

EI-1439

CORNELIA D'CLERC HUSGEN

BIRTHDATE: APRIL 21, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 22, 2006

INTERVIEW LOCATION: DUNEDIN, FLORIDA

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 98

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: ALLISON CRONK

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: EVAN TAPARATA

THE NETHERLANDS, 1949

AGE: 41

SHIP:

PORT: HAMBURG

RESIDENCES:

- **THE NETHERLANDS: DELFT**
- **INDONESIA: BATIVIA (NOW JAKARTA)**
- **INDIA**
- **US: BOSTON, MA, FLORIDA**

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: CORNELIA HUSGEN'S SON, PAUL, HAS ALSO BEEN INTERVIEWED FOR THE COLLECTION: EI-1438.

LEVINE: -- November the twenty-second, the year 2006, I'm here in Dunedin, Florida and I'm with Cornelia Husgen who was born Cornelia D'Clerc

HUSGEN: D'Clerc, yeah.

LEVINE: D'Clerc. That's a Dutch name and she was born in the Netherlands.

HUSGEN: In Delft.

LEVINE: Delft. Okay, great. And [clears throat], she has an unusual and interesting story. She is ninety-eight at the time of this interview, and I have interviewed her son, Paul Husgen, who gave -- he came to the United States as a ten year old, so perhaps Mrs. Husgen will remember other things than her son remembered about the experience prior to coming here and then coming here. Okay this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and, if you would say for the tape, your birth date please.

HUSGEN: Twenty first of April, 1908.

LEVINE: Okay, and you were born in Delft in the Netherlands.

HUSGEN: Netherlands.

LEVINE: Yup, and did you li--, how long did you live in Delft?

HUSGEN: Then I went to Indonesia, oh [clears throat], see that is my problem, I don't remember!

LEVINE: Well, you --

HUSGEN: I--, Let me think. I lost my parents when I was three, my mother was divorced and I didn't see much of her, and then there was, an aunt but I hated,

LEVINE: Well, how about --

HUSGEN: What did you ask me though?

LEVINE: I was asking when you went, when you left the Netherlands, but how about just telling a little bit about your childhood in the Netherlands.

HUSGEN: Paul is born in Indonesia,

LEVINE: Yeah, but you were born in the Netherlands,

HUSGEN: Yes.

LEVINE: So perhaps you can say a little bit about your early life before you left the Netherlands. What do you remember about that?

HUSGEN: Early life, that wasn't very pleasant,

LEVINE: No?

HUSGEN: Did my mother was divorced my father, and it was very unpleasant, the whole thing. And I don't remember much of it, my childhood.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. So was that why you decided, partly why you decided to go to Indonesia?

HUSGEN: No -- I was engaged to a Chinese student (voices talking in background), and I loved him very much. Is that private though (voices in background)?

LEVINE: Well it is gonna be -- wait, we're gonna --
[Recording paused and then resumed]

HUSGEN: Very much I loved him, and that is why I went to Indonesia. He was a student -- but her mother, his mother, don't want me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: He wanted, she wanted a Chinese girl, so that I was all alone, and he left me too so for his mother is very important, in China (clears throat) -- so there I was in Indonesia, by myself, and, I sat there and -- he gave me his gold watch -- and I give it to somebody, and a Dutch fellow saw me -- he was married -- and his wife, and they say, "What is the matter, you obviously have "--I was crying a lot -- I was all alone and didn't know what to do. So she says, "Come and stay with us." So that was very nice, yeah, that was a Dutch family. That is what I remember. Now ask me the second question.

LEVINE: Okay. And then how did you meet your husband?

HUSGEN: (Sigh) How did I meet my husband? (Sigh)

LEVINE: Well, maybe you could tell me something about your husband when you first--

HUSGEN: You know, I,

LEVINE: Met.

HUSGEN: meet him (sigh), it was at a dance, we were dancing, and it was a crop in Indonesia, it was a crop, and I was dancing and he was dancing there, and so we met and he had the little dog and I love animals and he said, "You want to go for a walk with me?" I said, "Sure, with the dog" you know and it was lovely, I loved that little dog. So (cough), but I-- what was the other question?

LEVINE: You said it was a crop, is that what you said? That that's why there was the dance?

HUSGEN: A crop?

LEVINE: What did you say, a crop? No, you said something else. I, I couldn't, I misunderstood it. Okay, well, so you went, you met your husband at a dance and you went for a walk with the little dog, and then I guess eventually you got married!

HUSGEN: That is -- yeah, yeah. (Levine laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah, okay -- so then what happ--, what was your husband doing?

HUSGEN: Importing. He spoke perfect English. His mother was English. He couldn't get a job, so his father in Germany helped him with importing things from the job -- good old nice things, gifts -- and that is what started him here.

LEVINE: I see. So he was in business and his father was in Germany and he was selling things --

HUSGEN: Helped him.

LEVINE: -- and he was importing them. And then, what happened? How did he get separated from you, and your, and your son?

HUSGEN: I was separated for five years and I don't know why! Was it a war?

LEVINE: Yes, it was World War, World War One -- because it was 1939 when your son was born, in Indonesia,

HUSGEN: In Indonesia, yeah,

LEVINE: And he was one year old when your husband went --

HUSGEN: Interned.

LEVINE: -- was interned, right.

HUSGEN: And I haven't seen him for four and half years,

LEVINE: Right.

HUSGEN: So he was interned!

LEVINE: Now, you were interned with your son --

HUSGEN: Yeah,

LEVINE: -- with just the women and children,

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember anything about that time period? The Japanese were apparently your captors.

HUSGEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember what life was like, during those four and a half years?

HUSGEN: I know I didn't have milk for my little boy, but [Sighs], and you -- it was very cruel, the Japanese, you know, that time. And they put you on the tree in

hot sun, not me, but some people, and they had to stay there in the hot sun.
That is what the Japanese did -- it was awful!

LEVINE: You mean they tied them to the tree?

HUSGEN: To the tree.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: And I saw that, but me, I was lucky. What else do you want to know?

LEVINE: So what was life like, what would you do during the day when you were there?

HUSGEN: Nothing!

LEVINE: Nothing,

HUSGEN: You're sitting alone and, suffer (laughs), and then I get some potatoes with the skin, I was happy you'd get that -- the food was, no milk or anything for the baby. At that time we were still on the old, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. So did you make friends with the other people who you were living with?

HUSGEN: I didn't have any friends, so--

LEVINE: Yeah,

HUSGEN: No!

LEVINE: Why was that? Why, You were all thrown together --

HUSGEN: I don't remember, I don't remember!

LEVINE: Yeah,

HUSGEN: That, just blown away, I just don't remember!

LEVINE: Well, it's not pleasant, maybe you, you know, pushed it away,

HUSGEN: May be done this way, I don't know.

LEVINE: So at some time, and your husband was taken to, interned someplace else,

HUSGEN: In, in, England, it's -- oh, wait a second, I don't know. They took him to In--

LEVINE: India?

HUSGEN: No. Ba -- by the Himalayas, the Himalayas.

LEVINE: Not India?

HUSGEN: The Big Baltas [not understood].

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: The Himalaya. That city!

LEVINE: Is that where he was interned?

HUSGEN: He was on the foot of The Himalaya. He saw The Himalaya.

[HISTORIAN'S NOTE: The city in Northern India that Ms. Husgen seems to be referring to is Dehra Dun, where her husband was interned by the British because of his German ancestry. For further clarification, refer to the interview Dr. Levine has conducted Ms. Husgen's son, Paul Husgen, EI-1438.]

LEVINE: Did you have contact with him?

HUSGEN: No.

LEVINE: No. So, so, when did you get to see him again? How did you get to see him again?

HUSGEN: My mother-in-law was here too. She couldn't get back to Germany, and she bothers in contact, how she did it, through the Red Cross or something, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. So then you and your son, who was now six years old, traveled to see your husband again? To be together with your husband again?

HUSGEN: Yeah, we went together again, but how did we do it? (Sigh)

LEVINE: Well, that, don't worry about it, somehow you got there, maybe trains and,

HUSGEN: I, I know we went in a little plane, with very nice gentleman, and they give us food and that was -- see the parts I remember.

LEVINE: Whatever parts you remember, that's wonderful, don't worry about the other parts,

HUSGEN: Oh, ok. And when you gone maybe I remember. (Laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah, you remember everything then (laughs). Ok, so anyway, you went by little plane and then somehow you got reunited with your husband.

HUSGEN: My husband was state -- better friends, a Christian Scientist, and how do we get reunited? Through my mother-in-law!

LEVINE: Hmm.

HUSGEN: See, with the Red Cross and something like that, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, so then I think you lived in India for a few years on a farm, a rabbit farm?

HUSGEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember that part?

HUSGEN: Yes, I stayed on a farm. And Mrs. Steel -- Steeling [ph], even I remember a name!

LEVINE: Look at that, good for you. Okay.

HUSGEN: Yeah, yeah. We stayed on a farm and there were wild pigs and oh, God, we had lots of awful things.

LEVINE: You mean animals?

HUSGEN: That was in India, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Yeah, she was an English lady from Christian Science.

LEVINE: And it was her farm?

HUSGEN: It was her farm.

LEVINE: And it was rabbits? And on the farm, there were rabbits, and then she grew something?

HUSGEN: They had the rab--. Oh, I love animals, you know. And they had the rabbits that go to the kitchen, I killed them. We eat rabbits.

LEVINE: Oh. Yeah.

HUSGEN: And later on I have a rabbit as a pet (laughs). But that is war, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: I just, yeah. It's, my son remembered that?

LEVINE: Yes, he remembered all the big animals. For a little boy, it was, it was fun, you know, all those animals, and at least being free again.

HUSGEN: Yeah, I remember the rabbits, and some other animal was killed and it was his pet, oh, I don't know (laughs). I don't know. But anyhow we lived on the farm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then after that where did you go? After the farm.

HUSGEN: You get me.

LEVINE: (laughs) I think, I-- from your son, what he said you went then back to Germany, to the farm there.

HUSGEN: We didn't have a farm in Germany.

LEVINE: Um, your husband's parents I guess had a farm, in Germany, no?

HUSGEN: Didn't have a farm.

LEVINE: Do you remember being in Germany at all?

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

HUSGEN: (Sigh) Oh, God. [Long pause]

LEVINE: I think your husband was working for the U.S. Embassy doing translations and things when you were in Germany and then you got the, you got on the quota to come to the United States.

HUSGEN: A lady spon--, oh Johnson sponsored us!

LEVINE: Oh, there you go.

HUSGEN: Johnson. Sponsored us to come to the United States. My husband wasn't sure where he wants go, to New Zealand or the United States, but he chose the United States.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: And Johnson, you know, the big Johnson who sells all these things, he sponsored us.

LEVINE: Really? Now was this connected with the Christian Science Church?

HUSGEN: Yes. Yeah. Oh my, at least I remember something.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, yeah, so you were active in the church, when before---

HUSGEN: I don't, I never was a Christian.

LEVINE: You never were? Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: I go to the doctor when I'm sick (Levine laughs). And when they're sick, they don't go. My husband, for a time, said, "well you don't go to the doctor," you know and then he went. They don't believe in doctors, you know, Christian Scientists?

LEVINE: Right, uh-huh.

HUSGEN: You believe in that?

LEVINE: No, I believe in doctors. Yeah.

HUSGEN: It's -- Well anyhow, I was never a Christian Scientist. I couldn't.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: I believe in the doctor and normal things.

LEVINE: Yeah (Husgen laughs). So, do you remember coming to the United States?
Do you remember the getting to the port and going on the ship?

HUSGEN: Oh, God. I remember -- how come that I forget things?

LEVINE: You know, sometimes, it just takes longer, you know to remember things.

HUSGEN: I came to the United States. See I don't remember, I don't remember.
Maybe it comes back later, I don't know.

LEVINE: Well, I guess it was a rough voyage. You hit a storm coming? Your son
remembered.

HUSGEN: Oh, aboard, on the ship, yeah. Oh, Paul remembers that, oh he remembers
more than I do (Levine laughs). Yes, I do. Yeah and you know on the ship,
Paul slept in the hangar.

LEVINE: The hangar?

HUSGEN: Yeah, not in a bed.

LEVINE: A hammock?

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Oh.

HUSGEN: I know, oh, god, yeah, now I remember. Paul was in hammock and close to me. It was awful. And there was a storm [pause], very bad on board.

LEVINE: Did you remember the name of that ship? Because Paul wasn't sure on that.

HUSGEN: What?

LEVINE: Paul wasn't sure, the name of the ship. He-- I think it was a troop ship that got converted, you know.

HUSGEN: Yeah, there were Dutch troops on there.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it was a Dutch ship.

HUSGEN: They were still there. And they, they helped us with little things. They went to the kitchen and brought it up to us, you know. And we were Dutch. Oh, yeah, now I remember that, yeah. It was a troopers, troop ship. It was very awful. It was an awful ship.

LEVINE: Was it crowded?

HUSGEN: Yeah, it was crowded. And then some of the ladies, they were separate from us. They were Nazis or something.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: And they know who it was, you know. And they did, they were separate from us. They were interned on the ship.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: She was walking around with the hakenkreuz. You know?

LEVINE: Yes.

HUSGEN: Hakenkreuz -- that time. So she knows she was for Hitler. And she wasn't with us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: They separate her to punish her.

LEVINE: It was just one woman or more than one?

HUSGEN: I saw only one, I only remember one woman,

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Was sitting alone and she was not allowed to be with us.

LEVINE: I see. Huh.

HUSGEN: See, the little things.

LEVINE: Yeah. So whatever comes to your mind that's wonderful. Now, so then do you remember when the ship came into the New York Harbor?

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

HUSGEN: We came into New York Harbor and they were waiting for us, for Christian Science and they took us home. And we stayed with them, and then, and then (clears throat), we didn't have any money or anything. And I worked, I cleaned houses.

LEVINE: This was in Belmont, Massachusetts?

HUSGEN: Belmont, Massachusetts, yeah. Mrs. Steeling. Ste-e-ling. I remember, how can I forget her, she let me work so hard. But,

LEVINE: But you didn't live there? You lived with,

HUSGEN: Yeah, I lived there.

LEVINE: Oh, you lived there. And what about your son and your husband?

HUSGEN: Where was my husband?

LEVINE: Was he still with the Christian Scientists who, who brought you over?

HUSGEN: Where was my husband at that time? Was he still interned?

LEVINE: No, I think he maybe was, well the Christian Scientists that brought him over were in Belmont, Massachusetts.

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you first went to their house,

HUSGEN: Yeah, but I don't know where my husband was, was he there too (laughs)?

LEVINE: I think he was. (Laughs)

HUSGEN: (Laughs) Oh, God. Oh, there's so much going on, it makes me crazy. Oh, my husband was there too. Belmont wasn't a nice state, I tell you that.

LEVINE: No?

HUSGEN: No.

LEVINE: Why not?

HUSGEN: She wasn't very nice to us, you know. She let us know, and then I made seventy-five dollars a week for cleaning houses. And Paul remembers something had bit me, and when I cleaned the house, I came back, I cried. It was so dirty and -- you know, I thought she was sick cleaning. (Laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: It was awful.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, I guess you did what you had to do, huh?

HUSGEN: Yeah, sure. I did.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well.

HUSGEN: And Paul remembers so very well. He was with me. With the Christian Science. They can't have us. (Both laugh)

LEVINE: So then what happened? After you cleaned houses for a while and your husband got a job,

HUSGEN: I-- and then they say you shouldn't do that, clean houses. There is something else. But my English was so bad you know, so I went in a gift shop, not a gifty shop, but nice things, you know? And I loved it.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

HUSGEN: Yeah. I sell, and I was a good saleslady.

LEVINE: I bet,

HUSGEN: Yeah. I liked that. So what else you want to know?

LEVINE: So then you stayed -- now were you in Boston by then?

HUSGEN: Yeah, in Boston.

LEVINE: Boston. And so you, you remember that period of time as being a good time, when you were selling the nice things in the shop?

HUSGEN: Yeah, it was only (cough) I remember, I have to go the subway, and then from the subway I had to go with the bus, and then I have to walk twenty minutes up where our apartment was.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: And it was quite something. And I was skinny, you know, after the war. But that was quite something everyday.

LEVINE: Yeah. I think you mentioned before we turned on the tape that you were seventy pounds when--

HUSGEN: [Superposed] Seventy pounds.

LEVINE: [Superposed] When you first--

HUSGEN: Yeah, after the war.

LEVINE: After the war when you were released.

HUSGEN: And you're not allowed to eat food. Just papaya.

LEVINE: And that was because your system was so--

HUSGEN: My system wasn't,

LEVINE: Off from not eating. Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Yeah. But, we made it!

LEVINE: Yeah, you did, yeah. So, let's see. So then your husband worked with the Christian Monitor, the Christian Science Monitor?

HUSGEN: Translation.

LEVINE: Translation.

HUSGEN: Translation, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. And then, did you keep, did you continue-- your son went to school.

HUSGEN: Christian Science only school.

LEVINE: Yeah. And he learned English very quickly.

HUSGEN: Oh, he was so quick, went to school, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So your husband knew English and your son learned English quickly, and took you a little bit longer?

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: My husband spoke English -- his mother was English -- so, he had a nice background.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, um, let's see. When did you stop working at the gift shop?

HUSGEN: [Pause]

LEVINE: Well, you don't have to say when. What did you do after that?

HUSGEN: This is a funny -- what did I do after the gift shop?

LEVINE: Your son Paul mentioned that you, you did something with cookies.

HUSGEN: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember that?

HUSGEN: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Why don't you talk about that?

HUSGEN: (Both laugh) I forgot. I baked cookies. Good, delicious butter cookies and put them in shoeboxes. Nice, clean boxes and get in the subway with the boxes. How could I forget this? (both laugh) And to one of the good stores, you know, from the Reuben's, I don't know what the store was. That is what I did. Bake cookies, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So, how did you get that idea, to do that?

HUSGEN: That I don't know.

LEVINE: It was a good idea, though, wasn't it?

HUSGEN: Yeah, it was a lot of work though. Every morning, every morning I'd make the dough,

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: And then the next day I'd bake the cookies. And so, everyday, and I had to bring them, in shoe boxes in the subway. My the life that I had, oh, God.
(both laugh) I have it good now.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: So, so, when you did the, made the cookies, had your husband died? Was your husband alive when you were making the cookies and bringing them in?

HUSGEN: How did my husband died [sic]? He died of cancer. No, I don't -- I wasn't making cookies when he died. He was importing from Germany and Holland. His father helped him. What else did you ask me?

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else about your life in Boston that you remember? I there, what makes you feel happy? What makes you feel proud of having done?

HUSGEN: Boston didn't make me happy, that's for sure.

LEVINE: Why is that? Why wasn't Boston,

HUSGEN: Cleaning houses,

LEVINE: Well, yeah.

HUSGEN: And in Germany, I had, was with my mother-in-law and they had a maid who cleaned my, my one room. I lived with my parents-in-law in that house. It was my parents-in-law's house, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about Germany when you were there with your mother-in-law in that house?

HUSGEN: Oh, I loved Germany. (Sigh) Oh, God. (Sigh) I had my mother-in-law. Oh, God. Why is my head empty?

LEVINE: Well, it was your mother-in-law who helped you get back together with your husband, right? Through the Red Cross.

HUSGEN: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Did Paul anything remembered?

LEVINE: He remembered, in Germany. He remembered being on the, on his grandparent's house in the country.

HUSGEN: He remembers that house, just that house.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: And it was woods behind and a lake. And that's where Paul learned swimming. (Levine laughs) I remember that, yeah. Oh, it was lovely. That was a nice time he had. He remembered that too, huh?

LEVINE: Yes, he did. Uh-huh. So that was a good time?

HUSGEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And even though a lot of Germany had been bombed out, that part of it wasn't.

HUSGEN: Well, my parents-in-law home, a big home in Munich was bombed out.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: And that was their summer home.

LEVINE: I see.

HUSGEN: They, they made the money for Germany. They had good money, my parents-in-law. They made the money -- oh, there was something going on. They killed my husband's brother, that he didn't want to make false money. You know, they had the factory and he didn't want to do that. They killed him. Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: There are little parts that come back, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Do you think all that your husband went through had an effect on him, on his personality? You know, being interned, and you know,

HUSGEN: Well, it was hard for my boy to get used to my husband. He was with me alone and then comes a stranger. He didn't like that. And I don't think they ever been close.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: No. That was not good. Did he remember that? His father?

LEVINE: He remembered his father, yeah.

HUSGEN: I brought him up really alone, yeah. Well, that's what--

LEVINE: War does -- war does a lot of damage, every which way, doesn't it.

HUSGEN: Yeah, sure. Paul was born in '39 when the war broke out.

LEVINE: That's right, yeah. Yeah. Well, when you got to America, how do you think about it now? How do you think about it?

HUSGEN: I have a good life now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Are you glad that you came to this country?

HUSGEN: (sigh) I don't, I never thought of that (laughs).

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: I love still my country.

LEVINE: Have you been back to the Netherlands?

HUSGEN: I've been back once, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah?

HUSGEN: I still like it, it's a little country, I still like it, I like the food and I --

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: -- still have my brother there.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: And I have a brother in Australia.

LEVINE: Oh. Do you keep up any of the Dutch ways? Are there certain things that you still do that are from the Netherlands? Either culture or cooking or something?

HUSGEN: Well, when I was at home, I did Dutch cooking. Yeah, sure. In my heart, I'm still Dutch (both laugh).

LEVINE: Now did, did you become a citizen?

HUSGEN: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, you should be a citizen.

LEVINE: Yeah. But you feel that as far as the Dutch side of you and the, American side,

HUSGEN: It's still there, it's still there. I have America and I have the Dutch. I love America, they were good to me, and I love the Dutch. I born there. You cannot be such, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: So, I, you still hear my accent. No, America was good to us, both of us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: So, we never forget that. But, now Thanksgiving is a bore. That is a bit too much. Like Americans do, you know?

LEVINE: Oh, in the Netherlands it isn't a holiday.

HUSGEN: Oh, no we don't have Thanksgiving, so I'm not brought up with it.

LEVINE: I see.

HUSGEN: Christmas, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember Christmas when you were a little girl in the Netherlands?

HUSGEN: Oh, there were candles,

LEVINE: Real candles, right,

HUSGEN: Real candles -- and we still had them later on, real candles, but my husband was sitting there, with a sponge (Levine laughs), so when something happened, you know, oh we had a real Christmas, never an imitation. The smell of the, you know the smell of the pine,

LEVINE: It's wonderful.

HUSGEN: And now, every Chris-- Christmas, they give me some branches that I smell.

LEVINE: Oh, nice, very nice.

HUSGEN: The smell of the -- I love Christmas. Not anymore. You go there, and they all get presents and you sit there, it's not, not good. I can't buy presents.

LEVINE: Well, what's your fondest memory of the Netherlands when you were a little girl growing up? What do you remember with very good feeling about,

HUSGEN: I don't have any feeling about my father.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: They were divorced, so I didn't see my father and my mother has a different man. They were divorced--

LEVINE: Did you?

HUSGEN: So my upbringing was awful. (Laughs)

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents?

HUSGEN: I did, but I don't remember them.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh. So you, you stayed in school, 'til what, eight-- eighth grade, is that what's the usual?

HUSGEN: The schools are different in Holland and here. I had -- I don't know, I had schooling there, and I have some other schooling -- (sigh)

LEVINE: How did you learn English when you came here?

HUSGEN: How did?

LEVINE: How did you learn English here?

HUSGEN: By myself.

LEVINE: By yourself? Did you, picked it up just going around and living?

HUSGEN: Yeah, sure, sure.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: My husband spoke English.

LEVINE: Oh, that's right.

HUSGEN: But we spoke Dutch together.

LEVINE: Oh. (Laughs)

HUSGEN: You know that's easy, but easy for me. And then my son give me answer in English. I spoke Dutch to him, he gave the answer in English. It was a big show. For me, it's easy. I still speak Dutch to my son.

LEVINE: Oh.

HUSGEN: And he answers me in English.

LEVINE: (Laughs) I see. Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: Yeah. That is my life and now I'm here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: And my son, give me this home.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: My son helped me, you know, so that's nice.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, so what, what gives you a lot of satisfaction that you did in your life?

HUSGEN: [Long pause] I don't have any. I can't tell you. My life is going on and I live it the way it comes along.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: The road, it's nothing.

LEVINE: Have you made, are there other Dutch people, people from the Netherlands here? No? Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: No.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: And American people are different.

LEVINE: How is that? How are they different?

HUSGEN: There's not a close, closeness. You don't get close. You feel that way?

LEVINE: Well, I feel everybody is at a distance, physically. They're all dispersed around the country and they don't, they're not as close as people who stay in one place.

HUSGEN: Yeah, that's for sure. But I don't get close to you. I don't have close friends.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HUSGEN: I have friends.

LEVINE: Good.

HUSGEN: And they're very nice to me (cough). This morning, they give me orange juice and cranberry juice. They're supposed to give me only one juice, you know, in the morning. So I drank the orange juice and they took away the cranberry juice. And I walked, and somebody came with the cranberry juice to give to me. The people -- no complaint, they're always very nice.

LEVINE: Good.

HUSGEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, that's worth a lot, yeah. Uh-huh.

HUSGEN: So, I was surprised [not understood]. So, that was surprise, was nice. And the other one took it away, you know, big shot (both laugh).

LEVINE: Well, you have a sense of humor about it, so that's--

HUSGEN: I always have a sense of humor, and that keeps me young.

LEVINE: (Laughs) Yes, well you look wonderful, and I want to thank you very much for everything,

HUSGEN: I wish I would remember more.

LEVINE: Please don't apologize, you remembered a lot and it was a very nice interview.

HUSGEN: I did?

LEVINE: Yes.

HUSGEN: Oh.

LEVINE: So thank you, very much.

HUSGEN: Oh, you're very welcome. I enjoyed --

LEVINE: It was a pleasure to meet you.

HUSGEN: -- to being here with you.

LEVINE: Good.

HUSGEN: I enjoyed this.

LEVINE: And I'll be sending you the tape so you can listen.

HUSGEN: Oh, how nice, yeah. Do I see you again?

LEVINE: Well, not, not that I know of. I mean, I don't get here very often. My office is at Ellis Island in New York City,

HUSGEN: Oh.

LEVINE: This is a special trip to do interviews.

HUSGEN: Oh. You're far away.

LEVINE: Yes, I am.

HUSGEN: Oh.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HUSGEN: Well, it was nice talking to you.

LEVINE: Well, thank you, thank you. Ok, well we're gonna close here and I want to thank you very much for your interview.

HUSGEN: I hope it helps you a little.

LEVINE: I think it was very good. Thanks. Ok, Janet Levine, signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW