

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series
Hank Van Driel interview
Conducted by Adina Langer
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Transcribed by Sophia Dodd
Reviewed/Corrected by Hank Van Driel, 12/18/2020
Finalized by Adina Langer 1/15/2021

Hank Van Driel was born in Schiedam, Netherlands, a suburb of Rotterdam, on May 10th 1934. He grew up during World War II and the German occupation of Holland. After the war, he went on to vocational school to learn about the restaurant business. After working in restaurants and hotels and on the Holland America Line, he made his way over to the United States where he later began a family and has since lived out his life while regularly returning to the Netherlands. He currently resides in Georgia to stay close to his daughter and grandchildren.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Today is Friday, February 28th, and my name is Adina Langer. I'm here at the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University with Hank Van Driel to record a legacy series oral history interview. Can we start by— Could you please state your full name?

Van Driel: Hank Van Driel

Interviewer: And is Hank the name you were born with?

Van Driel: Well, actually, the Christian name is Hendrikus. In the passport it is Hendrikus Johannes Petrus Van Driel.

Interviewer: Okay, and do you agree to this interview?

Van Driel: Yes. [nods head]

Interviewer: Fabulous. Could you please tell me when and where you were born?

Van Driel: I was born in Schiedam, The Netherlands, May 10th, 1934.

Interviewer: And what were you parents' names?

Van Driel: Martines and Maria.

Interviewer: And do you have siblings? Where do you fit into—

Van Driel: I got two brothers and two sisters, yes.

Interviewer: —that. [inaudible]

Interviewer: Are they older?

Van Driel: And I'm—I'm the oldest.

Interviewer: You're the oldest?

Van Driel: Yes. [nods head]

Interviewer: Okay, and what kind of work did your parents do?

Van Driel: My father did something like workman's compensation. You know, doing the paperwork and things like that.

Interviewer: For the government?

Van Driel: Yes, there was—government or—. I don't know exactly how to explain it. When you have to investigate whether or not people should get paid when they had an accident at work.

Interviewer: And your mother, was she a homemaker?

Van Driel; Yes. [nods]

Interviewer: What brought them to live in this neighborhood? Had they always lived there? Where you lived?

Van Driel: You mean back in Schiedam in the—.

Interviewer: Mhm

Van Driel: No my father actually came from Nijmegen, you know, where—where the movie was 'A Bridge Too far', and—and there is a town down there. Actually, there is a flash of the name 'Driel' in that movie. The sign for the little town. And my father used to live there (with exactly how everything was...) And there are more people by the name of Driel. We don't—we don't really know. But where—where else he lived, I don't exactly know, but Rotterdam is extremely close to Schiedam. And I think that's where they met in Rotterdam. And my— my mother was from Rotterdam. I believe she was born there. The family was there, my grand— my grandparents, and that's where they met. And, you know, then they— [coughs]— excuse me—they rented a home in Schiedam, and that was strictly availability, you know. That's the reason why they went there.

Interviewer: And what—what was the neighborhood like?

Van Driel: A regular—[coughs]—I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Do you want a drink of water?

Van Driel: Really, a regular—. [drinks water] For these days, a regular middle-class neighborhood of row homes but a pretty nice street. And—and actually the house is still in the family. My youngest brother, they were renting. My youngest brother eventually bought the place, and they're still—and they're still there. So when I go back, which by the way I'm planning in April if—if you can travel, I will be back down there, and when I'm down there it's like you've never been away. I was the only one that lived in another apartment before—when I was born, and when I was about a year and a half old, that's when they moved in that home. And then my brothers and sisters, they're all born there. (At home!)

Interviewer: And what were your earliest memories of your home?

Van Driel: Actually, the night my—. My earliest memory is the beginning of the war when Berlin—. Again, my birthday May 10th, and I remember my 6th birthday that everybody was forgetting about my birthday because the city of Rotterdam was burning. I may have the dates a little wrong because my birthday is on the 10th. I actually wanted to look up exactly what days they were. And—and Rotterdam got bombed on I believe on the 14th, so I don't know exactly. But what I remember is that my—my mother used a seamstress and they often—they—they made their own clothes, and they made their own draperies. And she had the seamstress on a regular basis. And she came from Rotterdam, and she was at our house at the time. And if my mother had enough work, —she stayed overnight and that was the case when the city of Rotterdam got bombed, and she was worried tremendously because of her family back in Rotterdam. Now, what further happened—what further happened with her family, I don't remember, but I remember her being panicky. I remember the sky being all orange because of the fires that really—that's one of my earliest memories is start of the war.

Interviewer: And it was—it was May 10th, 1940 that—that Hitler and the Nazis invaded Holland.

Van Driel: Right. [nods head]

Interviewer: Before the war started do you—do you have any sense that—whether your family was affected at all by the Great Depression or whether they had—they struggled to get by?

Van Driel: That actually—. I—I don't know, yeah, must've been because I'm born in thirty-four which is right in the middle of the Great Depression, but I don't know. For one thing, if you think about it, my family was able to start renting their own and furnishes the home and start a family, so I don't know if they were tremendously impacted by the Great Depression. For one thing, my father had a job. Couldn't remember my father ever being without a job, so they must've been okay.

Interviewer: And before the war started, what kind of—what kind of food did you eat? Was it easy to get food and—and— [inaudible]

Van Driel: I would say before the war started, yeah, and in the beginning of the war, it wasn't that bad either, but that—that gradually got worse and worse, and the rationing started and all that. And I think I looked at—. I saw that some place on—. Where did I see this? It doesn't matter. My father is talking in the letter about—about 500 calorie a day, but then I read somewhere that it was down to 340 calorie a day per person near the end of the war.

Interviewer: So before the—before the Nazis came and occupied, was religion important to your family? Do you remember that—

Van Driel: [nods head] Yeah, we were Catholic, and in Holland, the northern part were more Protestants, and the southern was more Catholic so. But not really big division, but that is actually still the case.

Interviewer: Do you remember any Jewish families in your neighborhood?

Van Driel: It's a good question. I'm thinking if—if I can remember if a Jewish family ever being picked up. I think they must've lived generally in separate neighborhoods or something. Like in Amsterdam they had, as we all know, they had a lot of Jewish families and a Jewish neighborhood. I don't remember a family being picked up because they were Jewish.

Interviewer: And right before the war started, do you—do you have a sense that your parents were worried about it at all? You know once the Nazis—.

Van Driel: That I really don't know.

Interviewer: Yeah. So what—what do you remember about the first changes once the Germans came and occupied?

Van Driel: Well I remember when I can. You know, it's not that easy to remember things between the ages of six and eleven. Basically, I would think six, five, six is when you start remembering things. And between the ages of 6 and 11, it's still difficult, but I remember things gradually getting worse. I mean, in the beginning, I believe they were trying to cooperate with the Germans, but then, you know, the rules and regulations they became harsher and harsher. And there are all kind of thing you really have to watch out for. And they were starting to—taking things. There were no more cars. They were even taking bicycles of people. There were all kind of problems with all kind of regulations. And they rounded, not only Jewish people, they rounded up able-bodied men to work in the factories in Germany. And my father was—well my father and my mother—they were worried that—that it would happen to my father, but I think he might've had a—

what'd you call that?—an exception that he didn't have to go with because of the job that he had. Something like this.

Interviewer: And did you go to school?

Van Driel: Oh yeah! And—and I remember that there's—. Well, you know, first of all, I was in kindergarten, at the beginning of the war, when I was six, Then I started elementary school. And that particular school is still in existence today. Built in the 30s. And the—the kids of my nephews and nieces they—they were there recently. School is still in existence. But during the war—. And the—and the school was divided. Actually, there was a real wall. It is one building, but somewhere in the middle was a wall. You couldn't get from one half to the other. One side was boys. The other side was girls, and during the war, the Germans took over the whole building, knocked down that wall, so they were using the whole building. And after the war, they actually decided to put the wall back in and have again a boys school and a girls school. But anyway, during the war, the soldiers were in there. They had a big red cross on top. Make believe it was a hospital. And it meant who were flying over—the Allies were flying over—. And so that school was occupied. So then—then one thing that also happened with the schooling, during the war, that we only had part-time school because I remember having to go quite a distance to go to a school that was still available, but it had to be shared by other schools that had also been taken over by the Germans. And I believe I went to school, maybe, two days a week. And I also remember that it was quite a distance like I said, and I was extremely weak that I was—. I still remember me sitting on the curb resting because I was so tired to—to get to the school, but I believe near the end we hardly ever went to school.

Interviewer: So how did your family get information during the occupation?

Van Driel: Underground you know, the underground that's what they called these people. And I knew some of those people. But you know I was told by my parents 'Don't ever talk about that.' And the other thing, you were not allowed to have radios, but my father did have a radio. And in the crawlspace, he hid the radio, and he tried to listen to the British radio, but, you know, it was quite a distance, and it's not like today's radio. It was hard to get any reception up there, but they tried to listen to the radio. And they were doing special broadcast for the people in Holland or—or the Netherlands.

Interviewer: And were those broadcasts in—in your language? Were they—what language were they in?

Van Driel: Yeah. [nods head] I believe it was in Dutch. For the—for the broadcasters, they were broadcasting to the Netherlands.

Interviewer: And—.

Van Driel: And my father was not fluent in English.

Interviewer: Do you remember curfews or anything like—.

Van Driel: Yep [nods head]. Yeah, we had those too. And actually, we had to—. The windows of the houses everything, we had black paper that was over the windows. If there was any kind of light, and that's another story what kind of light did you have, but all these windows had to be completely blackened. So people black paper on the windows, or somehow they were able, in the evening, shut everything down.

Interviewer: Do you remember air raids or British bombings or—?

Van Driel: Yeah, the—. And the reason for that was the—the British, you know, planes wouldn't be able to find their way, so I really tried—. I really think they must've tried to black out whole city of Rotterdam, so people—. That they couldn't see that. Near the school—. Near my home, because the school wasn't that far away, there was a shipyard, and they had camouflage netting all over the whole shipyard. But it'd get bombed anyway, and some of the bombs they, you know, strayed and within a block there was a house that got bombed within a block of the school. And we—. And, like I said, we weren't living that far away. We got concerned about that, and that something might happen. And so we actually moved to a house with an uncle in Rotterdam— in the suburb of Rotterdam some place. And we moved in with them because we were concerned about the bombings that close to the shipyard, and so we moved in with them. And I—and I remember living there in that house, I don't know how many maybe twelve, fourteen people, yeah.

Interviewer: All crammed in together?

Van Driel: All crammed together.

Interviewer: Were you—you were a child at this time. Did—Do you remember trying to do anything to—to lighten the—the mood, you know, playing games with your friends or?

Van Driel: The thing is that I realize—because also when you look at all the situations all over the world—. Somehow people learn to deal with whatever they have to put up with. And I—. The situation was really, really terrible, especially in the end. And still, you move on, you know. You—you try to continue life. You hang on, and I—I mean I'm really thinking about that kind of situation. Every time I see, like those refugees in camps, and all that, and the—the kids are still playing. Sometimes you see the—. And its—. People somehow, they learn to deal with that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: I remember when we spoke over the phone you mentioned there were a couple of

moments where you witnessed violence that the Germans—

Van Driel: Right. [nods head]

Interviewer: —had perpetrated against people around you.

Van Driel: Well, you know, the one thing that I also remember is the *razzias*, raids. And they were, I believe in September forty-four, when they were rounding up all able-bodied men. They—they brought a whole bunch of troops and kind of cornered off the whole neighborhood. And then went door to door to see if there were any men, and they were all told to gather together on a little square or something. Everybody goes down there, and the—the people who were picked up and put on pick-ups and trucks and carted off. And that—I remember seeing that, and it was pretty serious situation. And the other thing, you couldn't do anything that displeased the Germans or they just shoot you. And down the street, they had taken a nice corner home just a few doors down. And I remember a girl was able to get to a side door which led directly into the kitchen. And she went in there and got the loaf of bread and ran away. And there was a soldier standing on the balcony, and he saw her running away with the loaf of bread, and he shot her right down there in the middle of the street. And another thing I remember, the neighbor two doors down. He had a little marigold in the window, you know, orange—orange is the Dutch color, and the soldier just shot the flower right through the window.

Interviewer: And I know you mentioned that food and clothing, everything was becoming increasingly difficult—

Van Driel: Right. [nods head]

Interviewer: —to get. What did your parents do to try to go get food?

Van Driel: Because my father, the job he had, he, of course, had contact with all kinds of businesses. Quite a few, and, you know, he tried to get—. He wasn't easily able to get food, but I remember one time he got a bag of potatoes, but you would never recognize them as potatoes. They were almost rotten and tiny, but anyway. And I remember he went to pick the bag of potatoes up, and it was wintertime. Again, it must've been right in the middle of the winter. And we went with a sled, and he put the bag of potato on that sled and had me walk behind it. Now, how much protection I am, you know, the age of ten. But I think my father was afraid that while he was pulling it someone would grab the bag of potatoes, but we made it home with—. But that's the only thing—the only time I remember my father really got anything substantial. We really run out of everything.

Interviewer: And I remember you told me a story about your father defying curfew at one point or going out to a farmer's—

Van Driel: Yeah. [nods head]

Interviewer: —field.

Van Driel: People used to do that, yeah. They—. And he went on the bicycle. And if I remember well he didn't even have tires on the bike. And you couldn't get anything in those days, but then he went to the farms, and that was quite a distance. And I'll tell you something else in a minute. But anyway, so he took off family heirlooms, anything. And at the farmer's, they really realized, you know, these people are starving, but they couldn't always help either. But he came home once in a while with a little piece of bacon and things like that. It was quite difficult. And then—then actually, in the—in the letter, my father talking about a twelve-and-half-year wedding anniversary in the month of March. And they were able to gather some food with—with the rationing tickets. And family and friends, they were able to put some kind of a family gathering together. They must've had something—[points to letter] Shall I?

Interviewer: Sure.

Van Driel: See what—. Let me see what—.

Interviewer: So tell— tell us a little about this letter. This was written in March of which year?

Van Driel: The letter? This letter—. Twenty—twenty-eighth of March in forty-five which— [counting] March, April, May—two month before the war ended. And actually, what's also interesting is we still have the typewriter that this letter was written on. My brother still has that. Well the one thing with this letter here also, the whole page is about food. That's the only thing you were living for, you know. You—. That's the only thing. And the ration prices in here they're very difficult to translate that in today's prices because—I don't know. The only thing—. I read somewhere, or heard somewhere, that a bag of—a bag of wheat, whole wheat, you know, that you still have to ground up, was—. You had to pay a yearly salary for the one bag of meat—wheat. It's extremely difficult. And I—. They're talking about bread down here, but I remember my father saying—there was a poster in the bakery—'that what bread used to look like.' That was regular bread, but all we were getting was, you know, a soggy piece of stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah. You don't what it was made out of.

Van Driel: Yeah. We don't even know how they made that. And right at the end of the war—near the end of the war, Red Cross got permission to start dropping food among other—wheat flour. But even then, the Germans switched that good flour for the lousy stuff they were using, so. And the baker said 'Okay, here comes the flour. you can start making bread again.' But it actually was still the crappy flour that—that they had in the war.

Interviewer: So this was—you could go to a bakery with your ration coupons—

Van Driel: Yeah.

Interviewer: —and the Germans administered these ration coupons, so it was all controlled by the occupation?

Van Driel: Yeah and well—. You—you must've heard the story how they were trying to steal those—the rationing coupons, or make fake ones you know, and—. Oh! I know how I found out some of the stuff. I'm looking at the Dutch news sometimes on the computer. And one of the papers is having, already a couple of months, a series going on of the news from exactly seventy five years ago. And in there, they tell the stories. If you watch it today, you would see what happened in February 28th, 1945, and that's where I found out some of the stuff. But, yeah, the situation was not very good. Anyway, let me see (looks through letter). You know one—. One thing—one thing that was like—like currency was a bottle of gin. You could take bottle of gin, take it to the Germans, and maybe they were gonna give you some food. That was really (reads letter)—. Oh! He was talking about sixty guilders and then ninety and all the way up to two hundred. And for three liter, you could get a bag of potatoes (continues to read letter). Oh, yeah. Under those circumstances that we celebrated the twelve-and-a-half year wedding anniversary. Then father say—is saying, 'Luckily we are still okay except, you know, kind of weak—wheat—weak,' And my mother—my mother was sixty-two kilos which is what? About hundred-thirty pounds? And, oh, she lost another ten pounds—fifteen pounds. (begins quoting letter) 'Hank here'—that's me and my sister—I was only forty-four pounds, ten years old. Yeah, I mean, I'm going have to translate this.

Interviewer: Yeah, we—we'll certainly look forward to—to your translation, but thank you for sharing it. So some of this really dire time, which I had read it's been referred to as the 'Hunger Winter', right?

Van Driel: Right. [nods head]

Interviewer: Yeah. That happened after the allies liberated part—

Van Driel: Right. [nods head] Yeah.

Interviewer: —of Holland. How did your family hear about that? How did they feel about that?

Van Driel: Oh we had—. I think about in November, one date in November, we had crazy Tuesday because they were thinking that—that we were gonna be liberated real soon because they started coming in through the southern part of Holland, and they thought they were going to liberate the whole—the whole Netherlands in no time. And then we got that—. What it's called? Operation Market Garden or something—. But anyway, we got the story of 'A Bridge Too Far'. And they

couldn't get over the Rhine river. And then the northern part from Holland remained occupied. And the—and the Germans they or—the Allies—they were thinking 'We will be marching up to Berlin before the Russians get there.' So they decided to leave that little piece of Holland, or the Netherlands, officially leave that occupied. And then we were in big trouble because we now between the—the warfront and the North Sea. And nothing was coming in. And whatever was there, the Germans took—the soldiers.

Interviewer: Because they—they felt this pressure, that they knew the end was near, but they—they didn't—

Van Driel: Yeah, they were celebrating. They thought the end was near, and then, you know, then they realized 'Well, no it's not gonna go that fast.' And then it turned out it will be a whole lot worse.

Interviewer: Yeah. So when liberation finally came and—and—. It was your birthday again right, May 10th 1945?

Van Driel: The official—the official date in the Netherlands is the fifth of May.

Interviewer: Okay.

Van Driel: That's liberation day.

Interviewer: What do you remember about that moment?

Van Driel: Oh man, the people were—. They were really pleased that it was finally over. And also around the same time, like I said early, the Red Cross got permission to start dropping food while we were still officially occupied, but—but people were dying on the street. The situation was really really bad, and said 'We need to do something. We need to get people some food.' And I remember going to—. We lived near the river—. The river that goes from Rotterdam by Schiedam to the North Sea. And then you could see the airport on the other side, and you could see the parachutes coming down with all the food. But basically, the food didn't get to us until after the liberation. It was all around the same time.

Interviewer: And how did you know you were liberated? What—what happened?

Van Driel: Oh, that—that was pretty clear. I mean—. And the people, I think they may have thought they would be coming soon. And so we kids, we also knew, you know, we were all waiting and hoping that it would be pretty soon. So I—I remember when—when the Germans capitulated. All—all of Holland, all the Netherlands, they were all celebrating like crazy. We had street parties all over the place for—for quite a while. I remember they had all kind of things going on. And—and, you know, the biggest thing really was that we were getting food again. And then—and then they started thinking about replacing all the stuff that was worn out, you

know. I remember my father putting a bike together for me, but we had to wait for the tires because, again, the rubber was, you know, hard to get, so they were still—you were still getting rationing, I think. You had to wait before you got permission to buy a set of tires. So, I remember that.

Interviewer: Do you remember seeing Allied soldiers around?

Van Driel: Once they came in, yeah. [nods head] Yeah, we had a lot of Canadians. The Canadians were the ones that came to western—western Netherlands—Holland. Yeah they—. And some of them are called—. For example, in Amsterdam between the rails for the street cars, they used wooden blocks with tar, and the reason for that was they give. So when the rails get hot in the summer or cold in the winter, they, you know, they expand or contract, and the wood gives. That's why that—. They putting wood between these rails. And—. But people dug all the wood up to burn in the stove, and the first Canadian soldier on a motorbike that came drove—drove right in one of these holes and got killed—killed or hurt, but, you know, the—the streets were broken, actually broken up. During the war, the other thing we were doing—. We had a gas dump with coal. It was a gas factory, and they brought coal in—. Was really dirty way of doing it. And, you talk about the environment today—. But they used the coal to make gas for the houses. But what—what was left over from the coal, the cinders, they used that to—for fill-in, for streets, and—and things like that. And people started digging all that up again because some of these coals—. They would still burn and so lot of—lot of places got dug up. People looking for coals. And the other thing that happened, the parks and all that, they had no more trees. People chopped them all down. There were no dogs. There were not cats. They all had been eaten. And some people since to stay warm burning the trimmings in the house or the fences in the yard. Everything, you know, to stay warm

Interviewer: So all of that had to slowly come back to normal?

Van Driel: Right. [nods head] Everything had to be rebuilt. The—the real big thing in Rotterdam was they rebuilt the whole city and the harbor because everything was gone. All the—all the cranes and everything. Everything was gone.

Interviewer: Did you get—. Do you remember getting supplies from the U.S. or from other Allies?

Van Driel: Yeah, [nods head] we got—. Some of the first things that was coming in was C-rationing from—from the soldiers. I remember meat and potatoes in cans and—. But—but the—the one thing that also happened, we had to learn to eat again. We had hard—you know, the hardy stuff from the soldiers. We had a hard time digesting that. We really had to be careful what we were doing with the eating. You had to learn to eat again because couldn't digest the food that easy anymore—

Interviewer: Right.

Van Driel: —. And another funny story is, a ship came in with dried apples. And the people unloading—the men unloading the ship, ate some of the dry apples, and then they— and then they got thirsty and drank a lot of water, and the apple started swelling up, and the guy—. One of the guys actually died.

Interviewer: I've heard stories like that where, yeah, you get someone who's been starving, they can—if they don't go very slowly—.

Van Driel: [inaudible] I think I remember, you know, people had to be careful. They were getting diarrhea or something. Yeah, we had—. Everything, everything had to get back to normal really.

Interviewer: So before we talk about what you decide to do with your teenage years, and when you were a little bit older, do you want to show us the flyer that was dropped. That you had—. You saved a copy.

Van Driel: Yeah, we can do that.

Interviewer: (picks up flyer and hands it to Van Driel) And Cathy if you want to tell us kind of where to hold it, so that it can be seen.

Film Crew: Okay, so—.

Van Driel: (holding up framed flyer) Now this is actually a copy that I framed, but I have the original somewhere. And one of those days I will, you know get you the original one, and you can make maybe better copy because you can see this one already is a little discolored. But I should have the original somewhere.

Interviewer: And what—what is it that—that you're showing us?

Van Driel: (holding up framed flyer) This is a paper that they used to drop out of planes. They were printed in Great Britain. It's in Dutch, and it—it tells you what was going on, and you asked me before how did you learn about. Well, this is one way we learned about what was going on. But this one is May 10th, 1945, my birthday, and what it says—the headline is 'Germany Capitulated,' so, you know. And it also says this is gonna be the last one we gonna drop because you are liberated now, and there is no need for this—these papers anymore because that's the other thing that happened, newspapers stopped. We didn't have any newspapers anymore, so. (puts down framed flyer)

Interviewer: Here, I can—. Oh, you got that?

Film crew: When we're through we'll just shoot—

Interviewer: A still of that.

Film Crew: —a still of that.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's great. Well, so shifting gears a little bit, can you tell me how you began working on the Holland America Line?

Van Driel: Yeah, I—I worked for them in 1962.

Interviewer: Fifty-two?

Van Driel: Sixty-two.

Interviewer: Sixty-two.

Van Driel: So there were already quite a few years later.

Interviewer: Okay.

Van Driel: The—the one thing about, you know, education and career, that is another thing they had to get back to normal, go back to school. And I don't quite remember when that school got back to normal, and we went back to that school. But, you know, I—I had a little trouble with the—with the whole learning because of the war and because of my hearing, and so I wasn't doing that great in school. And then we went to middle school, and make a long story short, I went—I went to vocational school, and I learned about the culinary art and the restaurant business, and, you know, I liked it, so that's what I did. I became a chef, and I worked in Rotterdam. Several hotels in [inaudible] with Royal Yacht Club where we had all the dignitaries that visited Rotterdam. They usually went down to the Royal Yacht Club for—for dinner. And after a number of years I—. I worked in Switzerland for a year. I worked in Great Britain for a year, and then I decided, I wanted to go to the States. No, actually, I was on the Holland America Line, and there the people upstairs they were all making dollars, but the shift downstairs they—. Nowadays they—they divide the tips among all the people, but they didn't do that in those days, and told them, 'I want to make dollars too.' So that's how I decided to find a job in the States.

Interviewer: And what year was it that you went to the United States?

Van Driel: 1965. And I was telling how I used to clean out the storage space, and one of the boxes—. And of course, we had no time to go through all of the boxes—. But I used to open it up and right on top is a menu from the Mt. Airy Resort in the Poconos. My first job 1965, and that was a drink menu for the—for the big hall they had where they had the entertainment. The singers and all them. Frank Sinatra was down there. Jane Morgan. Anyway, the menu— I was just looking at it yesterday— drinks were one dollar. You know, cocktails and all that, one

dollar. In a place where you had big entertainment and everything. Probably today, you pay twelve or something.

Interviewer: It's a lot of inflation.

Van Driel: [laughs] Yeah, so that's how I got started in the States.

Interviewer: So what did you—what did you enjoy most about cooking in these resorts?

Van Driel: Say that again.

Interviewer: What did you like about cooking?

Van Driel: Well, you know, basically working in the resort. It's a job, and the honeymoon resort, you have to cook for an awful lot of people all at once, so it's—. And one time we had a Kiwanis convention, and you were feeding two thousand people all at once. So that's not—. We—we did the best we could, but it's not fancy restaurant cooking, but I've done that too.

Commented [1]: Notes— Hank noted in his corrections that this was actually a different group.

Interviewer: And you had told me a little bit about how you got your green card, how you became a resident—

Van Driel: Yeah, when I had—so when I found a job in the States, which was the Poconos, the Mt. Airy resort, I went to the American consul in Rotterdam. And I said, 'I need a visa,' and they told me, 'Go and ask for one yearly visa and that you're a teacher. if it's a temporary visa, it will be easier—easier to get.' And then—and the consul said to me, 'What you gonna do when you like it down there?' I said, 'Well, you know, find some way to stay,' which is a big no-no on a temporary visa. You're supposed to go back, and the consul said to me, 'You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna give you a green card.' And I got a green card within six weeks, and the reason—. They—they had quotas us in—in the beginning and shortly after the war during the Cold War, in the fifties. Lots of people were immigrating to, you know, not only America but Canada, Australia, South Africa. A lot of people, and they—. But for America they had quotas, which I think they filled up pretty good in those days. But by the sixties, things had slowed down, and they had extra quotas. So it wasn't that hard to get a green card. But—but they changed the immigration law 1965, 66, so I got here just in time. After that, it changed.

Interviewer: So, did you pursue more education or anything like that once you were in the United States, or you—

Van Driel: Yeah, I did. [nods head] Because I never really had a—an official college education in the Netherlands just vocational school. I did the—. I got CDC. I think that what's called. High School equivalence.

Interviewer: Oh, GED.

Van Driel: Right, GED, yeah. [nods head] That what I did.

Interviewer: Mhm.

Van Driel: And I got that. And I did take some college courses, you know, mainly because of work like marketing and things like that, communication.

Interviewer: And how did you eventually come to settle in Georgia?

Van Driel: That's only because my daughter started a family here. And I—. And, you know, I lived in Connecticut because of my job. But I, you know, I retired in 19—1990, and I consulted after that. But the—the house, you know, was really no longer too suitable for me alone. And my daughter started a family, so I decided to move to Atlanta.

Interviewer: So tell me about your family.

Van Driel: I have one daughter, and I'll be honest. I never became American citizen. Because I have so much family in the Netherlands, I didn't want to be a foreigner when I went back to the Netherlands. The Netherlands doesn't allow—or—. I'm not saying this right. At the time, they didn't allow dual citizenship. If I had been still married, but my wife passed away early, you could be a dual citizen. But in my case that was never—. I could never do this, so I didn't find it necessary to give up the green card, so I'm still here on my green card. And—and I look at it, at—at myself, as a dual citizen. I mean, some people never get married and they're more committed than the ones that actually married and the same thing with me. I mean, I've done very well down here in the States, and I'm very grateful. You know, so, but on the other hand, in the beginning, I didn't want to give up my Dutch citizenship. And later, I was thinking, you know, why really? So now, you asked about my family now, so me—my daughter, because she has a Dutch father, she's a dual citizen, and—and my grandchildren are dual citizen, so—. And—But not me. I'm still 100% Dutch.

Interviewer: And what was your wife's name?

Van Driel: Michelle.

Interviewer: Did you meet her—

Van Driel: Oh my wife! My wife's name was Mary Anne, and I met her here. And I started working for Nestle. And I was working, you know—. The last job I had was the Baltimore Country Club, and the only day off is Monday. I never had anything else off but Monday, and so, you know, social life wasn't that great. And the one day off you have, you have to take care of your laundry, things like that, and what

the heck is going on Monday anyway. But then when I started working for Nestle and started doing research and development, I had a regular 9-5 job. And I started going out more and met my wife in Baltimore and got married, so.

Interviewer: And then your daughter's name is Michele?

Van Driel: Right. [nods head]

Interviewer: And you have grandchildren too?

Van Driel: Two. (nods head) I have Lilah, ten years, and Willem which is a typical Dutch name. The King's name is Willem also. Willem is eight.

Interviewer: And have they been back to the Netherlands with you?

Van Driel: Oh yeah. [nods head] Yeah.

Interviewer: And you go back pretty regularly when you can?

Van Driel: Well they—they went—. How often they been down there? They had been there maybe twice, but you're talking about going again? I go back on a regular basis, so there's another reason why I kept my Dutch citizenship. I been going back almost every year and sometime twice a year.

Interviewer: What are some of the main differences you've observed between the Netherlands and the United States?

Van Driel: Well that is quite a story. For example, you really want to talk about—. We're now in the middle of the election business. To me, it's a big mess down here. None of that stuff they have here like voter suppression, redistricting, gerrymandering. All that stuff, they don't have in the Netherlands. Everybody's getting voter registration in the mail if you're an eligible citizen, and you get in automatically in the mail. And voting comes around, there're voting places all over the place. Like, old age homes, assisted living homes, they have their own voting inside. These people don't even have to go anywhere. They're talking about all the money that they're spending down here. That's not the case whatsoever. Candidates don't spend money like that. They get some free time on T.V. And then the thing other this is, you got here two-party system. Everything is black and white. That's not the case down there either. They have a dozen parties. They even have a party for the animals, and they have the Green Party, and so, you know. And you—. You know, you might think the mayor in town is doing a great job, and he is labor party. And—and then somebody else in the—you know, in the government, maybe he's another party, but you think he doing a good—. So you vote across the, you know, and people—. Well, the other thing, like Bernie Sanders, he is doing really good. And what he's talking about, some people they think 'oh, socialism and this and that.' They don't really know what they're

talking about, and they're talking socialism. They're talking Venezuela, Cuba, that—that are dictatorships. It's not social-democratic like—like they have in Western Europe, and they—they think—. People pay their taxes and all that, but they're taking care of people too. And—and they generally, the happiest countries in the world, you know the—each year, Denmark. The next time its Switzerland. The next time its Sweden. Every time again, it's Western Europe. People are happy. And that what Bernie Sander's is talking about, but he—he may never get it done here, but basically, that what he's talking about.

Interviewer: Ah, well if—we can't—. I guess we can't all go to Western Europe even if we wanted to. Though sometimes it—. Yeah, you know, but—. So my couple of just concluding questions. What would you like students, you know we're an education museum, what would you like students to take away from your experiences during World War II?

Van Driel: Well, like so many people say, you know, about the Holocaust. Never forget. And the—the one thing, I really, sometimes when I'm thinking about, you know. There are still so many people that are suffering. And I—and I so often wondering 'What the heck can we do about that?' And even—even myself, you know. I—I give to charities that I think that help these people, but you—you still see all that suffering. And for example, in Haiti, they have these problems. Lots of people—. Lot of money was collected. I really think enough money was collected to give everybody a new home, but they still living in tents. And I mean, basically, I would say, when you see all this, remember to have compassion for other people. I mean, what happened in Germany. It's—to me, it's almost unbelievable how that could happen. How all of German—. I really wonder, still wonder, how much the Germans knew what was going on. But really what was going on, like the Holocaust, to me, it's unbelievable that something like that can happen that people can act like that. And—and again, like we were talking earlier, in those bad circumstances, people deal with it. On the other hand, what these soldiers did. I guess there's a whole wide range of the way people can act, you know. It's unbelievable that they could do these kind of things, but (shrugs shoulders).

Interviewer: Under pressure, people react in different ways.

Van Driel: Yeah. Yeah, they really do. [nods head] And sometimes a real good way and sometimes a real bad way.

Interviewer: Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you would want to tell us about today?

Van Driel: [inaudible] I'm thinking. Are there other things that really—. I think mostly, you covered most of it, really. And the thing for me also to do is translate that letter, and you catch some more insight because that really, the letter is all about, is my father telling how things were going in March 1945 with the—. And you really, like I said earlier, the letter, you can really tell, the only thing people were

thinking about was food, you know, and some of the destruction that was going on because everything was wearing out. I remember, in my—in our home, we had linolium floors, and they were all falling apart. The furniture was falling apart. We were actually—. We had a tiny little stove that they— and we all were living in the kitchen, and I really don't know how we did it. The kitchen wasn't much bigger than a bathroom here, and the whole family of—. We had a nanny during the war. So the five kids, and my parents, and the nanny. We talking eight people all hunkering in the kitchen because the tiny little stove which could not heat the whole house. That—that—. We didn't have central heating anyway. The living room had a coal stove, but we didn't have that much coal to heat the whole house. So we hunkered down in the kitchen, and the tiny little stove was also used to cook on. And we—. The gas and electricity was often turned off. And, you know, we, like I said, the gas was generated by coal, but we didn't have that gas all the time, and neither did we have electricity. And one thing—and one thing we— happened also, like I said early, you had to blacken out the windows. But the soldier came by and he saw light in our house. What that was was a carbide lantern. You know, carbide the—like the very old cars used to have carbide lantern? That what we had, and again, that was hard to get also, but that's the way people had light with a carbide lantern. And these things were not that easy to get either, or probably very difficult. And the soldier'd seen the light, and the nanny we had I think might've somewhat mentally challenged. I'm not hundred percent sure. To us—to us kids, it didn't make any difference, but she may not be, you know. She helped us through the whole war and everything. But anyway, she answered, a soldier rang the doorbell, she answered the doorbell and he said 'That light, what was that? Give it to me.' Now we weren't gonna give him the carbide lantern. We were—. It may not be able get another one. And she knew a tiny piece of candle, about that big (makes measurement with hand), and she says, 'This was it.' And he took off with it, and my father said 'You did a wonderful job down there.' The soldiers really—the tiniest little thing they could give you big trouble, really.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. It's really vivid what you've been able to remember.

Van Driel: Yeah, now if there is any— anymore that I come up with, you know, I'll let you know. And for one thing, I will try to translate it, the letter and send—

Interviewer: Sure.

Van Driel: And send you a copy of that.

(B-roll of flyer/newspapers)