The following is an interview with Mr. Simon Maroko conducted at the Jewish Community Center on the afternoon of February 19, 1986. The interviewer is Sidney Bolkosky.

Okay, could you tell me your name please and where you're from?

I'm Simon W. Maroko. M-a-r-o-k-o. You prefer it with the spelling, I presume. Uh, I'm an M.D. Um, you want my address?

No, that's—you live in…

I live in the city of Sylvan Lake, S-y-l-v-a-n, which is next, between Pontiac and Keygo Harbor.

Where were you born?

I was born in Tarnow, Poland in 1923 on June 27.

Uh, did you grow up in Tarnow?

I stayed in Tarnow for about ten month, and then uh, as part of my father's career as a cantor and later on chief cantor uh, we moved to uh, Pressburg, Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, kitty-corner from Vienna. I have some early childhood memories from then in the, Judengasse, the Jewish street there. And uh, I stayed there until my third birthday. I believe on my third birthday or thereabouts we arrived in Holland, in Amsterdam. And uh, I've stayed in Amsterdam or in Holland from then, which was 1926 until 1946. And I left uh, with Aliya Bet to Palestine.

So you would consider yourself Dutch.

My education and upbringing and my accent is Dutch.

How many members were in your family?

Um, I had two, one older sister, one older brother and in Amsterdam um, in ’26 a younger sister was born. We were a total of four children.

And your parents—was there an extended family also in, in Holland?

We were in Holland the only branch of our family. All of our relatives uh, remained in Poland.

Um, how many members of your family remained in Poland?

Um, My mother was one of nine. My father had uh, one sister who also uh, was living with us, which I—by the way, just now remembered. My father’s sister stayed with us until about 1929 or ’30 when she got married. And then another sister of my father came to live with us uh, and she stayed there until maybe five or six or seven years. Then she…

In Amsterdam.

In Amsterdam. She went back to Poland to marry someone there.

So the extended family, with aunts and uncles and cousins, how large would you estimate it was?

Uh, I know about my mother who had uh, eight siblings, and my father had in Poland left uh, a few, maybe two or, or so. But uh, I believe all of them were married and all had children.

Do you know how many of that family survived?

Um, of all those people this first aunt that I mentioned survived uh, my father’s sister. And also a brother of my mother is alive and lives in Oak Park.

And the rest.

The rest all uh, were uh, murdered in World War II.

What do you remember about life in uh, in Amsterdam as a child?

Um, I have my memories of home life uh, we were Orthodox. My father was a big chief cantor. He had a life contract. Uh, he uh, was deeply religious. He believed in his religion. And he lived it as much as anyone can expect of him. And um, so I went through uh, all the uh, customs of a uh, religious family starting with a Modeh Ani prayer in the morning, washing the tips of your fingers and all the way throughout the prayers. Going everyday to uh, a synagogue in the morning before going to school, for example, and then in the evening after school going to the Mincha in the Ma'Ariv uh, service.

What was the name of the Shul?

Uh, in Dutch it was called the ???, means the Great Synagogue. This was the synagogue that probably was older than the Portuguese Synagogue. And it was the first synagogue of the Ashkenazi uh, congregation. In Amsterdam there was only one congregation, in contrast to United States. Uh, I don't know how many members they had. My guess would be perhaps twenty or forty thousand out of a total of about eighty thousand Jews in Amsterdam. So it uh, and uh, there were many different synagogues next to the Great Synagogue, which is across from the Portuguese Synagogue. Uh, next to it was the mikvah, and if you went a little bit further you got the New Synagogue, which was built later and therefore had the name of New Synagogue. And uh, there were, later on over the uh, centuries when the Jews moved in different parts of the city there are synagogues in east and in south and uh, there are many small synagogues. It was—I would say there

were perhaps a dozen or so synagogues—all belonging to the same uh, congregation. Each one with their own rabbi, with their own cantor, sometimes it was a second cantor. Even for the uh, weekly prayers.

You mean they were all Orthodox then.

They were all Orthodox, yes.

Did you have any um, interaction with the Sephardim?

Uh, I had interaction with the Sephardim in uh, school. I have a memory of maybe the fifth or sixth grade where I went to a school which was uh, Orthodox. It was not a uh, a public school. And uh, the name of the school was uh, Palache, P-a-l-a-c-h-e. Which uh, was supposed to be pronounced Palatia, but it was the name, it was named after a Sephardi rabbi, so it was, here was a school where a huge majority of the children were Ashkenazi it was named after a Sephardi rabbi. In our class we had uh, quite a minority of uh, children who had Portuguese names, such as Rodriguez Perrera, Texera D'Amatos, Vaz Diaz, and so on. There was one girl in our class, she was the best of all the students. All the boys were in love, including myself, but we knew which was very important that uh, any intermarriage in the future was completely out of the question. There was no intermarriage between the Sephardi, who considered themselves superior and uh, uh, Ashkenazi who were considered inferior by them. As the result of that uh, there was a lot of intermarriage among the uh, Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. The result of that was that there were sometimes, as can be expected in any inbreeding uh, either people who were geniuses or mentally retarded or, or otherwise. They had the nickname of the meshuge Portuguese. Therefore, because

among them there were a certain number which were either mentally ill or retarded, whatever.

Um, the uh, parochial school you went to, you spoke what language?

Dutch was the official language.

And at home you spoke Dutch?

At home we spoke… My early childhood I couldn't say for sure. But later on we talked Dutch. Our parents wanted us to talk Dutch because they wanted to become Dutch citizens, which they never uh, reached because World War II intervened. Uh, they spoke some Yiddish. There were the years before Hitler, I assume, that on Shabbos my father insisted that we talk German, because that was then the high class international language in Europe. "Deutsch sprechen." I remember this, that he would say, if we were uh, if we deviated and started to talk in Dutch, he said, "Deutsch sprechen," on, on Shabbos. It, it was like perhaps the uh, status of the French language still now in international diplomacy and so on. But after uh, the start of Hitler and uh, the Nazi party in Germany, I think uh, he changed his mind about that. Uh, my father's—when they wanted to—my, my parents, when they wanted to communicate about something and us not understand they spoke Polish, which we did not understand, we children.

And they were, they were originally born in Poland.

They were born in Poland, yes.

So they—were they Polish citizens?

My father and, my parents came as Polish citizens.

And you were also a Polish citizen.

I was a Polish citizen by birth and I stayed a Polish citizen until… My father, probably in the process of wanting to become a Dutch citizen, he surrendered his P…Polish uh, passport and so on. So after the war I found myself as uh, stateless, without nationality for some time.

What are your fondest memories of your household?

[crys] The who.. the family being together around the table on Shabbos or on Seder. Um, there was a warmth there, a, a feeling of security, of peace. We knew what we wou...cou...could expect, it was all traditional. And each one knew what their role was. My father was the head of the household, it was old fashioned Orthodox way. My mother, that Ayshet Chayil. And then there is sort of family and sometimes we had guests, especially uh, after 1933 we had people who came uh, as refugees from either Poland or Germany. Sometimes people who had come from Poland through Germany and, and, and they came in Holland either on their way to some other country or not. Uh, one of them that I do remember was not a refugee but it was one of my earlier times with someone who had come from Palestine. His name was Amira, he was a dentist. And he came from Odessa. Uh, he gave some free me…uh, dental advice. He told me that I had a tremendous underbite, like this and he told me how to correct it. Um, after the services there were some, one or more people left who didn't have anyplace to go for a meal so my father was either the last one or one of the last ones to leave the synagogue. He uh, took one, sometimes perhaps more, but usually one with him to our table.

Was there ever any trouble with anti-Semitism that you recall?

Um, I lived in a relatively protected environment uh, going to Jewish elementary school, Jewish high school. And uh, during World War II, I went one year to uh, University of Amsterdam pre-medical studies. Uh, I didn't know what anti-Semitism meant.

Did you have non-Jewish friends?

Um, I did not have any non-Jewish friends. I played with my Jewish schoolmates, who lived in the same street next to us. I do remember one occasion which I don't think I have any proof that it was based upon anti-Semitism, but I was alone there and some uh, Gentile strange uh, boys came along and I don't know what the reason is but they uh, completely caught me off guard and uh, hit me in the solar plexus. I doubled up as happens under those occasions and have never forgotten the experience. But I never connected it with the fact that they were not Jewish. In fact, I doubt, I doubt whether it was done because of—they were, maybe I was perhaps nine or ten. They were about that same age. It could have been, but uh, I don't recall anything like that.

Was there ever any discussion of uh, in your household uh, about anti-Jewish acts or, or um, attitudes in Holland?

Not in Holland, but my father told me about his own experience while still living in Poland.

What had he told you?

Um, I remember that he said that when you walk in the streets in Poland on the sidewalk and a Gentile would pass and if you did not uh, step off the sidewalk uh, he would spit in your face, for example, if not worse. And on another occasion he

was on a train ride from somewhere, maybe Pabianice to Warsaw uh, the Gentiles did not let him inside. Uh, he had a little uh, valise with him. He put it on the steps to get on the train uh, with his back to the train itself, the valise being between his heels of his shoes and the train and with both hands helding onto the hand rails, he had to travel all that distance to uh, until the train stopped. And, and they were laughing inside. This was uh, uh, reported as a sign of anti-Semitism.

Mm-hm.

When my father entered Holland from uh, Czechoslovakia even, which was not as bad I presume as far as anti-Semitism is concerned as Poland. Uh, he said that he could smell the—and, and sense the freedom there. Equality. Because Holland has a uh, history, a tradition of equality because they themselves had an eighty-year long war until 19...until 1648 against Spain. It was religious persecution against the Protestants and especially the royal house of Orange uh, had very strong positive ties with Jews who uh, financed their revolt against the Spanish occupation in the seventeenth century.

So he was, he was happy then that…

He was very happy to come here, yes.

the reassignment. What about the National Socialist Bund?

The NS...

NSB.

NSB, um.

Do you remember anything about them in the '30s?

I don't remember myself anything about that off hand. They came into play after uh, German uh, invasion and occupation. Before that they were a minority and I myself don't re...have any recollections of any context. Uh, I didn't know uh, what anti-Semitism meant, except for the people who came from Germany, from Poland, from Eastern Europe.

Had you talked to them?

Not to say—I knew there was anti-Semitism, but uh, not for us. For everybody but us.

What else stands out about the uh, sort of daily life in Holland as a youngster there?

Uh, I can remember the typical Jewish customs uh, in preparation for Pesach in front of the, uh, both the Great Synagogue and the New Synagogue, the Ashkenazi side of that square where now there is a statue of the dock worker. Uh, there was a whole row of uh, huge containers with water with a fire under them for the kashering of the utensils for Pesach. Um, going to shul was um, a high percentage of my time everyday before I went—let's say when I was a student in high school uh, I was starting sometimes pretty late after midnight. Uh, I had to get up in the morning and uh, I had to make up for lost time sometimes during my uh, school hours where uh, I developed a technique of uh, uh, pretending that I was reading a book and it was covering my eyes with my hand, on, on top of my eyebrows and uh, maybe those teachers knew, but uh, whenever they asked a question my ears were not sleeping. I, If they called on me I knew precisely where it was.

You, you would not consider yourself then, your family, an assimilated family.

We were definitely not assimilated.

Were most Dutch Jews assimilated, do you think?

I didn't know, but I have found out later on or it was reported to me or I read somewhere that in Amsterdam about 40 percent of the Jews were mixed married. And this was made possible, among other things, by the extreme equalitarian and liberal philosophy of a lot of the Dutch popu...Gentile population.

Um, at what point do you remember German and, and Polish émigrés coming and telling stories of anti-Semitic acts in uh, in Europe?

Um, in, I must have been let's say 1934, I was then eleven. After age eleven or so, I may have heard more about this. But you, these things didn't have any personal meaning for me. It was all for them. It did not pertain to my life because I didn't suffer myself from anyone in an anti-Semitic way.

Um, do you remember when the war began?

Yes. I remember the sounds of the bombs exploding at the airport of Amsterdam. Um, I remember four days uh, from our balcony, which was across from the zoo in Amsterdam where we lived. Uh, I remember next to us there was the main garage of a taxi company. And uh, I realized that there were acquaintances, perhaps even close acquaintances or friends of ours who were hiring taxi cabs to go to the port of ??? which was uh, the closest point on the coast of the north sea and they were trying to get from there to England. And I understand some succeeded. They—I know for sure that there was an organized transport by bus for children. Because one of my schoolmates that way survived the war. He was taken by bus to England and he was—he served in the uh, Allied Forces and uh,

he came back after the war. His, his name was uh, Hershon, which means Gershon Miller. But when he came back his uh, name was uh, it was something like Mick uh, I, I mean, completely anglicized.

Hm. Um, you were seventeen then.

When the war broke out, in '4...1940, I was uh, almost seventeen.

Seventeen. So what were you thinking, feeling about all this? Were you frightened?

Uh, I definitely remember what I felt. Uh, outside of some of the events that happened during those four days uh, where we had the blackout as far as not letting any light shine to the outside for fear of being bombarded. Um, I remember the last of the four days when I looked outside and I saw the streetlights were on. I cried because I knew what it symbolized. It meant defeat. There is also another memory I have about that time. Um, it's funny. Looking out of the little window which we had in our john—our toilet uh, we could see or I could see a nest of uh, doves. After those four days the doves were gone and never returned. It was also—to me it had a symbolic meaning. I was in those days uh, on the one hand quite Orthodox, religious, on the other hand I would perhaps therefore uh, be more inclined to see meaning in events, such as the symbolic meaning of the doves, the symbol of peace uh, disappearing.

What was the talk in your household about the war? Was there any discussion?

Of course. I don't recall it that easily. Um, I can tell you something that may have something to do with it also that will reflect upon me. Uh, we had put strips on our outside windows as protection in case the—a bomb would come close and the glass might shatter, it would hold the glass together. I had placed on the upper

part of the window in my room on the front of the house, I had put those black strips in the shape of a Magen David. I do remember, it must have been after the uh, Germans invaded that my father came in my room and saw it. He was in horror and he told me right away to take it off for fear that the Germans might uh, respond to it in a negative way.

Was there any talk about leaving?

Um, [pause] are you talking about leaving after the occupation or before?

Well, in those four days.

In those four days, no. But way later, when the deportations already had started uh, probably in 1942 I remember my mother telling my older brother and me why don't you leave and go somewhere in hiding. And I remember that I felt flabbergasted. I understood what she meant but I felt so hopeless. I had no idea what to do about it, I had never done it before, so to speak. I had no idea how to go about it and it took a lot more before I finally did it. They had to catch me twice before I finally considered it.

The Germans.

Right.

Uh, after the surrender um, what is the sequence of events that you remember?

SM:. Okay uh, I graduated from the Jewish high school—and I perhaps should mention this because it's interesting and I'll come back to the events. Uh, I took the final exam after the Germans already had invaded. And uh, the final exam was the equivalent for all high schools in Holland. And this Jewish school in particular was interested in having very good results. When… And there was a man from

the government who came there to examine us in addition to our own teachers who were—who would exam us. When that man asked me for the list of German literature that I had read or studied, I, for the first time in my life, I had a uh, a blackout. I could not remember one title. And now I understand of course this was my subconscious way of protesting anything German to, to express my uh, lack of uh, uh, desire or satisfaction with anything German. Okay, I did finish. My grade for German was a lot less than, or it might have been otherwise. Uh, I was accepted as a pre-medical student to the University of Amsterdam and uh, I finished the first year, which was then uh, let's say, towards the end of the summer of 1942. I passed an examination which is an extremely uh, rigid, difficult examination and um, around that time and I would have to consult my notes to know precisely what happened first uh, the numerus clausus was started by the, by the Germans. The Jews had to register, the David star and so on, and… So I could not continue for the second year. The Jewish Council already had existed by that time and they utilized the faculty of the College of Medicine of the University of Amsterdam who were Jews who had been fired to start uh, what really was intended to be a course in pre-clinical medicine. The name that it was given was massage in uh, therapeutic gymnastics. We had both courses in massage and gymnastics. But we also had the various pre-clinical studies about um, uh, the, the various uh, pre-clinical basic sciences.

So this was a ruse of some sort.

It was definitely a ruse.

Uh…

And we were prepared in case that, and if the Germans might question it we could say yes, but we have uh, massage and uh, gymnastics. The other things were done in secret, were done in private homes.

Did, did you still attend services regularly?

I attended services until 1943 when I myself went in hiding. Until uh, let's say uh, less than a week before.

At the Great Synagogue?

Right, always the Great Synagogue.

People continued to go…

Right

even during the occupation.

There is an interesting thing that I remember, if you don't mind.

Please.

I'm going back. Before the World War II, and it even, it, it could have happened even uh, after German occupation. Uh, my father had a vacation in the summer, and sometimes I, I remember at least one time, that he went to listen to the services in the other synagogues. And one time he went to the Portuguese Synagogue. Now in the Portuguese Synagogue there is a uh, section in the center which is for Sephardi Portuguese Jews. Outside in the periphery uh, Ashkenazi Jews or Gentiles are permitted. When my father came there he—and I piggy uh, tailing with him, I was permitted to enter the central part as a sign of honor, of respect that was shown…

Because they knew your father.

Yes.

They knew your father.

Yeah, right.

Did he sing there?

No, not singing. Uh, he would sing in the other synagogues uh, rarely on special occasions. I think maybe once a year or so.

But always in yours, of course.

Pardon? Always?

Always in yours in the Great Synagogue, he'd...

No, no. He would once a year he might go to some of the other synagogues. I don't know what was the idea behind it, the rotation or showing of flag almost already. But I remember that uh, it happened, but very seldom.

Let me…

And there was a visit by the royalty. Uh, he was the one who was singing in front of them. There are pictures of it uh, probably still available. He had sang for the mother of Queen Wilhelmina uh, the presence of Queen Wilhelmina. Um, when Princess Juliana who is now the mother of the, the pri...existing queen was there, when she was still a teenager, he was singing there. There was even a rumor that I heard that this Princess Juliana, being a teenager, fell in love with my father. I don't know whether it's true or not.

Did he have a very strong and beautiful voice then?

Um, I would consider him as one of the top five or ten or whatever in the world. Um, as far as his quality as a tenor, he may not have been able to reach the high C

as easily as uh, Rosenblatt or uh, some of the other world famous ones. But uh, as far as rendering the intent, the content of the prayers uh, I think, and maybe I'm biased, he had no peer.

Let me just step back for second. Um, your parents um, created this atmosphere in the house obviously, of warmth and security. What do you remember about, about them? Had you—did you have discussions with them as you were getting older that you remember, before the occupation as well as uh, during it? What are their outstanding characteristics?

My mother, I remember uh, being in the kitchen. She—we had before the war uh, maids. In fact uh, coming from Germany at times, because this was quite common in Holland. Um, my father I remember at home uh, studying the ??? or Mishna or, or whatever. And he at times he taught us. I, myself, I also had private lessons in addition to um, the Jewish curriculum as part of the Jewish high school. I also had private lessons by a rebbe, which was, consisted of Mishna and Gemara. I must admit uh, whether it was his quality as a rebbe or whether I was to be blamed, I always felt a hypnotic effect of it. I had a hard time keeping my eyes open. I remember that definitely.

At what point um, was this life—religious life in particular, disrupted by the war? I mean, really disrupted so that you couldn't, the family couldn't, couldn't function as it had before? When did Shabbos dinners take on a different tone, for example?

They never had anything different. Until the very—until my uh, family was deported.

So through 1943.

Right. Uh, I can uh, imagine because I don't have any direct recollection. But uh, I can easily, safely assume that the spirit uh, towards the end uh, even on Shabbos was uh, not as happy as it used to be because um, uh, the thousands, tens of thousands of people that uh, were acquaintances and friends uh, of my father uh, they were deported uh, way before uh, my parents were deported.

In 1940 now, the, you said the numerus clausus was passed.

Probably in 1941.

Nineteen forty-one.

They took—the Germans did it uh, the right way from their viewpoint. Uh, move in very slowly so they won't uh, have any excuse for reacting. It is like a subliminal approach almost. Any move that they made was so small that no person in their right mind would think of uh, taking this as a reason, this one step in itself as a reason to uh, start anything uh, negative, aggressive or whatever against the Germans. It, it was probably planned like that. That's my, my guess.

Do you remember the events of February 1941?

February 1941.

When…

I would have to go back to my notes, if I may.

When the—sure—when the NSB um, marched through the Jewish, Jewish section of Amsterdam.

I, myself, have no direct witness or recollection of this. But I do remember that there was a Dutch uh, saying, ???, which is, which is a rhyme. It means that Code who was a member of the NSB was killed by a Jew. So I knew that there had been

some action and some Jews had um, responded to that. But this was all done, and it was not in our street. It was done in the Jewish neighborhood we lived let's say, a little bit outside the center of the Jewish neighborhood.

Do you remember the general strike?

I was at that time a student at University of Amsterdam and I was in one of the laboratories. It could have been something like uh, organic chemistry some afternoon. And I heard shots of a machine gun like nature. I had no idea where it was. Later on I found out that there had been some action against Dutch and that there was a strike.

Did it have any effect on uh, on you or your family? The strike?

I do not think so. We were—continued to live our life and, uh… Yes, I, I don't know precisely if it was in 1942 or so, but my older sister was married and one of her brothers-in-law was taken by the Germans and I think at the last moment uh, he succeeded in not having to go. But others went and uh, their ashes came back from Mauthausen. The parents were asked to uh, pay money for the ashes when no one had any uh, hundred percent knowledge that this was really their ashes or just any ashes at all.

You had heard of Mauthausen by 1942.

Mauthausen, yes.

What had you heard about that?

Um, that people were uh, killed there. Now that we knew that something had happened. It was not… It was something that was slowly but surely approaching. And we didn't like it.

D…do you remember the um, um, anything about the Jewish Council, the Joodserat?

I have lots of memories of the Jewish Council. Um, the… I wonder about direct memories. Can you stop it there? When I, myself, already had been brought by the Germans to the prison, which was the converted Dutch theater building um, there were people there who had a band. They were members of the Jewish Council. Their task was to see to it that we would get our meals and any other way could be of help to us. Um, I talked to one of them and asked, "Is there any way of escaping here?" I don't believe that he even gave me a direct answer. So I asked him, "Is there a john anywhere?" He said, "Yes. I said, please show me." So he brought me there. If you want me to continue I can tell you about my first escape from there.

Let's go ahead.

Um, I had been brought there with other personnel, employees of the Jewish hospital where I had been working in order to temporarily escape any deportation. My job there was civil defense. On that particular night um, I had worked there and in the morning um, we were told that we all had to report, including nurses in uniform, in the center court of that hospital. We were standing in line and then our names were mentioned. My name was mentioned. I saw there one of the two highest people in the Jewish Council there, the name of Braham Asscher. He was afterwards excommunicated for um, cooperating with the Germans. And uh, I asked him uh, would it do any good to rely upon in quotes, "Palestine papers." Through the Red Cross I had requested that a telegram be sent to someone in

Palestine, and on the basis of that uh, it was alleged by me that uh, I might qualify to go to Palestine. And anyone who would have a paper like this from the Red Cross might perhaps uh, postpone any deportation. I asked him, "Would that help me any?" And he said, "When you get to Westerbork they'll take care of that." I was picked up with the others in a truck. And instead of going straight to the uh, to the prison, the Dutch theater, we were given a tour of the city, they went all around. And I was wondering, why in the world would they do that. We are not tourists. Because it was a very short distance. Anyway, we were unloaded there and, when we were there I a...here came the point when I asked someone whom I knew as an acquaintance who was working for the Jewish Council and he's the one who led me to this uh, to a row of johns, of toilets. I took either the one before the last. I probably didn't want to be in the last because then it might be too obvious that I had done this on purpose. And I waited there and I waited, uh… I acted in a very natural physical way there. If anyone will catch me I, I could say that I wasn't just standing or just sitting there. Um, and I remember after a long, long time I heard noise of people who were probably taken out onto the trains that went to Westerbork and then suddenly it became quiet. And maybe half an hour or so later, this was around one o'clock, roughly, and they left. Maybe it, it got quiet around twelve thirty or so. And I heard someone with uh, what do you call that um, not shoes but uh, uh, [bangs table] heels, um…

Boots? Hobnailed boots?

With boots. With boots coming. And opening and closing the doors of the johns. Every time he came closer until he came to mine, which I had locked. He found it

locked and he shouted "Auf machen!" I opened it and he punched me in the, there was from the left he punched me in my left jaw and he kicked me in my left knee. And I said in the best German that I could say um, "I have diarrhea uh, I will join the others." He again kicked me and he left me, which was of course one of the innumerable times that I was fortunate. He could have killed me or whatever. He was probably one of the green police, the green Polizei. Um, I left the john, did not join the others. But at the end of the row of johns, there was a um, water faucet with a um, basin. And I remember I—of course, I washed my hands, being very Orthodox and said ???, the prayer. And after that I didn't know what to do. So I stood there. I had a coat, I had a, a hat, which I had as a, being Orthodox. And I took my hat and with the sleeve of my right—the right sleeve of my coat, I kept on slowing brushing, cleaning it. Almost like a ritual. I didn't know what else to do. And I kept—stayed there for hours and hours and hours until about seven thirty. Maybe at one time I went to look as far as I felt it was safe and I came right away back, because what I remember is that I spent there lots of hours. Eight o'clock was curfew. Seven thirty at the end of the row of toilets, I saw someone whose face I recognized. He was a member of the Jewish Council. I, I motioned to him, he came over and I told him what had happened. I divulged everything to him and asked "Can you help me to get me with the others because I can't continue like this. I, I need—will need food and, and if they catch me here I'm—it'll be bad. Even worse than if I join the others." Um, so he said, "Okay wait a little while I'll come back and I'll see what I can do." So after maybe a short while, he came back and he motioned that I come with him. So I came with

him. He went from there, which was probably on the—let's say the right side, which would be from the front of the building on the left side. We were on the left side of the prison theater. And he walked with me and came across the entrance lobby. And I saw that there was on the right side in that lobby a table and someone was sitting.

He guided me further. We went up the stairs. And while we were up the stairs and I felt it was safe to talk to him. I asked him, "That guy who was sitting there, is he German or Jewish?" I don't believe that he even answered me. But he made the right turn on the second floor and motioned and I could see that the other Jews were there. And it was his idea that I continue there and he would go back. I saw him go back. I went after him. He came back to the same spot where I had seen that man next to the table, which was the entrance lobby. I had my coat over my arm, I had a obviously visible David star and I had a hat on. I did for sure not have the special band that the members of the Jewish Council had who could walk in and out of that prison. When I was about to start going towards the exit, someone behind me, I must assume from the Jewish Council shouted very loud twice, Maroko, Maroko – it's the Dutch pronunciation. I could see someone in green uniform with a revolver. I continued walking as if angels were guiding me. I walked very calmly through the exit. When I came to the street I saw that on the left there was a German command car with let's say at least ten uniformed Germans was arriving and stopping there. I went, calmly went to the right. There was there very close to the end of that block. By the way, that was the street where we lived on the left side. I made a right turn, not going home because I

knew that was the first thing they would look for me if they would notice I had left. I went back to the Jewish Hospital. Um, after a short distance past that corner, I started running. I remember that when I was still inside I could hear the electric streetcar making that turn—it was line number seven—and there was always a high-pitched sound there and they always had to keep that lubricated. And I told myself, I remember that, that sounds, that's the sound of life. Freedom and life is just only bricks separating me from that. And that was one of the things that probably uh, motivated me to, to do what I did. I ran from there on, my adrenaline overpowered me. I couldn't walk anymore. And besides it was getting very close to eight o'clock. I entered the hospital. I uh, had a sister of my brother-in-law there as a nurse. And uh, I went to her in the nurses', nurses' dorm and she let me sleep there all night. I was in the bed of one of the nurses. They told me, "Keep your head covered. There is going to be a bed check by the head nurses, but they won't see you if you have just your head covered. And by the way, that is mentioned in Leesha Rose's book, *The Tulips are Red.* Only with a few…

[interruption in interview]

…is it on or not? I went from there the following morning to my house. They had in the meantime uh, placed with ??? a red pencil over my whole id card. One of the first things that I did was go into the attic of my house where we had some coal dust from the times that we had a coal bin in there.

Your parents were still there?

No.

Your parents had already been deported.

This was probably in June of '43.

S:. Okay.

Um, I first tried to erase the red pencil as best as I could and obviously it was very visible. So I thought, I might as well make it completely dirty. So I raked it over the coal dust. I made it really black so the, the erasure would not be that obvious. It was still obvious enough. And I stayed there living at home. Only I did not have my job anymore. I did place on the—okay, when people were deported, it was only a matter of time before the contents of the houses would be Puls'ed. It's a word made out of a name. P-u-l-s. Uh, that was the name of the moving firm who was doing the emptying of the houses for the Germans. In order to prevent that, I placed on the outside of the entrance door to our house a sign which said my name, is working in the Dutch Jewish Hospital. That way hoping that they would not inadvertently think that the house was already de...the people had been deported.

This moving company was under contract to the Germans then.

Right, it, it could have been um, I...The first name was Abraham Puls, out of all the first names, but uh, I doubt whether it was a Jewish firm.

And they would just follow the…

They would do it.

deportation.

Sometimes it took a long time sometimes. They had so much work. It would take them months. They had a waiting list. And, and I was, by the way, later, later on during the war, it was my luck because uh, when my money, my money ran out

paying the monthly amount to the farmer where I was hidden um, there was a man, who was taking care of another lady was hidden together with me and he was an anarchist. And I told him I'm—my money ran out, he said uh, "What do you have there?" And he said it was a piano. In broad daylight, from the third floor, over a balcony, he took an upright piano out and sold it for me and gave me every penny. Enabled me to pay the farmer for another nine month.

This is a non-Jew.

Yes, definitely a non-Jew. He was an anarchist.

Let me take you back for a minute to the—to 1941. Did you ever witness any of the terror Razzias, the roundups in the street? Or had you heard about them?

I don't, I had heard about things, but—okay, around that time I must have responded in a particular way to the happenings. The happenings were that, it was pro...I don't know whether it was '41, it might have been already '42 by then, that more and more people were deported. I heard names. They were known to me. Uh, I responded by developing a psychological anesthesia. It didn't phase me anymore. It was like—it, it, it was unreal. So I must have heard about those things, but I had to protect myself emotionally. It would have been unbearable otherwise.

What about your sister, your, the rest of your family?

Okay, there's a little story about my sister. She got married in '39. Her husband was originally from Germany—from Cologne. He was a physician. Uh, they got married in Amsterdam before the war. And then he had a practice in Brussels. Sometime late in 1940, perhaps the beginning of '41, my brother-in-law the

physician sent over a friend with a car across the Belgium border, which was in itself already quite a feat to be able to do this under German occupation. He came to us to pick my sister up. My father… And this was on a Friday and it could be done only the following day, and this may have been a lifetime chance for them to be reunited. And this was known to us. Uh, but it could, ??? only on Shabbos. So my father talked to the chief rabbi ??? of Amsterdam, and his answer was no. My father gave my sister permission anyway. They were later on the way to uh, Switzerland, they were caught in northern France and we got in 1942 a postcard from Auschwitz from—by my sister, sent by my sister.

And the other members of your family? Were they taken?

No. Not until the, the Razzia, which was the action of deportation uh, in the center of the Jewish quarter, plus the periphery in which we lived, which was in 1943.

Near the end.

There was one time, probably the beginning of '43, when my father one day came home late from going to the afternoon evening service and I remember that my mother and me were kind of worried. We were very relieved that he came home. There was some reason why he was late.

Was there rationing?

Definitely. We were hoarding food already in 1941. I remember we had all kinds of food. We, we had kosher cheese, a whole wheel of cheese in a metal container. Uh, we kept this probably until way 1942, when uh, as a natural process it had started aging and we could hear there was liquid in it. But when we opened it, it was all delicious. Uh, I remember we bought eggs, either duck eggs or geese eggs

and we had them in a huge container which was filled with liquid silica. Because it was uh, one of the best preservatives of, of eggs. And we had of course other food that was hoarded.

Meats, butter, things like that?

Probably also, but it was getting more and more difficult.

Were you still attending school right to the end?

Um, I was going to University of Amsterdam until, let's say, June or so of 1941.

Nine…

Af...after that I had to start that course, pre-clinical studies, surreptitiously. And uh, after some time it was obvious that they were already deporting people and people who were working in certain jobs, the Jewish Council or otherwise, usually somehow related to Jewish Council, they got the stamp in their I.D. which said the temporary uh, the deportation was postponed.

Exemption.

And for me to get that, my father talked to one of the Gabayim, the leaders of the Jewish community and he got a job for me in the Jewish Hospital, because he was probably on the Board of Directors there too. I have one memory about that same Gabay and it must have been in end of 1942, beginning of '43. My father was uh, singing in the service and he must have been overwhelmed by his own emotions, which was not very common. He usually brought other people to tears. But he himself crying, that was unusual. So he had to stop. And I remember that particular Gabay was sitting in the center bima uh, there were seats there for the leaders of the community. He just couldn't take it anymore. He got up, he was

angry and he slapped his hand on the wooden uh, barrister or whatever it was there. I felt it was kind of inappropriate that he had so little understanding. I don't know whether my father was thinking of his own relatives or whatever, who probably by that time already were killed. I mean, his parents or whatever.

Uh, had you, had you heard of the talk about chief justice Visser and his…

No, I've read about this after World War II. All, all these things were, they were outside of our world. In fact um, the only contact that we had with Gentiles that wa...was of any meaning was when a friend of ours—Jewish—brought my father in contact with a business acquaintance, a Gentile, who came over to us and who was, of course, "willing to accept" jewelry, my microscope, for example, and to keep them. This was supposed to be done until after war and then to be returned. When I came to him later on, after World, World War II, and asked him to return it. He refused. He said it was given for him to keep. My own microscope. What would he do with a medical microscope? This man also somehow had uh, gotten hold of my hiding address—probably through the underground. And he came to visit me once in 1944 probably. And he was trying to convert me there. No deal.

Hm. The uh, um, were, you were registered as Jews shortly after the occupation.

Like all members of the uh, Jewish Community.

When um, when that took place, how were you notified that you had to register?

I don't remember. I was sixteen, seventeen. I didn't pay attention to those, I just was told by my parents and I did it. There was one thing about the registration. These are like free associations. Um, it is documented when it happened. But I do remember that I was looking outside of my room's window, which was the front

of the house, and seeing and hearing a tremendous noise of an explosion. Which was the time, the moment when the Dutch registration offices were bombed by the underground. It was um, in the next block, kitty corner.

So they bombed the Dutch offices.

Of, of, of, this of course also included the, the Jews. Anyone who was registered.

But uh, when—now when you took this pre-clinical massage, gymnastics course. You first were told that you had to stop your pre-medical studies.

Right. It was numerus clausus.

Now who, now how were you notified of that?

It was uh, I don't know whether I was personally notified. But this was in the Jewish newspaper.

Just in the newspaper. I see. But what, what, what are the events now of 1941-1942 that uh, um, you have sort of direct memories of?

When the time came to put on the David star, I didn't wait until the very date. I felt that it was an act of pride to wear it. So I probably had it sewed on already three or maybe four days before the date.

This is 1942.

Nineteen forty-one probably.

[pause]

In May, 1941.

You probably know that date better than I, precisely. I mean the month. In '42, a lot of things happened. In 1941 or '42 sometime, a young man, Jewish, who was in my opinion quite interested in my younger sister, he was perhaps about my age

himself. Um, and we were walking back and forth to the synagogue services, told me that he had heard that there were people who were coming from England, landing in Holland. And then also could get back. Um, I asked him about the possibility that I might be one of those who could that way escape from Holland. He uh, said that he would look into it. And this whole thing—it was very drawn out. At one time I had a definite impression that it might be only a matter of weeks before his contact could arrange that I would be picked up. I got to the point that I actually wrote a farewell letter to my family. The excuse or whatever, I don't know whether it was, the whole thing was a bluff or whatever. He told me that his contact had fallen ill in England and therefore never had made the trip.

Did you have a radio? Did your family…

At home?

have a radio?

We had to turn everything in, radio, bicycle. I remember um, I sold my bicycle rather than turn 'em into the Germans for a few bucks, which was almost nothing, rather than doing it. We, we showed our passive resistance in some ways.

But you didn't get broadcast coming from the BBC.

We did not listen to the BBC at home. It was only much later at the farmers' house when there was a hiding place where I started listening to the BBC together with the farmer.

What else was taken away? Um, they took your bicycles, radio…

Yes, my father was making probably uh, at least an average income, having a contract for life. Pretty good job there. The Germans uh, said that he and others in

his circumstances would be permitted to receive only a certain maximum number of money, of guilders. Anything over and above that was, was supposed to be either put in a special account or given to the Germans, I don't remember. So our income was already quite limited because of that. Definitely not what it was before.

That must have affected how you lived.

Yes, although I don't believe that I noticed any, any difference that I was aware of.

And did they take any of your personal property away? Things like, uh…

My…

jewelry, silverware?

my… We probably had to, before that happened uh, we hid some of those valuables, including uh, cantorial music records uh, linen. Anything uh, China or whatever. We hid it in a particular place which was in between the two floors which we occupied. Uh, we got there by removing a side panel over French doors which was below the ceiling. Opened it on the side, putting our stuff in there, and closing it so that nothing would be visible. I also know that my father uh, asked a Dutch uh, Jewish carpenter to take a hand brush and put a ring or at least a diamond, either with the ring or, or without the ring, inside the wood, which was done. And this may be one of the things that my father perhaps used later on when he was in Poland already in the concentration camps to stay longer than what even the Red Cross knew. Because I got direct, first hand witness reports that people talked to him way after the date that the Red Cross uh, believed that he had died.

Um, my—all Jews were told that they had to report any monies, funds outside of the occupied German territories. Um, my father went to the Germans and I went together with him. We were at the—one of those German off...offices. And he was to sign away his rights to a certain amount, which was at that time in a bank in New York. And I remember that vividly. I think he told them that it was a loan from an aunt who was living in London. Something like that.

You walked to the German headquarters.

Yes, we had to. My father did not take the risk because he felt that uh, they could have found out in the records uh, I think it happened in '39 or so, that uh, it happened. And he, he wanted to be prepared. So when we came up with the story that it was his aunt's. It was, like uh, his aunt gave him a loan or whatever.

Did you talk on the way to, to the German headquarters?

I don't remember. I do remember that perhaps later on my father did talk to me about it again. And he told me what the true story was.

How were you feeling at this point?

When he talked to me about that?

Well, given the circumstances surrounding it in that particular event.

You get used to so much. We, we were used to this uh, gradual encroachment upon our civil rights. Um, okay. That's our lot. What can we do? And I felt so frustrated when my mother said a very smart thing when she said, "Why don't you boys go and hide." But I felt so frustrated. I had no idea how to go about it. It was only when I was really with my back to the wall that I did whatever I could think of. Besides, we had heard stories about Jews who had gone in hiding and

had caught and had gotten extra uh, punitive treatment by the Germans. So it was uh, to some extent a deterrent on top of everything else. Us not knowing a, a lot of Gentiles.

When the deportations started um, were people you know being taken away?

Lots of them.

In the very beginning? What, what was—had you heard of Westerbork, for example? What did you know of Westerbork?

I don't know when I started hearing about this, but it for sure was known to us. It was one of the camps where they were sent to, and after that we didn't know. But um, in 1943, when I was working at the Jewish Hospital, obviously they had Chevra Kadisha there, they had undertaking uh, experts. And one of them talked to me and told me, we are all going to be sent to Poland and nobody will return. So I could never say that I never heard that opinion. But I had no proof. Because uh, the people who were taken were told, "Oh you are going to be placed to work." It was the Germans' ruse.

In the…

They deceived us.

Yeah. Did you believe that?

At the beginning perhaps. Because I know that uh, in Westerbork, yes they could work there and that probably some people were working there. Before this stage, the Germans already had given an order to Jews from the outside of Amsterdam to all of them come to live in Amsterdam. So we had at one time a young middle-

aged bachelor who came from the northeastern province of Holland. He was given my older brother's room. He was living with us.

This is when they were creating a ghetto. Did they create a ghetto in Amsterdam?

Yes.

What were the circumstances around that? Were you, were you in the area already designated to be…

We were inside—okay, they had a ghetto and a ghetto. There was the, the central ghetto where they uh, could raise the bridges over the cana...particular canal. And then anything inside that. People couldn't even try and get out because the water would be there. And we were a little bit outside of that, let's say um, maybe a mile or so outside of that.

There was a split.

Yes, it—we were in the periphery a little bit.

What were the conditions like when they started to bring people in from the neighboring towns and…

Everyone uh, pitched in uh, such as we uh, we accepted um, they asked for volunteers for people to, to uh, put these people up. So we became like a member of the family. Later on, that same Jewish couple, they were childless um, who got in, my father in contact with their Gentile business acquaintance. That same couple had gone underground. For some reasons they had to come back again. They asked my parents whether they could live with us. My parents agreed. Gave them their bedroom. So we had living at one time, in addition to our family—minus my older sister, was in Belgium—uh, that one man from Krooninen which

was the town in the province of Holland, plus that couple. Uh, I believe the bachelor, he had to report first and he probably did it. I don't remember the details. When at one occasion the Germans came to pick up the couple that had been living in my parents' bedroom and I remember how they pleaded and begged to let them stay. But to no avail. Um, I felt pretty bad about that. These were people that just to mention a trivial detail. When I was a young teenager, even before that uh, since they were childless they in a particular way had adopted me. On uh, Shabbos afternoon, after Mincha prayer they had invited me to their house alone and they would feed me with all the goodies that anyone could imagine. Candy, fruit, what, you name it. So I definitely had some positive feelings towards them. So I felt pretty bad when, when uh, when I… I was practically witness to it when they were taken away.

They were taken pretty much by force then because they…

Right. What choice did they have? The men said you come with us. If they hadn't done it they were armed. Also on one occasion they came for us. And uh, I believe there was, there must have been a German-speaking person with them. There usually was some Dutch uh, either Dutch police or undercover agents, whatever who were cooperating with the Germans. But also with Germans. There was one German, he came in there and I remember that he asked my father what does that mean on the wall. And it was the ten commandments in Hebrew. And my father explained it to him. And the man uh, seemed surprised that Jews believed in such nice things. And then he volunteered that he had found out that one of his own ancestors at one time was a rabbi in Spain.

Oh.

I remember that. We were, we were permitted to stay. I don't know why.

You think that's why?

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe.

At what point were uh, other members of your family taken?

Uh, outside of my sister, who not living in Amsterdam, they all were taken together during the Razzia, the action uh, in May, I believe, of '43.

Were you—were, were you?

I was that night working uh, as usual as a member of the civil defense department, which in the meantime had mushroomed because lots of people wanted to be part of that. It helped them temporary to uh, avoid. So I was there during that night. We had found out that there was going to be an action. And in the hospital itself there were sometimes patients who had come from the uh, Dutch theater, prison. Either because, for example, one guy he, he jumped from the second floor and broke his legs to try and escape. Others who fell ill to illness. Uh, so we had there a ward which was under guard. Now we knew that the Dutch plain clothesmen who were guarding them outside of the door, they were okay. They were trustable. They could be trusted. So I talked on that morning to one of them and asked, "Okay, can you do me a favor? We live here. Will you please try and get through to my parents and tell them—the family, to hide in the attic." The man must have tried. He told me later on, the following day whenever it was that I saw him again, that he was—came there but he couldn't get any through, further. You had to keep a safe distance, in fact, because the command, the, the center of

command for that German action was located in the street probably in front of our house. So he couldn't do that in front of their nose.

Had he seen your family being taken?

He did not see it. I did talk after the war to a lady who lived in the house next to us uh, who saw that particular day my mother coming out on the balcony and looking outside, perhaps uh, before the Germans were standing in front of the building or whatever. And, and then going inside. That's all I know. I came home that day, the same day, in the afternoon let's say. And I found that my family had left all their prepared belongings. We had been told by the Jewish Council, put uh, knapsacks ready in case you are taken. We knew about that. Uh, we were on call so to speak. I found that everything had been left there. They hadn't taken anything with them. But they had gone. Uh, this was uh, when I started praying to God uh, more intense than ever in my life. Anything so that they would return later on uh, that they would at least return safely. Uh, I still believed in God then. Uh, I sent their prepared uh, belongings to Westerbork. They also wrote to me asking uh, me to send protective glasses because there were sandstorms there. Because it was a very sandy province uh, where Westerbork was located. I got hold of them and mailed to them.

Had you heard anything about Upper Silesia?

Nothing about that.

Auschwitz, Birkenau? Nothing? Just Mauthausen.

Mauthausen I had heard. Maybe Dachau. Because of some other… Becau...yes, my—the father of my brother-in-law, he had been at one time in Dachau and he had told about uh, not so pleasant treatment.

Now when you came home and found no one there, why do you think they left all their belongings?

I don't have the slightest idea. Whether it was like uh, the, the story of the matzos, that they didn't have time to—that they were forced to—you already kept up waiting so long, they won't even let you go back and, and take those, I don't know.

What did you do next?

Um, I think I contacted the Jewish Council to see how I could send things to them and they, they gave me advice.

And you stayed in the same…

I stayed in the same place. At that time, I was still working in that job at the Jewish Hospital. This was before my first escape, which I described a little while ago.

What about the next escape?

Next escape. Uh, we are going to go back and forth I'm sure.

All right.

Uh, uh, I have it here in chrono...chronological order. Um, one day I was waking up after working there. We were working obviously at night. Civil defense it meant that we were responsible that no light would be visible to any airplanes 'cause we might be bombed or the Germans might think that we were trying to

contact the Allied ene...their enemies and so on. So we slept there on stretchers. I woke up on morning and I heard over the PA that we all had—wait a minute, there was this, not the first time, it was the second time. Can you…[interruption in interview] Um, as I said, I went faithfully to the synagogues. I was in the Great Synagogue around Tisha B'Av in 1943. There was an announcement made that with our rations for cheese we could qualify for kosher cheese. But we had to contact the office of the rabbinate in order to uh, get it. So the following Wednesday, I went to the office of the chief rabbinate, which was very close to the Portuguese and their Great Synagogue. They told me there that I would need to round up enough other people with coupons so that we would qualify for one wheel, which was quite a job for me. So I left there and I thought, all right, I'll try my best. Well, walking a very short distance a man in civilian uh, clothes stopped me and asked for my ID. I showed him my ID, and uh, he said, "Okay come with me.:" He went across the street to a place where there was a blacksmith and he asked me to wait outside. I was not left alone, there was another man in civilian clothes.

These were Dutch?

Dutch. Who was standing there leaning against the doorpost, but of course keeping an eye on me so that I would not run away. It took them quite awhile inside and he came out with another man. My guess is that they probably were uh, wondering, hey this man must have been before in the uh, prison uh, what did he do, etc. Because as I said, it was obvious for anyone more than just a superficial inspection of the ID. So he came out and says, "You know where to go." I played

dumb and I asked, "What do you mean?" He said, "To the prison." He probably was—he had been there before, we are going in there. So I was walking through the—this was right next to the Jewish street, this was the name of the street in Amsterdam. And um, I was walking there and they were on bicycles and I could see that they had a revolver, I knew that they were armed. And um, people were passing, coming across me from the other direction. And I remembered I was thinking, people, don't you realize what's happening to me. I might be led to my death. And I realized that at the time already. And no one did anything. My thoughts were not audible and I was disappointed. There was one point where the thought crossed my mind, they have to make a turn and I have to go on the other side in order to walk there, as part of the, the regular route to go to that uh, location of the prison. And a thought crossed my mind, maybe I could run here. And I thought oh, I better not. They probably would kill me. If I would have known then what I know now about arms, because I got trained in the Israeli uh, Tzahal—in the armed defense forces, I might have done it. On the other hand, maybe I would have been killed then. Uh, anyway, I walked there and I was brought to the prison. And I told right away to the Jewish Council, "I want you to know, my ID is one that has been marked. I've been here before. Uh, can you try and help me as much as you can." They said, "Okay, we'll try what we can do." Um, that was on Wednesday afternoon. We slept there that night. While there in the afternoon, I met the son—eleven or so years old, of someone who I had known as a patient under guard in the Jewish hospital. I asked this young guy who was very pre-mature—mature for his age. "Uh, can people escape from here? Has

it ever happened? For example, has anyone going, gone to the balcony on the first floor and hanging from hands made a quite high jump, but uh, still uh, better than nothing." Uh, he said, "I have something better. If ever, if, you don't have to do that. I wa...I ??? prepared for doing that." He said, "I can do something but it will cost you money." We haggled a little bit over the money. Uh, he asked more, I said, "I don't have that." I lied to him. I had a little bit more money, I didn't want to give him my last penny. I didn't know whether I might need it. He agreed upon the price. And he said, "Tomorrow I'll do something so that you can escape." That night we slept there and next to me there was, I would say a remote acquaintance, an eighteen-year-old or so, almost my age, boy. And I told him that I intend the following day to escape. I said, "Do you want to join me?" He agreed. Um, the following morning, the certain time that we had agreed upon, I gave him the money. He gave me a door handle, which at the end had a square metal piece, which could fit in a door where a door handle had been removed. And he said, "You have to come with me now." The other guy who was going to escape together with me said, "We have first to go back and uh, pick up our uh, belongings. My coat, which had cost me precious coupons also was there." I told him, "Either you come with me now or never." I say, "You do it now and you forget about material possessions, we do it either now or never." And I forced him to come with me, or I gave him that choice. The bo...uh, we went with the boy, he ga...brought us to a, the higher levels of the prison. We got in a space which was close to the uh, space above the… Let's say the highest level. And he showed us the door. I opened the door. From there I could walk—we could walk through the

uh, space above the stage and from there we could walk a little bit further and there were windows which were easily opened to get on the roof. From that roof it was a relatively short distance to the house on the right side again next to it. That house had been empty. There was a skylight there, which was easily lifted. And we got in there and we could see below the skylight there was a bench about this high, let's say uh, one, one and a half feet high. So other people had preceded us on that same route. We jumped on that, it broke the fall. And from there we got to the first floor, through that empty house and there we took our David star off and we left the house, first looking very carefully in both directions that no German would be there. And we went to my house. And this is the second escape. From there on I went straight—okay, we had a funny thing in our house. There was an inner staircase, not visible to the outside, from the attic to the second floor, where in the meantime had been living two ladies. Gentiles who had offered me after the first escape to go underground. And I said, no I can't do this. This is way too dangerous. If they catch me I'll be terribly punished by the Germans. This time I said, "I'm ready for it. I'm willing to accept your offer." They said, "Okay, you go back." And, and we were spending most of our time in that—in our hiding place in the attic, next to the coal bin. Um, and they got in touch with us and they said, We have two possibilities. Either uh, right away in the province of Friesland, northern Holland can we find a place for you." Or later on, and it might be different. Or it was the other way around. Doesn't matter. Anyway, that Shabbat, for the first time in my life, that boy and I, we went outside, we took maybe a, how do you call them, attaché case, or something like this. And we were walking

with our chin up passing the headquarters of the German police in Amsterdam. Officers, German officers passing us very close distance and we're just walking as if we were Dutch young men who were Na...Dutch Nazis. Going through the train station, we entered the train station, took the train to a particular place. We were supposed there to find a man who had a handkerchief in his hand. In the meantime we were lucky that there was no uh, checking because did a lot of checking of, of trains and so on.

Where did you go?

We went to that place, found a man without a handkerchief, we understood he was. And he, he approached us and we went to his house. He was a Catholic. He was also a member of the underground. He also, being a Catholic, had quite a large number of children. From his house he went on a bike and we each took one of his daughters behind us on our bikes and went to a farmhouse in ???. The daughters came with us so they could ride the bikes back. And he was the one who, who found a farmer who had been willing to accept students. It was Matzah Shabbat and one of the first thing that I told the farmers, we are Jewish. He had been prepared for students because at that time the students had to report, and the Gentile students had to report and work in Germany because there had been uh, actions by the students and they were being punished, whatever. Uh, he farmer said, "Okay, no problem."

He didn't mind.

But he uh, we had to agree to his terms of paying him so much per month.

Now who was the anarchist?

The anarchist came a few month later. There was a Jewish lady who was—who came to live where I was uh, hidden on the farm. And she had some—had an anarchist who was her contact man, who helped her with coupons and financially and, and otherwise. Uh, he was part of the Dutch underground. He as an anarchist uh, hated any authority, including the Germans. So he was against them and he was cooperating with the rest of the underground. UM, I had really no uh, no contact with him, except that uh, once he brought in some books uh, anarchistic literature, which I found just funny because they were making fun of no trespassing signs, and everything else is forbidden, they, they just wanted to do. I never in my life—I didn't know what an anarchist means. But I appreciate whatever he was doing for me by selling the, that piano. And, and uh, he was reliable as far as the money that he handed over to me.

Can I stop you for a minute…

Yes.

and ask you a question about something you said? You said, that was uh, when you still believed in God.

Mm-hm.

Does that mean you stopped believing it?

I—over a period of perhaps seven or more years gradually quit believing in God. It happened after, it happened let's say around age twenty when during the war, when those things happened. It was definitely not made any easier when I kept on praying and praying uh, as intense and as much as I could for the sake of my, safe

return of my family. Uh, and uh, then later on uh, very gradually my religious beliefs were replaced by a more humanist, secular philosophy of life.

This in spite of the Orthodox upbringing you had.

Right.

That must have been a um, a time of mental turmoil of some sort.

Those seven years? It was a turmoil in many different ways. I was extremely depressed uh, after the war. Uh, I, I went uh, one year I stayed in Holland and then I uh, went illegally to Israel and worked for a few month in 1946 there and then I went into the kibbutz. But I—in the kibbutz the, the ultimate uh, point where I would not go to the prayers anymore, would not believe in God anymore occurred.

W…was there ever a point during uh, during or after the war when you stopped feeling that the badge was some sign of…

Of pride?

pride?

I've never stopped feeling that uh, David star is a uh, sign, symbol of pride.

So it's not a question of stop, of being, Jewishness…

No, I, I… As I mentioned uh, someone tried to convert me. No deal, I said. Um, being Jewish to me means to belong to that group of people that have so many things in common, history, tradition, a religion up to a certain point in my case. And uh, some people continue that belief, others uh, are Reform, Conservative, others are human secularist. I am uh, probably as liberal as any Jew can be and still consider himself a Jew. It, it's almost like uh, not exactly genetic because we

know better than that. But it's uh, it's like an ethnic thing for me. I fought in the Independence War in Israel. I was uh, not religious at that time.

Let me go back again then. What was it like in hiding?

In hiding, it was adjusting to uh, difficult circumstances in a nutshell. Uh, [pause] can you stop it for a second?

[interruption in interview]

The other boy who escaped together with me stayed at least several weeks there. After a relatively short time, he became so homesick for his mother that he requested to be permitted to join his mother in Westerbork. This in itself was an extremely potentially dangerous thing because he could be caught, he could be tortured, he could uh, divulge. Um, we were very careful at the beginning. And I believe as one of the things that was decided by the farmer is that uh, from now on, instead of me sleeping in a place that would be right away visible, it would be in a place that would be invisible to the outsider. Um, there was an entrance hall through the farm. At the end of the entrance hall there was a toilet. So many toilets in my story of life. The ceiling of the toilet was made out of not very thick wood. It could be cut and sawed and hinges could be applied so it could be moved up. So you get already the access to a particular place. One more thing that was necessary is to take the left wall of the entrance hall, which stopped at the ceiling of the first floor That wall didn't go any higher. There was there a ceiling of that um, entrance hall and it became a place where we would sleep on. He built with bricks until the inverted uh, V shaped roof, which was right on top of that. It was not—it was a low farmhouse. So we got there, and in that space we could only be

reached from the outside and unless you took meticulous measurements, you wouldn't know that there must have been a place like that. It was never discovered.

Cramped, sounds like.

It was about like this uh, how would you call it? A little bit over a yard wide. The length was long enough for, four people. At one time there were…

[interruption in interview]

This other couple, the husband, wife and their um, little girl, is it?

She was uh, thirteen—fourteen-year-old teenager when she came.

How did that come about? The same way that you had arrived at the farm?

The farmer was uh, the farmer was a young farmer. He had gotten married not too long ago. When I arrived their baby was maybe six weeks old. Um, his parents had a farm with several cows. They were much better off than this farmer, than the son. So he was interested in uh, additional income. So when uh, he was offered to—this lady with her anarchist helper and she left after a few months uh, and when this Jewish family came, he gladly accepted. It would mean so much more money for him.

D…do you think that he was aware that he himself and his family were in danger by hiding Jews?

I am sure that he knew. Um, however the fact that I was more safe in the hiding place, the secret hiding place was safer for him too. However, his need for money was quite high because later on, his wife's brother-in-law brought several times cows to that farmhouse to be slaughtered there. And at one occasion I remember

that the—okay, I must explain first about the village. The village was on both sides of a long road. One farm here, another there, and so on. It was very long, maybe five or seven miles long. It was reported to us that at the very end, which was closer to the, let's say the center of Holland, because we were the last farmhouse next to the dike of that inner uh, Z…sea of Holland. We were really at the, at the end of civilization there. It were, the rumor was mentioned by one farmer to the other. They had their grapevine, literally. And they said it was some German there that was questionable or could not be trusted. While they were in the middle of slaughtering the cow, two or three men with bloody rubber boots climbed, not using as we usually did a ladder to go in the hiding place but the walls to climb up there on the pipe from the Niagara uh, which was there. Do you know what Niagara? The, the flushing…

Flushing.

Flushing. Uh, and uh, and in order to get up there. They would have—we'd, we'd have been given away by that, right away. So it was a mixture of one hand yes, and he deserved I would say immeasurable credit. On the other hand uh, he stretched his, his and our luck at times. Fortunately it didn't go wrong. If it had gone wrong, wow. It would have been terrible of course. Both for him and us.

And he got you food. The woman brought you food?

We were—I was a member of the family there. I beca...I, I became a member of the family. When I was alone they even let me uh, go outside and walk outside in the garden, the land around it, in quotes, because you don't look Jewish. When the other lady, the first lady came, she looked Jewish. Equality. She was kept inside, I

was kept inside too. When the Jewish family with the daughter came, same thing. We were not permitted to go outside.

Did you have at any point, have false identity papers?

I got false identity papers only after the aborted attempt to counterattack next to Arnhem in 1944. When that didn't work and the Dutch population of Arnhem, we evacuated. I got papers which "proved" that I was one of the evacuees from there.

How did, how did that come about? Was that on, was it Mad Tuesday or…

It was um, it was, it was probably way later. Because the Mad Tuesday occurred—and I didn't know about that, being in hiding there—it was way before, when they approached southern Holland and the Germans thought that all of Holland would be liberated. Instead of that, only the southern part was

Ah.

liberated. And, and it took quite awhile before they made the plans for the uh, uh, drop in the action uh, in the area of Arnhem, which didn't succeed.

Tell me how you got the false papers.

I got the false papers from the underground. This was a, a heaven sent uh, occasion to uh, type up papers and I have—I still have that original. And uh, I had right from the beginning, I had assumed a false name which utilized my two last initials. I'm SWM, Simon Wolf Maroko. Wolf or Ze'ev Maroko. So I kept, I left off the S and W for William and M for Master. And that name in Dutch is on my uh, false ID. With that I could qualify for uh, food ration coupons, which was extremely important, becoming more and more important then.

Mm-hm.

Because the Germans started punishing all of Holland by not permitting any uh, food to be uh, transported. I didn't know so much about it. In fact, there was one occasion, probably around that time, that on a Sunday, I went with the farmer to visit his parents and they had cows there. So they had one huge container with milk and they knew I was hungry and uh, they were hungry too, but uh, they permitted me to drink as much of that milk, which had been standing, so it had become cream practically, the top layer. They let me drink as much as I wanted, which I did. But for several months after that I couldn't even hear the word milk.

So now you were, you were, you were not really in hiding at this point, you…

I was every night in hiding. In fact, later on our hiding place was used by the son of a neighbor, Catholic, who had to hide in order not to be sent to Germany. And there was another relative of the farmer's wife who was there in hiding for the same reason. And there were sometimes—and he was Protestant and me being a Jew, still very Orthodox then. Interesting, we had some—most of our subjects were about food because we didn't have enough food. We were dreaming about food then. But there were some religious arguments there. Can you guess between who? Between the Catholic and the Protestant.

Protestants. [laughs]

That's why ???. ???.

How long did this go on? This was in…

I started uh, my hiding episode in August '43 and it lasted 'til May '45, 'til the end of the war. I was there all the time. At one time, when another relative of the farmer's wife was hiding in that uh, hiding place, when we had to use at night a

pail to urinate in, I must have missed the target. I'll explain how we found out. I came down when the time was—arrived in the morning when it was permitted to come out, which was usually around nine or ten. We, we were kept there quiet long because—safe better safe than sorry. Uh, this is how the farmer's wife thought probably. I urinated myself and I noticed a red color of the urine, which it could be u...due to beet or whatever. I didn't pay too much attention to it. When I entered the kitchen, which was next to the entrance hall to wash myself, the farmer's wife asked, "Is anything the matter with you?" I say "No, why?" And then she pointed her finger on the wall and it was there a narrow red line. I had obviously urinated bloody urine next to the pail and it had come through the cracks betwe...of the uh, wooden uh, ceiling and so on down there. From then on, I was under doctor's care, the doctor which was called in, which was a trustworthy doctor. He said, from now on he has to stay not in that place, he has to be where he can be easily accessed. And I was given a salt-free, protein high diet. Now then pro...high protein… They, they bought a carp for me, somebody could get hold of a carp. I love carp normally. It was without salt. It was awful, the taste. But it was good protein, so I tried it. Also later on, I was introduced willy nilly by the farmer's wife to pork's fat, which I was, I was not told what it was. It was on my plate and I ate it and it tasted and it tasted excellent to me. Uh, and then later on, she said you know what you have eaten. And then from then on I quit uh, holding kosher. Uh, I was, up until that time I was keeping as kosher as I could, which mean, meant that I, I would not eat any meat. Uh, I might have some eggs for protein. I remember at one time that I was eating the peels of apples or pears

and at one time even ate the peel, the outer peel of peanuts, which somehow we had there.

While you…

And from then on, especially with the farmer doing the slaughtering there we got some parts of the organs, such as kidney and the liver and so on. I ate anything that I could.

Was this some sort of infection that you had contracted, do you think?

I—until this day I don't know whether it was an infection of the kidney, or whether it was a kidney stone, because I've had kidney stones since and also my mother had kidney stones. It could have been just a, a kidney stone acting up. But it was never uh, removed as far as I know. It may have come out wh...maybe it was a small stone that uh, I passed without noticing it. But he, I, I definitely was at that time considered in pretty serious uh, condition.

While you were there all this time um, or, or before, were you wondering about the rest of your family?

All the time.

Did you have any idea what had happened to them? What did you think?

Um, I probably… Okay, I assumed that they were sent to Poland. I only hoped that they would be—would survive. Uh, every Friday evening um, I would cry myself to sleep by saying myself Good Shabbos, which was a traditional Friday evening greeting, of course. Plus everyday praying for them. Uh, I couldn't swear to it, but I believe that I even took my tefillin with me and I was laying that tefillin there everyday, which was extremely dangerous. Um, I know you're going

to ask me about this kind of thing, so I might as well tell it now. Uh, one day I was alone with the farmer's wife and I was mending stockings, which I learned to do, in the kitchen. And I heard at the back entrance, which was the far end of the farm. I heard the farmer's wife talk to someone. And I paid attention to it and they were German. So I went right away to the second floor. Uh, after probably first seeing to it that no tell-tale signals would be left. I stayed on the second floor, I heard them walk and talk, coming in uh, to the kitchen and going on to the living room, into the bedroom. And then they came back. And I waited a little distance from the door where I had arrived at on the second floor, because I didn't know what, where they were going from there on. Maybe he would leave, maybe he would come up. The moment that I heard them come through the first steps on the stairs, I went to the far end of the second floor, which was like—I think it was, you couldn't stand there except in the middle. And there was a window at the far end, and I jumped out of that window. Later on I found out that this German had come there to um, discuss whether there would be any chance of uh, uh, locating there, of having German soldiers live there, which was done with other people. Fortunately they didn't need that or didn't want it.

Had you heard of any Jews that were discovered in hiding?

When I was the second time in the Dutch theater prison, I saw in the center, when I was on the balcony, I saw in the center were people standing and they told us, these are the uh, S cases. S…uh, Strafe—in German, punishment. Punishment cases. And they were made to stand for hours on end.

Uh. So you, you escaped at that time. A close call, you think.

Yes. Yes, it was very… You mean by the jumping out the window?

By jumping out the window.

Yes, it could have been uh, it could have been terrible. I've had more occasions like this. Uh, I tried as best as I could to keep a Jewish calendar to know when the holidays were. Uh, I might be one or two days off. But I believed it was Purim of 1945 when I was in the—sleeping in the hiding place and I woke up. I thought it was already morning. And in the morning, I believe it was a man coming to deliver bread, a baker or a person who would deliver a bread. And that was my first impression. But then I paid attention. And maybe it was even simultaneously I heard German plus that the roof, the entrance to the hiding place rose and someone came in. It was the farmer himself. What I know from my, from my own knowledge is that I got extremely scared. I was shaking. The adrenaline was obviously doing its job. My whole body was shaking. And uh, I'm fortunate that uh, they couldn't hear it. Because it was wood, it was less than half an inch thick. And uh, there were several other things that went very fortunate.

Were they looking?

A total of ten men from the Army, Navy and Air Force. They were looking for men and weapons, because Gentile men already had to work in Germany unless they had a special permit. They were critically needed or so. Uh, they fo...they entered, the farmer's wife kept them waiting until her husband had in her guesstimate safely arrived in the hiding place. Uh, so they asked her how come it takes you so long? She said, "Oh I had to get dressed and blah, blah, blah. Uh, then they saw my coat, which I had left hanging there, a man's coat in the

entrance hall. They said, "Hey, you say that your husband is in Germany, that he works there now? How come there's a man's coat there?" And this farmer's wife, who usually was considered by us of being not too bright, she said, "I do this on purpose so that if any man will come here he will believe or think that there are me...that another man is in this house." They came in the living room and found an ashtray, the Germans asked "Hey, you're alone and you said," when they asked her about smoking, she said, "I don't smoke." "Why do you have an ashtray here?" Fortunately there were no ashes in it. And she again, very fortunately, she said that my baby is playing with it. They did not even check in the toilet. They did look in that part of the farm where uh, the slaughtering had taken place way before that. But more importantly uh, there were wooden shoes there, more than was indicated by our supposed absence. Now it was—it must have been around Purim because there was a full moon, shining through a relatively small window. So you've got there the contrast between a bright spot on the floor and the other shade. And they did not see those uh, wooden shoes. It was another time that we were lucky.

Now this was Purim 1945.

This was Purim 1945.

So it's almost liberation.

Yes. I have many more details that happened before. Do you want to, me to jump back?

Sure. Why don't… Let's see…

[interruption in interview]

This is part two of an interview with Dr. Simon Maroko conducted on Wednesday, February 26, 1986 at the Jewish Community Center.

Last time we talked you mentioned a couple of things, which I'd like to go back to. One um, you said that there was someone who was going to, or told you that you would be able to get to England. And you were even um, even went so far as to write a farewell note to your family.

A letter.

A farewell letter to your family. Did you write the letter?

I actually wrote the letter.

What did you say in the letter? Do you remember?

I don't think I directly remember, but it—if I have to try and uh, guess uh, I explained to them what the situation was and that uh, I intended to do so and uh, I wished them well, something like, of that nature.

Was it a hard decision to make to, to—I realize you didn't do it, but was it a hard decision to make to…

It was hard and then not, because uh, I realize this might uh, be my life saver.

And the second thing also had to do with a letter. You said that um, you had gotten some correspondence from your parents when they were in Westerbork.

Uh, yes. There were requests for uh, food and for those uh, protective glasses against the sand storms.

Did they say anything else about what it was like in Westerbork?

I don't recall that they said anything. I, I—there is something that I re...recall regarding my younger sister who was with them at that time. Uh, I don't

re...remember what the source was, but I was somehow informed that she was working outside in the fields, in fact uh, working in a potato field. And uh, I may have mentioned it last night, but I was already uh, hidden. I asked the underground to contact her and to advise her or to convey my suggestion and advice to her to somehow to uh, run away.

Did, did…

And at that time I may already have known that she was working in the potato fields. Because I thought at least she's outside of the most uh, populated part of Westerbork. It might be easier. But, uh…

Did she run? She didn't.

I think that the time my message reached her, if at all, she had gone. She had, she had already been deported from Auschwitz. And uh, based upon the information from the Red Cross uh, she was sent to Auschwitz. By the way, about information from Red Cross.

Yeah, that was the other thing.

Did I tell you last time that I talked to a sister of the present cantor of Amsterdam by the name of Moskowitz, Moskowitz. Uh, and this sister of him had personally talked to my father in Auschwitz when my father was singing on a roof in Yiddish or cantorial songs. And uh, he was working on the roof and there were Jews, women or whatever uh, were coming to listen to him and the Germans found out and they told him to quit it. Uh, this happened, when she talked to him in person, was after the date that I was given after the war by the Red Cross as the day that

he was uh, killed. So I, I have some doubts about the validity and the reliability even of dates of the records of Red Cross.

But you got those dates from them after the war, not—they didn't send…

I got the dates from the Red Cross after the war. But after that I met this…

This woman.

eye-witness who talked to him in person, which was several months later.

Do you remember approximately when that was?

Uh, probably it was 1944.

When she had met him.

Towards the second part of '44, I believe.

Did things that you wanted to cover again, loose ends um, as you said that would be…

Actually to add to it. What I, what I left here as marked that I had not mentioned. Uh, just a little uh, vignette. Uh, the day after the Germans conquered Holland, after four days uh, my younger sister Sarah and I walked to the main post office where our postal savings account was to withdraw our monies. On the way there we saw the Germans coming in, marching into Amsterdam. Right away we, we felt that uh, it might be safer if we at least take our savings out.

Can we stop you there? What, what did you say to each other when you saw the German Army come by?

I think you asked last time also what did your parents tell you, what, what, like in this case. I don't know whether we really talked that much. We were, in a sense, a quiet, relatively quiet family. We did not do what I—today as a psychiatrist,

definitely would, I would want to know what someone else thinks, feels and what opinions that person has. Uh, if I think back uh, I could have known a lot more about my family, about my parents, my sister. I didn't even think of asking, what do you think, what did you feel, what opinion do you have?

What did…

There were some things, we assumed certain things. In other words, I can safely assume that uh, both of us were, we thought it was horrible, it was awful. We had lost the war and who knows what's going to happen to us.

That's what you felt when you saw them.

Right.

Did they, did they see you?

Did they what?

Did they see you?

The Germans?

The German troops.

Yes, we were just standing there.

Standing on…

It was the first day after they entered. They didn't even know that we are Jewish. In fact, that came up later on, that I looked Jewish. According to the farmer, I didn't look Jewish and therefore I was permitted to uh, go and walk and work outside the farm.

What else did you have to add?

Um, this is regarding 1942. This is more or less like an observation now, regarding then, in retrospect. Um, I had to develop the psychological anesthesia when hundreds, thousands of people around us were deported and I heard their names mentioned, and I had to protect myself against that. Uh, even now, at times, I have remnants of that uh, meaning that feelings of happiness even like the one when uh, ??? of sadness. I cannot permit myself at times to fully realize those feelings. It's almost like uh, that habit from then is still with me at times. Uh, sometimes I can. For uh, uh, I remember for example I was entering the ballroom after the chuppa of my son here. I was practically jumping, dancing uh, with my wife. We have it on, on the ???. I felt, I felt really uh, uh, the full extent of the joy. But there are other times that I, I know it's happening, but it's almost like it's outside of me, like I'm an observer. And I feel there may be either a similarity and possibly even a connection with what happened there. When I, I was taught don't realize the full extent of what's happening around you because it would psychologically uh, kill you.

It's a coping mechanism?

Definitely. It's a protective mechanism. I'm still keep it now with me. [pause] Did I—I told you about the story about where I hid in the uh, in the morgue?

No, you were going to tell me about that this time.

I was going to? Okay. Um, in 1943, I don't know the date. It was definitely before uh, the Razzia in—of the ghetto, in—at the central ghetto of Amsterdam. Um, I was working in the hospital and the Germans had told the Jewish Council in that, that Jewish Hospital that they needed a certain number of employees. Uh, so I was

working there and suddenly I hear over the PA that people are going to be, uh… And I have to go with the Germans and, and were given instructions where to go. And uh, slowly the names were mentioned uh, probably alphabetically. When my name was reached, the person who was doing the broadcasting said Simon Vayivrach Maroko. And rei...and repeated everything, so again, Simon Vayivrach Maroko. Well Vayivrach uh, is a Yiddish, it is uh, also perfectly good ???. Uh, it means uh, referring to uh, "And He Fled." Vayivrach. Literally it means, "And He Fled." So I got the message. And uh, I first moved as if I was going to uh, report myself where I was uh, supposed to go. And then I made a detour and ended up in the morgue uh, off the hospital. This was either in the morning or early afternoon and I stayed there for hours upon hours upon hours. And I didn't know whether the coast was clear or not. Uh, it may have been around seven or so in the evening, perhaps even later, that I saw someone passing by. And I approached the person and maybe he saw me also. But maybe I… And I asked him uh, ??? "Can I—do I still have to stay here in hiding or not?" He had, was of course very surprised to uh, notice that he was… Then he said, "No, they've gone already several hours ago." So it was one of the four or fives times that uh, my life was, my life was saved by pure uh, luck. I remember the same year uh, during Pesach. Uh, normally uh, up until then every seder was celebrated at home. Uh, that year we were asked uh, to volunteer to lead the seder for a limited number of patients in the hospital because the walls were uh, such a nature that uh, maybe thirty or forty patients could be together and there were various groups like that. And I remember that I uh, I led seder that one night for a group of patients. After I

escaped the first time from the Dutch theater prison, I stayed at home, I lived there, I cooked. I remember uh, we had lots of potatoes. In fact, they had already started sprouting. Uh, but they were still very edible. I cooked them and I think we had lots of green beans that were still left over and, and I mixed those two. And uh, so I had where to—I had a shelter and I had something to eat them. On the door that led to the street of my parents' house, I had placed after uh, the first escape a large notice which said, the inhabitant of this house—maybe even I had my name there, I, I'm not sure, but our name was on the door anyway uh, so they would have known who that was—the inhabitant of this house is still working in the Jewish Hospital. My idea was that if this is the, the end, at least it won't be Puls. Puls meaning that the house will be emptied by the uh, firm by the name of Puls, P-u-l-s, in that Puls. Uh, they would empty all the houses uh, that had been uh, that the Jews had been deported from.

A moving company, is that…

Moving company.

essentially…

they were cooperating with the Germans and then it was sent to Germany or whatever. I had put that sign out for that purpose. And one… Every night uh, we lived on the first second and third floor and we had, and it was from the third floor quite a long uh, flight of stairs. I went down and I double-locked the front door so that they would have our…

[interruption in interview]

And now I was uh, approaching downstairs uh, probably on the top, uh, not making any noise. I heard people that there are people there. So I froze there and I stayed there without moving a thing. And I heard that there was uh, a German soldier, and a girl, a woman, a woman who w…who stand up and there were men, other things, they also made a remark about that sign. And they said something like it was a Dutch saying, which I don't remember literally. And it says uh, it went, it went something like this. Where fools and idiots place their names on doors and windows or something of that nature. And I was thinking hey, you might think that I'm an idiot, but at least I'm still alive. ??? There was also an occasion then when I was alone at home and someone rang the bell. I didn't know what to do. I decided not to answer the bell because for one thing, from our third and fourth floor you could not see who it was there. You had no way of uh, looking there. Some houses in Holland are built with—there is a mirror—and you can—it's called the spy, you can spy. You can just look up and see who's standing there. We had what's called in Dutch ??? which means it's like a, a little hall which was coming off the sidewalk in that group of ???. When that bell rang, I wanted to try and see if I could know who that was. And we had a uh, ??? where we had a balcony, the door had to be opened, so all I had to do was to crawl on all fours without raising my head as much as possible. And I had a—for a split second, a peek over the balcony from the floor and I could see there must be a man standing there. And right away I went back. I don't know if the man saw me. I'll never find out probably. I had no idea who it was. It could have

been a Jew even. To this very day, I don't know, but I had decided I'm not going to give any reason. Whoever it is, I am not here. ???.

Did the officials think that you had been deported? Because your name was on a list.

On one hand the officials must have known that I was deported. On the other hand they must have found out that I was not a list of those that arrived in Westerbork. It was between the theater and Westerbork. And I didn't know whether it was a civilian or an undercover agent that was trying to find me, whatever. It could have been a Jew, I don't know. I have somehow the feeling that it might have been a Jew. But I was not in any position that I wanted to take that risk.

How were you um, you had potatoes and vegetables, correct? Was that all you were living on at that time?

I had, uh… Yes. What I had was over, was left after my parents ??? was my ??? uh. I doubt whether I could get any significant amount of food ???. I do remember one occasion which I, I wasn't to sure I mentioned last time. That uh, a lady who was at one time our maid. ??? She was born in Germany and worked with us. She came to us and she brought me some vegetables and she said that she would come back ???. Throughout all of this I believe I had every time to the services in the Great Synagogue. Morning and evening. And also went to the offices of the Jewish congregation which were um, short distance on the same block, next to the Great Synagogue, the N…New Synagogue. Uh, I did this once a month to collect my father's salary uh, relatively small part it was permitted to be taken and they gave me that. Some of it I probably sent to Westerbork to my parents and some of it I may have used for myself. Especially after already having sent from

Westerbork. And this was the money that I had with me with which I could pay the young ??? who, uh. Well we purchased the uh, door handle from the, from that ???.

Did you hear when they were sent to Westerbork?

I don't know. I probably heard.

Officially you heard?

Um, not officially. Probably the Jewish Council or people who had met him in the synagogue. I remember that at one time I was picking up my father's salary there and I talked to one of the leaders of the Jewish Council and uh, and I asked them what the advice that I do, hiding or not. I didn't get any, any advice. He was no help. I, I felt really—I was on my own from now on. ???. There was one Shabbat that I was in that Great Synagogue. I remember that the chief rabbi ??? was still there and he was preaching to us among other things that we would not dare to go in hiding. And uh, my uh, belief in Jewish clergy was dealt a serious blow by that. Even at that time without knowing what would be for me not to follow the rabbis.

Did you know anyone who had gone—made the decision to go into hiding?

For example the Jewish couple the ??? came out from underground, they drove up and uh, we had been living in a ??? parents gave their weapons ???. ??? some people who just ???.

Were you in contact with the resistance movement, the underground?

My first contact with the resistance was um, the ladies—the two ladies who were living downstairs in that, in that part of the house, the non-group. Uh, they are the owners of the house themselves, there were Jews in the house. They had one in

hiding and uh, some Gentiles were evacuated from areas that had been inundated and those two ladies were from there. And the first time I came out I talked to them and they offered to, to find place where I could hide. The first time I graciously ??? because of my fear ???.

Did you know they were Resistance people?

I was ??? They found out, they told me it was the ???, the one who selled us um, I believe he was a lawyer. He was um, active in the underground and he is the one who uh, either knew or got hold of the contractor who, from the farmer's ???. [pause]I am not sure, but I believe if I had brought my family with me, my, my parents with me, we'd all been in hiding. And that I ??? everyday, which in itself was extremely risky. It was as risky as uh, ??? under those circumstances ???. ??? my own parents which was new for me because I was just using the ??? upstairs which were already made and even though some of them might be useful for purposes that I might be ??? welfare and safety of my family, I made up with my knowledge of ??? which was ???. Um, I had someone with me when I came to the farmer. He ??? for several months. In that time I was becoming kosher and the farmer and his wife were getting concerned about me because there was very little that I could eat. And so with that money that I had, they brought one large sack of uh, rye. Now rye was real brown and out of that uh, I was taught how to eat a large arm of rye bread. ??? And so there was—it was a special for me. I remember that a sack of rye was hung from a string so that the mice wouldn't have a chance to ???. Uh, and now a little detail, not very important. Uh, especially when that first, when the Jewish family came to live with me, after the first they uh, came

there to hide themselves with the farmer ??? they were much more outspoken, their criticism of conditions, and so on. And one thing that they mentioned is this you, this farmer thinks that maybe, if you wash yourself maybe in a certain metal large container. In that same container she prepares people other food. These uh, people, the husband, wife and their wife's daughter uh, they came to stay with us for—they stayed for several months, um. I remember once when that farmer was away, probably visiting his parents on Sunday and because they looked very Jewish and they didn't, sort of stayed inside. He was away and we were, of course, all the time we were ???. We went outside and we stole some fresh red meat which we ate raw and it was yummy, it was delicious.

How many of you were you at this point in hiding?

How long? How many.

How many?

I think we were four. We were four. Husband and wife here, their daughter here, I was here and I remember at the beginning there was a uh, disagreement over where the pillow should be. I, I don't remember the pillow was first next to my head or ??? or whether it was—later on I, I remember ???.

I was going to say, in *The Diary of Anne Frank* there's lots of discussion about the bickering that went on within the close quarters and eight people. Was it that kind of thing?

We had some bickering there, I don't remember. There was always some bickering ??? but uh, I don't remember any, any long period of time or so…

Do you remember anything outstanding about the farmer?

The farmer himself? Um… It's hard to think about outstanding. I can tell, tell lots, lots of things about he was a Christian By the way, I uh, this was the first time in my life that I read the New Testament in Dutch translation.

While you were there.

While I was there. I had nothing else to...And it's also on the subject. Uh, the farmer's family owned a lot. His parents. And he had some sisters and some—one of his sisters uh, took out uh, books out of the library of one of the places which were not department. And the people who uh, the librarians, most had noticed, hey there are some radical change in her face. Some, the books that I remember there was funny subjects such as uh, naturography. Did you ??? about that? I got a, a group of other suggestion which I never had uh, before. All kinds of way of, anything I could read, rather than just reading and rereading the Bible.

Do you think that's because he was Christian that that's the reason that he…

I think ??? he said so. He needed the money, he was just married, the baby wasn't a year, ??? a few weeks old ???. And he was working. He, he worked his own little entity there. He worked also for others. Uh, at one time I was alone there, no other was there hiding. Either his own uh, wheat harvest or someone else's. It was brought in, in the ??? there was a cement floor and there he and I and me and maybe some others helped. Our technique was this. We had a stick which was a branch with a rather flat end. The other end we had in our hands and there was a particular motion there. We circulated this over our head and, and we beat the wheat harvest so that the kernels would be released. And this was the technique of uh, getting the, the wheat ???.

You chaffed it. So you helped him to farm.

I, I helped whenever I could. I, I was the ???, which I didn't know before, to help to take care of the vegetables. When I was alone he let me do it.

Did you ever have any discussion about anything?

Probably. But, uh…

Nothing you remember.

I remember that he had a uh, radio hidden uh, which we listened from time to time to the BBC, especially the Dutch ???. Uh, in 1944, on one occasion, I myself found roughly 900 Allied ???. They were going eastward. This was like the sound of music to me. Uh, that farmer also agreed to hide some property that the gypsies had brought to him. Probably ??? And one of the things was a harmonica, a ??? harmonica. I knew how to play ??? uh, they had uh, this little regular piano keys, they had one buttons. Uh, if you didn't want to figure out the system, and he permitted me to play on this. So I played on the harmonica there at times. In October 1944, after the unsuccessful Allied action where they tried to break through into Arnhem, it became much easier to create false I.D. papers. So the mayor of the city ??? where I was hidden, he uh, wrote false paper testifying that I was evacuated from Arnhem and that I arrived on such and such a date and it was registered. So I became at least from that part on legal and my address and work place was on there.

And what was the name you took?

Huh?

What was the name you took under those false papers?

My false name was uh, based upon the two last names ???. My full initials are W.M. For Simon ??? uh, and the W. became Wilhelm, Wilhelm in Dutch, and M. became Master, in Dutch means Wilhelm Master. And that was the name that was on there. ??? short for William. Uh, around that time, when the southern half of Holland was already liberated. I had what I probably should call now fantasies of walking my way across the lines to meet the Allied forces, because I was getting impatient. On the other hand, it never crossed my mind what I would do in case somehow the Germans would be successful and not lose the war. I never thought like that.

How far do you think you were from the Allied lines?

Not far. ???. In, in miles it would be something like uh, maybe eighty, sixty miles. I think I could walk there in a few days. Uh, now in hindsight I think it's better I didn't try it. It was very risky ???. In 1945, ??? uh, I was again alone there with the farmer and the farmer felt since I didn't look Jewish that I could go outside. The canals, the relatively narrow, maybe a few yard wide canals were there for irrigation, they're all closing. And by the way, the location of the farmhouse was the last farmhouse next to the dike of the inner ??? the Zuiderzee. So we were very remote from...It was one of the best places. Uh, we went over the dike and there ??? and the farmer told me um, it's okay. And I said "Hey, there's a German soldier there." He said, We know him, he's all right." So I ???. And on the way back, while we were skating and we reached a place where the water on both sides was visible. And in the middle there was a narrow spot that was ice. And I told him, "Hey, uh, is that going to be all right?" He said, If I can cross it you will

be able to too. So he crossed it and I followed it and I went promptly through the ice. I made it to that side. I was, of course, completely drenched and I don't know if I ran back to the farm or I walked whatever. I was left ??? outside.

Did you have any contact with his wife?

Um, she was the one who uh, was most of the times with us when he, when the farmer himself was working outside. She, she's the one who uh, who told us do this, don't do this. Sometimes, especially when uh, I remember when the, the ??? Jewish family was hidden also. We were told in the middle of the day, hey ??? because??? because some Germans had been seen. And uh, especially the others. They were, they felt it was terrible, they felt almost harassed. But uh, my philosophy was anything goes and not to say no. Maybe my background of—that I was raised in Holland. I had heard from my parents what life was like in Eastern Europe. In contrast to these three, especially the man himself. The Jew was. And he was a Dutch Jew. And he uh, experience, yes, you must be flexible, you must be struggle in order to ???.

This other Jewish family, you had known them before?

Never before.

???

??? I remember the conversations I had with this man. He had been a businessman in so many different things. At one time he was selling vegetables by the uh, railroad cars whole...wholesale. And at another time he was selling advertisements for magazines and he was telling me how he was ???. Extremely

interesting things, but uh, my background was not in merchant, I mean, commerce or anything like that.

Some of the students that we talk to when ??? um, who ask about the possibility of Jewish resistance in all this.

Mm-hm.

How would you respond to those questions?

Um, the closest I came to ??? I needed to ??? collect the weapons that had been dropped. I said, "I won't be long here ???." That's the closest that I came in practice. Outside of that I didn't know anything about weapons.

It was a general case with…

This was the probably the case with most… There may have been some parts of the, uh, Dutch Jews that knew, let's say, boxing or some ??? or some ???, anything about self defense. But I didn't know a thing.

So there was really no possibility.

There was no—I was sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old at that time. Eighteen was very young. And before I was in hiding I was sixteen, seventeen. What did I know about organizing anything. I was still very much a boy.

One, one other question about earlier, a much earlier event. Did your, your family register when the Jewish….?

We regi...we registered like everyone else.

Everyone else registered as well. Were there any of you, do you know if there were anybody, people who refused to registered, who decided that it would be better not to register?

At that time I didn't know. Later on I found out there were some, and those were the people who ??? much earlier than I.

Were any of them caught when they registered?

I never heard.

Why is…

But we knew that uh, it was very clear the experience of Jews that had been at the ??? in Germany ??? experience. Also ??? We knew our lives would be alone. ???

But do you think it would have been wiser for people not to register?

??? I have a complete different opinion now. Uh, I think that that the only lesson that can be learned from that is that Jews like any other group has to be prepared for the worst. If necessary you know how to organize in self defense.

And not register.

Not register, yes definitely, that's the first appropriate—the first noncompliance.

I don't remember if I asked you about the general strike. I think I did.

You asked something about this. I knew it was, I heard some uh, something sounded like machine guns far away. I had no idea. Events were going over my head. I was a seventeen-year-old then who uh, who was not very world wise.

The trams stopped moving and…

I don't really ???

Um, you mentioned a couple of times when um, the farmer's wife surprised you with her quick thinking.

On one occasion. On other occasions we had a very low opinion of her IQ. In Holland farmers had a reputation of not being very intelligent. ???

But when the Germans came she seemed to…

It was almost like a miracle. Unbelievable. They ??? Saved my life, for sure. And her husband.

Okay, where are we in your chronology right now?

It's '45, and ???. In fact the shipping of flour and margarine was permitted by the Germans to be delivered uh, originally from Sweden. Um, I had my coupons which I got as the result from having that false I.D. from the army. I have the original here with me. And on the back of that uh, they stamped it and the person was given a few others ???. And based upon that, those coupons, I also got my share. And the white flour bread. Plus the margarine was like, like ???. It was unbelievable. I don't know. Sweets have uh, seems they always occupied a soft spot in my heart. Later on we saw that obviously Allied plane with, with a English or American signs on the wings. It came flying over very low over the dike. And we waved and saw that the pilot was waving back. These were things ???. Um, very close to the end of the war… In fact, after the war in England and German Strike ??? the farmer's wife was ???. And after that Allied planes were permitted by the Germans to drop ???.

After ???

This was at the end of the ???. I remember around that time I had a weekly ration of bread which was about uh, maybe an inch thick and we wanted to slice the bread thinly. Therefore, on purpose we let it become very dry, as hard as a stone. So we, we sliced a piece of it up. ??? the bread because it was very good. We were in a ??? never formally ???. Berlin radio ???. One day the farmer and I, we

realized the war is over because we could listen to the radio and they said that ??? soldiers already had been seen uh, several miles from ???. So there came a day when I woke up and the ???. On that day I did not get up. I was as depressed as a person can be and did not want to face the reality of most likely ???. I dreaded the thing. As much as I was looking forward to it, I dreaded it because I had the feeling that this might ??? that they were not my parents…

Had you thought about them while you were hiding.

Everyday, everyday. I prayed for them everyday.

Did you really believe they were going to survive?

They're going to survive? I hope. The day I st…stayed in bed, I didn't eat at all that day. I was too depressed. And I start again and I come out and I will never in the process of getting over the loss of them. Long lifetime is not enough to get over this, which was not made any easier for myself. The information from the Red Cross at least where my father was ??? and I remember I was already in 1946 in Palestine, which I went to in June '46, illegal Aliyah. Uh, I was still orthodox and it was the High Holidays in Sukkos, I was in a little synagogue in Tel Aviv and all the people who did not ???

[interruption in interview]

And it was really later that I in my heart had to make the painful decision, yes, I have to consider them as dead. It was, I don't know how long, maybe years after the war. Maybe two years or more even that I had already made that decision.

Did you say Kaddish then?

Um, by that time I was already uh, getting so unorthodox that I didn't believe in that anymore. And um, I went, after the war was over, after a certain number of days I stayed with the farmer, there was some bandying about that I would find some work and so I had to stay in that area. Uh, I couldn't even make a decision, yes or no. I felt completely ambivalent about anything at that time. Um, but I did go, I found a way to get to Amsterdam. And I came to uh, my parents' house and there were people living there, the same as uh, on the first—the lowest two floors uh, those two ladies had uh, lived in our place, other people had been evacuated from a place that was inundated. And they told me that when they came in they found uh, like shards, pieces of cantorial records that had been thrown down and were considered of no value. But they gave me uh, part of a tallit uh, of my father, the silver embroidered—I don't know what the technical term for it would be, and I don't know where it is now. But uh, also, and they give up ??? on the parchment, on leather. And uh, I gave this to my uncle here who is still orthodox and he has that. Very beautiful, made in, hand, obviously handwritten in Poland. These were the only things that were left there. All the other things had been stolen from the hiding place between the floors. The—those that uh, got hold of it, they had much easier than, than we had because we had to go on ladders and reach the, the spot from below between the two floors. They just opened the floor on, on the floor above and, and it was uh, easily uh, accessible from there. Uh, aft… Do you want to know anything about after the war?

Sure.

I was adopted by a um, in quotes, adopted, by a Jewish family from Poland who said that they knew my parents. I, I didn't know them. And, uh…

From Tarnow?

They were from Poland.

Where?

I don't know where from Poland, but uh, they had lived before the war in Amsterdam, they had known my father. I was there alone. I went there to the Polishe shul, the Polish synagogue there where they went. And uh, uh, they offered me to stay with them. Uh, I became like a member of their family. Uh, during Yom Kippur of 1946 uh, I found—or before it—I found out that there were Jewish Canadian soldiers who needed someone to serve as a cantor for the high holidays and it was already after Yom...Rosh Hashanah, but there needed to be someone for Yom Kippur. There were two chaplains, one was from Canada the other was from New York. And uh, I contacted them and they made me uh, sing and uh, they asked me how much do you want. I mentioned uh, off the top of my head, a high figure six hundred guilders and they on the spot agreed to it. So I uh, led the service as a cantor for the Jewish Canadian soldiers in the world famous Concert Gabow, which is the concert hall for the famous concert. And I, I also blew the Shofar, which I never learned before. I learned it in a jiffy. And uh, one of the fringe benefits was uh, before uh, uh, leading the service, I could sleep in the quarters which were part of the, of the Jewish chaplaincy or whatever. And I got their food before Yom Kippur and after Yom Kippur. I may have got their food too because I was not going to uh, ride—drive there or ride there from where

I lived. So we stayed there over night on Yom Kippur. And um, I remember during the service that I saw some flashlights. And, I'm going really way off on a tangent.

All right.

In 1979 I met a lady in Jerusalem in the Plaza hotel whose husband was one of those two chaplains. And she got hold of the pictures and I have them here, where it, it's showing that I was, as a cantor. Though it was many years later.

Can I—let me just stop you for a second. Um, do you remember what went through your mind as you davened that day? What went, what was going through your mind as you conducted that service?

Um, I'm sure I thought about my relatives. That's uh, one of the things you are referring to. I felt I was stepping my father's footsteps who had been the chief cantor. In fact I was uh, singing as best as I could remember the, the, the melodies that he was using during the service.

What were your feelings at that point about surviving?

About surviving?

You said you were very—last time too you said you were very depressed.

I was very depressed. I was offered around that time by someone to go back to the study of medicine. Um, the offer was, I would say uh, extremely gracious. I know they meant it. But I was in no mental condition to uh, go back to study at that time. What I was doing at that time was the following. In the Polishe shul where I went to. Um, by the way, the Great Synagogue was unusable there. The, the roof had been removed from it, it couldn't be used. So I went to that Polishe shul and

uh, I met there someone who was a Hungarian Jew and he knew that I was without any income and I was looking for work because I didn't want just to be a, a living there, and supported by others without doing anything. So uh, he had a factory of uh, bookbinding and I started working there. He learn...he taught me the tricks of the trade of uh, bookbinding. It was called cartoonage, because carton uh, was used for a, for a binding for books. And this was, by the way, also the first job that I did when I came to Palestine and uh, tried to make a living.

I guess I w…I'm curious to know if you felt happy to have survived, if you were…

I don't think I had any feelings about that at that time. I, I felt much more depressed than happy. I knew it was the right thing that I was doing, but it was not the way I had hoped for. Because this was uh, some, this was let's say short of being killed myself, this was one of the worst options that I had, to go through life alone at least quite a few years, at least until I got married, let's say.

What happened from there?

Pardon?

What happened…

Yes.

from there?

In this Polish uh, synagogue I met an older brother of the eighteen-year-old boy who went with me in hiding the second time when I fled and I told him about it.

And the eighteen-year-old had gone back to West… He'd gone to Westerbork.

He, he did not return. And there's another thing. Uh, the first few weeks and so after the war I had no source of income. I was given a chance to make some

money by selling lists of survivors. The Jewish newspaper uh, some of the people they had restarted it and one of the things that they were printing were lists of Jews had come back to Holland from the concentration camps. So it gave me a chance to uh, know first and if, the first thing of course was looking for a family name and then to sell others. And uh, I made probably not bad money because I guess I looked so depressed people must have had pity upon me. Because I remember at one time that it was going better than I expected, it was selling like hotcakes. [pause] At that time I noticed uh, on the subject of not being able to go back to medicine. I had noticed uh, psychologically, a difficulty of remembering nouns. I have no idea whether it was malnutrition or the psychological uh, stress and trauma. But I had difficulty remembering nouns and I would be inclined to enlarge it and say anything that had to do with anyway before war. In other words, it was so nice then and now it was so less nice. Therefore I was again, as a shield and protective mechanism, I was unable to remember. It was, it was psychologically too painful. And in the process probably I, I didn't remember names of simple objects. And I had to almost relearn it.

Not just names of people and places.

Just ??? objects. This was—it was another consideration why I felt that I know, if I go back to learning, I have a hard time remembering anything. How can I learn medicine? How can I study medicine? I also had a difficulty, which I had for quite awhile, I would say maybe several years after the war. Not at all times, but from time to time difficulty talking to other people. And this was um, it was a uh, almost like a chore. It was extremely difficult for me. The way I understood it was

that I was so angry at the world—in quotes, for letting this to happen, that I was angry at anyone and therefore I did not feel like I had to talk to them or wanted to talk.

Did you ever express that to anyone?

Not at that time. In fact uh, with twenty-twenty hindsight I definitely could have benefited from uh, from psychotherapy. I didn't even know that there was such a thing possible. I'm now in a position to help lots of depressed people.

Do you think that has something that your state after the war might have something to do with your chosen profession?

I did not get that.

Do you think that this depression that you were in after the war might have had some influence on your choice of a profession?

Very well possible. Very well possible. Uh, like the commercial goes, doing what we do best. When I was in medical school one of the things that I must have done that I understand now with twenty-twenty understanding uh, was when I had to do a model uh, record uh, on a psychiatric patient. And this took, it was a process took several weeks, I cured them in process, I believe. So I knew I was doing very well in that. This is probably why I went back to that.

You said, you, you made your way to Israel eventually, or to Palestine.

Yes.

How did that happen?

Um, I uh, joined after the war, the Agudat Israel, or more precisely Poale-Agudat Israel that means the working, the labor arm of the very Orthodox movement uh,

being still very Orthodox myself at that time. And one day I heard one of the other uh, activist there, the leaders there saying that so and so had gone to—left Holland to go to Palestine. I said, "Why didn't you tell me?" He said, "We didn't know you were interested." And it was just a matter of days before uh, I was given the information and I was put on my route to enter Paris and I made it through. By the way, I have written up in other people's books uh, the episode when I went from the theater to the nurse's door to spend the night there. It's in Leesha Rose's book *The Tulips are Red*, on page 110. And then there is a very leftist American author I.F. Stone.

Sure.

He wrote the—he went with us during that uh, illegal boat trip from France to Palestine. And uh, he doesn't exactly write about me in person, but uh, I was on that boat too.

And you were in the war for Independence. Well, how did you get in?

When I got there. Okay. You want to hear details or more roughly uh, description?

Mm, details.

Details? Uh, I had a first cousin of my father living in Tel Aviv, plus a half sister of my father was living in Kiryat Chaim next to Haifa. Uh, when—okay, when I arrived with the boat ??? into Haifa, first we went on a hunger strike because we were told, if you are in that harbor of Haifa, you won't be counted among the monthly quota yet. So we want to do… And we found out that if we are in Atlit camp that we would be counted. So we first, for one day we, we had the hunger

strike and then they took us uh, to that Atlit camp. I stayed there for two months. Um, after that I was sometime with my aunt and then I stayed most of the time until I went into a kibbutz uh, with my father's first cousin in Tel Aviv. Um, you ask about—what was the question? How I…

How you, how you got in and then got involved in the war.

In the war. Okay uh, the economic situation then got bad. So after some time the economic situation caused by the British uh, curfew and so on uh, led to that the factory for bookbinding where I was working at that time had only work about two days out of a week. So I was looking for alternates. Now on the one hand I did sing as a cantor in Jerushen Synagogue on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Chanukah 1946. Um, they paid me exactly what it cost me to pay in the hotel where I was spending the night. I was very, very disappointed there. Around the same time I also was looking for somewhere to go, such as a kibbutz, 'spe...in particular one where there would be Dutch members. So I ended up in Kibbutz Kvutzat Yavneh, where there were lots of Dutch uh, youths. Um, I stayed there from oh, beginning of 1947. Uh, in the, in the, before the Independence War in '47 I was one of ten members of the kibbutz. We were trained by the Haganah. We were called Polom. This is not the same as Palmach, but the same letters. We were like the local storm troops. If any action was called for, we would be sent out. We were uh, we went out in front of the buses to make sure that no bombs had been planted. And uh, also there were some actions against the neighboring Arabs, who were causing trouble. We were the ones who did it. So ten days training altogether. And uh, when Independence War came uh, our ten members of the Polom, plus also from

other kibbutz in the area were all uh, told to volunteer and we became part of the Tzahal at that time, the beginning of Tzahal. We saw action in several places, and one occasion uh, out of the ten members of our kibbutz, one got killed, one got seriously wounded, and one got lightly wounded. So I was one of the surviving seven. And um, I was in Negba at the moment that an Egyptian gun—artillery shell hit the water tower and the water came streaming out. So I was there during the Independence War at various locations and at various times.

Were you—had you decided at that point to become an Israeli citizen?

At that time I was a complete Zionist, which I am still, up to a point. And uh, I wanted to stay there. I either would stay a member of the kibbutz, but at least I, I, I thought I would stay there. I became somewhat dis...disillusioned later on when uh, I found out number one that the chances of me finding a life partner in the kibbutz were very slim. There's just no… I tried but it didn't work out. And uh, also when I found out that uh, my chances of ever becoming a doctor were completely nil if I would stay in the kibbutz. It never entered their mind that it would be a nice investment if they had sent me to the medical school in Jerusalem at that time. In fact I tri...when I was already uh, married, my father-in-law, who was a physician and uh, at one time the president of Kudat Cholim Jerusalem, he tried to get me into medical school in Jerusalem. And it was just impossible. So I had to study elsewhere.

So you met your life partner…

I met my life partner…

in Israel.

not in the kibbutz but in a different kibbutz after I left this one. But I already had gone out of the kibbutz. After I left the kibbutz uh, I served about thirteen month in the Tzahal. I was—ended up in the Air Force um, taking care of batteries, charging batteries. And they offered me to sign up, which I declined. And uh, then I was working in the trade that I had learned when I was in the kibbutz, which was first being a plumber, installator as they call it there and after that as an electrician. And I worked for an electric uh, contractor in Kibbutz Mishmarot and we were working there six days a week. And we were eating there in the kibbutz. And one day um, someone said, "Hey, there's over there a young lady who has a sister-in-law who's from Holland." So I went up to talk and the rest is history. She became my life partner.

This is Ruth.

Right.

Uh, at what point did you decide to leave Israel?

I decided to leave Israel when uh, my uncle offered me… Okay, my uncle he was from Poland. He had been in northern Russia during the World War II. He lost his family and children. And he ended up in Tashkent, close to China, eastern Asian part of Russia. And then uh, he came back in the DP camps and he ended up in Detroit because his second wife, his present wife had a brother in Detroit, by the name of Tintenfish, which means uh, uh, octopus in Yiddish. Uh, so he offered me to go back to medicine. And I was about twenty-nine and I remember that I was uh, debating with myself. And I thought, wow, that's going to be so extremely difficult. And then I told myself, yes but, if you are going to be past it

and you look back you will think it was worthwhile. And so I decided to go into it. It wasn't easy, but it was, it was worth it.

This was what in 1952?

I went back to medicine in 1953. Ac...actually in 1952 I studied for two semesters at Wayne University. You paid attention that I did not say Wayne State. It was before it was Wayne State.

Before Wayne State.

I got even on the Dean's list the second semester. The first semester I missed it because the number of credits I took were just not enough for that. The second semester I made sure I would get on the Dean's list.

And you spoke English.

I spoke English, yes. And I went back to Amsterdam in '53 to—I was reaccepted to medical school. My uh, exam that I had uh, passed in 1941 of the pre-med in Amsterdam was still recognized. And I went back to medicine and uh, I also got married in December '53. And my two oldest children were born there.

So Ruth went with you then.

She came to Amsterdam in December from Israel. I went back from Detroit. She,

I see.

and we met in Amsterdam and that's where we spent six years.

And what made you decide to come back here?

Um, I had—when I was here for those two semesters, I had uh, I had, liked the life here. For sure the financial part as well, but uh, also otherwise. And I thought I had much more future as a physician here than in Israel.

Let me ask you a question about um, uh, the present. The, the, the—do your experiences during the war come back to you? Are there things that you do during a routine day or places you go past that touch off an association or a memory that interferes with, uh…

Hardly ever.

Was that always the case?

Uh, if you mean to ask if I have something like nightmares about the war, no I never—I don't recall I ever had those.

Well you did mention that um, you felt that there was this reaction to uh, um, happy occasions, which you didn't fully engage in them. And then is there always—at your son's um, wedding, were there some thoughts about the past that kept you from enjoying everything to the fullest?

Yes, this is something that uh, no one probably has observed. But when I was standing there next to the chuppa, I was crying with tears. I was thinking of my parents, how they would have felt if they had been alive now.

What about holidays? Do you still celebrate the holidays?

Uh, we celebrate the holidays um, I would say in the, in the Israeli way, the secular Israeli traditional way. I do uh, lead the seder in a very modern version. And uh, for example my children um, whenever there was, whenever they still were dependent upon me and, which is still my youngest, for Hanukkah, Purim uh, any of the other holidays, I send a special present uh, to remind them of that and designate it as such.

Tell me a little bit about your children.

Um, my oldest child is, is my son. And he is lawyer now. Uh, he seems to like his practice of law, of general law. He has an office in Troy. Um, interesting point is that sometimes some of my patients in my practice end up with him. I do a lot of marital counseling in my office. Um, and some of those when they say they need a lawyer, I ask them do you mind if I were to mention my son. In other words, I want to do it the right way. I say, you have no obligation to go to him. And uh, so far there are several that have uh, quite praised him, which make, makes me kind of proud of him of course.

Does he have any children?

His wife is expecting a baby in September. We go the news not that long ago.

And your other children?

Uh, my oldest daughter is in uh, Be'ersheeva. She um, is very Zionist. In fact uh, the decision by her to leave here came as a shock to my wife and to me. She was in New York and it was either that she would get an answer from some institutions, banks, etc. that they would offer her a job. And if not, then she would go on. And uh, then I didn't realize that she would not, I thought she first would come back here, but from New York, she did not come back, she did not say goodbye. But she went straight to uh, to Israel. She is married now. Uh, I have a granddaughter. And, uh… [pause] What shall I say about her, uh…

What's her name?

Her name is Armonit. The name uh, was chosen by me when uh, my wife was still pregnant with her. And I was on my bicycle going to medical school to

lectures and I was passing a park with chestnut trees which were in, which were blooming. And her name means chestnut blossom.

And what are your children's name?

Uh, my oldest uh, is Eli. His official first name, because he changed his name, was Israel Eliahu, which was literally the name of my father. Then uh, when we naturalized here he had a chance to choose a different name and then he chose uh, to make it Eli to simplify it. But he knows he was named after my father. ??? My youngest child born in ??? is a girl, Doris. Just any general name. And uh, she's studying law. She has already received a job offer. And to my wife and my satisfaction, she'll work not that far from home. She'll be in Chicago and not in Boston or some other far away place.

Have you told your children about um, your experiences in the 1940s?

I have told my children some. I remember on one occasion that my oldest daughter Monique, she interviewed me similar to what you are doing here. But in, in a different way. I don't remember if she was a senior in high school or a college student at the time. But all my three children they are U of M graduates.

So they know about…

They know…

what you went through.

they, I would say significantly. Maybe not all the details. Maybe some of the details I mentioned on this tape if they hear it, it might fill in some of the things. Because whatever's on the tape is probably all that I can remember. There may be

some not that important details that might sooner or later remember. But nothing significant has been left out.

Just one or two more things. Um, what was your reaction to the exhibit, the Anne Frank exhibit that's here now?

Come to think of it uh, first thing uh, guard up. Move the guard up. In other words, to have your guard, to have your guard down means that, you are, you are vulnerable, right?

Mm-hm.

I made myself invulnerable. Don't let this get too, too close to you because it might be psychologically uh, im...unpleasant or even unbearable. And anything that has to do with this, I have to uh, screen my feelings from this, otherwise I would be in tears twenty-four hours around the clock for indefinitely. And uh, I would not be surprised if many other Holocaust survivors feel just like I do.

But you're participating in it?

Yes.

You're part of the…

But you know that uh, uh, first I said yes and then I said no. Because one day I was uh, during our daily walk with my wife I was thinking about something and while walking and suddenly there was, tears came to my eyes. And I said, oh no, I don't want that. The answer was no at that time. And then I thought, like at the beginning I said, I don't care. Let the chips fall where they may. This must be done.

Why do you think it must be done?

If it were only for the reason that there are some people that try to influence others into believing that it never happened. By the way, this was also the reason why after quite a number of years after World War II that Leisha Rose, that she upon her, I think one of her children's requested that she put her memories down in a book, *The Tulips are Red*.

Anything else you want to add to this?

I guess that's it. Oh I could go on and who knows how ???.

Well, maybe we'll do some more. Okay, we can stop for today anyway. Thank you very much Mr. Maroko.

You're welcome.