

Interviewee: Devos, Ted
Interviewer: David Gregory
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Gregory: Mr. Devos, would you please tell me when and where you were born?

Devos: I was born in Eindhoven, Holland, in the south of Holland.

Gregory: And when would that have been?

Devos: In 1921.

Gregory: And your birth date?

Devos: February 26.

Gregory: So you have a birthday coming up. What would it have been like, growing up in Holland in the '20s and '30s?

Devos: Well, it was, I would say, a pretty easy life. It was a good life. The circumstances at that time in Holland were pretty good. The city where I lived, Eindhoven, there was a big factory called Philips, which is well known here now. My brother worked there; my sisters worked there. So life in general was pretty good. Everything was available as far as food was concerned.

Gregory: You lived in the city?

Devos: We lived in the city.

Gregory: And your family was a brother and a sister and ...

Devos: No, in my family were eight children. I was the second youngest.

Gregory: What was school like?

Devos: Very good. There were different schools. I went to a Christian school for a while, then I changed to the Philips school. In Europe, most of the factories have their own schools, from the university right down to public school. I changed over to the Philips school which had an advantage because they had probably more and better teaching facilities.

Gregory: So you would have been in high school, then, when World War II started.

Devos: Yes. I was in the Philips trade school. They had what they call trade school, for four years. When you came out of public school, you had to do an exam to get into that school or you did an exam to go into high school, and if you didn't make either one, then you would go into labor or whatever.

Gregory: So you were at Philips school. Do you recall when the war started for you folks? It was in '39 when Germany invaded Poland.

Devos: Right. In '39 they invaded Poland.

Gregory: What was going on in Holland at that time?

Devos: In Holland was nothing going on. Holland had not been involved in any war in 150 years. It always remained neutral. And they expected to stay neutral. I was always very inquisitive. I listened to radio like Russia and so on. From what I heard, I couldn't see why they would want to invade Holland because I didn't see the big advantage of it. There never was a big advantage to it, I think. But they did, in 1940 – May 10, 1940 they invaded Holland.

Gregory: Do you recall that?

Devos: Very clearly. I was just out of school and I started a job and it happened to be on a radio station where I worked in maintenance. One morning I woke up to go to work and there was hundreds of planes, I guess, in the air that came over towards the center of Holland. Of course, I didn't know what was going on. My mother and I talked about it and I turned the radio on. On the radio there was nothing but coded messages, so the radio wasn't giving us normal programs. It was only later that I found out that the Germans had invaded. We were very, very, very surprised.

Gregory: Were you scared? Confused?

Devos: No, the problem of Jews had not come up yet.

Gregory: I say, were you frightened or confused?

Devos: We were confused, yes. Frightened in a sense, but mostly confused because we knew that there was no way that they could stop the Germans. We knew we had so many contacts ... like my brothers and so would go to Germany once in a while, and they knew the Germans had built up a terrific army. We always said, "Why don't the English know about that?" At one time my brother came back from Germany and they had German planes in the air and they were all painted "Lufthansa." Lufthansa is the name for the airline. He said, "But they flew _____(??) in formation over Germany." He said, "So if they don't see that, they're

stupid!” But they were training and prepared. And indeed, in Holland, after three days Holland it was known that we got flood quite a bit because a lot of it was below the sea level. So it flooded so much that the Germans could not get through, although there had been fighting. The Dutch were not too good a fighters the first couple of days, I think, because if you get overrun all of a sudden like that, a lot of them get hysterics. There is practically no hunting or anything in Holland. Guns are just unknown. Nobody wants them in their house. So all of a sudden they get involved in a war like that ... the Germans already had experience in Poland. So they broke through the first lines and then found out that they couldn't get through the water. So they decided to bomb Rotterdam after four days. I'd been in Rotterdam right after that happened. There was, I would say, five city blocks square was absolutely flat. The Germans said if we don't give up, we'll do the same thing to Amsterdam. They said there's no reason for us to fight the Germans. In the meantime, there had been already, just in case of an invasion, trainloads had been loaded up from Philips ... the queen and so on, they all went to England. The ships were ready to load up and they loaded up whatever they could and went to England before the Germans came into the coast.

Gregory: The queen and the royal family ... the government.

Devos: Yes. They went to Canada.

Gregory: What was going on with Philips at the time?

Devos: Well, Philips was in production of ... 15,000 people working there. They were making radios, X-ray machines ... all electronic equipment. Just about anything you can think of. They still do today. But one of the main things was light bulbs and light fixtures and all that sort. The production continued at first, and even when the Germans took over ... when they came in, certain technicians were sent in to tell them what they had to make. To change over most of the production ...

Then you get resistance. On the surface it looks like cooperation, but as soon as they turned their back, things didn't go. So this did go on all these years. There were bad times. The first six months there was food in Holland. Holland was a rich country; it stocked up for being isolated. So the warehouses always were full. The result was that the Germans just loaded it all up and brought it to Germany. And farming was the same way – the farming was taken over. The farmers were told, “You have so many acres in this kind of grain – you can expect this big a grain crop. By September we expect to get so much.” And that was it. The farmers could farm what they wanted pretty well, but they couldn't keep it. They got a very low price for it and it all went to Germany. It was known at the time Germany didn't have chocolate or anything like that, while in Holland the warehouses were filled up with it, because Holland was always a seafaring country that always had a lot of contact with ... But they gave Holland six months to kind of blend in with the Germans. That's what they wanted. After all, we're blond and blue-eyed, and we are friends. That was their propaganda. The Dutch, they're our friends, because they're blond-haired and blue-eyed. So they even gave them a three-man government. Those three men could run the country.

Gregory: Dutch citizens?

Devos: Dutch citizens. But it only lasted six months because those three men slowly told them ... this is the way we want to run it ... they said, “No, that’s not the way you’re gonna run it.” They said, “Oh, yes, we will.” So they forced them to ... finally threw them out because they couldn’t get anything out of them. What they wanted is that they delivered the soldiers and everything up. In other words, they wanted them to go completely with the Germans. It wasn’t a questions that the Dutch and the English always were big friends, because over the history those two were fighting each other, too. Because they were two seafaring countries. But when the Germans came in, that changed overnight. The Germans used excuses like the Dutch were giving enemy spies free reign to go through Holland to Germany and all.

Then after the six months, it was all over with the Germans. The cities were surrounded. In Holland they have a system ... the language is, in a way, funny that they often act out certain things instead of saying so. When you talked about the Germans, you would act like you were carrying a package under your arm. “I saw a bunch of those people ...” and you would show like you carry the package. They would know you were talking about the Germans.

Gregory: What was the significance of that? Why did the package mean German?

Devos: Because they were taking everything to Germany. They stole everything they could get ahold of. Emptied the warehouses officially.

Gregory: They took your food ...

Devos: Took the food. After six months, the food ran out. The papers and the control from the Germans told that we could live on 800 calories a day.

Gregory: Did the Germans give you food or ...?

Devos: No, there was enough food in Holland, that Holland grows. Even today, the exports in Holland are much higher than the imports. Part of it is cheese and a lot of food products. They are very sufficient. In fact, I was with my son in Holland a couple of years ago and he said, “I can’t believe how much they grow here. Every little square inch, they grow something.” He says, “On the same spot they grow for 1,000 years. How can they still keep up with But they have environmental control today, inspecting now. I was there in May, and it’s back to one of the richest countries.

Gregory: Do you recall your first contact with a German national or a German soldier?

Devos: Yes.

Gregory: Would you share that with me, please?

Devos: The first contact was, I was walking down the road and a German motorbike stopped and they said that they wanted to go to a certain town. He said, “Are we on the right road?” Now, in war – and I knew that from day one – if you mislead them, there is sometimes different ways they can find out within ten minutes and he had a map in his hand, so I told him the truth. I said, “You go straight ahead and you come to the city Arnhem in about fifty miles.” One of them said, “He’s lying. He’s lying.” I spoke fluent German, but I didn’t let on. So I let them talk and I let them talk. Then one of them had the map and he looked at the map and he said, “Look at the map ...” Finally I told them, I said, “If you look at the map, that’s where you came from. Now you have to go that way to Arnhem. There’s Arnhem.” “Where are we then?” That’s where you are.” I doesn’t pay to try to mislead them on little things, because later on we found ... I was correct in that, because later on we found out that we had cases where a bridge was blown up and the guys that probably did it got away, but somebody that wasn’t there, which was one of my best friends, to see what happened -- [to see] did they blow it all the way up? He is the one that was shipped out to Germany and never came back. So you stayed out of everything. If you had to, you told them what was true and only when you were sure that you could get away with it, you did something.

Like food, later on, too. There was like five percent of the population was pro-socialist – pro-Nazi. They would sometimes walk around with shotguns and felt like a big shot talking to Germans. So when I had food on the back of my bike, for instance, that I got from farmers ... later on when there was a bigger shortage ... I might run and I had a jacket on that looked like a jacket from them – with pins on it that said National Socialist. I would say “Heil, Hitler.” And they would let me go. That was the easiest way out. They always try to find the easiest way out. I don’t know, I was always playing up to the enemy.

Gregory: Were there Dutch nationals who were in Nazi uniforms, who actually joined the Nazi military?

Devos: Later on you got that because the Germans started the big propaganda “join the German Army” or “join the Dutch unit in the German army” and they did that in Belgium and France and everywhere – “to fight Communism.” Way before the war, even in the First World War, Communism was a threat. So they advertised and that way they did get some young people in it. Sometimes you have young people that like adventure, see what _____(??). The problem with the German army, you were in or you were out. There was no fiddling around with them. The hunger, the lack of food, showed up after a year. Then later on, May of ‘45, the Canadians came in Holland. It was only then that it started to ... and even then you had problems, too, because people couldn’t take normal food anymore. Somebody who was really ... not just hungry but totally skinny – worn out ... the Canadians came with bacon and eggs that could kill them overnight. Holland was mostly liberated by Canadians. There were some Americans in the south that got down, but Canadians had the northern sector. Even today the Canadians and the Dutch are very, very close. Not only that, but the Canadians took in the queen and she was expecting. So when she lived in Canada there was a problem – this was a kid born in a foreign country. So the Canadians passed a law that this particular area was given to the Dutch government and was official Dutch property, so she was not born on But anyway, she used to speak on the radio ... what we had ... shortly after the Germans took over Philips –

and I had two brothers working there ... they started to ... you had to deliver all your radios. You could not have a radio at home.

Gregory: How did that work? Did they come by and pick them up or did you have to turn them in somewhere?

Devos: They would send police out and Germans spot control here and there. They would say, "You have to go to that school and bring all the radios."

Gregory: German police?

Devos: Some German police. They controlled it.

Gregory: So, they had German police and German soldiers?

Devos: No German police ... military police, like with Dutch police. They wouldn't pick them up. You had to bring them. If you got caught with it, you were on the way to Germany. That's as simple as it was.

Gregory: When you say "on the way to Germany," was that concentration camp? Is that what happened?

Devos: Not necessarily.

Gregory: Well, what would happen if someone were shipped to Germany, a white, blue-eyed, blond-haired person?

Devos: We had a soccer game at Philips sports stadium on a Sunday morning. They already tried to ... in fact, I had a card that I had to report at 8:00 in the morning at the railroad station, and I didn't. At the football game -- soccer game -- there was a lot of people. While the game was going on, the Germans surrounded the soccer field stadium. When they came out, anybody between fifteen and forty, I think, they were loaded in trucks and brought to Germany to work in Germany in the factories because the soldiers -- the Germans -- were on the frontline. That was done in Belgium and all over. Sometimes, those guys would sneak out and turn back, but that was very difficult. They were well-paid. It wasn't that they were starving or that they were ... but they worked in Germany in military factories. It made a lot of complications because you had prisoners of war sometimes working there. Later on in the war it was a problem because a lot of Russian prisoners of war worked there. They shot most of the Russians. For some reason, the Russians really didn't even make it to Germany. That's why Russia had such a high amount of death in that war, more than doubled of any of the countries.

Gregory: Were you in the stadium?

Devos: No, I wasn't.

Gregory: You weren't.

Devos: I was looking at a distance when they loaded them up.

Gregory: You said you had a card to show up at the train station and you didn't go.

Devos: Yeah. 1st of April 1942.

Gregory: Could something have happened to you if you didn't show up?

Devos: Yeah. I moved out by my parents' house for a couple of weeks and see what happened. Nothing happened, so I moved back in.

Gregory: Where did you go when you left your parents?

Devos: Friends. Everybody helped everybody.

Gregory: Hiding.

Devos: Yeah. We had a system, which was ... I _____(??) my father-in-law. At that time, of course, he wasn't my father-in-law. I had a good friend where I used to go play games -- chess and checkers and so on. His father developed into the leader of a group of underground that would take care of young people that had to go to Germany and didn't want to go. They would go mostly through his house. Philips supplied them with false cards. Everybody had a card, and Philips used to print them in the laboratory by the hundreds. You got a card with your picture on it and everything. Often, they gave you a job at Philips. They said, "You never had a card." "No, I had a card."

Then, food was a problem because you had to have a food card to get food. You had to have coupons. I don't think that there was anything without a coupon anymore. They set up a group ... one reason was I was often said to be too young to get involved in it. A group of about six or eight, and they would rob the post office when they know the coupons were shipped. Then, the coupons were brought to different people and then divided up to people that had taken in a boy or a girl that had to go to Germany, didn't go, and they would be supplied coupons. The person that had my ... as you say, father-in-law ... he would get coupons and he would distribute them because he know where the boy was. So that those people had enough coupons for themselves. Sometimes it was difficult. There was a couple of times that there was people wounded or killed by robbing the post office. Sometimes the post office had police there because they knew it was often robbed. In one case, for instance, the police got nervous. Actually, he knew they were coming. He was tipped off. He said, "You just tie me down in the chair, and I won't do anything." When they walked in, he started shooting. In front of the building was a bus stop with people waiting for the bus, so those guys took off like wild fire.

The people at the bus saw them go. Of course, they tried to hide them right away. They got away. I think only one that had very slight ... he had a bullet between in his leg, and his one leg was bleeding. Of course, we lost a bunch of guns. We had a couple of ladies we'd send after it, and they would go and find the guns in the bushes and so on. Usually stick them in their pants. Tie them down with a piece of rope. I remember one of them came home late at night. "Did you check on the guns? Did we lose anything up there?" She didn't say anything, walked to the back, and came out with two guns. [Chuckles]. She had tied it on to her waist and hanging, more or less, between her legs. We lost a couple of guys. Not too many. We lost one ... again, I wasn't involved directly. My brother was involved. The police still had a police car -- an unmarked police car. There were a bunch of pilots that were shot down, and they were picked up by the underground. They were going to bring them to the city where there was a widow. Her husband got killed in the war. She would give them a place for the night ... feed them. In the mean, they were establishing a route from Eindhoven south through France, through the Pyrenees to Spain. They would smuggle them that way. In Holland, special by Philips, they would print all the cards they needed ... all the paperwork they needed. So if they got picked up, they'd have a fair chance to get through. The guy from the police ... I think it was a sergeant from police from Eindhoven ... the city was about 150,000 people. He drove them to Tilburg with my brother and a couple of pilots. No, there was my brother, and there was another guy from the underground, Peter. They drove them to Tilburg to that widow. She lived on the upstairs apartment. When they rang the bell, the door opened up and there was a German standing there with a machine gun. So, they took off. This Peter jumped into the German military car that was standing there and took off. For some reason, they shot at him. In the meantime, the other ones got away except two pilots got wounded. My brother and the other one got away. Peter made a mistake. He drove out of town, and he was going to drive forever. The Germans telephoned ahead and put up a road block and caught him. He went in a concentration camp, and we had a lot of trouble trying to get him out. They never got him out. They finally killed him in the concentration camp. A couple of times, we thought we had him out.

Gregory: How would you have gotten him out?

Devos: Again, we had a couple of special men for this. You can do this. You have to have a couple of specially-trained men that know what they want with the Germans and fluent in German and could talk to the Germans. They thought that they had ... one guard was going to let them in and let the other guy out.

Gregory: Bribe the guards?

Devos: Yeah. Bribe the guard. If necessary shoot him if he started to be a problem. In Amsterdam it happened that they got into a big prison, and they thought they were going to take out over 100 and the Germans were well paid out. But, they started shooting, and there were sixty dead.

Gregory: Sixty of your Dutch?

Devos: [Yes].

Gregory: Were you working for Philips at the time?

Devos: No. I worked at the plant for the telephone.

Gregory: For the telephone company.

Devos: It used to be telephone, telegraph, and post office semi-government.

Gregory: What were you doing there?

Devos: Mechanic and maintenance.

Gregory: Were there German supervisors? How did they control you?

Devos: Officially, we only had one in an office. There was one German that was all day long in the office. I laugh because we would lead him around like a kid. [Chuckles]. We always knew exactly where he was. He would say, "I couldn't do anything if I wanted to. You guys know exactly what I'm doing." That was true. In the meantime, I had picked up a girlfriend that was a long distance telephone operator. She was younger than I was; she was only fifteen [or] sixteen. They put her in a telephone transformer station. There was seven boys working there, and there was one German. She did all the telephone connections and all the talking and all. A German came over to the office where I was working. I went into what we called the battery room because telephones work on batteries. It doesn't work on the house net; it works on a separate system. I checked out the batteries in this room. When I walked out, I opened the door and there were about five or six guys standing there talking. Then, I saw the German there. He had his back to me. I opened the door, and I looked. I saw one of them winking at me. He shook his head like this. I closed the door and went back in. I thought there was something going on. When I came out ... later on, the same guy came and opened the door. He said, "Ted, come out." I said, "What happened? Wasn't I supposed to go on the floor?" He said, "No, because he came here and he said, 'Who is that Ted Devos? That boyfriend of Ann that worked there?'" I wouldn't say he didn't trust Ann anymore, but he had some reason to believe that maybe he couldn't trust her, and why was she always talking to that Ted in the other building. I traveled around a lot. I did also maintenance on the automatic stamping machines. If the post office had trouble there, they would call me. So, I would be free to travel, and that made a real complication. Now I got involved in all kind of other things because there were three post offices in the city and a post office outside of town in another small town that would call me if they had any problems. I was the one who was always going. That's what they wanted. This German smelled something, but didn't know what was going on. Ann ... we had set up a network of telephones that the underground could use. We had different ministers connected. Out of the let's say 10,000 phones, the Germans cut out at least 6,000. We were not allowed to have phones. I think it was more than that. But, we would hook up whoever we wanted to hook

up. This one German walking around, he sometimes would get frustrated and say, "I'm sure that that line was not hooked up. That is so-and-so and he shouldn't have a phone." "Forgot to unhook it, right?" It was just putting pins in different numbers. It got real complicated.

Gregory: How would you travel around to the post offices? On your bicycle?

Devos: Never.

Gregory: How'd you get there?

Devos: From post office to post office I'd walk. If it was out of town, I had a pass for the railroad.

Gregory: Did you also have a pass to travel around town? Did you need one to travel around?

Devos: No. Everybody had an identification card, which doesn't make a difference. They say, "How could I have an identification card?" You have a driver's license. That was good enough. You needed those cards if you wanted to go to the post office and get the coupons for your food. Everything was in coupons.

Gregory: How did the coupons work? You'd go to the store to buy things but you had to have a coupon?

Devos: Yeah. You couldn't buy it unless you had coupons – you had to give them a coupon.

Gregory: It was like the rationing we had in this country.

Devos: Yes. You just gave them the coupon for whatever you bought.

Gregory: You were being paid for your work?

Devos: Oh, yeah.

Gregory: Living at home?

Devos: Living at home.

Gregory: How many were at home? Your mom and dad?

Devos: At one time, we had about six [or] seven. Then, I had sisters that got married and moved out. My oldest brother ... yeah, he was married. He moved out. He worked for Philips

and with Philips at that time, I think they were quite busy making little radios -- little things where you could get only two stations on. You could pick up London, England. In Europe, all the radios have shortwave. You know the shortwave? They're all built in, usually, all over. They built little radios there was nothing in the damn thing. I remember my brother coming home, and he says -- he had a little headphone -- he says, "Now we can at least listen to London." What he did, he hung it under the bed of my parents. And it was only one station. Like, when I came home at noon -- everybody comes home at noon usually -- I would lay on the bed, and I would get out the headphone, put the headphone on, and turn the little switch there on the side of the bed and I could listen to the 12:00 news from London.

Gregory: From BBC?

Devos: From BBC.

Gregory: Philips was building ... were they building things for the Nazis?

Devos: Oh, yeah. They were building things ... I don't know what they were all building, but they were building something.

Gregory: So the Nazis would have had officers somewhere at Philips to make sure they were ...?

Devos: Right.

Gregory: But they were also building radios ... Philips was?

Devos: No. The guys were building them for themselves. They stole parts here and there. At Philips, everybody knew and everybody cooperated. In fact, my brother, he would come home and he says, "In 10:00 news they said so and so." I said to him, "10:00 news? You were at work?" So, they had another little radio like that built under the work bench in a cabinet. One of the guys would crawl in the cabinet and lay in the cabinet, listen to the news. He wouldn't come out until it was the right time, and they would knock on the door because he couldn't come out if the German was ... then he would come out and he would tell them so and so. The Germans couldn't understand Dutch. In the factory, there were Germans but not that many. Later on they had problems with it because they tried to stand up. We don't get enough food to live on. So, one day they were going on strike. They were not going to take it anymore. The old Philips was an older man. He had gone to the United States because Philips had interests in the United States, like Norelco. Philips was not allowed in the United States under the name Philips because it was, according to General Electric and so on, it was a conglomerate. What's the name for it? It was a big outfit over the whole world, and General Electric felt threatened by it, so they kept them out in a way. They started a company named Norelco. That's how they started. Later on, they brought out Magnavox, and then Magnavox became their producer. Now, they are pretty well open to get in. There's no problem anymore. But they're all over the world. They made a lot, a lot of stuff for Germany. They made a lot of stuff

for the underground. They had thousands of underground boys that were supposed to be in Germany ... they were working there -- quite often, not doing anything. They were just hiding.

Gregory: Because Philips would help them hide.

Devos: Oh, yeah.

Gregory: Make up the passes for them and so forth. Was Germany paying folks?

Devos: I don't know.

Gregory: But the employees were getting paid.

Devos: The employees were getting paid _____(??). When they went on strike, they called the German police in and _____(??) had to walk out of the gate. In a factory of 1,500 people it's like a small town. There's a fence around the whole thing. The roads are all in there and the stoplights and everything. First guy to walk out, they shot him. Let him lay there for three days. They said, "Anybody who wants to cross that line, go ahead." They were special German police that were brought in. So, the strike was over. Philips' son -- his name was Fritz -- took over the leadership, and he negotiated with the Germans. He told them that that's no way to do it. You don't gain anything by ... they had soup kitchens and so on and _____(??). Where I was, there was soup kitchens and such. You couldn't get any decent food anymore. You couldn't get cigarettes. _____(??)dry tobacco maybe. Everything else was gone.

Gregory: Liquor?

Devos: No. I don't we had any liquor at all. I know we didn't. We used to be a family where we had always some liquor, but I don't remember we had liquor in the house then. Everything else like what used to come from Spain and from the Mediterranean area -- fruit and all that stuff -- there was nothing. Eggs ... never got an egg. In fact, I went to a farmer and I got an egg, the farmer says, "Well, I'll give you one." He gave me some flour, too ... grain. My mother cooked it and made it into bread. I don't know how she did it. It wasn't flour; it was grain. The farmer gave me an egg ...

End of Side A, Tape 1
Begin Side B, Tape 1

Gregory: ... because you couldn't share it with the other people. Wouldn't go very far.

Devos: No.

Gregory: What would you eat? What kind of meals would you have?

Devos: Potatoes, bread. In the end of it, the bread that was there was made out of brown beans.

Gregory: Brown bean bread.

Devos: It stuck together. You pulled it apart and it was just ... [laughter]. I lived in south Eindhoven ... was liberated first. Then, they had this big problem that they couldn't get through in Holland. They stopped by Arnhem. There was a movie called *One Village Too Far*. They cut off lines. The Allies couldn't get through. What happened north of that line in the north of Holland was just unbelievable. It was just unbelievable. People starved. Eating tulip bulbs and all that. I came there right after ... the war wasn't over yet, but I was in Belgium. I had joined up in a Dutch unit. The captain said to me, "If you want to drive up there for two days -- drive up one day and come back ..." and I did. In Amsterdam, I picked up a girl because I didn't know my way around. I said, "I have to go to a certain shed." She said, "I know where it is." The other guy and I ... she sat in the middle. Pretty soon, we could hardly stand it in the truck. She had been eating all sugar beets and tulip bulbs and stuff like that. Those people smelled out of the pores out of their skin. They were terrible.

Gregory: Worse than garlic?

Devos: Like garlic. It was very bad up there. Very, very bad. People dying ... laying in the streets.

Gregory: Why was it worse there than where you lived?

Devos: Because the Allies had to stop on the Rhine ... on that river. They couldn't cross it for the winter. So, they waited for the next action for another six months. In the meantime, the Germans pulled everything out of the north, and why they didn't go after them I don't know. But, it was from September till May that we were on our side liberated, and the north side was not liberated. People would walk for days just to get a bag of potatoes. I went to the north shortly ... a couple of days after I had gone on this trip. There was a motorbike -- a military motorbike. The captain was a friend of mine. I said, "I wonder how my sister's making out because it was terrible up there." He said, "If you could go on the motorbike I wouldn't miss you for two days." I was doing dispatch sending [??] in Belgium at the time. So, I went to a couple of Belgian farmers, and they loaded me up with butter and grain and stuff like that ... tea. I went to Amersfoort, the city where I was last May. By the family _____(??) it was last May. The oldest son at that time was about six. He's fifty-two now. He has a good business running in Holland, and I stay with him when I go to Holland to visit. When I came to the door there on my motorbike, my sister opened up ... "Who the heck is this strange soldier over here?" When I came closer ... "Ted," she cried. I went into the house, and I talked to them for a while. First, the Canadians wouldn't even let me in town. They said, "We have a quarantine here. We shouldn't let anybody in town. We have to find out what is going on in town." I drove around, and I knew that I could find a way to get in. I came back by the same bridge. You had to go

over a river. By the same bridge again, and I drove over as if I didn't know anything. This one soldier came up. He says, "Where are you going?" I said, "I have to go to so and so." I said, "My sister lives here and I just came from Belgium and brought her some food." My brother-in-law ... they had three kids -- three boys -- I think three boys at the time. I still see him sitting there at the table crying like a child just because I brought in maybe ten pounds of grain and butter, tea, and so on. Today it would be nothing at all. Whatever he did, he couldn't supply it. There was no way. He had a good income. He worked. That's the situation that was all over Holland. The people didn't have anything to burn in the stoves anymore. They would tear their window sills out. They burned buildings. Tear the window sills out and burn them. They didn't have coal or anything.

Gregory: The farmers had food though?

Devos: The farmers could feed themselves. I don't think they had food to give away. They could hide food. They couldn't even hide some food that they would give away. Black market was also the case. I knew a farmer ... in fact, the first time I came there in _____(?), I was going to see if I could get any grain or whatever. I walked up to the little gate. The gate was open, and the door was on the back side of the house. I opened the gate and walked through to the back side. This big dog came up to me. I might be in trouble there, you know. I have a way with dogs, and I stopped -- dead stop. I hung my hand down. He came up and smelled my hand. I talked to him. I said, "All I want to do is see your boss. You don't have to worry about it. You be a nice boy." Finally, I did a couple of steps very careful. I came around the corner. Stayed away from the door and knocked on the door. When I knocked on the door, _____(?) opened and the farmer said, "He let you go that far?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "He let you go that far you might as well come in." From then on, I used to go and get maybe ten pounds of grain once in a while ... stuff like that. Mother could cook something out of it.

Gregory: What would you use for currency? Was it Dutch?

Devos: Yeah. Regular Dutch.

Gregory: So you joined the Dutch army after you were liberated?

Devos: Yeah. It was a funny thing. They wanted people to watch the coast, so they formed kind of a unit to spread out around the coast to see German boats or German U-boats or whatever.

Gregory: This would be in '44?

Devos: '44. Then I went with some American troops to the front line because I spoke fluent German.

Gregory: What was that like?

Devos: Oh, it was a lot of fun.

Gregory: What did you do?

Devos: Mostly talk to the officers and talk to the guy at night in the cafeteria. We made a cafeteria somewhere. Sometimes I was standing at an intersection with a soldier that controlled who was coming and going. They had to keep an eye on it. Since I spoke more than one language I would stand there and listen to what the people would say. [Chuckles]. At night, they wanted to go out, and I went with them. There were cases where they were talking to some girls. "Dammit, can't understand a word what they're talking about." I said, "Just let them talk, and I'll tell you what they say." [Chuckles]. Then, I was quite familiar with the _____(?), the maps, and what was going on and how far the front line was and what they could expect.

Gregory: You were in uniform?

Devos: I was in uniform. I was in English uniform.

Gregory: An English uniform?

Devos: Yeah. The Dutch were supplied with English uniforms at the time. England did that. They gave us free uniforms and most of our gas supply in military units ... military trucks or whatever you usually went to the English.

Gregory: Who were your officers? Dutch?

Devos: Yeah. Most of the officers that we had actually had been in England during the war. A lot of Dutch went to England even during the war. I mean, it wasn't too hard to get across ... not for English and Dutch sailors. I mean, they found a way to go across. Some of them came back as officers.

Gregory: What happened to the Dutch Army when the Germans invaded? Did they capture them?

Devos: Yeah. They captured them. After six months, they let most of them go. They checked them all out, you know.

Gregory: Then they let them go home.

Devos: Let them go home.

Gregory: Wasn't there something about they came back later and were going to capture

them again, and then there was a strike or something. Does that ring any bells?

Devos: Yeah. This has been constantly discussed what they're going to do with ... one of my brothers was in it. He was one of those types. He always found a way to get out. In fact, he was one of the underground. He used to do a lot with pilots that were shot down. My boy friend traveled to France to the Pyrenees. You were not allowed to cross the border into Belgium. But, he went all the way to establish a line of contacts to bring pilots through ... that they had to go from one day to the next and what buses to take and what was the safest route. In fact, when he came back they arrested him on a real crazy thing. Got six months in a German prison.

Gregory: Why did they arrest him?

Devos: They arrested him because they thought he was smuggling from Belgium to Holland. When they got the name, they checked it out, and they said, "He was involved with ..." Oh, they found tickets from buses in France in his pocket. He wanted to keep them as souvenirs, but he should have thrown them away. [Chuckles]. When the Germans checked him out, they said, "You are arrested for smuggling." He says, "I never smuggled anything." Then they went through all his clothes and said, "What did you do in France?" and then a whole complicated thing where he had no answers. They put him in jail, then they put him on an airport that was bombed by the Allies. Then the prisoners would have to dig up the bombs that didn't explode. He was there for six months. Then they came in a German court, and they still couldn't prove anything what he did. It's a funny thing ... why I remembered it I don't know. In the first place, it was in court and you were allowed ... especially families. So, I went with his family because you didn't sit together if you possibly could because if the Germans would pick up, you would never be in groups. His father was one of the top men in underground _____(?). So, we would sit there -- in fact, I was sitting with his daughter -- and listen to it. They said, "Why did you go there?" "Well, I wanted to go to Philips in Madrid, and see if I could find a job up there." "Why would you leave?" He says, "I was fed up with the war. I didn't have anything to do with the war, and I wanted to go out and if I could find a job in Madrid I would be happy." "Did you have anything to do with this? Did you have anything to do with that? Where did you sleep?" "On the street." So, they didn't get anywhere. The Germans gave him a lawyer even. Like I said, I spoke German so I could hear what he said. One thing that stood out, and it loses a lot in translation, but it comes down that. He said it in German this way, "*Ich habe hymeway nach seine Mutty.*" "He was homesick for his mother." That's why he decided when he couldn't get through the Pyrenees in the winter to go home because he wanted to go back to his mother. He's an eighteen year old boy or so, you know. The German defending him failed. The verdict came that he would get six months, but the time that he spent already would be taken off. So, he was gone the next day. Couldn't believe it.

Gregory: Were the Germans always that fair?

Devos: No. I think they were fair if they found out that there was no real reason for it.

Gregory: He wasn't a threat to them, or so they thought. How is it that you spoke such

fluent German?

Devos: My parents lived in Germany for a while. They lived in Belgium. I don't speak French.

Gregory: So they taught you to speak German when you were growing up?

Devos: Yes. I picked it up myself. Another thing is, in Holland ... it's a small country. Germany is close, too. If you turn on the radio, you had German and English stations. The English you'd pick up, too.

Gregory: You spoke German and English and Dutch?

Devos: Yeah. All fairly well.

Gregory: That helped you didn't it?

Devos: Yeah. In the schools up there, English and French and German is compulsive. Only if you go into trades, for instance, you don't necessarily have to take them. But, otherwise, it's compulsive because if they hire a policeman, he has to speak three languages.

Gregory: You said your friend was helping the pilots. That would be British and American pilots?

Devos: Well, any pilot that was shot down and the Dutch could get ahold of them. Of course, usually they were picked up by Dutch people and taken in the home. Then, it might take days before they could find a contact that was working with them. You had your pilots that had to be taken care of and brought back if possible. You had Jews. A lot of people did hide them. And you had your Dutch boys that had to work in Germany -- boys or girls. The pilots were separate. They were difficult because they didn't speak Dutch; they didn't speak German. So, you always had to keep them in the background. I never had anything to do with pilots really. I talked to some of them, but my brother did.

Gregory: Under divers?

Devos: Yeah. They would disappear. Instead of going to Germany to work, they disappeared. We helped lots of them. Most of them through Philips papers, but otherwise we would bring them to a home in the city ... they knew you were coming. It was no problem. But, the Jews was a different problem. I wasn't involved with the Jews very much, although I knew at that point when the trains came through there were sometimes trains with Jews and people would spread the rumor there was a Jewish train coming, and they would go there (to the railroad station) and try to feed them. That was a terrible thing if you see a car that's normally for horses and here it's totally loaded with people. There's nothing in there -- there's no food, no toilets.

There's no nothing. They stopped there, and you hear the kids crying and everything. They would go there and people would feed them. Sometimes the Germans wouldn't let you feed them because they were afraid you'd give them something.

Then, I worked with ... of course, with a bunch of people. In this case he came to me one day. He says, "Ted, I have to talk to you." When we were in a private area, he said to me, "You might be surprised but I know you as Erich," which was my underground name. He says, "I have to talk to you because I'm hiding two Jews, and the Gestapo has been three times in my street picking out a house and searching the house." He said, "I'm afraid I might be the next one." If they find two Jews in your house, what they did, you know when your upstairs ... you know when you have a room but the roof goes down, and the _____ a window or so, but there is an opening there. That's where those Jews would hide most of the time. Only when the mother would say they could come out they could come out. But then stay away from the windows. At first I told him, "I don't have anything to do with the underground." He says, "Ted, I know more than you think." I found out later that he knew it. He was also a very good friend of the director of the post office, who I worked with in the underground, too. I finally said to him, "All right. Bring them tonight at 9:00 at that corner." He said, "I don't have to bring them because they know the town." Later on, I found out that they were two boys from a Jew that owned a music instrument store in town. I said, "I'll wear such and such a thing in my hand, and then they can follow me, but don't come close." So, they followed me. I brought them over to like I said, what is now my father-in-law ... to the house. I knew he had a place for them. When I came in the house, my father-in-law wasn't home. He came home a little bit later. He said, "Who are those little fellows?" I said, "Well, I had to bring them in because of this and that." _____ (??). I said, "I don't know what you can do, but I probably felt _____" (??). He didn't say anything and walked away. He went upstairs. He came back down and he said, "I'll take care of them. I'll bring them away." So, he made a couple of phone calls, and at 11:00 at night he disappeared with the two boys. When he came back he said to me, "Now, there's one thing Ted -- you never, never bring Jews up here anymore." He says, _____ (??) "Because if we get caught with Jews, the Germans will do everything in their power to round up our whole group, but if we get caught with our own boys, you know what we do." He said, "What do you think? I'm not defending my brother? Don't you think I would hide my brother? They're my brothers! And the Germans would have a certain amount of respect for that. But when you're caught with Jews, there's only one way -- concentration camp. So, let's not get those two mixed up ever." So, he straightened me out on that in a hurry. We did something for Jews, but we would never bring them into our group anymore. They were too dangerous. Not because they were Jews for us, but because they were Jews for the Germans. Anything that was Jewish was concentration camp.

Gregory: So if you had been found out, what would happen to you?

Devos: Send you to concentration camp. Pick you up right then and there and take you. Probably beat the heck out of you before you even go. In Amsterdam that's what they did with Jews, too. Like Anne Frank. They had a Jewish area, and they just closed off the whole area and loaded them all up. I know a lady ... I don't know if she's still living, but the last time that I talked to her, we lived in Ohio and she lived in Ohio. She's married [and] has kids. As a

fourteen year old girl ... it's not common here, but out there it's common that fourteen year old girls that they live with a family that has little children and so on ... help them out. The relationship with the Jews up there was always good. So, this Jewish girl was working in a Dutch family helping the mother ... just helping the mother. She would get fed there. I don't know what she got paid or whatever. She's only fourteen years old. Then one day the Germans surrounded the whole Jewish neighborhood and loaded them all up, and they all disappeared. Of course, this girl said to the Dutch lady, "I want to go see my parents." She said, "You're not going anywhere. You're staying in this house right now, and we will see tomorrow and we will let [my] husband or whoever find out what's going on up there. But, you are not going near." She never saw any of her family again. Never saw any of her family. Uncles, father, brother, sister. Never. Nobody came back from the concentration camp. As far as I know she still lives in Ohio ... I'm not sure. She came over to our house quite often. We lived on the same street. That was quite a hard thing. It changes a person terribly.

Gregory: What did you hear about concentration camps?

Devos: Very little.

Gregory: How did you know it was a bad thing then?

Devos: Well, any of the camps were bad things. We really didn't know that they killed them there because the Jews were always told, "You'll have a job for you there" and so and so. The Jews were proud ... like goldsmiths _____(??). Otherwise, you would have had more resistance from the Jews. The Jews that they were just concentrating them all in one area and let them work for the German army or something. The idea that they were all mass murdered up there did not penetrate ... something unbelievable.

Gregory: What about yourself? You said that if you'd gotten caught with those Jews, you would have been sent to a concentration camp.

Devos: Yeah. You were killed.

Gregory: They would kill you.

Gregory: Same thing with Allied pilots?

Devos: No.

Gregory: What happens if you get caught with a pilot?

Devos: You probably got in a concentration camp, but not in a camp where they killed people. You had concentration camps, like in Germany especially, they were made to kill people. But, we had concentration camps in Holland ... they actually didn't kill people. It might

happen once in a while, but normally they just kept them.

Gregory: You as a Dutch citizen would have been sent to a concentration camp in Holland?

Devos: Normally in Holland. If they caught me hiding other Dutch boys, they would ship me to Germany and let me work in the German factory. They were not that bad off. You just couldn't get out.

Gregory: They were living in some kind of a prison environment.

Devos: Yeah. Most of them. Some of them that were picked up in Holland were out there ... they were in homes because a lot of the Germans were on the front line. It was so bad in Germany that ... people don't realize what happened after the war. The Germans during the war were on the front line, not just a few, but all the men. All the workers that were there were foreign workers and German women. At the end of the war, the first crop of babies were ninety percent foreign kids. I've seen German films and I'm surprised ... they're too busy with politics and everything else up here to show what's really going on in the world. At that time, right after the war there were films [about] how they lived and the problems they had with ... kids were growing up and the soldiers that came back and their wives had another baby and he wasn't there. I've talked to a lot of Dutchmen that came back.

Gregory: From Germany.

Devos: Came back from Germany. Yeah. Told the stories that were unbelievable.

Gregory: What did they tell you?

Devos: Well, in the first place, the Dutch for some reason, they could get away with a lot with the Germans. A lot of them would find themselves a nice place to live some young German woman that would take them in. They got good coupons because they were working, and they got extra. And they had a good place to stay. So, they came back, "It was never that bad off in Germany." Of course, it wasn't. But, the only thing is you lived there and there was not too much food. You had the constant bombing. Depends on where you lived and where you worked.

Gregory: So like the Germans they went to work everyday?

Devos: Yep.

Gregory: Probably no worse off than they would have been in Holland.

Devos: Not much. Didn't have the bombing in Holland. Saw the planes coming over. But, in Germany, I came through a city called Essen. It was the big city for Krupp. You know

Krupp? The big steel factories in Germany. They were all in Essen. That city was flat, and I mean flat. They had to bulldoze the roads open a little bit so you could drive. I talked to a number of people and there were people living underground in the basements. I came through there in '45, I think the day Roosevelt died.

Gregory: That was when you were with the Dutch army?

Devos: No. I was on a mission for three months with these American troops.

Gregory: For three months?

Devos: Yeah. I could have gone from there to the United States right away because it was a _____(??). One says, "I live in California, and I'll write you a letter. Apply to immigration and you can come to California." I had no plans at that time to go anywhere.

Gregory: That's when you were helping the Americans as an interpreter?

Devos: Yeah. Interpreter.

Gregory: What was that like? Was that good duty?

Devos: Oh, yeah.

Gregory: Good food?

Devos: Oh, yeah. Always good food and drink.

Gregory: British uniform still?

Devos: British uniform, yeah. In fact, one time we stopped somewhere, and there was a bunch of Dutchmen. The Americans had a spot that they occupied -- intersections and so on. And we came from Holland with a truck, and we had to go to a city in Germany to report. Stopped by German farm. We thought maybe we can heat up something and maybe they have an extra potato or whatever. There were six of us. We came by those Germans. They thought we were Russians. They were used to American uniforms. One girl that was there took off. For some reason, I saw her. I didn't want to speak German, but I did. I said, "Where are you going?" She didn't say anything, and she ran off. In fifteen minutes she came back with an American soldier. She says, "They tell me you are Russians." [Laughter]. He says, "What happened?" I said, "Well, I'll tell you what happened. We're kind of fed up with rations and maybe they have something that we can eat and a couple of eggs or so." He said, "Oh, there are lots of eggs." Maybe we can fry it up at the stove. So, he told them, he says, "No, no, no. Hollanders, Hollanders." And he took off. He said, "You've got to do whatever you want. I

don't give a shit." [Chuckles]. He couldn't care less. I always hated to tell them that I was Dutch because it made them feel very uncomfortable. Nobody deserved this war. It should have been settled. I agree that the Germans were in terrible shape before the war. I mean, they were just starving to death till Hitler pulled them out. The war was not necessarily.

_____ (??). _____ (??) the first time I drove into Germany and there were big signs: Don't fraternize with Germans. There were two ladies on the side of the road and they asked for a ride so I stopped. They put their foot on the car. I looked at her and she says, "We drive it. Can I drive with you?" In German I said, "No, I'm not an American. I'm Dutch." I said, "In all of four years in Holland, I never seen a Dutch girl do this to occupying troops." She swore _____ (??). She walked away.

[Chuckles]. We drove that day to a big city in that area. _____ (??) officers. We spent about four or five days here. I was going to say Holland was not the worst off in Europe at that time, but the north of Holland by the Rhine River, they were starving to death. They were terrible.

Gregory: How did you come to be in the underground? Was that because of your brother?

Devos: I don't know. You just saw something that you thought should be done. You found out a little bit from the underground and say, "Hey, let's do something about this," and you get in contact with more and more. Of course, you didn't want more contacts or more names than you had to because you always know too much. If they would ever pick you up, you actually should know nothing.

Gregory: Would they torture you?

Devos: If they thought it was worth it.

Gregory: Did you know anybody that was tortured?

Devos: Yeah.

Gregory: And lived?

Devos: Yeah.

Gregory: What did they tell you about the torture?

Devos: Anything. Depends on where it was and who did it and what they wanted to know. Oh, yeah, they tortured you. Hang you on your fingers or hang you upside for a couple of days. Beat the heck out of you. This one guy ... man, they beat the heck out of him. That was mostly in the camps where they did it. This one guy that they caught with the pilots that escaped... he escaped with the German car. They caught him _____ (??). They tortured him, and he died in the camp. He was the only one really from our small group that

died.

Gregory: How big was your group?

Devos: We worked in a group of about six or eight. Then, we had a contact all over the city.

Gregory: So there were a lot of small groups?

Devos: Oh, yeah. The Communists had their own group.

Gregory: And then somehow they would communicate?

Devos: Yeah. And then you had groups that did more ... like we worked with boys that were hiding mostly. But you had groups that would aggravate the Germans. They would blow something up and stuff like that. The thing is, we had a case _____(?). There was a high German officer that would ride that road everyday. He was hated for different reasons. One day, the underground set up two machine guns on the side of the road. They decided that that guy has to go because ... you know, he was giving too much trouble to the underground. Maybe coming too close to the _____(?) underground. So, they shot his car and the next car and everything. Shot it completely to pieces. They never found one of the guys. The little town that was next to the road, two days later it was surrounded by Germans. Every man between fifteen and forty was shot right there. The whole village had nothing to do with it. The same thing happened in Denmark -- exactly the same thing. It's amazing that those people didn't have no mercy. That's the way Hitler trained them from the beginning. That's why they were terrific fighters. You can't be in a war and show any mercy. You can't trust anybody. If you want to make sure, kill him. Then you know he's not going to bother you anymore. If you're on the front line ... like for instance the Battle of the Bulge. I was in Belgium at the time. Everything was going fine, then the Germans started to build up for the attack of the Battle of the Bulge. On the western side, _____(?) not in this bad weather ... but the Belgian people told them, "They're building up an army there that's not finished." [Tape recording momentarily paused due to ringing phone].

Gregory: Okay. You were in Belgium. And the Belgian folks knew about the ...

Devos: Yeah. They warned them. The lines and lines of tanks and all that stuff. I've seen the same thing in Holland ... "Oh, no. The underground doesn't know all the details either," which is true. Nobody knew all the details. You don't know what happens there. Then, all of a sudden the Germans came out with full power. They penetrated. In the beginning when I was there ... in fact, a crazy thing one time. The officer said, "Anybody that can drive a car come on over." We lined up. "All in the bus" and in the truck that we used for people's transportation. They drove us to Brussels at the airport because the airport was full of trucks and cars that they had shipped in. That was the reserve. Any unit that needed a car over there, they go to Brussels

and pick it up. The Germans were so far down already, they were afraid they would get the whole -- it was an airport -- full of cars. So, they sent everybody up there that could drive, pick them up and bring them back to Antwerp. When I came to Brussels, it was panic. It was panic.

Gregory: What was going on?

Devos: The Germans were so close already. They broke through. The first defenses ... they were not too good because they weren't prepared. They were not organized. The Germans broke through three or four times. A lot of people killed. I came through small towns there ... yeah, it was like in Germany after the war. They didn't know what to do. People killed laying all over.

Gregory: Soldiers?

Devos: Yeah. Soldiers, people.

End of Tape 1
Begin Side A, Tape 2

Gregory: ... Belgium when you were in the Dutch army. What were you doing up in there?

Devos: That was when we had that unit that was actually guarding the coast. It was having binoculars and constantly watching because ... in Antwerp, that's where all the military materiel came in after the landings that they had. Antwerp was a big harbor, so that's where they shipped in a lot. In the opening of the harbor is a river, and that's where we had posts to watch and make sure that there was no mines or anything coming out.

Gregory: Did you folks know about the invasion in Normandy ... D-Day? What did you hear about that?

Devos: We knew everything about it.

Gregory: You did?

Devos: Because we had the radio under my parents' bed. We would hear everything that was on the English radio.

Gregory: After the invasion, the English broadcasting was going on?

Devos: Yeah. I don't know what we all know the first day. It was just a matter of time.

Gregory: Was that pretty exciting to think they were that close?

Devos: Oh, yeah. We knew this couldn't last. When Hitler invaded Russia he took on too much. Now he fought all the rest of Europe -- England and so on -- and Russia. They always said they didn't fight the United States that much, but the United States supplied all the materiel. In Europe they always say, "The only one that made money on wars is the United States" because they made all the materiel. We used it. They couldn't attack ... they tried to attack England to bomb it, but it didn't work out. They thought they could ... and that's when they started with the V-1 and the V-2 -- the flying bombs. They were very efficient. I mean, the result of them. They couldn't build them fast enough.

Gregory: Weren't those launched from Holland or Belgium?

Devos: The V-1s ... a lot of them were launched from Holland and Belgium. They were flying bombs -- nothing in it. The V-1 had the engine on the top -- a jet engine on the top. Then they had the V-2. It was a rocket that they brought over to the United States with Werner von Braun and a whole bunch to build them up here. He had it pretty well fixed there. I think that Hitler could not make up his mind whether he wanted to go to the atomic bomb or to the rockets. It's amazing what he all did because he doesn't have that much supply in Europe. You know, Europe doesn't have that much resources. One of the reasons he went into Norway [was] to get resources for atomic bomb. Heavy water and so, that was the only place you could get it. So, he took Norway. In Peenemünde where Werner von Braun was, they were far ahead. Again, Hitler would not commit himself 100 percent. _____(??) Werner von Braun already had plans of building a great, big mirror in the sky and simply burn the American cities off the map. That was Werner von Braun. All the countries there was a lot of sabotage. My girlfriend at the plant ... the last time ... I picked her up on a bike on the way home. She said to me, "Well" ... I forgot the Germans' names that were stationed in the office there. He said to her, "Ann, I can't prove anything, but sometimes I think you're into dangerous things." He couldn't understand Dutch, of course. He said, "I'll tell you one thing, if I ever catch you, you're dead right here in the hall." He says, "There's no questions asked." I picked her up that day, and she never went back to work. It was only about three weeks before we got liberated, I think. In fact, we kind of wiped them out. I wasn't really there. I was on the telephone, and I told a bunch of guys ... they said, "We're going to break open his office, and if he's still there we'll shoot him." He had left. But, they broke into the building and took over. There was a relay station for the telephone and the underground wanted control of it because you had all the underground lines that we had hooked up illegally according to the Germans and we wanted to protect them then. That same night I spent on top of a building that was a transformer station for electricity for the city. They called the underground and said the Germans wanted to blow it up. So, we took a load of hand grenades and machine guns, and we set it all up beside the building and on top of the building. I lay on top of the building. Well, if they come (??)... and they did because if the guard would have pulled up They sent spies out and they found out. _____(??). There were two Germans together, which we shoot at them. One of the underground people was going through the woods in the area to see if there was Germans. Well, _____(??)the Germans were quieter than he was because they caught him, and he had his gun over his shoulder. They took him prisoner. This is a crazy story. So, the next morning, we said, "The Germans aren't coming anymore." We could see off the top of the building. We would stay

behind the fires (??)because we could see the Germans going down the roads, trucks and everything going back. We said, "Well, we won't find him anymore." So, we went back to the base because we said the Germans are not going to blow it up anymore. So, we go back to the base, which was Philips' house. He had a house outside town in the woods. It was all _____ (??). Beautiful place. I went there. My brother was there. I said to him, "We lost William." He says, "What happened?" So, I told him. Meanwhile, a whole bunch of American paratroopers had landed there in that area to take over the ... check the area. They came there to find contact with the underground. We talked to them. We said, "We lost one man there." "How did you lose him?" So and so on. What was that? Looked at the map. This one guy said, "I'll see where he is." We says, "Hey, you won't find where he is." He must be kind of like I am. I like to spy and get across the line. He was going on on the other side. I've always been lucky, and that guy was lucky, too. He left about ten or eleven in the morning. We didn't hear from him. Four o'clock in the afternoon, one of the Americans said, "Well, I guess he's gone too." It was later at night. It was already dark. The two of them came walking in. I couldn't believe it. He was a paratrooper. I mean, he knew what he was doing. He said, "Well, I just followed the line that you guys told me." According to the map, he had put it in his brains that was the layout of the land. He says, "I found him," must have been six miles [or] eight miles out at least. The German troops were going back there. What happened, two of the guys that tried to protect the plant by going through the woods had picked him up and taken him along. This American said _____ (??). Saw a bunch of Germans there and kept looking at them between the trees and following them. He says, "There are two Germans there. They look like officers, and there was a guy that was in blue coveralls." We had blue coveralls. That's the guy. He said, "The next thing I know, a couple of British planes came over there and they shot the heck out of them -- all of them." He said, "I didn't know what happened because I was laying in the ditch. When [he] looked up again, he saw here and there a head coming up but it was a lot of them that got killed. Tanks were burning. " When I looked up, my friend who I was looking for," he says, "I didn't see him anywhere." He says, "Some guy passed by in fifteen or twenty minutes, and all of a sudden out of another ditch way on the other side I saw this other _____ (??)." He says, "The whole thing I could see from a distance between the trees, and I made my way over there. I said, 'Are you the Dutchman they took prisoner?' He says, "Yes." He says, "We're on our way back right now." So, they came back and they're walking in and everybody just hugged them and hanging on them.

Gregory: Yeah. He's a hero, huh?

Devos: Yeah. Both of them were heroes. That's the way it sometimes goes in war. You never can predict anything. My family came surprisingly good through it. We never had anybody killed by bombing or anything.

Gregory: Was your father in the underground at all?

Devos: No.

Gregory: He continued to work during the war?

Devos: Yeah. He worked with them, but he didn't get involved deeply. There was a lot of people that you could trust if there was something ... in other words, if something went wrong and they would flee and come to him, he would find a place for them. But there was so much going on.

Gregory: Were you able to learn after a while those Dutch people who was Nazi sympathizers and couldn't trust them?

Devos: Oh, yeah.

Gregory: So after a while you knew who to stay away from?

Devos: Oh, yeah. Not only that. Like I said, in the Dutch language they often use gestures. If one of them was, and you talk to somebody else and they thought that you didn't know, then you would ... they'd give you the sign. They're funny people ... the Dutch. I mean, we have gestures for everything. They have a lot of things they don't use the name; they just have gestures. Even homosexuals _____(??). It's a very open society and very easy going, tolerant. Very tolerant. There's drugs _____(??). In the war they stuck together _____(??).

Gregory: And you had a girlfriend.

Devos: Yeah. The last _____(??).

Gregory: What kind of activities ... there probably wasn't a whole lot to do, was there?

Devos: No, no.

Gregory: So what kind of things would you do?

Devos: Sit home [and] play games.

Gregory: What kind of games?

Devos: Same as here.

Gregory: Cards? Checkers?

Devos: Checkers, cards. Yeah. We played a lot of cards.

Gregory: Music? Anybody play any instruments or anything?

Devos: Yeah. We had an organ and a piano there they could play. My wife's youngest

son played most of the time. He was a jet pilot in the Dutch army. Became a jet pilot in the American army and in Vietnam. Entered the reserves in Washington D.C. and became the head of the group that checks airplane accidents ... investigates them. CAP -- Civil Aeronautical _____(??). He flew all over the world for Civil Aeronautical to check on American planes that were coming in.

Gregory: Who was your best friend during this time?

Devos: My best friend during that time was ... the one that I met everybody through was a guy by the name of Paul _____(??). He was my best friend and that's how I came in his house regular to play games, and that's how I came into contact with his family where the father was in the underground. Another interesting thing [chuckles] they knew in this house there was something going on. The adults collaborated _____(??). The one family was one of those collaborated when the Germans came there and checked the house. There was a row of pictures there from all kind of boys that they were hiding. Later on, we said, "Stupid! Don't ever do that." But the mother would say, "Yeah, but they're all my boys." Anyway, those guys came in there at my girlfriend's ... I don't think we were involved with each other at the time, but she was home by herself and these two guys came on the door and they said _____(??). She said, "Well, go ahead." They checked the whole house. Couldn't find anything. They had a little chicken coop behind the house. In the chicken coop was a bag that looked like chicken food standing in the corner. It was all coupons. If they robbed an office where they had coupons, you go in there and get all the coupons you can, right? You can't go and say, "I want bread coupons today." No, you get out what you can. They had whole stacks of coupons of bicycle tires and all that stuff. Well, you couldn't do anything with it, so he stuffed them all in there. He thought, put them in the chicken coop and nobody will find them. If we need bicycle tires, if somebody needs one, then we have the coupon. My girlfriend ... I can't believe it that they looked there. Probably thought it was chicken food and never touched it. In the bathroom upstairs in the floor, you could take the mat up and you could lift the door open. There were three guns in there. They never looked up there. You depend on luck half the time. She says, "I walked out the front door while they looked through the house," and her father was coming up down the road. She waved at him, "Father go away." He turned around and left. He didn't come back till it was safe. Your life depends on little things sometimes.

Gregory: How would you get your ... you mentioned you had grenades and rifles and so forth. How would you get those?

Devos: Stole them from the Germans. Sometimes at the airports. Parked cars.

Gregory: Just reach in and grab one, huh?

Devos: Yeah. [Chuckles] You have to remember, I was in a small town. There was always something going on with horse riding. The Germans loved horse riding. Cars were parked in the road, and I came by behind one of the windows and in the back window was a gun

-- a pistol laying there. So, I walked up and down two or three times. I thought to myself, that's easy pickings. So, I looked _____(??)down between the houses and everywhere and opened the door. Opened the door, grabbed the gun. Turned around ... this was right on the sidewalk and there was a house right there. There was a lady standing behind the window looking. [Laughter]. I looked at that lady and she just turned pale. She saw me coming out with this gun in my hand. I just looked at her and I shook my head [like] "don't say anything." And I took off. She was scared because she was afraid that they would be accused of doing it. Bullets were easy to get.

Gregory: They were?

Devos: Yeah.

Gregory: How would you get the bullets?

Devos: Usually from soldiers. Buying them from them.

Gregory: Really? Buying them from the German soldiers?

Devos: Yeah. Sometimes. You had German soldiers that they wanted to go out in town and you had to deal with them and so on. Talk to them.

Gregory: Everyone has a price, don't they?

Devos: _____(??). Especially if you have insulated people. At that moment, they're singles there. They had no responsibility to anybody else. They probably needed the money for something.

Gregory: Were you ever wounded?

Devos: No.

Gregory: Shot at?

Devos: Yeah. [Chuckles]. Funny thing is, in a war, usually you shoot or you get shot at, and you don't see the one that you want to shoot because you can't. If you can see him, he can see you. I don't know how I was trained, but I was also a natural. I used to like to go out ... I remember there was a case where we tried to get information from a camp. Somebody shot and I wanted to know. I had a flashlight, and I took the flashlight. I didn't normally take a flashlight. You don't do that. Flashlight ... "Bang!" And you hear the bullet go "zhewww." [Chuckles].

Gregory: _____(??)

Devos: Never have anything in front of you. Then I see that often, in wars ... I see that in Vietnam. Open... talking to each other. We wouldn't even talk to each other -- never.

Gregory: You said something about training. Was there any training given to underground people?

Devos: Yeah. In the little six-people groups we had some training. Some laws laid down. Not training as such ... more or less what we could do and what we shouldn't do.

Gregory: Like what?

Devos: For instance, you never talk about any of the other ones. You didn't even want to know what somebody else is. You keep everything secret. You had to. Otherwise, if they pick up one, they _____(??)the whole group, so you have to keep it all separate. I know quite a few that were hiding Jews, but never talked to them ... that I would never get involved with. I didn't want anybody else to see me with them either.

Gregory: You said a special name you said.

Devos: Erich.

Gregory: Everybody had a special name?

Devos: Yeah. It was easier. In the first place, you don't give away your own name. In the second place, it's a mark that ... when I said, "Erich," they knew what they had as far as the underground was concerned where I was involved. Some people get that they're afraid of things like that, you know ... that they're afraid of ... some people are naturally afraid. I worked in this building when I worked for the telephone out there. The building still had an oil and coal hose ... coal was hard to get. But, we had a man to look after the coal furnace and look after heating the building. I also had a friend there who I didn't know too much about. I found out that he was involved with pamphlets -- printed pamphlets. A lot of them were dropped by the British airplanes. They would drop them in bundles, and the underground would spread them out. I never knew it, but he was one of the contact men. One time I came in in the morning, _____(??)this guy that had those two Jews said to me, "Has he shown up yet? He said, "Something happened last night. They might have picked him up." "Pick him up what?" "He's one of us," he said to me. So, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock then we talked again and he said, "I wonder what he has in his cabinet." What he got discovered in there or what. We wouldn't even go to the foreman _____(??). Finally he said that we have to see if we can get in. We got in one way. Broke the lock or whatever. He had stuck one of those pamphlets ... all of the situation and all that. Everything was on there -- information about Dutch underground, contacts that they had. What the heck are we going to do with them? I don't know what to do with them. Took it downstairs, burn it in the office. He said, "Are you going to take it and burn it?" I said, "I'll take it. You watch." Walked around and the German wasn't around. I picked the whole

stack up and walked out the door, and I had to go around the building. I found a door and went downstairs in the basement. I said to open the door. "For what? I don't like to burn paper in there." I said, "This time you have to burn paper in there." He says, "Why?" I said, "Open the door and here, you read this." I opened the door and I started throwing in packs that were about ... he read it and he said, "Ted." He was shaking. "You can't do that! What if a German comes here?" I said, "That's why we have to hurry up." I said, "Get them in there and that's it. Close the door." He says, "Ted, don't ever do that again to me." I said, "If we have to, we will because that guy might _____."(??) They checked later on that cabinet, but he never came back. I never knew what happened to him. Never knew what happened to him.

Gregory: Did you have an underground newspaper? Were there underground newspapers?

Devos: There were underground newspapers, but more about information about the Allies and nothing about the underground itself.

Gregory: You were getting in the newspaper the kind of things you were getting off of BBC?

Devos: Yeah, right.

Gregory: The news about the war and so forth.

Devos: Yeah. A lot of those things. The English were typical of the ones that always dropped them. They had dropping sites laid out. They had messages on the radio where they had dropping sites and so on -- in code. They used to land on the water. We used to pick up some people ... [chuckles]

Gregory: On the coast?

Devos: No. On the big ... what we called the Zuider Zee at the time. It's a buffer from the ocean. Now it's closed in. They would land there, and people would be there with the small boats and they pick them up. The Germans could never catch them. The British were good. They bombed Philips, too. They bombed Philips on a Sunday at 1:00 when there was hardly anybody in the factory. They bombed the heck out of it.

Gregory: Really?

Devos: Oh, yeah. They bombed it with special ... the British had special planes for those purposes. They didn't have a lot of them. These particular ones were built from plywood. Two engine. I forgot the name of them. But they would fly as high as the four- or five-story buildings. The machine guns were all on top of the buildings, and they'd just wipe them out. In fact, they lost one plane that hit the side of a house with the wing a little bit. The second story hit the house, and he flew right into a building. The guy was hanging almost to the

_____ (??). Then after that, there was a lot of activity on the ground getting stuff out of there.

Gregory: You mentioned going to Philips' house after you had spent the night guarding that ...

Devos: It was used for a get-together place for the underground, and at that time, for the paratroopers that had just landed. In Eindhoven, there was a church -- a big church with two towers. That church was the place if the paratroopers couldn't find their mates, they would finally come back together to the town and go to the towers in this church with two towers. A lot of them landed on a Sunday morning. We came out of church and the whole sky was ... a lot of those gliders that go with the glider behind. They pull them out over here. About twenty miles _____ (??).

Gregory: Very exciting to see all those paratroopers.

Devos: Yeah. Because now we knew it was a question of either make it or don't.

Gregory: Were the Germans still in your town then?

Devos: Oh, yeah. Some of them were leaving though. They were backing up more than concentrating. They still had the airport. The airport was bombed by Americans about two weeks before, I think.

Gregory: Was your town destroyed?

Devos: No. It was hit.

Gregory: Philips was hit.

Devos: Philips was hit. But then Philips was so big ... 1,500 people there. It was like a town by itself. They bombed the airport, and they bombed the _____ (??). I don't think the Germans used it anymore after that. It was a place where I was. I was by a canal and I saw the bombs come over. Some of them turned around, and new ones came. They about hit each other. Then you had this red ball going off, you know. That's the sign of _____ (??). They dropped all the bombs after they dropped _____ (??). There was a young lady there. She came up to me. We knew each other, but not that well. She hung around me and cried. She said, "They're going to burn the whole city," and we looked at the city and it was just one big heap of dust. Couldn't see anything. I thought the city was _____ (??) because there must have been 100 bombs. The bomb flew away. The dust _____ (??). I took her under a bridge under a canal. It was all concrete. Because I thought we might get hit. We didn't. It took them two or three hours to clean it up. Actually the city didn't have much. The ones at the airport didn't have much, but the main site

was pretty well bombed. Some of them fell over in the canal. Bombs were laying there for years.

Gregory: Unexploded bombs.

Devos: Unexploded bombs.

Gregory: Do you remember the end of the war?

Devos: Yep.

Gregory: What was that like? What were you doing?

Devos: I came back from ... I was in Germany.

Gregory: With the Americans?

Devos: Yeah. With the Americans. Just couldn't believe it, you know. All of a sudden it's all over. We were not far enough to the front line to see the action itself. Yeah, it was quite a feat, you know. On the other hand, all of a sudden, you didn't have nothing to do. [Laughter]. I was always somebody that liked to go everywhere and get information.

Gregory: Kind of exciting.

Devos: Yeah, it was exciting. I was _____(??). After Europe, in '46, the war was over, and I went to Indonesia for a couple of years for the army. Later on, the Indonesian _____(??) took over their own country. When I came there it was a mess. Japanese were still there. What I did best ... somebody told me a couple of times, you should have been a police or whatever. But I didn't. I was a tool and dye maker, and at that time, it was a good income and good job. You were never without a job. I had a very, very good life. A very happy life because when I was back in Holland for a while, it was just too small for me. I went to Australia and New Zealand, South Africa. I read books about it and so on. New Zealand is so much like _____(??) you wouldn't believe. They have housing there and everything else. Then, in the city where I lived -- in Eindhoven -- was a Canadian government ... the Canadian Embassy came over to talk about emigration and employment offers. I called and I asked the Dutch guy up there, I said, "Can I speak to the Canadian?" He said, "Can you speak English?" I said, "Well enough." He said, "Well, I _____(??)." So I talked to him. I said, "You guys have as many red tape as New Zealand?" "It depends," he says. "Why?" I said. "I might go to Canada instead of going to New Zealand. I like New Zealand." He said, "You're already in Canada _____(??). Why don't you come over so we can talk about it." So, I went over there with my girlfriend and talked with _____(??). He says, "Anytime you want to go to Canada come to my office. Here's (???) a certificate from your doctor." He says, "You can go anytime you want." So that's what

we did. We waited a couple of months. My wife was fluent in German, French, and English. I lived there for quite a while. _____(??) For the reason that Canada and the United States are kind of behind with the metric system, and I had trouble with the road [chuckles] system. I said, "Whoever invented that?" The guy said to me, "The king. That's the king's feet you're talking about." You know, that's the way it was. The French came up with the metric system and everybody took it over. I have a son [who's] an engineer. A couple of weeks ago he says, "One of these Americans are going to wake up and have a surprise." I said, "What's that?" He said, "They will find out they knew metric." He says, "Because we can't do it in engineering without it."

Gregory: After the war in Holland, was there any recognition of the underground resistance?

Devos: Oh, yeah.

Gregory: Did the government ...?

Devos: Oh, yeah.

Gregory: What did they do?

Devos: They compensate a lot. In fact, I had some kind of a card that I could put on my military uniform. I had a card that I was officially recognized as so on and so on with the Dutch underground.

Gregory: Did they have a ceremony or anything or just send you a card?

Devos: Yeah. There was a ceremony in most cities. Afterwards even, they sent me cards. They do that very well. After the underground, I went into Indonesia for reconnaissance group, and they had small airplanes. So, I was still in the army. In fact, I had a letter that they were talking about in the government, since they came out of the war quite well, they should compensate more the military. At one point they passed a law that was too easy, and a lot of people protested. They said, "Hey, people that have gone and emigrated in the 50's, we shouldn't have to pay them a pension anymore because they haven't put enough in." So, that was discussed in the government again, again, and again. Finally, they decided cut-off date was '57 -- in 1957. So, I was out. I was in Canada. I was in '52 in Canada. After '57, you would actually get every month a pension. Then, they didn't _____(??) too heavy with ... they sent me a letter that they would send me at least some kind of recognition, and if it was in money value, what bank would I want it in in Canada. They said it wasn't going to be much because I had _____(??) out of the army too early and went to Canada. But, when my nephew that I was just talking about who lives in Holland, and he has an accounting business. I had given up his address. He says, "Hey, I've got a check here for you." He says, "\$1,000." I said, "Who owes me a penny in Holland?" He says, "The government." The government makes up its mind

to say we deserve it. We have money and they send it. I said, "Bruce, put it in a bank in Holland that way I don't have to take money from here." It was in May I was there. I've been there every couple of years. Took all my kids up to ... it's very interesting. They learn a lot. Today, Europe is something else. I love to travel in Europe. Amsterdam-Paris ... 200 miles an hour. Yeah, then I was in Indonesia for three years. I was going to go for a year and a half. I didn't come back with the _____(?). At one point, I just about stayed. I liked it.

Gregory: Well, how did we do?

Devos: Well, what do you think?

Gregory: Anything that we should have talked about that we didn't?

Devos: We can always add something if we have to.

Gregory: If you want, I can come back if something comes up that you think we should have covered and we didn't talk about.

End of interview