

Aaron K. Brown, Cassandra Corbett, Hannah Park, and Samuel Timothy Tankersley (editors)

*Hungry in Hitler's Holland:  
Frans Buikstra's Childhood Memories (2002)*

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California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

The Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH).

Project: From Hitler's Europe to the Golden State.

O.H. 3090.1.

Oral Interview with Frans Buikstra, conducted by Omar Dominquez,  
April 19, 2002, unspecified location.

*Introduction*

The oral history transcribed below belongs to a collection held in CSUF's Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH), titled "From Hitler's Europe to the Golden State." The interview with Frans Buikstra was conducted by Omar Dominquez on April 19, 2002, at an unspecified location. It is 55 minutes and 14 seconds long, and it is archived as a digital recording/audio file at COPH (see "Copyright Advisory" below). The verbatim transcript edited here was prepared in the fall of 2024 by Aaron K. Brown, Cassandra Corbett, Hannah Park, and Samuel Timothy Tankersley.

Frans Buikstra was born on March 11, 1937. Based on the interview's references to local coal mining, the close proximity of both the German and the Belgian border, the considerable distance between Buikstra's original home and Amsterdam, as well as a hint in a 1997 *Los Angeles Times* [article](#), his family appears to have resided in Limburg, the southernmost province of the Netherlands. In his oral history, Buikstra recounts what life was like during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945. He grew up in a strict, religious family that consisted of his parents, four brothers (including himself), and three sisters. Since his father was a coal miner, the Nazis considered him essential for the German war effort, which is why the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) kept a close eye on him. However, this did not stop Buikstra's father from actively participating in the Dutch Underground resistance movement: he kept a concealed radio, sheltered a Jewish family, and smuggled food to family members in Amsterdam. Buikstra's interview covers a wide range of topics, including food rationing, curfews, and air raids. He mentions Nazi atrocities, such as a massacre of Dutch civilians (presumably at Woeste Hoeve in March 1945), the Holocaust, and the sending of German soldiers to the Eastern Front as a form of punishment. He also refers to specific World War II events, including the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands (May 1940), the United States' initial neutrality (until December 1941), the Allied forces' liberation of the Netherlands (starting in September 1944), the Battle of the Bulge (December 1944–January 1945), the "Hunger Winter" of 1944–1945, and the postwar treatment of Dutch collaborators. Buikstra highlights the Dutch comradery during these times of adversity, and he fondly recalls his family's interaction with Allied soldiers stationed in the Netherlands after the war.

Frans Buikstra's oral history should be of particular interest to polemologists, sociologists, and historians of World War II, especially those focusing on the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands outside major metropolitan areas, as well as those interested in the perspective of individuals who were children during these years and their respective memories.

Only identifiable individuals, locations, and technical terms have been referenced in the footnotes, usually when they first appear. Dutch words have been italicized (and translated in the footnotes, when they first appear). Italics have also been used for spoken emphasis.

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Aaron K. Brown of Huntington Beach, California, earned his B.A. in History (2024) at the University of California, Davis (UCD). He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).*

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Cassandra Corbett of Fullerton, California, earned her B.A. in English with minors in Linguistics and History (2025) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where she is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society) and serves as the president of the Linguistics Student Association.*

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Hannah Park of Fullerton, California earned her B.M. in Vocal Performance with a minor in History (2025) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).*

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Samuel Timothy Tankersley of Anaheim Hills, California, earned his B.A. in History (2022) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF.*

*The primary-source edition published below originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's Department of History.*

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### Verbatim Transcript (O.H. 3090.1)

LAWRENCE DE GRAAF CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: Frans Buikstra [FB]

INTERVIEWER: Omar Dominquez [OD]

DATE: April 19, 2002

LOCATION: unspecified location

PROJECT: From Hitler's Europe to the Golden State

TRANSCRIBERS: A. K. Brown, C. Corbett, H. Park, and S. T. Tankersley

OD: This is Omar Dominquez with the Oral History program at the California University of Fullerton. Uh, today, our topic will be, uh, the Dutch experience during the Second World War, and I will be interviewing Frans Buikstra?

FB: Buikstra.

OD: Buikstra. Frans, when and where were you born?

FB: I was born, uh, March 11, 1937.

- OD: Um, what kind of upbringing did you have? Was it religious? Strict? A bit of both and so forth?
- FB: Yeah, I was, yeah. Strict, religion, yeah.
- OD: Were your, were your—both parents were pretty strict?
- FB: Yeah, I was—came from a family *van*<sup>1</sup> seven. Seven children.<sup>2</sup> Three boys, uh, four boys and three girls, yeah. Very strict.
- OD: Was that, was that type of upbringing characteristic of the Dutch people,—
- FB: —Yes.—
- OD: —were most Dutch parents raising their children in that manner?
- FB: Most, most, most, *most*. At *that* time. It sure changed today, I think.
- OD: A little bit different?
- FB: Yeah. A little bit different.
- OD: Um, as far as you mentioned, it was religious. What, what religion was prominent,—
- FB: —Uh,—
- OD: —was, was practiced more?—
- FB: —about, uh, I think about, uh, forty, forty, between forty-five and fifty is Catholic.<sup>3</sup>
- OD: That's percent?
- FB: Percentage. That's percentage, and the rest is Protestant.<sup>4</sup> But then you have *Nederlandse, Nederlandse Hervormde*,<sup>5</sup> you have Baptist,<sup>6</sup> you have Lutheran,<sup>7</sup> you know, quite a few Prote—uh, Protestant churches. Like the Dutch queen<sup>8</sup> belonged to the *Nederlandse Hervormde* church.
- OD: Um-hm. So, it was pretty—
- FB: —One of the, yeah,—
- OD: —pretty—
- FB: —pretty even, yeah.
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: Yeah. Pretty—
- OD: —Yeah.—
- FB: —balanced out. Yes.
- OD: Ok, um, do you remember where you were when the Germans attacked on May 9, 1940,<sup>9</sup> and how old were you at the time?

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<sup>1</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: of, from.

<sup>2</sup> See Lisa Addison, "For 7 Siblings Separated by WWII, Decades Fade as New Memories Are Made at Reunion," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1997, [online](#). According to this article, the Buikstras' parents passed away in 1985 (the father at age 85) and 1991 (the mother at age 95). They had four sons, Ben Buikstra, Jan Buikstra (1926-2012), Frans Buikstra (b. 1937), and Herman Buikstra (b. 1942), as well as three daughters, Yellie Buikstra Dumbrowski (b. c.1924), Tinie Buikstra Van Halen (b. c.1927), and Anna Buikstra Helisek (1932-2021).

<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholic Church; Christian denomination. The percentage would have been slightly lower.

<sup>4</sup> Collective term for various Christian denominations, established during the sixteenth-century Reformation.

<sup>5</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: Dutch Reformed; Protestant Christian denomination, founded 1571.

<sup>6</sup> Protestant Christian denomination, originating in the seventeenth century.

<sup>7</sup> Protestant Christian denomination, named after Martin Luther (1483-1546).

<sup>8</sup> Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands (1880-1962, r. 1890-1948).

<sup>9</sup> The German invasion of the Netherlands started on May 10, 1940.

- FB: I was, uh, about, I think it was September?<sup>10</sup> I was about three-and-a-half years old. Now, it—I, I wake up early in the morning, you know. I hear that noise, and my mom said, “Oh, the Germans are here.” You know, this invited, invaded Holland<sup>11</sup> in, in no time, you know *met*<sup>12</sup> the tanks, you know, and all the, the street was blocked off, and the tanks. Tanks and tanks and tanks. They were a lot of noise, see? Didn’t take them long to take Holland.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: I mean the *zuid*<sup>13</sup> part. In the western part, it was a little different, you know. The Dutch Marine<sup>14</sup> was fighting there, you know, because you wanna have Rotterdam,<sup>15</sup> the seaport, they wanna have it, and the Germans really needed it. And, uh, they was fighting, and they didn’t want to give up, so bomb the heck out of Rotterdam.<sup>16</sup> There was not much left. And then the Dutch government already was in England, already in the time.<sup>17</sup> The Dutch queen, Wilhelmina.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: And, uh, they told the Dutch Marines, “Better give up, surrender,” because the Germans was threatening, you know, to bomb completely Rotterdam off on the, from the planet, see?
- OD: Um-hm. Um, you said your mom said that the Germans are here. Now, was that,—
- FB: —My dad,—
- OD: —was this—
- FB: —my dad was working—
- OD: —Um-hm.—
- FB: —in the coal mine at the night, night shift. So, I don’t remember what day exactly was, but was around September.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: Yeah.
- OD: Um, but did your mom say that because—was this already expected. Do, do you remember, was it—
- FB: —Yeah, I, yeah, we had *een*,<sup>18</sup> had a feeling that he would, that he would invade us.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: He, uh, Hitler,<sup>19</sup> you know, he said he wouldn’t do it, but he did it anyway, so. (pauses)
- OD: Let’s take a little pause right here for a second. (tape stops, restarts)

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<sup>10</sup> September (1944) was the month when the Allied liberation of the Netherlands began.

<sup>11</sup> Here used as a synonym for the Netherlands.

<sup>12</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: with.

<sup>13</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: southern.

<sup>14</sup> Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, founded 1665.

<sup>15</sup> North Sea port city, located in the Dutch province of South Holland.

<sup>16</sup> May 14, 1940.

<sup>17</sup> The Dutch government-in-exile operated out of London, England, from May 15, 1940, until May 5, 1945, led by Queen Wilhelmina and prime ministers Dirk Jan de Geer (1940) and Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy (1940–1945).

<sup>18</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: a, an, one.

<sup>19</sup> Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), chancellor and dictator of Nazi German (1933–1945).

- OD: Ok, now as the Germans invaded, was there a lot of fighting there in your town? Was there—
- FB: —I, I tell you, I didn't, you know, I didn't remember, you know, I really—I don't think there was too much fighting there. No.
- OD: You just remember—
- FB: —Yeah,—
- OD: —the tanks—
- FB: —yeah, the tanks coming in, you know.—
- OD: —and the troops just roaming through?
- FB: Because I was very small, you know?
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: Yeah.
- OD: Um, do you remember the feelings of your parents or your older brothers? Brothers and sisters?
- FB: Yeah, uh, my, my, my, my dad, he, he, he hated Hitler. He hated Hitler. Nothing compares. He, he joined the Dutch, uh, Resistance, you know, *de*<sup>20</sup> Underground<sup>21</sup> and, uh, what it was, you know, he worked in the coal mines, in the *zuid* part we had coal mines, you know, and he needed the coal to make the gas for transportation. To Germans, you know? They had these seven *bijzonder*<sup>22</sup>—I remember used to that be the big seven *bijzonder* cars,<sup>23</sup> you know?
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: We didn't have any gasoline. So, that was *one* way, you know. So, uh, he, uh. (pauses) You know, they treated him pretty good *met* food and everything, you know, he'd get extra food because it's heavy work, you know. And, uh, so, that, really we was, in the southern part, we were not that hungry, so, but, uh, it was a different story up on the river, past the rivers, up in the western part, you know, like at the big cities, people were dying. You know, and, uh, he just, he just, he just hated the Germans. Everybody in Holland hated them, at that time.
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: You know.
- OD: Was that because, uh,—
- FB: —Nazis. Hated Nazis.—
- OD: —because of their treatment—
- FB: —Yeah, the treatment,—
- OD: —of the Dutch people, or?—

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<sup>20</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: the.

<sup>21</sup> Dutch resistance movement (1940–1945), opposing the Nazi occupation largely by means of hiding opposition figures and Jewish citizens, and by engaging in counter-intelligence and sabotage.

<sup>22</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: special, exclusive.

<sup>23</sup> Presumably a reference to the Mercedes-Benz W07 (W150) cars favored by the Nazis.

- FB: —yeah, they treated us bad. Really bad, you know. They treated us not very good. Was curfew, you had curfew time, after certain time at night you couldn't go on the street <sup>of</sup><sup>24</sup> you have to have a pass, you know what I mean? And it's just—
- OD: —They sent cars.—
- FB: —it's just, yeah. Just, just, just like, uh, like really, really *bad*, you know? And, uh, later on, you know, the, the stores, you know, getting all the, uh, the—they bought coupons, then you, you couldn't have coupons on a, on a cart, you know? Uh, you can have so much bread, and so much, you know, whatever. Hardly, hardly no meat, you know, except the meat, you know, it was for the coal mine workers, you know. And then, of course, the big generals probably had meat, you know, so, um, but it, the, um, it was, the—it was pretty bad at that time. Later on it was really—get really bad. So.
- OD: Now, um, the Germans, when occu-occupation began, they implemented a lot of different things into the sys—into their system for the Dutch. One of them included their—what you were saying about food, rationing cards, and rationing goods?—
- FB: —Yeah, yeah, rationing, yeah.
- OD: Um, what was your experience with those?
- FB: Rationing foods?
- OD: Yeah, the ra—, they used to give, uh, issue rationing cards—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OD: —and then you'd go to certain—
- FB: —You have to go to certain, certain—
- OD: —they were supposed to have like bread, for example. They had a bread card.—
- FB: —Yeah, what you did, you have to go to certain, uh, say like a city hall, you know, or something, you know, and pick them up, you know? And, um, you was, uh, registered, you know what I mean? You know, exactly—you have a card, and how many cards you have, and how many, uh, coupons you had for the bread, and how many for milk, you know, how many for, uh, fresh fruit, you know what I mean? It, it was different, you know? And, uh, even when you have a big family, you know, you had to share, you know and, uh, that's one thing, you know, uh, I, I, I never seen so many people *share*, you know? When somebody was hungry, uh, y-you give to, uh, you know, you really share, like, like anything, you know. There was a lot of money! There was a lot of money, but you couldn't buy nothing. There was nothing there, you know what I mean? Everything was on coupons, you know? And it was getting rougher and rougher the long the war was going on, the more worse it went.
- OD: There were less and less—
- FB: —Less and less food,—
- OD: —goods.
- FB: —because the Germans took a lot of, *a lot* of food to Germany themselves because a lot of German soldiers was hungry, too. So, we was not the only one, okay? But was just tough all the way.

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<sup>24</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: or.

- OD: So as the, uh—  
 FB: —Because rationing, you know?  
 OD: Um-hm. As the war progressed and the occupation progressed—  
 FB: —Um-hm.—  
 OD: —did you and your family also experience some of this hunger—  
 FB: —Yeah.—  
 OD: —that many of the people experienced?  
 FB: I'll tell you what I did. My dad *met* a neighbor, he went on a bicycle. See, just like I told you, my dad get extra food because he worked at the coal mines, you understand? Heavy, heavy, *heavy* labor, and that's why he get extra coupons for extra food. And, uh, well, what my dad did and a neighbor, you know, uh, they saved it, you know, put some on the side, and we have family in the western part, in Amsterdam,<sup>25</sup> and my dad went on, on a bicycle *met* the neighbor. I don't know how long it took them. Quite a long time, probably, you know, maybe twelve hours, you know, from, from all the way *van* the *zuid*,<sup>26</sup> to, to Amsterdam. You know it was about, I figure, about 225 miles, you know, around that, so, but that's nothing, you know. He was very physical okay and everything. They know how to ride a bike, you know, he was used to that. But the problem was—and they have all checkpoints, they have to go to checkpoints, you know, they check them, you know, and they have to show the cards. And, and, and usually the Germans, you know, look at it, and when you had some food there, hey, they took it away from you. So, he, he tried not come to the checkpoints, you know, so it was very dangerous what he did. But he believed in that, you know. He was in the Dutch Underground, you know? And, uh, he rescued quite a few people, you know, and uh, it was just, um, their duty.

[00:10:20]

- OD: So, that, that part of act was, was something organized by the Underground?  
 FB: Yeah, but, yeah—  
 OD: —One of the Underground groups?  
 FB: The Under—well, uh, yes. I mean, you know, what he did, I don't know. The Dutch Underground. You remember the windmills<sup>27</sup> they had?  
 OD: Yeah.  
 FB: Well, when the windmill goes certain way, you know, say left, left, five times, you know, it was a message, you know. That was—you know exactly what it means. The Germans didn't know that. That's how they communicate, the, the Dutch Underground. You understand?  
 OD: Those were signals.—  
 FB: —Signals, yeah.—  
 OD: —Signaling each other—

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<sup>25</sup> Capital of the Netherlands, located in the Dutch province of North Holland.

<sup>26</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: south.

<sup>27</sup> The Dutch Underground adjusted a "windmill language" to communicate; this was accomplished by adjusting the windmills' sails to certain positions.

- FB: —Yeah, yeah, see? Like, like, that's how they did that, and the Germans didn't know that, see? They didn't know that. See, and then, then, then, then dad knows it, he knows the codes on it, see?
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: And on top of it, uh, I mean, later on, we had to turn in the radio. The radios. Radios, right, you listen—
- OD: —Um-hm.—
- FB: —the radio. Well, my dad never would turn in his radio. But when you get caught, you know, hey, he, he'd probably shoot you. Who knows? But he insists, he'd never, never turn in the radio. And he was listening. You know, you see that in movies, you know, that they get that, you know, and they was listening, you know, to, uh, you know, how far the, the, and how far the war is—was, you know, and how far the Americans came and the English, you know, and when the invasion was. It didn't say that over there in the (inaudible), see? The Germans thought the invasion would be in the North Sea, by Rotterdam, Rotterdam, in that, that part because the North Sea, that part is so close to England—
- OD: —Um-hm.—
- FB: —you know what I mean? But they did it differently, came to France,<sup>28</sup> see? And the Germans didn't knew that, didn't know that. They surprised them.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: So, uh, yeah, it was, was, was pretty bad. Tough. Yeah. See, people over here don't understand it, you know? I know exactly, the people you know, uh, in Af—what do you call that country where we have the war now?
- OD: Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>
- FB: Yeah. I know exactly how they feel. You know, because there was nothing for them either. You get bombed, you know. And, and, it was—we get bombed, too, you know. Sometime, you know, the Allies, when the, the, the airplanes came around, you know, and sometime a bomb came the wrong way, you know, and, and wonder, "*Waarom?*"<sup>30</sup> see? But that happened because you just living so close to the German border. Twenty minutes, and I was in Germany. *Twenty minutes*. That's how close.
- OD: So, that's why their—
- FB: —About an hour, less than an hour, I was in Belgium.
- OD: Hm, that's why their initial attack was so quick.
- FB: Yeah, yes. They just took over. They took over Holland and Belgium the same time, I think. (laughs) Yeah, it was well planned, you know. And you started probably late at, late at night and then an hour in the morning, you was already there. I see the tank, I look, you know, like, holy mackerel, all these soldiers, you know? I asked my mom what happened. She said, "Well, the Germans are in here." My mom was 'fraid, so. Dad was in the coal mine, working the night shift, so he came home. He seen that, too. So. (pauses) Yeah, it's pretty bad. You have to, you have to be in there, ok? I was

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<sup>28</sup> Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France ("Operation Overlord"), launched June 6, 1944.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, launched in 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: why.



only small but, uh, I can tell you something, you know, uh, like, uh, (pauses) the Gestapo<sup>31</sup> came early in the morning, you know, that is, that's the police, you know, they call them Gestapo.—

OD: —That was, uh, German secret police?—

FB: The German secret police. You got it. Gestapo came in there, and my dad didn't show up in the coal mine that night. And my brother, my oldest brother,<sup>32</sup> he was—he worked in the coal mine, also. He didn't show up either. But you know, this Gestapo is coming, so, you get in the field, see, you get out of the house. And, uh, one, one, one early morning, and out we go, like, uh, six of us, you know? You know, I was one of the smallest. And they, and they told *mijn*<sup>33</sup> mom, you know, "Your husband better go on the night shift tonight. When he don't show up, we're gonna to take you *all* to Germany." So, my mom was so 'fraid, you know. And my dad came home, you know. When he was gone, he came home, and she told him, so my dad showed up for the night shift again, you know. So, they, they, they get you, they get you going, you know, there because you're afraid. And on top of it, you don't know if you can trust your next door neighbor because some of them, you know, collaborated *met* the Germans, you know what I mean?—

OD: —They were the Dutch Nazi-Nazis?—

FB: Yeah, yeah, you know. You never know, see. That was the sad part, see. But, uh, I, I tell you, you know, you have to check everything out, you know. Most people, you know, most Dutch people I knew, they stick together, really stick together. Share whatever they have, you know. They, they, they share, uh, *food*, it was most of the time, you know. The longer the war get on, the worse it was going to get in Amsterdam because people was dying just like that. I tell you right now, there was no cat *of* dog on street. I tell you an example. We had a dog, you know, small dog. And Bayreuth (?) was the dog. My brother goes to work, to the coal mine, and my mom let him out, like five o'clock in the morning, see, because he was on the day shift. That dog never came back. And I guarantee the butcher, probably across the street there, you know, I had a butcher shop, he probably finish him up, you know, and sold him as, uh, meat, ground beef, who knows what, you know? It's true. It's true. And then in Amsterdam, you know, you know your, your, your bulbs, you know, your, your, like your, your tulip bulbs,<sup>34</sup> you know, and things like that, your flower bulbs? Well, people make soup out of it. They cook them, you know, and make soup out of it, and they, and they drink the soup. I mean they—when you, when you see these people, how these people look, you know. *Awful*. And then on top of it, you know, we had *een*, uh, *een*, uh, a Jewish family house in the house, you know. I didn't know ab—in the time. I didn't know that it was Jews, you know. And, uh, another thing, you know, when they ever catch you, you know, oh man. You gonna go. You gonna go. It's awful, you know, so. You have to see that to believe it, you know, I

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<sup>31</sup> Secret police of Nazi Germany (1933–1945), also operated in Europe's Nazi-occupied areas.

<sup>32</sup> Ben Buikstra

<sup>33</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: my.

<sup>34</sup> Tulip bulbs are partially edible and have a flavor that resembles onions.

mean, uh. Well, this was tough. But we—really, really—was tough. Not hungry, like, like in Amsterdam, you know, and the big cities and the western part. These people was hungry. Hungry, they had nothing to eat, you know. And they was dying every day. Every day was people dying, you know. That's why in, in, in Holland, it's so much for the Jewish community, you know, uh, I don't think you give them to-enough credit. They always said, you know, how, how the Jews suffer, you know. But Dutch citizen, you know, suffer too in the war. And not only Dutch citizen. People from Belgium. Even from Germany. They didn't agree with it, you know, but they had no choice, because when you go against Hitler, he gonna put you in a war and shoot you, that's what happened *met* a lot of Germans even. You know, not everybody agreed with, with, with Hitler, you know. When you was afraid, you had no choice. So.

OD: You mention the, the Gestapo earlier, and the Germans had different types of officers, including the Gestapo—

FB: —Absolutely. Gestapo.—

OD: —and there's a couple of other ones. There's one group of officers that wore green.<sup>35</sup> They were known for their green jackets and their green uniforms. They were said to be more, more, uh, *atrocious*. Um, do you have any other experiences? Or did your family have any other experience with, with, um, (pauses) with the German police?

FB: Yeah, they came, uh, one time, you know, one time, they came in the house, you know, and searched the house for radios, you know. Because they give you so much to turn in your radio, you know. But my dad refused it. (repeatedly pounds fist on table) Refused to turn in that radio, you know, because as long as we had contact, you know. And not only that, that's how the Dutch Resistance give certain message, you know, like, uh, uh, "Charlie, Charlie has to go, uh, to the bathroom," and you know exactly what it mean, yeah. Was not because, uh, he was going to the bathroom. It was a message, you know. That's how they keep in contact with him. And my dad just refused to do that. *Mijn, mijn*—it drove my mom crazy. My mom was afraid. Afraid.

OD: Scared for the whole family.—

FB: —*Scared*. Scared for the family and, you know, scared for him. What were you going to do, you know? Seven kids, man. (laughs) That's not easy, you know?

OD: And that—the radio, um, that was part of the—it was, I believe, it was called "Radio Orange"?<sup>36</sup>

[00:20:00]

FB: Or—uh, Radio Orange, yeah.—

OD: —Radio Orange.—

FB: —Yeah, Radio Orange, yeah.—

<sup>35</sup> Presumably the "Ordnungspolizei," the Nazi police force (operating 1936–1945).

<sup>36</sup> Daily Dutch resistance radio program (*Radio Oranje*), broadcast from London, England, by the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

- OD: The actual, um, messages came from England,—
- FB: —England, England. Wilhelmina was, yeah,—
- OD: —or the Queen, Wilhelmina, was in England?—
- FB: —absolutely, yeah, absolutely. A lot of them. And not only that, it came from headquarters, because everything was through the Americans, you know? They was already in England, you know, and sure, sure, you know, they had (inaudible). That's why they *hadden*,<sup>37</sup> *hadden*—that's why they (inaudible), you know. The, the, the heard in Germany a lot, you know. I can tell you story, you know, and it is true.<sup>38</sup> There was a little town in Tholen.<sup>39</sup> Tholen is the name, in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The province of Gelderland.<sup>40</sup> Gelderland, you know. And, uh, well, I think it was some high officer,<sup>41</sup> I think probably was *een* German general or something, get killed by *de* Underground. So, what he did, it happened up in Tholen, so the Germans they, they wanna get even with them. So, what he did, he took the whole town. Old men. Was none of the young men there. Old men, women, and kids. Hundred—hundred and fifty of them. They put them on the wall. They shoot every one of them. Killed every one of them. And that, that is a story, that is true. You know, and you, and you see things, and it goes, like, like crazy. You know? You'd be surprised how fast it goes through a country like that, you know. So, uh, it was pretty bad, though. It was not easy. Oh yeah. And when they ever catch you, you have *een*, uh, *een*, *een* Jewish family in the house? See, I don't even know about Jewish. Later on, I found out. But Jewish? They go.
- OD: So, even though you didn't know they were Jewish, um, did you see, for example, like, let's say, when the Gestapo came to your house? Did you see how your mother, your father, how—what they would do? Would they—
- FB: —They went out, when they come.—
- OD: —hide them or how would they do that?—
- FB: —They went out *met* the dad, out in the fields, see? Yeah. Was a man and a woman and, I think, like two kids. I don't know. It was two girls, or a boy and a girl. That I don't remember, but I know it was a small family. And, uh, I'll tell you. You take a chance. What are you gonna do? You don't wanna turn them in to the Germans. Because, uh, you *know*. You know what happens to them, you know. You, you don't say nothing to them, yeah, but you know. You know what happens to them. Squadron.—
- OD: —They—the Jewish family already knew, or your family knew?—

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<sup>37</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: had.

<sup>38</sup> The story related here presumably refers to the Nazi massacre of 116 Dutch civilians in De Woeste Hoeve (Gelderland) on March 8, 1945, committed in retaliation for the Dutch Underground's shooting attack on the Nazi Chief of Police, SS General Hanns Rauter (1895–1949), two days earlier.

<sup>39</sup> Presumably a confusion of place names. Tholen is a municipality in the westernmost Dutch province of Zeeland. Meanwhile, Deelen is a hamlet in the center-east Dutch province of Gelderland, only 5 miles from De Woeste Hoeve, the site of the Nazi massacre on March 8, 1945.

<sup>40</sup> Dutch province in the center-east of the country.

<sup>41</sup> Presumably the Nazi Chief of Police, SS General Hanns Rauter (1895–1949).

- FB: —My family knows, too. My dad knows exactly what's gonna happen with the Jews. Sure.—
- OD: —By that, by that time, a lot of people were already starting to realize that (inaudible).—
- FB: —Oh yeah! They already, already gassed them, you know. Throw them in the gas chamber. Oh yeah, they already did that then. Big time. Gee, big time. Yup.
- OD: What did, uh, do you remember, like, like you mentioned your mother would always tell your father, "Get rid of the radio." Do you know—she kinda resisted the Resistance, in a sense.
- FB: Yeah. Yeah.
- OD: Um, what did she say about the Jewish family that was there? Did she—
- FB: —She was afraid, too. She was afraid, too. At the time, you know, yeah, she was afraid, too. Yeah.
- OD: Did she prefer not to have them there—
- FB: —Well,—
- OD: —for the safety of your family or?—
- FB: —yeah, well, she never said it, you never—you know. It was, uh, sad, though. And we was not the only one. There were quite a few people in the southern part that had Jewish, Jewish families in the house, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
- OD: Um, did—do you remember feeling as if what was happening was gonna last forever? Or did it—would eventually end?
- FB: Oh, uh,—
- OD: —Do remember what kinda feeling there was like?—
- FB: —oh, I, uh, know. I think, I think we was bit afraid of it, yeah. Yeah, I think that—Omar, you know, uh, you know what it was? The, the, the, the people, you know, I mean, are completely different as, as today, you know. They know how to share. Not only that, you know, they stick together, you know what I mean? Like a *bunch*. When they really stick together, you'd be surprised, you know, and, and I don't think so today you can find that anymore. Not only, not only in, in the Netherlands or Germany or in the United States, it's the same way. You don't see people like that, you know? Uh, some time, you know, uh, I, I think there's a lot of hatred in the world today. *Met, met* World War II, you don't have that. Doesn't matter. Doesn't matter what, what, what you was, you know. I mean, so long you can hurt, hurt the Germans, you were ready to do it, you know? Oh yeah, my mom was 'fraid, *met* the Jewish family. Oh yeah, don't kid yourself. 'Cause, just like I said, you never know. You couldn't trust your neighbors, you know. They could turn you in, too, you know what I mean? And some of the Dutch did, okay?
- OD: Turn, turn people in?
- FB: Yeah. I tell you another example, you know. After the war was over, the people—we picked them people up in no time. And a lot of women, you know, they went out *met* German soldier, you know? Some of them girls, you know, you know how it is, you know? Just, they may be this and that, you know? What we did with the women, we

- shaved their hair off.<sup>42</sup> You know, shave it completely. All the hair. And we put them in, you know, like *een*, like *een* camp, you know. *Met* security.
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: Every one of them.
- OD: Like a jail?
- FB: Yeah, yeah, it's not like a jail. Like, it's like a, yeah, like a—it's more like a camp, you know. Not really a jail, you know. You can—you wanna escape, I think you probably could, you know, but anyways, you wouldn't, because you wouldn't be safe. That's why they shaved their head, you know, their hair, you know. Because they wouldn't be, shaved—you wouldn't be *safe* in the street, but people point at them, "Look, look, the hair, see? Look!" you know what I mean?
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: That's the reason they did that, see. (laughs)
- OD: As the occupation continued, um—
- FB: —Holland was occupied from 1940. In the *zuider* part, we get the freedom in, I think, the end of September in 1944.<sup>43</sup> We was free. But in the western part, May the fifth, Amsterdam get, you know, get free, we signed the thing,<sup>44</sup> you know, they signed and the war was over.
- OD: That'd be, uh, 1945.
- FB: Yeah, 1945. So, there was a lot of difference, you know, there was twelve months. And, uh, that was the tough months, you know. That was the months that people was dying. *Dying*. Not in ones. Not tens. Like maybe twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty a day. There was nothing left, man.—
- OD: —Does that include the southern part?
- FB: No, not in the southern, no, no. The southern part was not bad, no. (inaudible)
- OD: So, in the southern part of Holland, you didn't, uh, experience a lot of people dying, or?
- FB: No, not, not that bad, you know. But, uh, like, like, uh, well, in the, in the southern part, we don't have enough food, you know, fresh food, because the Germans took it all with them, you know, to Germany, you know. We had them trees and everything, but they took all that food, you know, and milk, you know, and things like that, and whatever they had then, they took. There was nothing left for us. But later on, there was nothing left for the German people either, so.
- OD: There was hunger everywhere.<sup>45</sup>
- FB: Yeah, was hunger everywhere. Yeah. (pauses)

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<sup>42</sup> Dutch: *moffenmeid(en)*, *moffenhoer(en)*. English meaning: "muff-maid(s)," "muff-whore(s)." The Dutch term *mof(fen)* is a derogatory term for "German(s)."

<sup>43</sup> Allied troops entered the southern Dutch province of Limburg on September 12, 1944.

<sup>44</sup> In the Netherlands, the Nazis surrendered to the Allied forces at Wageningen (Gelderland) on May 4, 1945; an agreement was reached on May 5 ("Liberation Day"); and the capitulation document was signed on May 6.

<sup>45</sup> The famine of 1944–1945, known in Dutch as the *Hongerwinter*.

- OD: In December of, uh, 1941, uh, a lot of things happened. There was, uh, of course, Pearl Harbor,<sup>46</sup>—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OD: —and there was—
- FB: —That's when, that's when the United States really came, came in war, see, because United States used to—was neutral. They don't even start it, you know? And Europe was very upset about that. You know, Churchill,<sup>47</sup> you know, and the English people and the Dutch and the, the French, you know, because we needed the, you know, uh—
- OD: —Their help.
- FB: Yeah, sure. Of course.
- OD: And then also, in, in Russia, the Russians, uh, gave the Germans their first defeat—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OD: —of the, of the war at that time.—
- FB: —Yeah, there was in—yeah, because there was a strong winter, you know. That's part of it, because the winter time, you know, they couldn't—well, the Germans said it was pretty close to, uh, to, uh, Moscow, yeah? Leningrad.<sup>48</sup> Remember Leningrad? Real close. And they never could get it, because, uh, you know the, the Russian had that—came out so strong back, you know, and then, uh, the Russians, they had some kinda tank.<sup>49</sup> Did you know this tank? *Een* heavy, heavy tank. And, uh, that's how do you really get the, get the Germans, you know, because they had that equipment, you know, the tank. Then they came up *met* a heavy, heavier tank as the Germans had, you know, and, boy, they really killed a *lot* of Germans. A lot of Germans. Well, in, in, in Germany, you know, was so—Hitler, when you, when you didn't foll—when you did something wrong as soldier, you know, what they did then you get punished? You know what your punishment was? They sent you to the East Front.<sup>50</sup> The East Front, that mean you go to the Russian front. And there was not too many, uh, German soldier wanna go to the East Front, because they know it was cold there, and not only that, it was *tough*. And you know it. A lot of, of Germans know, you know, the war was almost over but, uh, different, you know. Uh, the Battle of the Bulge,<sup>51</sup> you know, was close by. Was heavy fighting. That was in 1944.

[00:30:42]

- OD: Yeah, what was, um—
- FB: And that was not too far from, from where we live.
- OD: Right.

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<sup>46</sup> Japanese attack against the United States on December 7, 1941.

<sup>47</sup> Winston Churchill (1874–1965), British prime minister (1940–1945, 1951–1955).

<sup>48</sup> St. Petersburg, city in northwest Russia, under Axis blockade during World War II (1941–1944).

<sup>49</sup> Presumably the Russian KV-1 or Kliment Voroshilov tank.

<sup>50</sup> Front between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (1941–1945), and their respective allies.

<sup>51</sup> Last major German offensive on the Western Front in World War II (December 16, 1944, to January 28, 1945), primarily in the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg.

- FB: Maastricht<sup>52</sup> is right there, you know, and the Belgium border. And, uh, Bastogne,<sup>53</sup> you know, I remember Bastogne, you still can see all the stuff in Belgium, yeah. A lot of cemeteries, you know.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: There's a cemetery<sup>54</sup> in Holland. That's about, uh, close, a little—are close to 10,000, uh, Americans are buried there. Most of them—lot of them get transferred to United States but the grave is still there, you know. And, uh, what, what the Dutch government did, the Dutch government, you know, donate the, the property. You know, the, the, the *land* to the United States, see. And was *een*, some kinda war (?) in the United *Statesjes*.<sup>55</sup> And they keep up, keep up the cemetery. (tape stops, restarts)
- FB: Because during, during the Battle of the Bulge, you know, a lot of Americans get killed, believe it or not, you know. And, uh, he was a, he was a fanatic, that guy, you know. The commander,<sup>56</sup> you know. (inaudible) He had all young kids, you know. Whatever he could get from Germany, getting—a lot of them was young kids, see, was fighting Americans. That was in 1944, but the winter was so strong, you know. And a lot of them get killed, and I remember, uh, you couldn't bury the, the, the, the soldier both ways, you know. None of the Germans get buried because the ground was so solid, you know? (female individual enters the room, speaks in the background)
- FB: So, what we did *met* the bodies, you know, American and—we put them in potato bags. You had your potato bags, you know, and, uh, you stack them up on the street. And I, I seen that, and I remember that as a young kid, and that's awful, see. That's awful. But that was what happened in 1944.
- OD: During that time, did you see a lot of German military activity around your town or—uh, (female individual speaks in the background) we're gonna pause here for a second. (tape stops, restarts)
- FB: Can you imagine if you went all the way from here, huh? All the way to Amsterdam *met* the bicycle?
- OD: Wow.
- FB: I did, I did this *met* a bicycle, when I was a kid. From *de zuider* part here all the way up to Friesland,<sup>57</sup> in the *zuider* part. Here, along to here. (taps) See? Yeah. Um-hm.
- OD: As you were saying before, um, during that time, is there a lot of military activity like, um,—
- FB: —Um,—
- OD: —when the Allied troops were coming in<sup>58</sup>—

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<sup>52</sup> City in the southeastern Dutch province of Limburg.

<sup>53</sup> City in the Ardennes region of Belgium.

<sup>54</sup> Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten, located east of Maastricht.

<sup>55</sup> Dutch diminutive *-jes* version of the English word "States."

<sup>56</sup> Presumably German General Walter Model (1891–1945).

<sup>57</sup> Dutch province in the northern part of the country.

<sup>58</sup> Allied troops entered the southern Dutch province of Limburg on September 12, 1944.

- FB: —Allied troops came, coming in. What the, what the Germans did, you know, the German soldiers, you know, they just, uh, they just wanna give up, you know. They just wanna give up, they went back to the border, you know. I mean, they came from this side, see? They came on this way, this side of Maastricht was one of the fast—early one yet. And then they go this way, see? And then they are here, and then they stop, see. So, what—instead of strongholds here, you know, like the Siegfried Line,<sup>59</sup> you know? For the tanks? Siegfri—Siegfried Line they call that, you know, for the tanks?
- OD: It's along the southern end of—
- FB: —Yeah!
- OD: —Holland—
- FB: —Yeah, Holland, you know,—
- OD: —and the border of Germany.
- FB: —and border of Germany, yeah. And, uh, what happened there, you know, (pauses) the SS troops,<sup>60</sup> you know, they was Hitler's private—
- OD: —Private, private, uh, soldiers. Private officers.—
- FB: —soldiers. Yeah. *Fanatics*. Fanatics, you know. They stayed there and, oh, they just slaughtered them just like that. Their own soldiers, you know. So, what them guys did, they get—they went back, you know, give themselves up to the, to the Allies, see. They were American and English, you know, and they captured quite a few of them. All they went, you know, to the fuge,<sup>61</sup> you know? Get, you know, why they get—to the—they took them out of the fuge because the, the, the German Un—Dutch Underground was there, too, you know.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: Oh yeah, so they just wanna give up. Them guys, they just wanna go back to their own family. You know the war was over, see? So, uh, (pauses) but just like I said, you know, uh, Hitler was still alive, and he was terrible. Even though his own general believed war was over, you know. But, uh, his own general was afraid of him, too. That guy was just the—I like to call him now today "dictator."
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: So.
- OB: Do you remember seeing—after the Germans were pushed back—
- FB: —Um-hm.—
- OD: —out of Holland and the first Allied troops<sup>62</sup> came in?
- FB: Um-hm.
- OD: Um, do you remember seeing the troops? The Allied troops?
- FB: Oh yeah. Yeah, I see them.
- OD: They may have been mostly American.

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<sup>59</sup> German defensive line along the Dutch, Belgian, and French borders.

<sup>60</sup> The "Schutzstaffel," a Nazi paramilitary organization.

<sup>61</sup> Meaning unclear, perhaps "refuge," "flight." Perhaps related to the Dutch word *voege*.

<sup>62</sup> Presumably the United States 30th Infantry Division ("Old Hickory Division").



- FB: Most, yeah, where we was, most of them was American troops. Yeah. But some other parts of Holland, you have English and Canadians, too, you know. So, yeah.
- OD: What, um, what was your family's reaction upon seeing—
- FB: —Oh man! You put the flag out,—
- OD: —the Allied troops?
- FB: —oh, you know, the flag, we don't care, you know. Flags went out. All the Dutch flags<sup>63</sup> went out, you know. That was another thing, you know. They (laughs) wanna take the flags away, you know. They want you to have the, you know, German flag,<sup>64</sup> you know, the, the, the—
- OD: —The Germans'—
- FB: —the Nazi flag, you know. The Nazi flag. Yeah, you know. Yeah, it was a pretty good part.
- OD: Um-hm. Do you remember in any other ways that the Germans tried to, uh, tried to, I guess, uh, Nazify Holland? For example, taking away the Dutch flags and making them just have, uh, German flags, for example.
- FB: Yeah, they, they tried a lot of things, you know. Just like they took away the radios, you know. Then, uh, you couldn't have the flag out, you know. The only flag you could have was the Nazi flag, you know. And you, you had plenty of them. In every city hall had a Nazi flag, you know, because he took over the buildings, you know! They had officers in there, you know. Because, see, them guys slept in them homes, you know. And, uh, (pauses) different, I mean. And when the, when the Americans came, you know, and the English, you know, we had to, uh, give one bedroom, bedroom to the, to the soldiers, you know, because, uh, that's the way it was, you know. It was wintertime, you know. And you don't mind. It was cold, you know, in the tents, but every family did that, you know.
- OD: Every family had to, had to house a soldier?
- FB: Yeah, yeah. *Hadden, hadden*, had two soldiers, you know.
- OD: That's, uh, from the Allied forces? Or from the Germans?
- FB: No, from the Allies. Not Germans. No, we never had Germans in the house, thank God, no. Oh, my dad. (laughs) No, he wouldn't go for that.
- OD: So, you guys, you guys housed a couple of, uh, Allied, Allied troops?
- FB: Um-hm, yeah.
- OD: What was that like?
- FB: Americans, you know, and nice, yeah. Because they got here, you know—they guys, they know there was no food, so they got whatever they had, you know, in, uh, in *bliks*<sup>65</sup> in, you know, in, in, you know—
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: —in cans, you know, so we get can with this, can with that, you know. There was a lot of new, new stuff, you know, we'd never seen before, you know. So, yeah, we, we

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<sup>63</sup> Horizontal tricolor of red (top), white (middle), and blue (bottom).

<sup>64</sup> Red background with a superimposed white disk featuring a black swastika.

<sup>65</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: (tin) can.

- share, yeah. And the man get cigarettes you know? Oh, it was crazy. Cigarettes, you know. I didn't smoke, thank God, you know, I was just small anyways—
- OD: —You were so little.—
- FB: —but, um, my dad, oh God, he go for that cigarette, you know. Now it was—even, even during the war, you know, I remember, you know, and he was trying to own tobacco, in the garage, you know what I mean. Hang it up, you know, in the garage? And the tobacco plants, you know, and make their own. Yeah, my dad did that. Yeah, I remember that. I seen them hanging there. (laughs)
- OD: (laughs) Was that something that the Germans didn't allow?—
- FB: —No, no, I don't think so.—
- OD: —Would he just do it for his own personal use?—
- FB: —Yeah, for his own personal—no, he never sell anything, I don't think so, no. But, uh, he was doing our own bread, too, you know, bread, you know? Like a fuge,<sup>66</sup> you know, like the farmer didn't cut off, you know. Even, even as little boy we went over there, you know, and, uh, pick up the—what was left on the, on the ground, see, and we took it home, and then we make it, you know, *brood*,<sup>67</sup> and then we make it—and then we make flour out of it, see? So we can have bread. At least can do that, see? But in Amsterdam, there was—you didn't have that. There was no fields, you know? They didn't have that.

[00:40:02]

- OD: So, uh, because you guys were near—lived in the fields, what you couldn't get from the rationing, you were able to get from going out in the fields and—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OD: —getting the plants and so forth.
- FB: Yeah, but what I try to tell you, you know, like, like you have a sandwich, you know, sandwich. Well, there was no butter. There was no butter. You probably couldn't get butter, you know, you have to pay, I don't know how much, in the black market,<sup>68</sup> you know, because the black market was going really strong, believe it or not. Oh boy, I tell you. And, uh, what we did, what I remember, you know, I had this sandwich, you know, and then, uh, we put apple, apple, apple sauce on there, you know what I mean? Apple sauce. So, we had something on the sandwich, right, but that's all. We didn't have any lunch meat *of* something *of* cheese, you didn't have that. My dad only had a portion, you know, because he worked in a coal mine, and it was not, not really enough to share, you know. And then when many are rationing, you know, at one time, you know, *met* the neighbor, he went all over Amsterdam and brought it over there. You know, people share, they did share.
- OD: Um-hm.

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<sup>66</sup> Meaning unclear, perhaps "refugee." Perhaps related to the Dutch word *voege*.

<sup>67</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: bread.

<sup>68</sup> Illegal commercial activities, thriving due to food shortages and rationing.

- FB: But we was not that hungry, like in, like in the big cities. These people was *hungry*. Awful. Yeah. (pauses)
- OD: Your father, you said, he works, he worked in the coal mines—
- FB: —For over forty years.—
- OD: —and that was throughout the occupation as well?
- FB: Yeah, that was, yeah, that was, that was his job, you know? Yeah.
- OD: Did he ever say how he felt, uh, about knowing that all that, uh, coal was going to help the German—
- FB: —Germans'—
- OD: —war effort?—
- FB: —oh yeah, he, he didn't like it. But then he had no choice. And he knows it. Because, uh, when he wouldn't show up, it's like I said, the Gestapo would take us and I guarantee they would, yeah. Even when they catch you on radio, oh man, and he hide that radio. I don't even know where he hide the damn thing. Nobody knows. He knows.
- OD: Only he knew.
- FB: Well, then mom probably, well, I don't know if my mom even knows. But my mom was 'fraid. My mom said many times, you know, "Turn that radio in! Turn it in, turn it in! Look at all these people, they already turned it in. You still have the chance. You still have a chance to turn it in. Turn it in!" My dad said, "I'll turn it in. I will. I will," he said, but he never did.
- OD: So, a lot of people from your, from your town did turn them in?
- FB: Oh yeah, some people, yeah. Turned the radio in. Yeah. Yeah. (pauses)
- OD: You also said, uh, you mentioned that your brother was also in the resistance.
- FB: Yeah, my oldest brother.
- OD: Was he, uh, did he also—
- FB: —He's 80, 82 years old now. He still lives in the Netherlands. He's still alive. Still there.
- OD: Did he, um, was he involved like your father, I mean?
- FB: See, my, *mijn* brother get drafted in the, in the, in the, in the army, you know?
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: But heck, the Germans took over Holland so fast, you know, so he get out of it, you know what I mean?
- OD: He didn't have a chance to fight.
- FB: No, he didn't have the cha—no, he didn't have a chance to fight. So, I think over there, there was a uniform, I think, he had. (laughs) You know?
- OD: Yeah.
- FB: He took it home, or something. He never said. Yeah, see, it's different. It's, uh.
- OD: There's a lot of, um, a lot of the Dutch troops that had stayed in Holland after the Germans occupied, they were either went into the German army, you know, or given, uh, police,—
- FB: —Yeah. You know,—
- OD: —state police—
- FB: —yeah, you know what you—
- OD: —Dutch police.—

- FB: —you know what he did with them, too, you know? He transferred them to Germany and, uh, and then he put them to work. You know, like they made the Autobahns,<sup>69</sup> you know, transportation, you know what I mean? And even, a lot of them people even worked in factories in Germany, for war, see? Quite a few Dutch worked in factories. They force them, you know what I mean? They forced them. Oh yeah. Yeah. A lot of them, yeah.
- OD: Um, the winter of, uh, '90—of, uh, '84—uh, '44, I'm sorry.
- FB: Nineteen forty-four.
- OD: That winter was said to be one of the coldest—in years.
- FB: Coldest winter in, in, in, in history,<sup>70</sup> but I remember. I don't think there was *een* colder winter. *Awful. Awful.*
- OD: What do you remember about that winter?
- FB: Well, just like I said, you know, uh, the Battle of the Bulge, you know, that had a lot of Americans get killed, you know, couldn't even, couldn't, couldn't bury the bodies, you know. So, what we did, we stack them up on the street. On the street, all over, you know, and, uh, you know, uh, when you was a little kid, and you, you think what the heck going on, but then you see a limb hanging over here, you know, a hand hanging out there, you know. It's, it's funny. It's, it's not funny, but I mean, it's, you know. That's what happened. That's how, how bad the winter. I asked my, my, my, my mom, "What, uh, how come, how come you don't bury?" "You can't bury in the street. Solid!" You couldn't get them in the ground.
- OD: The ground was solid.
- FB: Oh man, and then they didn't have the strength neither. People didn't have the strength, you know, that they can hold like the, you know, (inaudible) machines, you know. But used to, you know, you dig them by hand, you know what I mean.
- OD: During that, that cold winter, did it make it harder for you and your family?
- FB: Yeah, oh yeah.
- OD: As far as, like, getting things from the fields and so forth and being able to make food and—
- FB: —Yeah, it was getting tougher and tougher all the time, too, yeah. In the end, you know, really, yeah, there was just nothing there you know. We had drinking water, thank God, you know. 'Cause, uh, that's one thing Holland had. Plenty water. (laughs).
- OD: Oh yeah?
- FB: Lots of water. All the rivers, you know. A lot of water. Oh man. It rains a lot, too.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: You know. So. (pauses)
- OD: We'll take a little break right here.
- FB: Yeah, okay. (tape stops, restarts)
- OD: Um, we, uh, spoke about the rationing system earlier—
- FB: —Um-hm.—
- OD: —and there—how food was rationed and so forth. And clothing was also rationed.

<sup>69</sup> German highways, constructed from 1932 onwards, subsequently accelerated by the Nazis.

<sup>70</sup> The famine of 1944–1945, known in Dutch as the *Hongerwinter*.

FB: Clothing was rationed, too.—

OD: —How—did you always have enough clothing?

FB: No. We but did, uh—I mean, uh, believe it or not, you know, uh, all the Dutch family had a sewing machine. You know what I mean? Sewing machine. So, what you did, you know, you made from older clothes, you know, you take the good things out, you know. You make, uh, things out of it, like *een* a blouse, you know. My sister *kun*<sup>71</sup>—was really handy in that, you know. She went to school for that, you know, and, uh, but I, I seen, you know, like, uh, believe it or not, you know, they make, uh, like an underpants, you know, *van* the Dutch flag, you know. Anything you could get a hold on, you know, you use it because there was—the clothing, there was no clothing here. Yeah, that's right. That's right. I remember that, yeah. I forgot about that.

OD: So how, how, um, during that cold winter of '44, the record-breaking winter, um, how did your family, I mean as far as clothing, how did you stay warm—

FB: —Oh, we had—

OD: —how did you—

FB: —we had coal, you know, we had coal, you know, and we had a stove, you know, and you put the coal in there, that really warmed up the house really, really good, yeah. That's one thing, you know, but, uh, uh, like shoes. We didn't have any shoes, like wooden shoes,<sup>72</sup> you know what I mean.

OD: Um-hm.

FB: And then we, we put, uh, uh, like towels, you know, I mean, towels around your feet, you know, to keep, keep warm, yeah. Yeah, there was no socks and things like that, you know?

OD: How about when you went outside, and you didn't have that warm, you know, that warm-warmness from the, from the coal that you had inside?

FB: It was cold, yeah. Awful. So we tried to stay inside, you know. When you don't have to go outside, you know, you stay inside.

OD: Um-hm.

FB: That's one thing you, you try, you know. But there was always people outside because they had to go whatever, you know? People stand in line, you know, in the, in the food kitchen, you know what I, I mean. The, uh, later on, you know, you can have you—brought your pan, you know, and they give you soup, you know what I mean. And, of course, people had coupons, too. And, and then you brought the soup home, and you heat it up, and then you had something to eat again, something warm, you know? Yeah.

[00:50:06]

OD: Did ea—did each one of you have to go and stand in line—

FB: —No.—

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<sup>71</sup> Dutch word. English meaning: is able, can.

<sup>72</sup> Whole-foot clogs. Dutch: *klompen*.

- OD: —or just like your mom or your older—
- FB: —Mom or older brother, yeah. He did that, yeah. Mostly them, and mom did. Yeah.
- OD: And what—do you remember what that soup was made of or—
- FB: —I don't remember.
- OD: You don't remember?
- FB: Some kinda, uh, had some, some tomato soups, I think, you know, and some *van* cauliflower, you know? Soup *van* cauliflower.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: Yeah. But it was soup that we shared, at least you had some soup, you know? But in the western part, they don't have that. They make soup out of flower bulbs. Tulip bulbs. (laughs) Yeah, these people was bad off, really. And they still, *still* had that spirit, you know. They still had the spirit, for, uh—and then they keep going, you know. And, you know, you see them, you know, pick up bodies, you know, every day. Every day, you know, you can see it.
- OD: So, you, even, uh, during the darkest moments of occupation, that spirit was still there.
- FB: Oh yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah.
- OD: Was that kind of what, (pauses) what helped the Dutch be so strong?
- FB: Yeah, that help you keep going, see, yeah, that's part of it, you know, because the, the—oh, what can I say? I mean, you just stick together. I mean, you know, that, that was so hard, you know, I mean, so powerful, you know, and it keep, keep people going, really. You have nothing, nothing to die for so why you, why you want, you know? You don't wanna die but a lot of them died, you know. And keep going, just, just different.
- OD: You guys had a—you and your family had to go out and stand in line for food and so forth—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OB: —and, uh, the Germans had very strict rules, and there were very strict curfew—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OD: —rules.
- FB: Yes.
- OD: How, um, how did you and your family go about that, or did you guys just in general try to stay inside?
- FB: Inside. Not only that, you know, uh, like, uh, you know *de* bombers came over, you know how they went to Germany and bomb, like Aachen<sup>73</sup> and Cologne,<sup>74</sup> you know, the big cities. You know, started bombing, you know, especially where they had the war plants. War factories, you know, bombing them. Well, uh, what he did, you know, he had, remember the newspapers you had?
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: We put them in front of the windows, see. Keep it dark. And we had candle lights. Candle lights, candles that light up, you know? So, uh, that's, that's part of it, because,

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<sup>73</sup> German city near the border with Belgium and the Netherlands.

<sup>74</sup> German city on the Rhine river.

- uh, see, and uh—the reason for, uh, we did that, you know, so the planes couldn't see the, the, the light, you know what I mean? So, then they go over us. Even something light up and they just say, "Hey, that light over there." You know, you never know, we might get bombed, see? That's part of the reason for safety.
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: Yeah.
- OD: Was the other reason, so, also so—for the German police—couldn't tell your lights on, that your lights were on?
- FB: That is—
- OD: —Was that, was that part of the curfew where your lights had to be out as well—
- FB: —Yeah.—
- OD: —by a certain time?—
- FB: —Yeah, certain time, I mean, uh, you know, yes. Many times, you know, the power was out. You know, the power? You know, there was no power, so we had candlelight, you know? We know that. So none of the power was back on, you know? Fine. But that happened many times. No power. You know, uh, yeah.
- OD: That because the Germans, the Germans decided to, uh, cut the power? (female individual speaks in the background)
- FB: Well, I don't know if they decided that or what. But uh, you, uh, you tried, you know? I mean, uh, they needed the power, too, you know, for certain things, you know what I mean? Because they need the coal, you know, to get the power going. That's part of it, you know? The electricity. Now, uh, now you don't have this. There's no more coal mines in Holland. Close them all up. Unhealthy, see?
- OD: Um-hm.
- FB: That's part of it, yeah. (female individual speaks in the background)
- OD: Hold on. Take a pause here. (tape stops)

[00:55:14]

END OF INTERVIEW