

**EI-1115**

**ARCHIE MARTIN VERHAGEN**

**BIRTHDATE: JANUARY 27, 1919**

**INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 1999**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 80**

**RUNNING TIME:**

**INTERVIEWER: KEVIN DALEY**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: HOUSTON, TEXAS**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**NETHERLANDS, 1922**

**AGE: 3**

**SHIP:**

**PORT: ROTTERDAM**

**RESIDENCES:**

DALEY: Good morning. This is Kevin Daley for the National Park Service. Today is November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1999 and I'm in Houston, Texas at the home of Mr. Archie Martin Verhagen, who came from the Netherlands in 1922 when he was three years old. Mr. Verhagen and his family were detained on Ellis Island for two to three days.

VERHAGEN: Yes.

DALEY: My—I have been the recording engineer at the Ellis Island Oral History Project since 1992 and this is my third interview. Also in the room are Macalitas [PH] Verhagen, his wife; Martin Verhagen, his son; Aaron, with two a's, Verhagen, his grandson; Hollie Reno—H-O-L-L-I-E, his granddaughter, and Mike Reno, his grandson-in-law. So let's begin now. And just to—to say, we're in the home. We have traffic outside and we have a clock, the grandfather's clock here. So there'll be

some extraneous noise. So let's start. Can you please give me your—your full name and your date of birth?

VERHAGEN: [clears throat] Archie Martin Verhagen, January the 27<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

DALEY: And can you spell your last name, please?

VERHAGEN: Verhagen—V-E-R-H-A-G-E-N.

DALEY: Thank you. And where were you born, specifically?

VERHAGEN: Zwyndrecht, Holland, or Netherlands. That's close to Rotterdam. And then we—my daddy was a dairy farmer there. And he sold out and we came to America.

DALEY: Can you spell the name of your hometown?

VERHAGEN: No, I don't have it.

MRS. VERHAGEN: I'll spell it. It's capital Z-W-Y-N-D-R-E-C-H-T. Zwyndrecht.

DALEY: Thank you. And that's Mrs. Verhagen, who will be helping us. Can you describe the town? What kind of a town was it, small, large?

VERHAGEN: It was a small town and we—it—you know, Holland is densely populated anyway, but you had to go to the market, from what my folks told me. You know, ride a bicycle or ride a horse or something. And with the house we lived, was attached—my daddy was a dairyman. So the house was attached to the barn. So you didn't have to go outdoors to go to the barn or to milk the cows. And that's the house we were raised in. And then later on, well, the house—we had beds built into the wall. So it wasn't a bed on the outside. It was a bed built into the wall for us children. It had a curtain on it and you covered it up during the daytime, opened it you at night when you went to bed. And it was mainly for warmth, you know, heat. Didn't get as cold as a—a bed did.

DALEY: Well, we'll return to the house, to the description of the house in a moment. Can you give me your father's name?

VERHAGEN: Yeah, Martinus Verhagen.

DALEY: And can you spell the first name, please?

VERHAGEN: What—

MRS. VERHAGEN: Capital M-A-R-T-I-N-U-S.

DALEY: Thank you.

MRS VERHAGEN: And the middle name is Adrian.

VERHAGEN: Adrian.

MRS VERHAGEN: A-D-R-I-A—A-N, I think. I don't know about the second a— Adrian. And originally, their name was V-E-R-H-A-G-E, Verhage.

DALEY: Ah.

MRS VERHAGEN: There was no "n" on it.

DALEY: Oh. Okay, thank you. And what was his occupation again? He was a dairy farmer?

VERHAGEN: Dairy farmer. Yeah.

DALEY: And did he produce milk and other dairy products?

VERHAGEN: Dairy products, yeah.

DALEY: Can you describe some of the other products he made?

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: Oh.

VERHAGEN: I really didn't pay no attention when I was that small.

DALEY: Oh. Can you describe what he looked like?

VERHAGEN: My daddy? [clears throat] Five foot, eight and weighed about 140 pounds. [clears throat]. Hard working little man. And he always had something going, you know. That's about it.

DALEY: Can you describe his personality?

VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah. He had a good personality. He liked to help people and I think that's what made him a good person after we came

to Louisiana, you know, because he had several—he didn't have no brothers or sister. He just had a half sister. That's all there was in his family. [clears throat] About it.

DALEY: And can you give a story that you remember or somebody else had told you that would illustrate his stor—his personality? How he would be helpful, let's say.

VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah. Well, my wife knows him and knew him and so did my son.

MRS VERHAGEN: Yeah, I asked him—I asked him. Somewhere down through the years, he had left home when he was 14, his home. And because of tremendous poverty, he had gone to Germany. And he was a 14-year-old boy. And he lived in the barn adjacent to the family's house. And he lived upstairs and slept in the hay. And I asked him, "Well, Dad, did you ever get—did you ever cry?" And he said, "Yes." He said, "I did. Yeah." He said, "There was many nights that I cried. You have to remember, I was only 14 years old." And to add to what Arch said, his dad was tre—only five foot, eight, but he was a tremendously strong man. He had big hands and they were stronger than either of his sons. He was a hard, hard worker. And his philosophy, I guess, his—the way you live is to—to Dad Verhagen, there was no gray. You were either right or you were wrong. It was either black or it was white. There was nothing in between. And I think—I think his life spoke that way—that well on him. That's the way he believed.

DALEY: Thank you. And can—and what was y—your mother's name?

VERHAGEN: Cornelius.

DALEY: Cornelius?

VERHAGEN: Yeah, Cornelia.

DALEY: Cornelia.

VERHAGEN: [clears throat] She—

MRS VERHAGEN: Cornelia?

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

MRS VERHAGEN: It was capital C-O-R-N-E-L-I-A.

- DALEY: And what was her maiden name?
- VERHAGEN: Van Zelfden. Van Zelfden.
- DALEY: Two words?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah, two words. V-
- MRS VERHAGEN: Capital V-A-N Z-E-L-F-D-E-N.
- DALEY: Thank you. Can you describe her physically? What did she look like?
- VERHAGEN: She was a short, stocky lady. You know, she wasn't tall or—about five, four or something like that, stocky and hard working little Dutch girl.
- DALEY: And do you—can you describe her personality?
- VERHAGEN: She was a peacekeeper, I guess, because what she said usually went. And, well, she, real stern about things. It was either yes or no, you know. You're either right or you're wrong. There was no in between. And she didn't believe in any—any pain, you know, or just—if your head hurt, your head hurt. Don't tell the world about it. You know, that kind of a person.
- MRS VERHAGEN: She was—she came from a family of 12 children.
- VERHAGEN: Six boys, six girls.
- MRS VERHAGEN: Uh-huh. And several of them migrated to America. And she loved children. She loved little boys. I mean, that [chuckles]—that was her thing, little boys. And I think it was during the year of 19—it was during World War II year, 1943, Mr. and Mrs. Verhagen were chosen the Louisiana Farm Family of the Year for their work in producing and at that—that year she had canned something like 850 quarts of food, fruit, vegetables, meat. Just everything. She was a hard, hard working lady. And she's a lovely lady. She never learned to speak English as well as Mr. Verhagen, but she was just a really nice, nice lady.
- DALEY: Well, can you des—do you remember a story or a memory about your mother that would illustrate or describe her personality?

- VERHAGEN: Oh, I remember [clears throat] when we were headed for Louisiana, I had—we—we got out of New York, you know, after they turned us loose in Ellis Island, that she had us three children stand there on the dock of a train station or something. And she told us something about, “Now, this is your country. Now, look at it now.” And we looked around and we saw people we never had seen before, like black people and everything. And [clears throat]—but anyhow, she always told us, “Now, you’re American. You’re an American and forget the Dutch part.” That was one of the things that always set with me.
- DALEY: It was a black and white thing. You were an American now and don’t worry about the Old Country.
- VERHAGEN: That’s right. Yeah.
- DALEY: Okay. Let’s get back to the house. You said that it was attached to the barn?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah.
- DALEY: And what were the barn and the house made of?
- VERHAGEN: I really don’t know.
- DALEY: But you de—you described how you slept. You had the little cubbyholes, I guess you would call them—
- VERHAGEN: Yeah.
- DALEY: —in the wall.
- VERHAGEN: Just—they were built into the wall where you had a mattress, and long enough, you know, for a person to sleep in and wide enough. And we had that in one room. There was two in that one room. And my [clears throat]—my oldest sister and I used to sleep in them. And I can’t remember what my youngest sister—she must have slept in another room or something. But it wasn’t a big house.
- DALEY: Well, let me ask about your—your brothers and sisters. How many did you have?

VERHAGEN: I had two sisters that came to America with us. And then I have a—[clears throat] a brother in Louisiana that was born in the United States, and another sister that was born in the United States.

DALEY: Can you give me their names, please, starting with the two in the Netherlands?

VERHAGEN: Yeah, my oldest sister was—

MRS VERHAGEN: Johanna.

VERHAGEN: —Johanna.

MRS VERHAGEN: Capital J-O-H-A-N-N-A. And his brother's name is Martin.

VERHAGEN: No, that came to the United States with us.

MRS VERHAGEN: Oh.

VERHAGEN: Frinkie. [PH]

MRS VERHAGEN: Florence.

VERHAGEN: Florence.

MRS VERHAGEN: And her name in—in Dutch was Florinke [PH]. So she always went as Frinkie. But her name was Florence and I don't know Florence's middle name.

DALEY: And the two that were born in the United States?

VERHAGEN: Martin Verhagen.

MRS VERHAGEN: Yeah, his brother, Martin Verhagen, and it's the one this one's named after and it's—and then he had a sister, Shirley Verhagen.

DALEY: Do you—do you remember anything else about the house, what it was built of or—

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: —how it was heated?

VERHAGEN: No.

- DALEY: Do you remember where the farm was situated? Was it very far from town?
- VERHAGEN: No, I don't remember. I remember going into town one time because the Queen of Holland was coming through. And they—all the people was gathered up to see her, whether—at that time, I didn't know who she was. I thought she was just a lady, you know. But then, you know, at that time, there was the queen and the prince and stuff still, like it is now, you know. And—but I remember we [clears throat]—we all stood there and in this town—but I don't remember even the name of the town or what it was.
- DALEY: Do you remember seeing what the queen looked like? Do you remember seeing her?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah. Well, I didn't really know what to look for. You know, I mean there's a lady in that carriage. You know, and they had a carriage deal. And that's all I remember.
- DALEY: Okay. Can you describe the other things that happened on the farm? Did they raise animals?
- VERHAGEN: Cattle.
- DALEY: Cattle?
- VERHAGEN: Dairy cows. And then they also had a little, what they call small crops of flax. That's the—well, they make linen out of it and oil, or something. The—that was just a—a small item, I guess, because the land was really—you didn't have a lot of land that you wasted. Now, my grandfather was a—raised turnips, a lot of turnips. And then my—one of my uncles was a hog farmer, raised hogs. But that's about all I remember.
- DALEY: Uh-hmm. And were you surrounded by family members? Did you have a lot of par—grandparents, uncles and aunts nearby?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah. My grandmother and grandmother. Well, my father's folks had passed away so we didn't know too many of them. But they all kind of settled, you know, within walking distance, or either of a bicycle ride. Some of them came to the United States, my uncles.

- DALEY: Do you remember any one relative more than the others? Is there one that sticks out in your mind?
- VERHAGEN: Well, I guess my grandmother because when we were getting ready to go to the United States or go to the boat, she kept hugging me and crying. And I really didn't know what it was all about. And we all stood out there on that brick patio and everybody cried, and everybody said goodbye and then we left, I guess. But I—I really didn't know what was going on. And then we went from there to Rotterdam and got on the boat.
- DALEY: And what religion did your family practice?
- VERHAGEN: Methodist.
- DALEY: And can you describe how often you attended services?
- VERHAGEN: No, I don't. I remember something about my youngest sister being christened in the church, which is about the only place they had records of people, you know, that got baptized or whatever. And then you—there was no such thing as birth certificate at that time. So we never did really get a birth certificate.
- DALEY: And did you practice the religion in the home at all? Prayers or—
- VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, my daddy was one that always had a prayer before a meal and after a meal. Another thing, on Sunday he had—we got the Bible now—that he sat and read out of the Bible every Sunday at noontime. And that was—went on for years and years. Now, he [clears throat]—well, he—that was [clears throat] one of the things they carried over from Holland and just stayed with us all through life in Louisiana.
- DALEY: And can you re—now, the language—what do you call it, the language that they speak in the Netherlands?
- VERHAGEN: Dutch.
- DALEY: Dutch. Do you remember anything in Dutch, like a prayer?
- VERHAGEN: No.

- DALEY: Can you recite anything?
- VERHAGEN: No. Used to, could count, [speaking in Dutch]—about 10 or something like that. But like I said, my daddy and mother was firm people. You in the United States, you talk.
- DALEY: Oh, you—when you came here, you talk English.
- VERHAGEN: Yeah, you used—no—no talking, except when my mother got—she got a little mad sometimes and that—then the Dutch would really come out.
- MRS VERHAGEN: [laughs]
- DALEY: Well, can you describe eating in the Netherlands in your hometown? Do you remember the different kinds of foods you ate?
- VERHAGEN: I know they ate a lot of—I remember Daddy and Mother always talking about a lot of cheese and potatoes, boiled potatoes, big—big platters of 'em. And I guess we ate the same thing but I don't remember sitting there doing that. A lot of cheese.
- DALEY: And were the holidays—do you remember how you celebrated holidays?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah, I remember around Christmas we had St. Nicholas. You know, it wasn't Santa Claus. And then you had—what was his name? Black Peter?
- MRS VERHAGEN: Black Peter.
- VERHAGEN: He—
- DALEY: Oh.
- VERHAGEN: He's the one that, if you had been bad, he put—we all had wooden shoes and he'd put sticks in your wooden shoes. And then that way, St. Nicholas come around, he wouldn't leave you nothing if you had been bad. But they had characters like—
- MRS VERHAGEN: Arch, you might—Mr. Daley asked about holidays. You might tell him about New Year's. How Dad—

- VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah.
- MRS VERHAGEN: —celebrated [unclear] and they went from house to house.
- VERHAGEN: Yeah, and they had New Year's. My mother—everybody on New Year's Eve made what they called ole balls. It was a dough and raisins and—and you put it in a big pot of grease and let it just go down to the bottom and come up and it'd be done. And then they dipped it with powdered sugar.
- MRS VERHAGEN: Powdered sugar or granulated sugar.
- VERHAGEN: And even though when we came to America, for years and years after—well, till us children got grown, that was our—still our New Year's at home in Louisiana.
- DALEY: And they were called Ole?
- VERHAGEN: Ole balla [PH].
- DALEY: Can you—can you spell it?
- MRS VERHAGEN: Yeah, I guess it would be—would mean, like, oil balls. Basically, they're about like a doughnut. You put 'em in a hot grease and turn 'em up. And my mother-in-law told me that on New Year's Eve it was the custom to—to go to the neighbors. You and everybody went to the next-door neighbor and they had some goodies and sweets there and ole bolen. And it was just, I think, a thing for, maybe, good luck the next year.
- DALEY: And can you—can you spell ole ball? Is it ole ballen?
- MRS VERHAGEN: I have some Dutch literature here somewhere that—
- DALEY: Well, we'll just—we'll spell it phonetically, I guess.
- MRS VERHAGEN: It's like O-L-E—O-L-E B-O-L-E-N or something that—
- DALEY: Okay.
- MRS VERHAGEN: It's kind of like—ole ballen is the way they pronounce it.
- DALEY: Thank you. Now, you were too young to attend school, weren't you?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Do you re—was your older sister—did she attend school over there?

VERHAGEN: No, she was just a year older than I.

DALEY: So you really didn't know anything about—

VERHAGEN: Not in that school.

DALEY: —about other children going to school?

VERHAGEN: No, huh-uh.

DALEY: Okay. And do you remember, were you given any chores to do on the farm?

VERHAGEN: No. Too young, I guess.

DALEY: And do you remember how you played? Did you have toys? Did you play with games?

MRS VERHAGEN: [unclear].

VERHAGEN: Well, yeah. There's—my daddy coached a soccer team and so I was kind of a mascot. And I remember, you know, he'd let me go out there and kick the ball around and everything. Now, he was just a volunteer coach is what my father was. And then I remember something about the ice. The water would freeze over and they had sleds, you know, pulled with a horse. And everybody would gather there. But I don't remember too much about it but my mother used to tell me about it. And everybody would go and they'd have hot chocolate and ride around in—in the sleds with a horse, pulling, the horse.

DALEY: Well, while we're in the—the winter season, I'd like to go back again to Christmas. Can you describe what St. Nicholas looked like, as opposed to our Santa Claus?

VERHAGEN: No, I really don't.

DALEY: Or this other person, that Black Peter?

VERHAGEN: He was a black—well, he wasn't a black man but he was—face was black and everything. That's why they called him Black Peter.

- DALEY: And he's the one that would leave sticks in the shoes.
- VERHAGEN: Yeah, switches.
- DALEY: Switches. What did your family know about the United States? Did they ever tell you while you were growing up or later on?
- VERHAGEN: No. They didn't really—see, I had an uncle, one of my mother's brothers. He—I'll tell you a story how we got into the United States. But he [clears throat]—he was pretty rough character over there. And he—he threw a couple people's bicycle in the canal or something for some reason. And the law got after him and told him to get out. So he called—called [clears throat]—went down to the docks and got on a ship that was hauling some cattle from Holland to New York. And he worked his way across the ocean with this cattle—on this cattle boat. Now, this is my mother's—well, he was older than my mother. So that's how he got in the United States. And when he found out they were hiring people to work in the lumber business in Grand Rapids, Michigan, he went there and got acquainted with a—a family by the name of Stiles [PH]. And they had bought a cotton plantation, bought a—2,000 acres of land in northeast Louisiana around Tallulah. And they thought it was all timberland. And it turned out to be a cotton plantation. So they sent my uncle down there and he started up a far—I mean, a cotton plantation and everything. So he had an idea of starting a Dutch colony. So he came back to Holland and he talked to my mother and daddy, coming to the United States. And he painted a pretty good picture, you know. Roads were paved in gold and—and he talked to four other families and they came about the same time we did. And that's how come we got into Louisiana, you know, from New York. But go ahead with your—
- DALEY: What—what was this uncle's name?
- VERHAGEN: Van Zelfden was his last name.
- DALEY: Uh-hmm. And his first name?
- VERHAGEN: Gosh, what was Uncle Van's name?
- MRS VERHAGEN: You know, that's the one person in the family, I can't think of his—because everybody just called him Uncle Van.

DALEY: Oh, okay.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Well, he was your mother's brother?

VERHAGEN: Yes.

DALEY: Oh, okay.

MRS VERHAGEN: And I think—I think there was—they finally wound up with—  
how many Dutch families over there, Arch?

VERHAGEN: Well, there was four.

MRS VERHAGEN: Four Dutch families.

VERHAGEN: He had built special little houses for us, you know. And that's  
where we came. But nobody in that bunch knew anything  
about cutting farming.

DALEY: What was the name of the town that they founded?

VERHAGEN: Well, it was right outside of a town called Tallulah, Louisiana.  
T-A-L-L-U-L-A-H. And that's in northeast Louisiana. And we  
lived about eight miles out of town.

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

VERHAGEN: Right next to the Mississippi River.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

DALEY: Now, can you—so, basically, your family came over because  
they heard of this plantation from your uncle.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Said they thought it was a—a good idea to come to the United  
States?

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

- DALEY: Did they feel it would be a new beginning? A new chance to improve themselves?
- VERHAGEN: Well, I think so. My daddy never said but I think that was the decision, a reason they made the decision to come.
- DALEY: Can you describe—do you remember anything about preparing to leave?
- VERHAGEN: No. Only thing is that somebody or somebody had told him, you know, to build these big boxes and put all their stuff in there. Well, I—I guess I didn't know what was really going on. But anyhow, that's where we shipped all our china and things that came over in them big boxes.
- DALEY: And—
- MRS VERHAGEN: One—one of the things I remember Archie's mother telling me was she had some—some very nice rugs. And she was advised not to bring the rugs to America because there was so many bugs—bugs over there on the plantation. They'd eat—eat her rugs up. So she didn't bring 'em. But all her china, things like that, she brought all of that.
- DALEY: And do you remember if there was a formal goodbye from your other relatives or other townspeople?
- VERHAGEN: No, I just remember we was all out and it was getting dark. And like I say, my grandmother was crying and she kept hugging me and telling me, you know, "Come back. Come back." And I thought we was going to the house and come back, to her eyes, you know. And then, well, then everything took place and we got on the ship.
- DALEY: Do you remember anything about the journey from your farm to the port city?
- VERHAGEN: No.
- DALEY: And what was the port city?
- VERHAGEN: Rotterdam.
- DALEY: Rotterdam. And that's where you went onto the ship?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Do you remember if you were examined before you went on the ship?

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: And did anybody—

VERHAGEN: [clears throat]

DALEY: —come to Rotterdam with you to see you off? Or were you there—was your family there by themselves?

VERHAGEN: We were just by ourselves, as far as I remember.

DALEY: Do you remember the name of the ship?

VERHAGEN: Yeah. What's the name of it?

MRS VERHAGEN: Ryndain.

DALEY: Rhine? Can you spell—spell that, please?

MRS VERHAGEN: Uh-hmm. It's capital R-Y-N-D-A—looks like I-N. Ryndain. There's still a ship right now named Ryndain.

DALEY: And was that a ship of Netherlands?

VERHAGEN: You mean the country?

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

VERHAGEN: I don't know.

DALEY: Oh.

VERHAGEN: Well, a light bulb went out.

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

MRS VERHAGEN: That's all right.

DALEY: Okay. Do you remember anything about the ship? About the—what it looked like or what your impression was, seeing a ship like that?

- VERHAGEN: No, I don't.
- DALEY: Do you remember anything of the journey?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah.
- DALEY: D—can you relate something that comes to your mind?
- VERHAGEN: Well, [clears throat] I remember, you know, it was different classes. Okay, you had first class, second class and third class. But [clears throat] I didn't really know what that meant. But my daddy always said we was—even in this—when we got to this country, that it was—we were number two. I figured we was second class. And I remember that—that they fed you twice a day or something like that, and we all had to stand in line to get the—get our food and sit down. And Mother always had us prepared when mealtime come, because there was no such thing as buying a snack, you know.
- DALEY: And was there any specific incident that happened on the boat that you remember?
- VERHAGEN: No. I—my sister fell out of the—well, that was before we got to New York.
- DALEY: Uh-hmm.
- VERHAGEN: She fell out of the bunk bed and cut her head. And then, well, we were retained on account of that. But I remember one morning, Daddy got up and got us children up. "Get dressed. Get dressed. We're going to go see." And so we all [clears throat] ended up on the deck of the ship with nearly everybody else on the deck. And they kept looking and they kept—well, there was a guy, I guess, telling them which way to look. And we couldn't remember—I—I don't remember what they were looking for. And then all of a sudden they said, "There it is." And, well, it was foggy and it—well, it was the Statue of Liberty. And, you know, everybody were talking and cheering and I guess they figured, "Well, this is it," you know.
- DALEY: How did you feel when you saw the statue?
- VERHAGEN: I really didn't know what it was. [chuckles] I mean, nobody explained to me, you know, or told us anything.

DALEY: So just getting back to the boat for a minute, do you remember where you slept, what it looked like?

VERHAGEN: Yeah, it was a small room, had, like, six little bunk beds in it. I mean, beds for six people. Well, there was five of us [unclear]. That's about all. And it was just a small room with a door on it.

DALEY: So who was—who, actually, came on the ship? It was your mother, your father. And who else was with you?

VERHAGEN: My two sisters.

DALEY: Your two sisters. And do you remember being ill, or was anybody in your family ill during the journey?

VERHAGEN: Not that I remember.

DALEY: It was just the incident where your sister—

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: —fell out of the bunk. Was she badly hurt?

VERHAGEN: No, it was just a cut, you know. And it bled and—but they had to go somewhere to the—if I remember right, Mother took her to the doctor on the ship or something. I don't remember.

DALEY: Okay. Well, we're coming into New York harbor now.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: So what happens next? How do you leave the ocean liner and get to Ellis Island? Do you remember?

VERHAGEN: Well, [clears throat] no, I don't. Only thing is, it—I remember that Ellis Island, you know. I don't remember how we got from the ship to Ellis Island, whether we went down the gangplank or we got on a ferry or what. But I remember everybody had to line up with their baggage and everything and I—we stood in line quite a bit. And that's when the doctors said, you know, my sister had to go over to the quarantine or whatever that was.

DALEY: Do you remember staying on Ellis Island? Because you were there two to three days, I believe?

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VERHAGEN: Yeah, it's couple—couple days.

DALEY: And do you remember where they put you and your family? Did—did they separate you or—

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: —where you slept?

VERHAGEN: Yeah, we were separated. I mean, the family wasn't separated but we were separated, you know, from the other people.

DALEY: And what—which sister had the cut?

VERHAGEN: Florence.

DALEY: Florence. So the family was kept together and they were given a place to sleep?

VERHAGEN: Yeah. Our—yeah, somewhere in there.

DALEY: Oh, you don't remember?

VERHAGEN: No, I don't remember.

DALEY: Do you remember eating on Ellis Island?

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: Or do you remember how the American officials were? Do you remember any—

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: —interaction with them?

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: Or—or do you have any other memory of Ellis Island? Anything that sticks out in your mind?

VERHAGEN: No. I know it was a busy place. That's about all I know.

DALEY: Okay. So we're—we're at the point now where you're starting your trip to New York, trip to the United States. Where did you go when you left Ellis Island?

VERHAGEN: We went—[clears throat]—went to the train station in New York. I—I don't know how we got over there or I don't remember the territory. But then that's where we caught a train headed for N—Louisiana. And my daddy had a little book. And any time he wanted to say something or ask questions, he'd look in the little book. And it was a translation between the Dutch and English. Now, how we got on that train and got into Louisiana—I know we had to change trains several times. But somehow or another, he got us there.

DALEY: So—excuse me. [coughs] Do you remember going from where you got off the ferry from Ellis Island to the train? Do you remember anything about New York City or what you saw?

VERHAGEN: No.

DALEY: Do you remember anything about the train trip itself? Where you slept or how you ate?

VERHAGEN: Oh, from leaving New York? I don't remember too much about it. I remember we didn't have no bunk bed. I know that. I think we just slept on seats or—I remembered all that. My mother used to make us lay down on the seats and stuff like that.

DALEY: So, and now you've arrived—and this is Tallulah?

VERHAGEN: Tallulah, Louisiana.

DALEY: Louisiana. Did—who met you there when you came?

VERHAGEN: My uncle, the one that talked my mother and father to coming to the United States.

DALEY: Did he have a place for you to stay—

VERHAGEN: Yes.

DALEY: —as soon as you got there?

VERHAGEN: He had a house. He had already built these several houses, or had them built. And that was for us, you know.

DALEY: Do you remember what the house was like, what it looked like?

VERHAGEN: Yeah. It had kind of a big room as you go in. On the right hand side was like a bedroom. And the back, on the right hand side, was the kitchen. And then we had a staircase and we had room in the attic for more sleeping facilities or whatever. And I know us children—us three children slept up in that attic. And it was built just out of wooden—set on blocks, you know, off the ground.

DALEY: Do you remember what color the house was?

VERHAGEN: No, I don't.

DALEY: And who else was living in the area? Were these all relatives of yours in this—

VERHAGEN: No. My uncle, he—he lived in it because he was a—a plantation manager at that time. And he lived right close to us. And then these other families, these—they came in. They—they lived—they came from Holland also. And they lived right down the road from us, you know. Maybe quarter of a mile, half mile.

DALEY: And how did you eat? Did you bring the recipes from the Old Country there and—

VERHAGEN: Yeah. I guess Mother did. We had trouble getting groceries because [clears throat] we had no transportation to get into town. But my uncle [clears throat] had a—what's called a handyman. And he came around and he talked—he was a black man. And Mother would save boxes or sacks of what she wanted him to pick up in the town. And she'd pay him for it—pay—pay him when he come, brought the, well, I'd say bread or corn flakes or things like that, you know. But the [unclear]—

MRS VERHAGEN: Was this on recipes and stuff?

DALEY: Yes, I—I wanted to get an idea of—

MRS VERHAGEN: Some years back, one of old, old ladies in Tallulah was written up in the newspaper. And she was a close friend of the Verhagens. And so somebody asked her about Mrs. Verhagen and she said, "She was really a nice lady. But when she came over here, she didn't know how to cook corn bread. So I taught her how to cook corn bread." [chuckles]

DALEY: And how—how is the religious life in America? Was there a—a church nearby your family was able to attend?

VERHAGEN: No, we had to go into Tallulah, which was eight miles.

DALEY: Uh-hmm. And how would you get to church?

VERHAGEN: Well, [clears throat] until we got a car, we didn't go. But we got a—a Model T Ford somewhere along the line and then we would go.

DALEY: And how was your beginning at—of school? How did you begin school? At what age?

VERHAGEN: Well, I was six when I went. And we had to ride a school—well, they had a school bus that came around and picked us up. And we went in to Tallulah High School, or Tallulah school there, elementary.

DALEY: Uh-hmm. Do you remember the school itself? Was it—can you describe it? And how many children were there?

VERHAGEN: [clears throat] Yeah, it was a—well, it's still standing there. They had from first grade to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and it was all in one school. I mean one building. And then later on they added another building. And that's where most—I went and it was a two-story building. So my first, second and third grade, I went in that building on the second floor. [clock chiming]

DALEY: Just pause now until the clock stops striking. [tape off/on] Okay. We're beginning again. Now, we were just talking about the school. Now, you went to the school. It was in which town again?

VERHAGEN: In Tallulah.

DALEY: In Tallulah.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

- DALEY: And you went there to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah. See, when you first went, it—you graduated 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Before I got out of school, they changed it and you had to go to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. So I had to go, actually, a year longer than I thought I was going to go.
- DALEY: And how was it learning English? How was it when you started in the early grades? Was it very hard?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah.
- DALEY: Did anybody make fun of you because you were different? You were from Europe.
- VERHAGEN: No. I failed second grade because I—I don't know how I got through the first grade with my accent and English or whatever, you know. And so I failed the second grade. And then from then on out, I went on through.
- DALEY: So what grade would you say you were in before you were very good in English?
- VERHAGEN: Well, I'd say, you know, fourth or fifth grade or somewhere like that, because I was around a lot more people that talked English all the time. Out there on the plantation, you didn't have too many people to talk to. You know, so you didn't pick up a lot of the English as you went.
- DALEY: So at—back at home, your parents would be speaking Dutch.
- VERHAGEN: Very—well, at certain things, yeah. But mostly, when we—us children were there, they learned a lot of English from us, because now, my father was more involved with other things on the plantation and in town and stuff like that. But my mother wasn't involved with a lot of people that talk English all the time. So she picked up a lot of English from us. You know, especially my older sister because, you know, she—older than I was. So she talked more English. And she used to teach my mother different words and things like that.
- DALEY: Well, let's talk about getting used to America. How did your parents get used to America? Was it very hard for them?

- VERHAGEN: No, I don't think so. Like they say, they just fell in—fell in with a group, you know.
- DALEY: Uh-hmm. Because your—your—well, during the break, your—your wife talked about your mother. And she was afraid of storms? Can you describe that a little bit, what happened?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah. I don't know. You know, you used to have some big wind storms over there, lightning and thunder, which I don't think she was acquainted with, you know, or they had it over in the Old Country. I don't know why. But anyhow, that's what she used to do, get us—line us up, dress, shoes, hat, everything on in case we had to run. I don't know where we'd go but that's—she was deathly afraid of them.
- DALEY: And wh—and was there one year in which you had to leave your home?
- VERHAGEN: Yeah, 1927, when the Mississippi River levee broke right close to us and flooded that whole country from—well, for several miles and miles around. And we had to leave and go to Monroe. And my daddy had taken a lot of the cattle that—and they put all the horses and mules up on the levee. And some of the—all the people had to go to the Red Cross camps, you know, they set up, and—except one old black guy that stayed in our—in our house while the flood was there. And he took care of everything, chickens and dogs and cats.
- DALEY: And how long were you gone from your house before you could move back in?
- VERHAGEN: Well, this happened right in the first of the summer before school was out. And then it was a—I guess around somewhere in September before we got back in. We were out for quite a while. And we lived right next to the bayou. You—you know what bayous are.
- DALEY: Oh. Can you—for the—for the tape, can you explain what a bayou is?
- VERHAGEN: Well, it's—it's not a—like a river or a creek. It's just—well, they got them all over Louisiana. I guess bayous is just another thing on a stream of water. And they—they is all over. Buffalo Bayou. Just like bayous here, you know.
- DALEY: It's like an inlet—

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: —of water?

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Like a fjord?

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

MARTIN: [unclear] deep water—

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

MARTIN: —body of water. It's almost like a slough. It could be a swamp that's not moving.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

MARTIN: But they're usually a certain amount—like a river, but very, very slow moving.

DALEY: Okay, that was Mr. Verhagen's son. Can you, as a further illustration of your mother and her personality, can you describe her—her life, family life in the house? For example, cats?

VERHAGEN: Oh, in—in our house?

DALEY: How she felt about cats.

VERHAGEN: I don't know what her—really, what—what her—the thing was about cats. She didn't have—want them anywhere around the house or in the house. I really never did find out.

MRS VERHAGEN: But you mean Mom—your mother's family life?

VERHAGEN: Yes.

MRS VERHAGEN: She was—she made all the girls' clothing, made a lot of her own clothing. Two or three times, the state of Louisiana sent a child to their house, like a—a foster home. Because they had no place to put a child and they wanted them put in a Christian home. And so basically, that little—little boy that was so bad, they brought him there and more or less just said, "Here he is."

And later on, when she could speak English a little better, she joined with a lot of the farm ladies around there. And they—they had a home demonstration club. And she was very, very much a homebody. Her—her children and Archie's three sisters became nurses. And she was very—her children were her whole life.

DALEY: And what was your life like? You went to school. But what months were you in school?

VERHAGEN: Well, [clears throat] we used to start about the middle of September. Now, all of us didn't get to go to school at the same time. There was families that, when the cotton crop come in, they had to keep the children out of school until the cotton crops got picked out. And—but in our case, my daddy was a plantation manager. So we didn't have to pick cotton except if we wanted to make extra money. And—and then we got out just about the same time these other children. But we didn't have as many holidays as they have now. And that was about it.

DALEY: And when would your school year end?

VERHAGEN: In May somewhere, middle of May or somewhere like that.

DALEY: And would you have to work on the farm during those months you were in school?

VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I had—my daddy also had a dairy farm on that plantation. And there was cows to be milked seven days a week, twice a day. And I used to milk cows before I went to wor—I mean, went to school in the morning, and then come home in the afternoon. And them two—them same cows had to be milked that afternoon. Well, with other help, you know. And then we had to put the milk ready to be shipped to Monroe, Louisiana. And so I [clears throat]—after I got older, my daddy had a little pickup. So we'd load the five and ten-gallon cans of milk on the little pickup, and I'd drop 'em by the train station on the way to school in the mornings. And that was, well, after I learned how to drive, you know. Didn't have to have no driver's license but—

DALEY: And what were your summers like?

VERHAGEN: Well, I worked just—I worked day labor. That was what Daddy had. He always had to hire day—extra labor be—besides the

tenant farmers. He always had raised cotton—I mean, corn and stuff like that for—to feed the mules and horses and cows. And—and that didn't come in with the tenants. That had to be separate. And so that's what I used to do then, bale hay, drive tractor, cut silo and plant, like all those things, you know. And he'd pay me—I was on his payroll. So I got a dollar a day.

DALEY: So this sounded like a—with all your—these people from the Netherlands, it sounds like a—a fairly large operation.

VERHAGEN: Yeah, well, most of them—well, let me tell you about the people that—that came from the Netherlands. They—eventually, most of them moved away. I think the ones that stayed the longest was about two years. And they moved to Monroe or Shreveport. But my mother and father was the ones that stayed because, you know, they promoted him to plantation manager. And so they—they didn't have to go out and work like these other people did.

DALEY: So, basically, it was a—a fairly large plantation?

VERHAGEN: Two thousand acres.

DALEY: Two thousand. Okay. We're going to pause the tape here and pick up in the second hour.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

DALEY: We're—we're picking on the second hour of the interview with Mr. Verhagen. So your father became the manager of the plantation?

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: And you moved from your first home to a second home?

VERHAGEN: That's right.

DALEY: Can you describe the second home?

VERHAGEN: Well, [clears throat] it was just like my son was talking to you. It had a, what's called a dog run, you know, through the middle. And you had the big rooms on this side, two on this side, two on the other side. And then [clears throat] later on,

they closed in this dog run, made a room out of it. And also, it had a porch that run nearly completely around the house. And my—my daddy built another room—two rooms on that side and put a bathroom in there. And that was—it had tin roof and about the same as the old—most of the plantation homes around there.

DALEY: But originally it didn't have indoor plumbing?

VERHAGEN: No, it didn't. No.

DALEY: Did it—did it have running water, a pump in the house itself?

VERHAGEN: No, no.

DALEY: Oh.

VERHAGEN: No, it had to run to the pump or the tank. It had a rain tank or the outdoor toilets was a three-seater. We were real proud of that.

DALEY: [chuckles] Oh, that was pres—prestigious to have a three-seater?

VERHAGEN: Well, most of them would have only one-seater. That was a while we had a three-seater.

DALEY: And for the sake of the—

VERHAGEN: And then the—the kitchen—we had a kitchen that was attached to the house and just had a little runway. And what they did, did all the cooking in the kitchen. That way, the house didn't get like an oven during the daytime, you know. And the meals was brought in from the old kitchen. We called it the old kitchen. And then later on, we mov—they took the kitchen and moved it and used it for storage. And when we got a kerosene stove, well, then we got a—one of the rooms was turned into the kitchen.

DALEY: And w—was that how the house was heated? If it needed heat, would be a kerosene stove?

VERHAGEN: No, that was to cook on.

DALEY: Oh.

VERHAGEN: Now, the heating was fireplaces. We had two big fireplaces. But later on, they—they got heaters, oil can heaters, which was a lot better than fireplaces. I don't know if you are familiar with fireplaces. The old type like we used to have, your front was warm but your back froze. And you'd have to keep—that's about the way it was.

DALEY: Oh. And for the sake of the tape, I just wanted to explain. A dog run house is a house in two sections with a sort of a breezeway in the middle.

VERHAGEN: That's right.

DALEY: Which is very prevalent in the south and in Texas.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: And sometimes they are later enclosed—

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: —to make a—one larger house. Okay, let's talk about your parents becoming Americans. Did they both become citizens?

VERHAGEN: My—my father did. Okay, then this is where the mix up started. When we came to the—America and they told my grandfather, you know—I mean my father that when he becomes citizens, all the children under 18 automatically become citizens. And he went ahead and got all these citizenship papers and everything. Now, my mother never did become a—a citizen. She felt like she didn't know enough about history and things like that. And I think that's—she just didn't want to go through it all. And so then we found out later that this law had been erased and my—myself and my two sisters and I were not citizens. And we found that out because—

MRS VERHAGEN: Only 33 years ago.

VERHAGEN: Yeah. We were going to Monterrey, Mexico. And at that time we had a—a poll tax here. And all you had to do was show a poll tax that you were American citizen. But it had another check on there and it says, "Naturalize." And me, I always checked all—I was a naturalized citizen. So when we went to get our passport up here at the Immigration Department, they

told me, "Well, prove it." And my wife was doing all the legwork and so we could—

MRS VERHAGEN: [unclear].

VERHAGEN: We couldn't prove it. And we had to get my—hold of my daddy because his papers came through New Orleans. And so we had to get his paper showing that I was his son, but I wasn't a citizen so they'd let us into Mexico for—we were there, what, five, six days or so.

MRS VERHAGEN: Well, we had—that was—I guess it was a blessing in disguise. But when we had gone down to the Mexican Consulate and, honest as he was, he always put—at that time, Texas had a poll tax. And he had always checked "naturalized citizen," which he was, according to the law when they came in here. And the Mexican Consulate said to me, "Well, where's his papers?" And I said, "Well, he didn't have any papers." "Well, then we can't give him a visa to go to Mexico." And I said, "But he's been in Mexico." And he said, "How'd he get there?" And I said, "On a school bus." And he said, "A school bus?" And I said, "Yeah." Tallulah, Louisiana was the first—their football team was the first American school that ever played football in Mexico, in Mexico City. And they were bused down there. Well, they all just went back and forth, no problem at all.

VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah. Well—

MRS VERHAGEN: So he refused to give us—and so I said, "Well, I'll go to the Immigration—Immigration Bureau."

VERHAGEN: Well, this—the thing of it is—

MRS VERHAGEN: And they also refused—they said he was in sympathy with our cause.

VERHAGEN: But—

MRS VERHAGEN: At that time, there was about 20,000 people a year going through the Immigration. And the law had been changed. And I said, "Then why weren't these people notified?" Well, what they were going to do, they would—maybe he'd get through going and, coming back, they might parole him. So—

VERHAGEN: But anyhow, we went down. I played on the football team and we went to Mexico and played down in Mexico City. We

played American consolation, our school down there. Most of them was American boys. They were from—diplomats from the United States and stuff like that. But then I also served four and a half years in World War II. And they never asked me was I a citizen or—or anything like that, and my wife told this counselor. He said, “Well, anybody can join the Army and fight as a mercen—you know.” So eventually, my sister and I—my younger sister got killed in a car wreck in New Orleans. [coughs] So my older sister, now, we got together and we went through the whole thing, got our passport pictures and everything. And the day we went in before the judge and he swore us in, we were the only two people in the whole building and the court. And—and the same thing, he read out to us about the same thing I took when I went in the Army. You know, pleasure and so forth.

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

VERHAGEN: And that’s when I got my citizenship papers.

DALEY: Oh, so you had to become a citizen on your own then?

VERHAGEN: That’s right. Yeah.

DALEY: Okay. And—

VERHAGEN: Because I figure, you know, somewhere along the line, Social Security and things like that, and I thought maybe I’d have to have citizenship papers.

DALEY: And your son mentioned before when the tape wasn’t running that y—your father—your name was changed here when he applied for his first papers, his naturalization papers.

VERHAGEN: [coughs] Yeah.

DALEY: He—can you explain what happened?

VERHAGEN: No, I don’t really remember or know.

MRS VERHAGEN: I don’t know what happened. We didn’t even know this—we didn’t even know that declar—I didn’t even know, and Archie didn’t either—know that declaration of intention had even been filed from Dad Verhagen. His brother over there in Tallulah was called one day by a lawyer. They had been down in the archives at the old court building. And they happened to run

upon this document that had Martinus Verhage on it. And they thought, 'Well, the only Verhagen in Tallulah is Martin.' So they called him and he went down, and that was when his dad filed the declaration to become a citizen. And his viewpoint was, "If you're going to live in this country, you should be a citizen." And that's one reason they stopped speaking Dutch and start speaking English. And so it was quite an—and then our son, Martin, made a copy of that for—for the family. So that was quite a surprise.

DALEY: Yeah, but the name was slightly changed?

VERHAGEN: Yeah, added an "n" to it.

DALEY: Added an "n" to the—to the—to the end of the name.

MRS. VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Oh, okay.

MRS VERHAGEN: Uh-hmm.

DALEY: So what year—do you remember what year he became a citizen?

VERHAGEN: '20—'23 or '24, somewhere like that.

DALEY: And what year did you have your problem with the—going to Mexico?

VERHAGEN: In '66?

MRS VERHAGEN: His citizenship papers are '33.

VERHAGEN: Huh?

MRS. VERHAGEN: Do you want to see them?

DALEY: Well, maybe we can see them later.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

MRS VERHAGEN: Sure?

DALEY: We can see them later.

MRS VERHAGEN: Okay.

DALEY: Yeah.

MRS VERHAGEN: Yeah, in the 30—it's been 33 years ago. '66.

DALEY: Oh.

VERHAGEN: '66. Somewhere in that neighborhood.

MRS VERHAGEN: And they were quite perturbed to think that they had been paid [chuckles]—that they had been citizens all these years and then had to go prove it.

DALEY: Hmm.

MRS. VERHAGEN: You know.

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

MRS VERHAGEN: And—but as it was—and then at that time, Medicare, was it, that was being instigated or—

VERHAGEN: Oh, well, that was 70 years later.

MRS VERHAGEN: That took a year. It's a year in the courts in New Orleans. So it was—by the time they filed, had their picture taken and so forth, we didn't hear anything from the U.S. Immigration Bureau for a year before we fi—he finally got his paper.

DALEY: Okay. So let's—we have information. You've described going up to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Did you continue school past the 12<sup>th</sup> grade?

VERHAGEN: No. [clears throat] I had a couple scholarships offered to me to play football. One was in northeast Louisiana and the other one was in Lafayette, Louisiana, southwest. And [clears throat] I don't know. I just felt like I had enough school. I wasn't very bright at that time. And about the next year was when the draft started and I was drafted into the Army in '41. I graduated in '39 and grad—and went in the Army in '41, was in there four and a half years before I got out.

DALEY: And what role did you play in the Army?

VERHAGEN: [clears throat] I was the—with the 227<sup>th</sup> [clears throat] MP Division, Military Police. We were the—

MRS VERHAGEN: [unclear] staff sergeant.

VERHAGEN: No—sergeant. Sergeant.

MRS VERHAGEN: Yeah, sergeant.

VERHAGEN: And we transferred prisoners, American and foreign prisoners from different places, from New Orleans to different camps and so forth around the United States. We escorted some American soldiers' bodies that had been killed. We picked up prisoners that had deserted or—or was AWOL. And we were stationed in New Orleans in Port Embarkation there.

DALEY: So you left the Army in which year?

VERHAGEN: '45.

DALEY: Oh.

VERHAGEN: December of '45.

DALEY: And what did you do after that?

VERHAGEN: Well, [clears throat] before I went into the Army, I worked for Chicago Mill and Lumber Company in Tallulah. I was a supervisor on what they call the veneer mill. We made veneer to make plywood and stuff, furniture out of. And so I didn't—I didn't want to go back into that. And so I had met her several—couple years before that. And I decided that I didn't want to go back to Chicago Mill, you know. And so I went to Sioux City, Iowa. That's her hometown. And we got married and I worked up there till the winter came. And the winter—those winters up there wasn't for me. I was a warm boy, a country boy, I guess. So when the boom started around Houston, we packed up and came to Houston.

DALEY: Oh. Can—can you describe how you met, in what year and how you met Mrs. Verhagen?

VERHAGEN: Well, she was down—she came down to New Orleans to visit her sister-in-law—

MRS VERHAGEN: Sister-in-law.

VERHAGEN: —and which had been separated from her brother. And my—what I call my buddy—he asked me one night, “Do you want to go with me? I’m—we’re going out somewhere around New Orleans.” And—and he—“There’s a lady I want you to meet,” and it was her. And so we dated and saw each other when we could for about two—nearly two and a half years, I guess. And finally, we got married after I got out.

MRS VERHAGEN: We just had number 53 anniversary this summer.

DALEY: Congratulations. And this was after you—you were introduced before the war?

VERHAGEN: No, no. During the war.

DALEY: During the war.

MRS VERHAGEN: During the war.

DALEY: And you were married after the war.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: And what—what is—Mrs. Verhagen, what is your maiden name?

VERHAGEN: Donahoo.

DALEY: Can you spell that, please.

VERHAGEN: D-O-N-A-H-O-O. That’s a good Irish name.

DALEY: And were you—were you born in the United States?

MRS. VERHAGEN: Uh-huh.

DALEY: And were your parents immigrants?

MRS VERHAGEN: My parents were from here, yeah. I was born in a little—little—little tiny town of Onwa [PH], Iowa, which is—what’d it have? 1,500 people, maybe. Maybe a thousand. And it was about 40 miles from Sioux City and my folks moved to Sioux City when we were young.

DALEY: And were your folks born in the United States?

MRS. VERHAGEN: Oh, yes.

DALEY: Oh.

MRS. VERHAGEN: Yes, uh-hmm.

DALEY: So how did you feel, meeting this—this Mr. Verhagen, who—did you—did you know he was an immigrant? Did you know he was born in the Netherlands?

MRS VERHAGEN: No, Mr. Daley. All I knew was he had a—nice, nice eyes and a nice southern boy's—and he was a nice person. [chuckles] And so off and on with—I've said two or three years, but I come see him, or once he had a delay en route. He had to take a prisoner to New York. And he stopped by Sioux City. So one of that two or three years, maybe we saw each other three weeks at the most? Four?

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

MRS VERHAGEN: Uh-hmm.

DALEY: So can you describe your life after the war and up to this point, briefly? What you did for a living and how you wound up in Houston, Texas.

VERHAGEN: Yeah, well, we—[clears throat] we moved down here. He was a year old and [clears throat] I went to work for a company called Pedon [PH] Iron and Steel. And, well, I was kind of a welder's helper. And then I went to welding and from there I got to be foreman and—and then later on, I was promoted to super—superintendent of the Reinforcing Steel Division. And I stayed with them for 28 years. And then I was approached with Continental Steel out of Garland, Texas and—to set up a couple plants here in—in Houston, and which I did and stayed there with them nearly nine years and retired.

DALEY: And how many children did you have?

VERHAGEN: Just our son and daughter.

DALEY: And your son's name is—

VERHAGEN: Martin Verhagen.

DALEY: And your daughter?

VERHAGEN: Rebecca Verhagen. Well, her name is Stark now.

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

VERHAGEN: She lives in Austin, Texas.

DALEY: And did your parents stay in Tallulah?

VERHAGEN: Yes, yeah. You mean my parents?

DALEY: Yes.

VERHAGEN: Yeah. Yeah, they were always going to go back for a vacation. So when my father got, well, like, say, [coughs] we got r—got the kids out of door. Well, they were thinking about going back. [clears throat] Well, that's about the time Hitler started his push. And you know, it would have been no good if they'd a went, you know, with Hitler running wild. And so they never got back. And my grandfather was 90-something when he died. My grandmother was in her 70s somewhere when she died. But we never saw them since them. I mean, since the time we left.

DALEY: And how old did your parents live to be?

VERHAGEN: My father was 85 when he died. And Mother was 60—

DALEY: Sixty-four.

VERHAGEN: Sixty-four, uh-hmm.

DALEY: And did you ever have a chance to go back to the Netherlands?

VERHAGEN: N—[coughs] I could a went, I guess. Now, we were hoping, you know, during World War II that maybe we get to— attachment, you know, be sent over there. But we never did. So—and then, I don't know. I had a good life here in the United States and—

MRS. VERHAGEN: He has a sister that's gone—went over several times.

VERHAGEN: Uh-hmm.

MRS. VERHAGEN: Johanna. But Johanna still kept—she could still speak Dutch.

VERHAGEN: She corresponded.

MRS. VERHAGEN: And so she went over—they went over to Holland and stayed, I think, three weeks the first time and met his cousins. And then here a few years back, one of Archie's second or third cou—second cousin, I guess, came over for—she and her friend from—from the Netherlands came over and toured the entire—the entire United States. And—

VERHAGEN: So we still—I have some shirttail relations—

MRS. VERHAGEN: Yeah.

VERHAGEN: —[chuckles] that I know of.

MRS. VERHAGEN: He had two aunts and an uncle at that time that were still living and they were in their 90s.

DALEY: So—so you stayed in contact with the people in the Netherlands.

VERHAGEN: No, not really, except the two girls that came visited us. Now, when my mother and father were living, m—my mother used to write over there, you know. But during, like, World War II, she never knew if they got the letters because they—they—they never got a reply, you know. They just—might have just folded up. But they did. See, she had one sister—I mean, two sisters that came to the United States and two brothers. And one went to Canada. So out of the 12 children, there was six of them that eventually ended up in North America.

DALEY: Okay. So this—the 12 children are from which family again?

VERHAGEN: My mother's side.

DALEY: Oh, your mother's side of the family.

VERHAGEN: Yeah.

DALEY: Okay.

VERHAGEN: No, my father's, he only has a half sister and that's it.

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DALEY: So did—either before World War II or after World War II, did any more of your relatives come over to the United States?

VERHAGEN: Not that I know of.

DALEY: Okay. Well, I just have a few more questions.

VERHAGEN: Okay.

DALEY: Since we—we have you to the point where you're in the United States. Basically, one of them is, do you consider yourself American or Dutch?

VERHAGEN: American.

DALEY: And—

VERHAGEN: It's been a good life.

DALEY: And are you glad that your parents decided to come to the United States?

VERHAGEN: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I might have been pulling turnips over there or selling tulips or something. But I've had a good life in the United States. Good family. Everything.

DALEY: Okay. Well, that sounds like a good point to stop at and I'm very grateful that you wanted—you allowed me to interview you for the oral history project. And this is Kevin Daley for the Ellis Island Oral History Project on November 14, 1999. And I've been speaking with Archie Verhagen. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]