible on the table. Almost everybody in Overeisel lived like this. I just want to interrupt this reading by saying something that I have found out in the last half a year that there was in fact a group in Holland, there was a group of young people, 17, 18, 19, 20 who were instrumental in providing hiding places for Jewish children like myself and this group was called the NV which literally translated means the unknown holding company, the anonymous holding company which is a wonderful surrealistic title I think. And my cousin Yanika from California has been receiving this information and recently sent me an article about an older man who is very pivotal in this group who was captured and killed and in the article there is a list of children's names of their name, the date they were born and where they were hidden and my name is in there and I saw it and it was a remarkable experience to get this. I called my cousin Yanika and I said to her I got this, this is wonderful. And she says to me what did you feel like when you saw your name? And I said well the truth is I felt wonderful. It confirms all these things and I said and how did you feel and she said well I wept and I wept and I wept. She is 57 so she's older than me and she remembers our grandparents. She remembers going out every day when she was hidden underground waiting for her parents to come back so she has that experience. But for me it was a remarkable experience to see my name Isaac Trompettor and then Overeisel which is the province where I was and then a question mark next to Overeisel that may mean we don't know where in Overeisel. It was a stunning experience for me to see that and it was all the result of me spending the last years of searching this out. I know my parents were very resistant to that for a long time and I feel very vindicated that I pursued this and stayed with it, that I got this. It's very important to me. I would emphatically encourage other people who have similar or like stories to do that. When you do find out real documented pieces of what you've always heard in your family it's emotionally very fulfilling and powerful.

Q: I imagine. Do you want to choose maybe one or two more things to read.

A? Sure. I'll just read this last page. In the few days that it was necessary for Dad to stay there, there was so much conversation from which Dad had heard that in the beginning there was also another young boy about twelve years old who they also hid. Mrs. De Chot had noticed that when she was away and came home to you, you were crying and the young boy had frightened you and the crying got worse instead of better. It turned out that he would light the stove and put me head first into the stove, this boy. I'd rather not believe it but it was enough for them to

bring this boy somewhere else because they wanted to keep you. So I can imagine seeing this other young Jewish kid who was out of his mind and took it out on me. He had to go somewhere else and who knows what happened to this boy. I think this accounts for some of my having a nervous breakdown after the war, being fricasseed. Now it was time for Dad to figure out how to come home. He knew that I didn't know what was going on nor did he have an opportunity to inform me. You know there were no phones then that were working. The next morning Dad went to the church, spoke with the pastor. What Dad told him was sufficient enough for Dad to take you without any official authorization. The church had a lot of influence with people. You could go to the church and make it clear to them you were the parent and the church would go to the people and talk to them and convince them. From there we went to the local military authority who provided him with a transportation pass so that when transport went south both of you could go on it. It took four That's_my_Mom.jpgThat's_my_Mom.jpgdays before an empty truck came your way. Those four days were actually very necessary because you two got to know each other. The morning when the truck arrived Dad and you left for Tilburg promising the De Chots to keep in touch and he would let them know how you were doing. Naturally we kept our word. We did. We were in touch and visited those people up until we went to America. It was also the time at least according to my parents that they got to be very pushy and obnoxious about wanting to convert me. I suspect that this was not entirely so and maybe what my parents had to flush out in order to make the necessary separation from these people. I mean it's complex and subtle stuff with this last little chapter. What Dad clearly remembers about this trip was that as long as the ride took, you sat in your wet pants on his lap and he got wet, too. You also cried often during the trip. How could it be otherwise sitting in the back for hours with the feeling of wet pants, no food or drink, as well as the crowding of many other people around you. While you possibly had been so used to the quiet all of a sudden such a huge change. I have often thought about this especially if I had been the one to carry you instead of Dad. I have also often thought about how I would have felt if I had been the one to see you first at the De Chots. To understand that I could see you in front of me to spoil you and take you with me. What would that have felt like? This will always be a question. The other question that should always be a question and unfortunately didn't get addressed in our family was what was it like for me to be adopted by my parents. Powerful stuff.

Q: Indeed, well I thank you again.