

Maud Dahme

A Former “Hidden Child” during the Holocaust in the Netherlands

Oral History Conducted by Kasey McNulty



Photo courtesy of Holocaust Memorial RVCC

Web Story

Born in 1936, Maud Peper Dahme spent her formative years as a hidden child in the Netherlands. After being approached by the Dutch underground, Dahme’s parents made the decision to send their two children, Maud and her younger sister Rita, to live with a Christian family they had never met. Maud and her sister spent nearly three years pretending to be nieces of the Christian family they were living with.

In her interview, Dahme recalls leaving her parents as a young child and being told that she and her sister were going to stay with family while her parents went on vacation for a few weeks. Maud recalls being unaware of the rise in anti-semitism and danger that surrounded Jews in Europe at the time, and even recalled feeling special that she was old enough to wear a yellow star since her sister was not old enough to.

She discusses her journey to the safehouse, adjusting to life with a new family, and the toll living as a hidden child had on her after the war. She talks about using her childhood as a lesson for future

generations to learn respect and love for one another, and the drive she feels to share her message with as many people as possible.

Dahme's story is one that exudes strength, perseverance, and a passion to prevent further human suffering.

Interview with Maud Dahme

December 2, 2021

West Windsor, New Jersey

**Interviewer: Kasey McNulty, Oral History Intern, Mercer County Community College's
Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Center**

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And oh my gosh, I will never forget that day. There was such celebration. There was a little boy running around saying, 'I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish' and cause he knew now he could say this. And I know that we were standing there, it's still very emotional for me... that day... and just like that we were free.

56:09-57:05

It's very, very upsetting to me of what is going on in the world, and especially in the United States when I see what's going on with the politics, and the anti-semitism, and the Anti-Asian, and I thought, gee, you know, we're back in the 1930s when Hitler came to power. And it really bothers me so much because I see the writing on the wall, what is happening here. And I feel helpless cause there's nothing I can... The only thing I feel I can do about it is talk to children in school of what happened to me and instill in them how they have to care for each other and respect each other no matter who they are or where they come from or whatever. And, that to me, is the most important thing. So, that's my contribution.

59:57-1:00:22

I want the world to know what happened, and to remember how gruesome, how horrible all of it was. I want them to know about the Holocaust so they would be better people after knowing all those horrible things, they would be better people for the rest of their lives, you know. And not repeat the horror.

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Interview Transcript:

Interviewer 1:	Today is Thursday, December 2, and this is Barbara Krasner, director of the Mercer Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Education Center at Mercer County Community College. And with me today is Kasey McNulty, from The College of New Jersey and an intern at our Center. And our interviewee is Maud Dahme and she is just coming back to the screen right now.
Dahme:	Yes I'm back sorry.
Interviewer 1:	And Maud, how do you correctly pronounce your surname?
Dahme:	Dahme.
Interviewer 1:	Dahme, okay. So I'm going to turn it over to Kasey and Kasey will take it over from here.
Dahme:	Okay.
Interviewer 2:	Great, thank you professor. So Maud before we begin I'd just like to thank you for being willing to do this interview with me. And I have maybe around 15-20 questions that I'd like to ask you.
Dahme:	Wonderful.
Interviewer 2:	But if there's ever a subject that you don't want to answer or you don't want to elaborate on, just give me a signal and we can move on so feel free to do that.
Dahme:	No, that will be fine. I so much more prefer even some of the programs I've done where we just... somebody interviews me and asks questions and people tend to listen to that much more than somebody just standing there and babbling on and on.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah sure.
Dahme:	Thank you.

Interviewer 2:	Sure, thank you. So I kind of broke up the questions into 3 parts, the first part is life before the Holocaust. So growing up from ages like as a baby till 5 years old for you. So we can start there. So where did you grow up and what was your life like there?
Dahme:	Well I lived in a town called Amersfoort in the Netherlands and I lived there with my father, my mother, and I have a sister who's two years younger than I. And my mother had originally come from Germany. She had met my father at a party or something, they fell in love, got married. But her parents were still living in Germany in Frankfurt am Main where my German grandfather was cantor at the synagogue there.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. Sorry, can you spell the place, the town you grew up in?
Dahme:	A-m-e-r-s-f-o-o-r-t.
Interviewer 2:	Perfect. Thank you. So what was your town like and what was your childhood like?
Dahme:	Well my childhood up until the age of six and a half was, in the beginning, let's say the first four years, were very idyllic. My Dutch grandfather had a restaurant on the train station and my father was learning to be a chef and was working for him and my mother was home with us. And I say till 1940 because that was when we were invaded, so up until then we lived a very idyllic life.
Interviewer 2:	And you mentioned before that I believe it was your parents that moved from Germany to the Netherlands or their parents?
Dahme:	It was my mother.
Interviewer 2:	Your mother. What brought her to Holland?
Dahme:	My father.
Interviewer 2:	Okay.
Dahme:	She had come to the Netherlands from Germany for a party or something and she met my father. The rest was love.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. And what was your relationship like with your family?
Dahme:	It was wonderful. You know I don't remember too much until the age of four, but. I don't remember any sad things or horrible things, it was just very very pleasant.

Interviewer 2:	What were your parents like?
Dahme:	They were wonderful, caring people. And it was kind of interesting because it was very hard for my mother because she couldn't speak Dutch. She had to learn to speak Dutch. But she managed very well. At the end of, you know, maybe three or four years she didn't even have an accent anymore.
Interviewer 2:	Oh wow that's impressive. What year were you born?
Dahme:	1936.
Interviewer 2:	How was your relationship with the community growing up?
Dahme:	It was fine, you know. We belonged to the synagogue, there was one synagogue in my hometown and it was just a very good life I said until everything changed when we were invaded in May of 1940.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. So now I wanna kinda ask about the role of religion in your life during your childhood. So did you always grow up knowing that you were Jewish or was there a turning point?
Dahme:	Oh yeah. No, no I always knew. I came from a very Orthodox home because eventually my German grandparents left Germany and came to the Netherlands thinking, you know this was already in the late '30s, thinking they would be safe. So, and as I said, we belonged to the synagogue and it was an Orthodox household.
Interviewer 2:	Was there a big Jewish population in your town?
Dahme:	Yes, yes. And of course so many Jews had left Germany, and many went to different places, and many of them came to the Netherlands. So I don't know how many of them were in my hometown but I know that when the war broke out the Jewish population in the Netherlands was 140,000. And that's for the whole country.
Interviewer 2:	So what did being Jewish mean to you at this point?
Dahme:	Not much, it was just a way of life. I was little, I guess it was alright.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. So do you remember experiencing antisemitism before the Netherlands was invaded?
Dahme:	No. I was too little, I was only four years old.
Interviewer 2:	Okay, so now we can transition into questions about life during the war. So what was life like for you? What was your experience during the Holocaust?

Dahme:	Well in the beginning it was... I was afraid because I started school I started kindergarten when I was five and then we were invaded, the queen left, and now we had Doctor Seyss-Inquart, who was now the Commandant of the Netherlands, and at first the first couple of months it wasn't that bad, from what I've heard because I don't remember, I was too little. But all sorts of regulations started to come out. The first was everyone who was Jewish in the Netherlands had to register. Who would've thought what would end up happening? So everybody registered and then very quickly they started firing everyone, people who were Jewish, who worked in the government, or in the township, the town, the city, the federal government. If you were Jewish you were fired. So that was the first thing. And it continued. It continued to the point that I had to leave school because another regulation came out saying that no Jewish child can attend public school. And I was really very upset because I loved going to school and I didn't quite understand, I guess, at that point and I loved going and I loved my teacher. Her name was Ava Schnell and she was also Jewish and had come from Germany. And of course all the teachers, whether in the university or in the public schools, if you were Jewish you were fired. But, you know, that was hard on me. Not being able to go to school. And some of the teachers and parents rented some rooms and tried to continue our education for a while.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. So I know you were young when this all started, but do you remember seeing any Nazi propaganda? And if you do remember seeing it, how did you interpret it?
Dahme:	I don't remember any of that.
Interviewer 2:	Okay.
Dahme:	Because I couldn't really read or write either.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah, right.
Dahme:	And they were putting placards on houses and walls, the Germans did. It was really propaganda. And there were no newspapers. There were some illegal newspapers but so there was very little. What people were doing they were listening to the radio from radio orange from England cause our queen had left and she had a government in exile and that's how people in the Netherlands... and all radios had to be turned in, for everybody, but people kept some and they would sit late at night in a dark room and they would listen to the broadcast. And that's really the only time anybody knew what really was going on.
Interviewer 2:	Okay, but you don't remember any part of that? Okay. So how did you parents

	react to the rise of the Nazis?
Dahme:	I guess they were... they were very upset about all of this because it affected them personally also. I guess it must've been a very difficult time for my parents.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about your experience during the war like during the 1940s?
Dahme:	<p>Well, as I said, I was going to school in 1941 and then I had to leave. And in 1942 another regulation came out. And in the meantime we were not allowed to take public transportation, my mother could not go, we didn't have supermarkets but she couldn't go to the meat market or the grocery store. These are the days Jewish housewives may go and these are the times, so all of a sudden our lives became very restricted. And in the spring of 1942 they came out with another regulation and it was that everyone who was six years old and older has to wear the yellow star. I was very excited. I didn't know what it meant. And I was so excited because my sister was only four and I was the big girl. I could wear the star, not knowing what it meant. My sister pulled the usual temper tantrums and all, she got one. My mother sewed one. My mother actually had to buy them. On a big sheet, the big piece of material, they were all stamped on there and you had to pay one gilder, let's say a dollar, for each star you wanted. And you had to cut it out and sew it and wear it over your heart and every time you went out of your house you had to wear it so you were easily identified. And as I said there were so many restrictions it became very, very difficult. They took many of the cars too that belonged to Jews so it was a very difficult time. But I was unaware of this because I was six years old, other than I was very thrilled I got to wear the star. And then my parents had gone to the synagogue, the Rabbi had called the congregation together on a Sunday afternoon, and this is in 1942, the spring in 1942 or the summer, somewhere in there. And the Rabbi read a letter to the congregation, a letter that was sent from the German command informing the Jews of Amersfoort that we have wonderful news, we're going to have trains taking you to the east. It'll be wonderful because the children can resume their education, the fathers and mothers can get jobs. And they then informed, you know, when the train would be leaving. And there was a list also of what you should bring with you: a suitcase, in big letters, put your name on the outside, a backpack, a pillow, a blanket, a bowl, utensils. And work clothes, like overalls and stuff. So really it was like you needed this but it didn't say where the trains were going, just east. So my parents left and snuck into a friend's house who was deputy mayor of the town, his name was Kees. And my mother happened to look and on his desk she saw that same letter that had just been read in the synagogue. And she said, "well how come you have this letter?" She told me that she thought he was either working for the resistance or he was a Dutch Nazi, and</p>

	<p>there were many. So she finally asked him and he said, “well I’ll tell you. I’m working for the resistance. And we have been going all over the Netherlands asking Christain families, if the need should arise, to take and hide Jewish children. They’re our first priority. And I have an address for you. I can’t tell you who they are. I can’t tell you where they live. I can’t tell you anything.” I think the only thing he said to my mother was that they lived on a farm. “And I have to know” he said, “by tomorrow morning what you decide”. So that was... that was very difficult, for my parents. Giving up your children and six and a half and four a half but they decided yes, that they would do this. I remember my mother sitting me down at night and talking to me telling me that she had such wonderful news, that my sister Rita and I were going on a vacation by ourselves to a farm. And while we’re on the farm, they would go on their vacation and they, you know, she said two probably weeks and then they would come back and pick us up. And I was very excited, you know, I lived in a city to go on a farm. Well, I remember some of that conversation. I was so excited. So my mother packed some stuff for two weeks for my sister and I. We each had our own little suitcase. And my father was told where to bring us to a safehouse. It was in my town, not too far away. And I remember going there, cause I remember riding, we rode our tricycles and my father had the suitcases. We got to the house, and we got to the garden gate, and my father gave me the little suitcases and he took the tricycles and he said, “take very good care of your sister. And we’ll see you in a couple of weeks”. And we went into that house. We didn’t know the people, it was a lovely family, they had a lot of kids. And we had dinner with them. They put us to bed there. And about 2 o’clock in the morning they woke us up and they said hurry up and get dressed. Because this gentleman, now he’s been recognized at Yad Vashem as a righteous, he was going to take us to the hiding place. But we couldn’t leave from the train station in my hometown because the restaurant that my grandfather had and he also had a kiosk, which is like a newspaper stand in the Netherlands. So everybody knew the Peper girls, you know, so I guess a decision was made by the resistance that we had to leave from another town. And that’s what we had to do. We had to leave from the next town but we had to walk through the woods at night. And I remember that. Because he gave me... I got my own flashlight, you know, and I was picking blueberries and he was getting very upset with me. And by daylight we arrived in the next town and there took a train and indeed we arrived on a farm.</p>
Interviewer 2:	And can you spell the deputy sheriff, his name Kees?
Dahme:	He was not a sheriff, he was a deputy mayor of the town.
Interviewer 2:	Deputy mayor, okay.

Dahme:	His first name was Kees, K-e-e-s.
Interviewer 2:	Okay.
Dahme:	And the man that took my sister and I to... to the farmhouse, his name was Jan. J-a-n. And his last name was Kanis, K-a-n-i-s.
Interviewer 2:	Thank you. And so does that mean that your maiden name is Peper?
Dahme:	P-e-p-e-r. That's the weird thing, in Dutch it's pronounced 'paper' which means pepper in English. So it's really weird. So people started calling me 'pepper' and I said okay. In Holland I was paper which is also pepper.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah. So during that night when you had to walk through the woods, what do you remember feeling?
Dahme:	Excitement. I guess I don't know what was explained to me, why we went to that particular house and this person was gonna take us, I don't remember. And as you get older, you know, I have questions but my parents are now longer with us. And there's no one at this point in my life to ask so. I don't know what I was told... so I don't know I just did as I was told to do, you know. Walk in through the woods and get on the train. Without my star.
Interviewer 2:	Right. Was that confusing for you?
Dahme:	Probably. I don't remember.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. So what happened when you arrived at the safehouse?
Dahme:	Well we arrived on the farm. And Mr. Kanis left. And it was like, the country's at war, we've been at war for two years now, and all the farms, very religious area of evangelists, the farms were all along the major highway and the major highway had one lane this way and one lane that way. And the farms were all along and the meadows and things were in the back. But when we arrived that day there were nothing but tanks rolling down the street, through the highway, and German trucks and German soldiers walking all over the place on the farm. They had set up huge guns cause they were shooting at the Allied planes that were coming over to bomb. So... it was... I don't know why but then they told us, the very first day we arrived, they must've told me that we were gonna go play hide and go seek. I'm not sure. But they told me my sister and I had to go hide in the wheat field. The wheat had not been cut. I'm little, it was just over my head. And they said, "don't walk in straight because you mush it all down and it leaves a trail, just zigzag in. Oh and here's an umbrella, it looks like it's going to rain". So I took my sister by the hand

	<p>and we wandered into the field. I guess they told us to stay there, you know, til they found us or somebody would call, I don't know. We were not in there very long and my sister cried. She was only four and a half years old, she wants her mommy. And then it started to rain. So I opened the umbrella, way up high, twenty miles around us because it was very flat. There you could see in the middle of a wheat field an umbrella way up high and a child crying. So they decided this was not a good hiding place I guess. So they took us into the farmhouse and that very first evening that couple... and you know, any couple that accepted Jews in their house to be hidden would also be taken away... if my sister and I were found the people, who were caring for us also would be taken away and murdered. But that very first evening, I will never forget it, a couple of relatives came over. I guess they had known who we were and wanted to meet us. I had felt so grown up cause they were asking me questions and I remember that and I said, "I'm so grown up I wear a star but I'm not wearing my star". And I don't know what else was said, I just remember that part. So after this company left, the couple who took us in and had no children, they were in their sixties, they sat me down and told me why we were there. That this was not a two week vacation. And they told me they're gonna tell me something that I must remember, no matter who asks us who are you. This is going to be our story. You are going to be our nieces who have been bombed out of a city. And really that area they all wore the costumes you know with the wooden shoes and the whole thing, we were two little girls in city dresses. We didn't speak the dialect, you know which was hard at first to even understand. So you're our nieces from... who were bombed out. So since you're our nieces you have to call us aunt and uncle. So it became <i>Oom</i> for uncle and <i>Tante</i> for aunt but my sister couldn't say <i>Tante</i> and called her <i>Tannie</i>. So all our lives she's been <i>tannie</i> to us. And they told me you can't go to school here and since you're our nieces you have to have our last name. And their name was Spronk. And your first name in Dutch is pronounced Maud, and at that time it was very unusual, so your first name is Margje, or Margie. And your sister Rita is Rika. So I became Margie Spronk. And they were very poor people so they went out all day to work in the fields and my sister and I had to stay in the house and hide in the house cause German soldiers were walking by or knocking on the door for something. And it took quite a while, I don't know how long, til I remembered who I now am. But I was very scared because they told me if I don't remember it correctly they were gonna take us away and kill us. I'm only six and a half years old and I remembered that very well. And... but after a while, I remember, we were allowed to go out so we would go out with them all day in the fields.</p>
Interviewer 2:	So how long did you stay with this family on the farm?
Dahme:	Well, we arrived in the summer of 1942 and we left right after Christmas in 1944.

	<p>What happened in the meantime... the husband, the uncle, my new uncle, it was in January of 1944, he went like this [puts hands on chest], cause we had gone out that evening, on bicycles of course to visit relatives, and we were coming back and he was taking off his jacket and he was standing right near me, and he went like this and fell down. He had a heart attack and died. So the resistance came and said, "you really can't hold these children anymore, you know". She said "no, I'm keeping them. And if their parents return I'm giving them to their parents, if not, I'm keeping them." So we stayed. But it was very sad because we, you know, there was a lot of things that happened with another Jewish boy, being hidden and almost getting caught and all these things were happening, you know. And I don't know how much time we have to talk.</p>
Interviewer 2:	<p>Well I have us scheduled for an hour so maybe for another 30 minutes.</p>
Dahme:	<p>Okay so it was right after Christmas. And actually, he died on January 20th and he was buried on my birthday. Which was January 24th. And I will always, always remember that. That was so sad. So now, fast forward, it's after Christmas in 1944 and aunt could not work the farm anymore so a nephew came in with his wife and, they had a baby at that time, and they were running the farm but she had the rights to continue to live there. So we had, the farmhouse only had two rooms and a kitchen, so we lived in one of the rooms and two strangers came in and said you're leaving right now. I don't know what was said to Aunt, I'm sure there was a conversation I didn't understand, but they took us on the back of their bicycles and we went to another safehouse. And all I remember from that house is it had rhododendrons and everytime I'm there I'm trying to find the house. And from there, we spent the night there, and the next day they took us to another family. And this family lived in a fishing village called Elburg. And that was a family with a daughter who was about nineteen, at the time, and it was very difficult because it's now... and we had heard in June of 1944 there had been a landing in Normandy... in France. And everybody was waiting and waiting and troops started to move west, east, and north... and what happened was the Netherlands was free, the southern part of the Netherlands. But not where we were. But anyway, so now we were in the village and it was very difficult because it was... there was no food. 1944-1945 was the Hunger Winter in the Netherlands. There was no food in the Netherlands at all. People started eating tulip bulbs. So we said, "you're gonna die". But nobody died. So there were all sorts of recipes where they used tulip bulbs and then they went into crocus bulbs and all the bulbs. And there was no food. The saving grace was, this was a fishing village, and the family we stayed with, he was also one of the fishermen, and he went out every day and fished. Unfortunately, many, many years before the war, this village was right on a huge lake, and long before the war, the Dutch built a huge dam from one province to</p>

the other and closed it off. I mean, I'm sorry, it was part of the North Sea so it was salt water and when they closed it off it became a lake and most of the fish died because through the years the salt water became fresh water. There was only one fish that survived and continued to multiply. And once I was talking to a class and a little boy says, "I know I know I know". I think it was the fifth or sixth grade And I said, "well what is it?" And he said, "eel". And I said, "you're right. How did you know that?". He said, "well I heard you speak before". But so we lived on eel and bulbs and so this was, you know, the winter of 1944-45 and of course then... the day I will always remember... and there were a lot of things; there were curfew and people were able to make radios, I don't know how but they would sit late at night and they would listen to what was happening because the south was already freed, we were not because the Germans put up a great deal of resistance right where the rivers came from Switzerland and Germany to the North Sea. And there's all sorts of movies on that also. A Bridge Too Far is one of them I think. So finally we heard they had broken through, Allied Forces had broken through. And everybody got so excited but it took a while, we were pretty far north. And one day they said... It was now April 18, 1945 and they said we have just freed two villages before us and they're coming. So everybody got so excited. German soldiers left the village. And we all knew it was coming so we all put our flags out and anything orange, cause the royal family was the House of Orange, and everybody is celebrating. And the German soldiers came back. And it was horrible, you know. A lot of shooting at anyone who was moving. And after they got done with that, they left again. And people went out and retrieved their dead and wounded and everybody stayed in the house. And the house where we were, I was on the second floor, I could look out a window where they told me the tanks would come in. Now you have to imagine this is all cobblestone, very medieval village. And I stood, and I sat there and I watched and watched and all of a sudden I saw a truck with men in blue coveralls come into the village. I found out many years later those were Dutch resistance fighters because of course they all had spies, they knew the village was now safe. They gave them the honor of coming in first. Right behind them came the tanks with the Canadian soldiers. Most of the Netherlands was freed by Canadian soldiers. And oh my gosh, I will never forget that day. There was such celebration. There was a little boy running around saying, 'I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish' and cause he knew now he could say this. And I know that we were standing there, it's still very emotional for me... that day... and just like that we were free. And soldiers were throwing out their rations and we were all starving. And the gal, the daughter of the family, we were standing with her, and she grabbed... she got a chocolate bar and she wanted to give it to me. I didn't know what that thing was. So she unwrapped it, she held the chocolate bar in her hand, and I still didn't know what it was. So she broke off a piece and shoved it in my

	<p>mouth and ever since I've loved chocolate. And then they said, the resistance thought we should go back to live with Aunt on the farm and wait to see if my parents survive. There had been no contact with my parents. Other than, I remember, right after Uncle died, someone had a piece of paper and there were letters and things on there. I'm now nine years old, nine and a half years old, and I remember they gave me a pot of ink and a pen and told me to trace all the letters. And so I did and when the ink was dry they erased all the pencil and it was a note to my parents. And it said: "Dear mommy and daddy", I didn't even know what it said until long after the war when my mother showed it to me. And but it was: "Dear mommy and daddy, we like it here very much. We'd like to see you again when we come back. Uncle died". So then I knew about when it was written. "And I want to become a farmer's girl". And then it was signed "Goodbye, so long, Margje and Rika Spronk". But the resistance would, I found out later on, they would always come up and check on us no matter where we were. And they were given that letter and they got it to my parents. Now my parents, when we went into hiding, they had no place to go. And that very first night we had gone, Christian friends of theirs snuck in the house, and we're not allowed to see our Christian friends, and they snuck in the house and they said, "well where are the girls?" And they told them that we had gone into hiding. And they said, "well where are you gonna go?" And they said, "we have no place to go". And they said, "can you come and stay with us?" They had like a self standing building at the edge of town. It was a car dealership with a showroom in the front, service area in the back, and they lived in the apartment above it. So my parents said, "yes, we'll come". However, they said, "there's two German soldiers living in one of our bedrooms'. Because my hometown was also a military town and, of course, now all the military bases were occupied by German soldiers. So my parents packed a few things, left, locked the door, left everything, and my parents had to hide in their attic for three years. My father could never go outside because he would be recognized. It was our hometown. And second of all, any young man his age were just taken off the street and sent to work at factories. My mother dressed as a nurse and she would go out and try to get food for them and the people who were hiding them. And she.. cause she was German, soldiers used to flirt with her. They'd give her cigarettes and she said she would take two puffs, put it out and put it in her pocket for my father but she would overhear things. So when she went out to get food and all, she would stop at different places and just reveal what she had heard. But they survived.</p>
Interviewer 2:	So while you were at the different houses that you stayed in, where did you think your parents were?
Dahme:	I didn't know. No idea. Cause there was no contact I didn't know if they were alive

	or dead. As a matter of fact I didn't even recognize them after the war.
Interviewer 2:	So was that something that was on your mind a lot?
Dahme:	About my parents? No. I don't think so. I'm sure we missed them very much at first, but then we got used to, you know, it was a whole different time. And the fear and all. That was my greatest thing. I remember going to bed and praying that I would live another day. Cause I know, I knew, more than I should know at that age, you know. It wasn't a regular childhood for sure.
Interviewer 2:	So during this time, how did your relationship with your Jewish identity change?
Dahme:	Well I didn't know any better. We went to church. Every Sunday we went to church cause they didn't have Sunday school and it was very boring. Went on for hours and hours, that's all I remember. So no, there was nothing. And I, you know, I knew I was Jewish and I should never say that but that was all.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. Do you know any of the individuals who were a part of the Dutch underground or who helped you?
Dahme:	Oh yeah, afterwards yes. It's interesting because Mr. Kanis, just recently I came in contact with one of his daughters, who remembers her father telling them that, you know, they had walked us through the woods and that I... she said, "I remember my father saying you kept picking blueberries and it was annoying him because you had to move". But he was caught and sent to various concentration camps, he did survive. Because everyone who was in the resistance also if they got caught were sent.
Interviewer 2:	Were you able to connect with them after the war?
Dahme:	Oh yeah, oh yes. Very much so. And that was wonderful, you know. And now I still have contact with the family. And actually they're honored... I had them honored at Yad Vashem. There's a tree in their name there.
Interviewer 2:	Wonderful. So, do you know what happened to your extended family or other friends and loved ones?
Dahme:	We didn't know much, you know. Well first of all, they told my parents we survived and my parents decided to come out where we were. They were told where we were. I don't know if somebody came with them, I don't remember. But it was very difficult because as the Germans retreated they blew up all the bridges, there were no cars, there was nothing. So they hitchhiked on food trucks. That was the only thing that was coming into the country. And I remember them at the

farm, I remember standing in the room with our water pump, there was no running water or anything and no gas or electrical at this time, I remember standing there with Tannie, I was on her right and my sister on her left, and there's a man and a woman standing in the doorway, no clue who they were. She gave me a shove and said, "This is your mommy and daddy. Shake their hand". So they stayed for probably about a month with us on the farm so we could get used to them. And then finally I said, "Okay fine we'll go home with you, but if we don't like you we're coming back to live with Aunt". So... but we never did live back with Aunt, though, we spent all our time with her, as much as we could but. So then people started returning from the camps. So... this was like where are my... where are my mother's parents, my German grandparents, where are my Dutch grandparents? My father had, my mother was an only child, and my father had a sister. She was married and I had three little cousins, about the same age as my sister and I. And I remember the day my mother got a notice from the Dutch Red Cross that they had all, with the exception of my Dutch grandmother, they had all perished. They had all been picked up. They did go to Amsterdam cause when the trains went east their first stop was Amsterdam and then they had created like a whole ghetto there. It wasn't closed in or anything. From there people were shipped to a transit camp called Westerborg in the Netherlands. And from there on trains. My family members, and not only that, I have a big book that was published by the Red Cross of all the names, because the Germans kept very good records and it tells you where they were born, when and where they were born, and where they died, on most people, but anyways so I remember my mother reading this and it turns out my immediate, immediate family perished in a camp called Sobibor. My Dutch grandmother, and I remember this, my Dutch grandmother, when we were still living in Amersfoort before we went into hiding, had had a heart problem or something and she was in the hospital. And I remember my mother saying we're gonna go visit her cause I had a star, my mother had a star, and of course my sister had the star too, so we couldn't take any public transportation. Our cars were taken. So we walked, I remember, walking through a park. It was a shortcut. And I remember, it must've been June, because I remember my mother saying, "It's kind of warm today, let's take off our jackets". Well, by doing that we took off our stars and we were able to walk through the park. So when they, when my Dutch grandparents were called up to go to Amsterdam, my grandfather asked the Nazis if he could hire an ambulance cause she couldn't travel she was still in the hospital and take her by ambulance to Amsterdam. So they agreed. So he took an ambulance and they lived in an apartment with about 20 other people. And so it was... it was very hard on my grandparents. It seems she even died in Amsterdam. There was even an obituary that was in the newspaper and it was a Jewish newspaper that was illegal. And she is buried in the Netherlands and one of my

	<p>friends actually found out exactly where she's buried and I went there. They had cleaned up her whole gravestone, it was in a Jewish cemetery near Amsterdam. So she was the only one who was buried in the Netherlands.</p>
Interviewer 2:	<p>Woah. So, transitioning to life after war. Can you describe that transition for you?</p>
Dahme:	<p>It was very hard because my sister, I'm nine and a half years old and my sister is seven and half years old, and we're both in the first grade. And the kids are making fun of us because we spoke this dialect. And so... and our manners, our table manners, everything my mother said was atrocious. And eventually I learned how to speak the proper Dutch. And eventually I skipped, I got out of the first grade and went to the second grade, but it was a very difficult adjustment because everything was in ruins all around you and all the sadness. And we had nothing. What happened during the war, when Jews left they abandoned everything in their houses whether they went on the train or went into hiding. The Nazis hired a moving van company, like Allied Van Lines here, it was called Pulse. P-u-l-s-e. And they went into all these houses, took everything out, and took it to Germany. So they used to refer to your house as 'pulsed' because of the name of the company. So our house had nothing. It had no... no wood in the house at all because the house was abandoned, empty, and people needed firewood during the war so they came in and took. Nobody had window panes, that was all gone. So it was very difficult. And we finally lived in one of the bedrooms upstairs. And the Canadians had set up a soup kitchen. They gave my mother a big pot, four bowls, four spoons. With her pot, she marched up to the top of the street where there was a Canadian soup kitchen, and they poured in something, it was always liquid, three times a day. And that's how we had to start our lives again- with nothing.</p>
Interviewer 2:	<p>What was your... What were your emotions during this time?</p>
Dahme:	<p>It was very hard because, well, we came back home in 1949 and in the spring of 1946 I had a nervous breakdown. Well I didn't know but my mother said my behavior was crazy. And I remember her taking me to a doctor but she never ever took me again. The next thing was I had to lie in a bed. We had like an enclosed porch, they put a bed out there, and I had to just lie in that bed for months. That was going to cure me. But I said, "well you never took me back to that doctor", and my mother said, "well I thought he was crazier than you and I'm not taking you back". And that was the end of any medical interference so, but I survived it. But it was hard and then just to adjust to everything, you know. And being always so much older than the rest of the kids so. I have a girlfriend we met when we both started school in 1945 and she's the same age, actually she's like well a month older than me, and they came from Indonesia cause after the war many of the Indonesians</p>

	<p>came back to the Netherlands. And they were occupied by the Japanese so they have... she and I have been friends all these years and we're still years. Every time I'm in the Netherlands I see her, you know, we spend some time together so it's kinda nice.</p>
Interviewer 2:	<p>Do you remember seeing how your parents or even your sister had coped with everything everyone had just gone through?</p>
Dahme:	<p>Well I was with my parents, I don't know. It was just hard after the war, getting used to everything being so different, and not having anything.</p>
Interviewer 2:	<p>Yeah. So when did you start talking about your experience?</p>
Dahme:	<p>You know I never did and my family knew, you know, everybody knew, but publicly I never said a word about. But then Governor Kean in 1982 signed an executive of Kean University, I remember it, creating the Holocaust Advisory Council and I had read it in the paper that he was going to do this. So I called the governor's office, and I had worked on his campaign, and I knew people in the governor's office, and I said, "I'd like to be on that". And they said, "why would you wanna be on that?" And I told them, you know, what happened to me. I've been on it ever since. A couple years later it became a commission so since, I'm the only one who's still on that council, so since 1982. And then I was watching a TV program about 60 Minutes and, you know, they had a program about Raoul Wallenberg, who saved so many Hungarian Jews. And the week after that program they always show you parts of letters that people had written in and a letter appeared, and I don't have the exact wording here of, more or less saying that there were no concentration camps. It was all Nazi propaganda. And it was signed by someone I know. I went like, "woah". I had a friend at CBS I got all the, you know, the right wording and everything and, but this woman she married a GI, she was married and she married a GI, which I really didn't know, but that's how she felt. And I decided then that I had to speak. If this is what's out there, then I have to share my story. And when I first shared my story, no one really knew about people who were hidden. Everyone knew about the concentration camps and everyone was just so surprised that there were people who were hidden. So now I've been speaking ever since cause I think it's so important to share our stories. Everyone has a different story of survival during that time so it's important so I do. And I try to be very positive about something very negative and instill in kids to respect.</p>
Interviewer 2:	<p>So when and why did you come to the United States?</p>
Dahme:	<p>Well some of my mother's relatives, it was really a large family, some of them had come to the United States. And they found out we were alive and they said,</p>

	<p>“Would you like to come to America?” This must’ve been in 1946 and my father said no. We were just beginning to rebuild our lives and they thought about it for another year or so and they said, you know, there’s too many memories here. It would be so wonderful for the kids to just... let’s start life in America. So in 1950, April 24th 1950, we arrived in the United States not knowing a word of English. I’m now fourteen and a half years old. And what happened was we always spent all our vacations with Aunt and the other family and we didn’t know how to tell Tannie that we were leaving. She died on January 1st, 1950 so we never had to tell her that we were going to America. But it was very difficult here... everything was so different... and I don’t know... the first day I went to school cause I didn’t know everybody was so nice and the next day they didn’t even know me, you know, cause it’s just the way Americans are, I guess. And they couldn’t test me. They put me in the fourth grade and that first summer in the United States my sister and I spent at a movie theater cause you could go, it was 25 cents but it was all relative you know money wise, anyway, they would show you a cartoon, a newsreel, and a film and then it would start all over again. So you could sit there all day and it was air conditioned, we weren’t used to the humidity. By the time I came back to school, I was now in the fifth grade, they were able to test me and said she should be in high school. Because in the Netherlands we don’t have seventh and eighth grade. Sixth grade, and you go on. So they tested me and I started high school and ended up graduating with kids my own age.</p>
Interviewer 2:	That’s impressive.
Dahme:	<p>And my English was pretty good because I think that second summer I was here, a family hired me to be a mother’s helper and it was at a country club and they didn’t wanna say that I was the help cause then I’d have to wear a uniform. And they said no this is our niece from New Hampshire, can you imagine? And no one suspected. I guess my English was... my vocabulary wasn’t that big but I pronounced words properly and no one ever knew that I had only been in this country a little over a year.</p>
Interviewer 2:	Wow. So during this time when you’re just adapting to the United States and learning the language, how often did you think about what you had just experienced?
Dahme:	<p>Oh, often, you know. I had many nightmares for years, during the war also but more so after the war when all of a sudden everything just stopped, you know, and you were free. I could never see a war movie. I can barely tolerate it now. So I didn’t wanna read anything about the wars. I just... but I slowly started... once I started speaking... but speaking about it has helped me and I think it helps every survivor</p>

	because these are the things you've lived with and it's all coming out. The only problem is, when you're talking about your experience you're visualizing it, you're seeing it, it's like a video in your head and you're describing it. So that was hard for me at first to live through all that but I'm fine now. I'm glad that I spoke up because it's helped me.
Interviewer 2:	And what is your experience, or your relationship really, with religion now?
Dahme:	I'm fine. I'm Jewish. I never changed that. Pardon?
Interviewer 2:	Sorry, do you practice? Often?
Dahme:	Yeah.
Interviewer 2:	So your relationship with religion never wavered?
Dahme:	No, no. Religion has always been in my life.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. And you've mentioned that you've been back to the Netherlands a couple times, so what is that like for you?
Dahme:	I lead a group of teachers from New Jersey, I guess you know that, and every year for the Holocaust Commission and on one of the trips... well we used to go to Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, and then Israel, but then there was a warning in Israel and we couldn't go so we started going to the Netherlands as the last four days of the trip. And one year I went back with just my sister and I and that was... she doesn't remember that much... but that was good for both of us to go back to all these places, well this was a long time ago. But now with the trips that I take every year, after the group leaves the Netherlands, I pick up a rental car and I stay for another 4 or 5 days by myself in the Netherlands and just go see friends. I still have friends there. No relatives there at all. Most of our relatives who, were in Germany, were all murdered, you know, from my mother's side. There's no one alive actually from my father's side at all. They were all murdered.
Interviewer 2:	So how do you reckon that with Germany now? Do you feel anger?
Dahme:	No. It's a different time, you know. Yes, I'm angry at all those Nazis at what they did. But I can't blame the population now at all. I actually married a German, so there.
Interviewer 2:	Wow. Did you feel any like inner conflict about that?
Dahme:	No, we were both the same age during the war. My parents at first but then they

	realized that, yes, you know, they would accept it but there was never any problem.
Interviewer 2:	Okay. Well, how have your thoughts on the current state of the world, on human rights, how has that been shaped by your childhood?
Dahme:	It's very, very upsetting to me of what is going on in the world, and especially in the United States when I see what's going on with the politics, and the anti-semitism, and the Anti-Asian, and I thought, gee, you know, we're back in the 1930s when Hitler came to power. And it really bothers me so much because I see the writing on the wall, what is happening here. And I feel helpless cause there's nothing I can... The only thing I feel I can do about it is talk to children in school of what happened to me and instill in them how they have to care for each other and respect each other no matter who they are or where they come from or whatever. And, that to me, is the most important thing. So, that's my contribution.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah. And that's what's gotten me into my studying of the Holocaust and genocides so it has made a difference...hearing the stories of survivors so thank you for what you're doing.
Dahme:	Well I think it's important. My mother was very upset, oh my gosh, she found out that I was speaking and she said, "no, no, no you can't do that." And I said, "why?" She said, "you're putting your children at risk. Maybe not in your lifetime, but you're putting your children at risk". But I didn't listen to my mother.
Interviewer 2:	So what do you want your legacy to be?
Dahme:	I don't know... that I'm a caring human being.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah. You kind of touched on it before that you just wanna leave children with the sentiment of caring for one another.
Dahme:	Yeah, cause kids can be cruel. I mean, when you look at kindergartners, they're so cute, they don't see any of this. And same with all the Zooms that I've been doing all for the last two years I ask, and parents were home working from home, for my parents to also to listen to my story cause then the conversation is then a little different. But there's so much more of close grapes I have where I almost got caught and all, but do you know that there's a PBS documentary about me?
Interviewer 2:	I did not know that.
Dahme:	Okay, I have your email I think, yes. Rutgers has put it on... in their library so you can watch on your computer. It was filmed in 2004, the last part of the teacher

	trip, in the Netherlands.
Interviewer 2:	Oh, awesome.
Dahme:	And I also wrote a book, did you know that?
Interviewer 2:	I did know that.
Dahme:	This.
Interviewer 2:	Chocolate the taste of freedom.
Dahme:	Good title isn't it?
Interviewer 2:	Yeah, you mentioned before that it was the sister of the family you were staying with who gave you chocolate? The daughter.
Dahme:	Yeah, yeah. It's true. I'm actually going to mention that tonight when I have to do... I now have to be with the governor and speak. So... But there's so much more but it's hard to and if you could send me your address I'd love to send you a copy of my book.
Interviewer 2:	Thank you. I have one final question for you.
Dahme:	Yes.
Interviewer 2:	What do you want the world to remember about the Holocaust and your experience?
Dahme:	Well I think I want the world to know what happened, and to remember how gruesome, how horrible all of it was. I want them to know about the Holocaust so they would be better people after knowing all those horrible things, they would be better people for the rest of their lives, you know. And not repeat the horror. But unfortunately genocide continues right this very minute somewhere in the world and that's the sad part.
Interviewer 2:	Right. Well, thank you so much for doing this interview.
Dahme:	You're welcome. And send me your address and I will send you the book. And the book was written mainly for students cause so many Holocaust survivors have written their books but their very graphic, with all the horrible things, and sure I've experienced it too, but I didn't wanna dwell on that, you know. Yes I talk about all the things but also to bring hope and caring and respect. And that's what that book is. And it has a lot of pictures, too. My next project is to put all those

	pictures in a book for the younger grades, cause they start it at fifth grade up, to do one for kindergarten and it's just pictures to just, you know, tell my story.
Interviewer 2:	That's awesome.
Dahme:	Yeah.
Interviewer 2:	Well I look forward to getting the book, that's so exciting.
Dahme:	I'm glad. And I'll send you the link for the documentary. And actually, the teacher's union, NJEA, has a program called "Classroom Closeup" and they too have quite a few of me on there.
Interviewer 2:	Okay.
Dahme:	They actually came one year with us to the Netherlands, met us in the Netherlands, and filmed all the places where I was hidden. So it's on there. I'll give you the link to that too.
Interviewer 2:	Yeah.
Dahme:	Alright?
Interviewer 2:	Awesome, thank you so much.
Dahme:	You're welcome.
Interviewer 1:	Thank you both so much. This has been fascinating.
Dahme:	As I said, you know, the beauty of going on the trips with the teachers is that I have everybody for two weeks. And there's so much to the story, and even then being in the Netherlands and talking about it, but to do things in an hour or 45 minutes really doesn't give it justice. It's hard because there's so many things that's still in my head that I usually wanna talk about. And that's why everybody who's heard me speak over the years, say every time they hear me they learn something new.
Interviewer 2:	Right.
Interviewer 1:	Well thanks again Maude for your time.
Dahme:	You're welcome.
Interviewer 1:	And thank you, Kasey. You asked some really great questions.
Dahme:	Yes.

Interviewer 1:	And eventually we'll post this to our website.
Dahme:	Okay great. Thank you so much to both of you for having me. [01:03:21]
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