

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ELLIS ISLAND ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewees: Joanna Glarem Demarest  
Jacobra Verhov  
Ellen Davidson  
Interviewer: Nancy Dallette  
Interview Number: 199  
Interview Date: June 26, 1986

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MS. DALLETTE: My name is Nancy Dallette and I'm speaking with Joanna Glarem Demarest, and Jacobra Verhov, and Ellen Davidson on Thursday, June 26, 1986. We are beginning this interview at 11:15 a.m. and we are about to interview these three sisters about their immigration experience from Holland in June of 1907. This is interview number 199.

Let's start back at the beginning of your story, and I think I'll ask you, Jackie. Where and when were you born?

MS. VERHOV: Well, I was born in a little town called Yerseke--

MS. DALLETTE: Can you tell me how to spell that?

MS. VERHOV: Y-e-r-s-e-k-e. Yerseke. And, it was a small town, probably about five hundred people; I don't think there were many more than that. It was a small town.

MS. DEMAREST: It was a village.

MS. VERHOV: It was a village, a fishing village. My dad was a fisherman. He had a boat, and of course he had to have some mates, they call them, helpers, and he used to travel away quite a bit. And you can imagine, having a family like we did, eleven children, that mother usually had to have help, because how could you manage alone? Well, in Holland, in this little town, the young girls really have no positions, so they used to go to the different families and stay there and help them out. They were all young girls around sixteen and seventeen, and but when they reached an age of twenty or so, they really had to go out to the city to work. Because there was not enough for them to do. So, of course, my dad realized there was plenty work for men, because there were fishermen, but not for the girls. So there we had these five little girls and well, fortunately, we had uncles in this country. So, they

immediately wrote to us and said they would sponsor us if we wanted to come. Well, my dad didn't want to come alone. Usually they would have the father and a couple of sons go first, and the family follow. But, dad didn't want to do that at all. He said, "No, no. I'll sell my business and we'll all go together," which we did. So, it was quite an event, you can imagine, thirteen of us leaving a small village at one time. I remember, everyone was excited about it, 'cause my dad belonged to the--some band every Saturday night they would have an affair at the park. They had a big, one of those old, what do you call, tent. And the musicians used to gather there and play for all the people there, which was very nice, every Saturday night. So, of course, he was quite well known. My brother and he both played the trumpet and the violin. So, they were going to miss them, so they gave us a lovely send-off. They hired a limousine, and mother and dad rode with the mayor to the station. Where we all had to go in a small jitney bus, to take us to the station, which was quite a distance away. So, of course, that was all very exciting for a ten- or eleven-year-old girl. But I do remember several things in Europe. The school system was very nice, too, and they--I don't know--I think we were a little more advanced in the schools than here, because in the fifth grade, I was very good in arithmetic, and, and then they also had sewing classes. They taught you how to sew, and they taught you how to knit. And ever since that, I've been knitting, because, I mean, I liked it very much, and I--you know, I was ten years old, and do you know that we even had to make our own stockings? After coming home from school, we'd have to knit so many rounds before mother would permit us to go and play. And all that sounds kind of funny now, but it was good, because it taught us how to do certain things.

MS. DALLETTE: At what age would you have started school?

MS. VERHOV: I think you started around five like you do here. I don't remember kindergarten. I don't think we had that; I think that we were put right into the first grade.

MS. DALLETTE: And was the school just in the village?

MS. VERHOV: School was in the village, yes. Yeah, they had several schools. They also had a Christian school, like they do in all these little towns in Europe. But we went to the regular school.

MS. DAVIDSON: A church.

MS. VERHOV: And a church, of course. We were Protestants, we had a lovely church. They called it [De Hoghte Karie] which means "the large church." And as a child, you think it is enormous. But I remember going back to Holland in sixty-five. Well, when I went to that church, I said to my brother, "Where's the big church?" He said, "Well, the tower is completely gone, because the war, the damage, quite some things there," and he says, "that was ruined, a lot of the church was ruined." I said, "Yes, but--the war," I says, "but I was here, I couldn't reach to open it." He says, "You forget, you have grown. The door isn't smaller, you have grown." But it was still called [De Hoghte Karie]. And at that--when we [. . .], we had a grandmother. She lived in the town. And that was very sad, when we left, we had to leave grandma. Mother's mother. Of course, she knew she was going to a land which was better for all of us. We will have chances to--

MS. DEMAREST: Tell about the hundred pennies.

MS. VERHOV: And the hundred pennies? Oh, well they had a system there for old ladies. You would go to the church, and they would give you a hundred pennies on Saturday, every Saturday. So, I was selected to go and get the money. Well, I could just about reach the door, but I managed. And I got the hundred pennies for grandma every Saturday. Of course, she was so generous, when I got there, she said, "Now there's a

bakery across the street. Now you go and buy two nice little turnovers with cream in." She spent ten cents right there, from the dollar. But we enjoyed it, and we just all loved her, because she was a nice grandmother, like all grandmothers. So--

MS. DALLETTE: As a ten-year-old, were you in charge of some of the younger sisters and brothers?

MS. VERHOV: Oh, and how. I always had to comb their hair and do things. I always said I needed my own hair combed, but anyway. But naturally, you know, when there are two or three littler--

MS. DEMAREST: You [helped me] with the two small boys--you were the youngest sister, then; yeah, that's right.

MS. DAVIDSON: Um hm.

MS. DEMAREST: She was a baby.

MS. VERHOV: So naturally, you all had to help. We all had chores to do. Certain things you just had to do every--after school, and peel potatoes, and in Holland, people are very fond of potatoes. We used to peel potatoes by the pound, I swear. But, that was our chore. We had to do those chores, after school.

MS. DEMAREST: You did have an older sister, though. I don't think you made that clear. You were not the oldest.

MS. VERHOV: Oh no, I was not the oldest. I had an older sister. She was about two years, three years older than I.

MS. DALLETTE: And did you have someone--you said that a lot of the young girls of around sixteen worked--

MS. VERHOV: Oh, we always had to have someone to help mother with the laundry and everything, naturally. So, then, we learned how to do things ourselves, you know. You're taught very young how to cook and do things.

MS. DALLETTE: And some of that you actually learned at school?

MS. VERHOV: Well, they did teach us the knitting, and the sewing. Very nice, embroidery, they were really very--I thought I liked that, because I thought that was much better than here. I don't think they have those classes.

MS. DAVIDSON: Tell them about the wooden shoes in school.

MS. DEMAREST: There were all wooden shoes in school. You were not permitted to keep your wooden shoes on during classes. Well, Jackie wasn't always very attentive, so one day I didn't even hear the teacher call me. He came up to me and he dragged me out of my seat, and the wooden shoes went clickety clog all the way to the front of the class. And he said, "I'll tell your father." Oh boy, I was so frightened. I thought here's where we're going to have a good whipping. But he had so many to take care of, I don't think he gave me a licking at all. But I really was very frightened. So, I used to daydream a little, well, nothing wrong with that.

MS. DALLETTE: And your brothers, they worked with your father?

MS. VERHOV: The brothers--well, one worked with another man, on another ship. But the one brother worked with my dad. And the other brother worked on a farm, way out in [the distance], not near our home. And he used to work on this for milk, dairy. So, they wanted to keep him there when we were told that we were going to America, oh, they wanted to adopt him. Mother said, "Nothing doing." She wouldn't let one of the children go. So, we all came, and it was very pleasant, really.

MS. DALLETTE: So you say you--was it your father who had a brother who came to this country?

MS. VERHOV: No, mother. My mother had two brothers, two farmers.

MS. DALLETTE: Did you remember them from Holland?

MS. VERHOV: No, I faintly remember them, the one, [Aunt] Levy, with a little girl. That's about all I remember. But I don't remember the other one going at all. They must have gone quite a while before, you know, when I was still young. Shall I go on with--This is enough about mine. I don't know anything else that would be too interesting. Oh, and leaving, of course, was very exciting.

MS. DALLETTE: Yeah. Tell me about that.

MS. VERHOV: Selling all the furniture and all. 'Course, you don't have furniture like you do here. The homes aren't that large. We had a smaller home, and the beds were altogether different from here. The beds are built in the walls, so you can't take them with you. And they have doors--our living room had two great big beds, they were built like big closets, but they were beds. They had the mattresses and everything on the--and you would close those doors during the day. But at night, you can open them up and climb on a little stool and climb in the bed. And that's how they managed with the beds. See, we didn't have beds then. But later on, when I went back to Holland, then I remember going into the same little house, and they had beds upstairs. Regular beds, like you do here. So that was an improvement then already.

MS. DALLETTE: So was there a lot of excitement around that period, where your parents decided to come here and they were selling things?

MS. VERHOV: Oh yes, oh definitely. Of course. Everyone, you know, they didn't want to see a big family like ours go away. We had to have a sale, of course, to sell whatever furniture we did possess. And we had a nice send-off. Mother boiled a lot of eggs, hard-boiled eggs. She thought we wouldn't get anything on the train. We had never traveled on the train, and she thought, "Oh, those kids will be so hungry." So, she--

MS. DAVIDSON: And peanuts.

MS. VERHOV: Huh?

MS. DAVIDSON: And peanuts too.

MS. VERHOV: And peanuts, oh, she had everything, so--well, we had some friends in Rotterdam. They met us at the train, and took us to their home. That alone was already an experience for a youngster that had never been on a train even. So, it really was all very exciting for all of us. Not the older boys, they had been around more, you know. They didn't stay home like the little ones did. But, we just went to Sunday school, like little children do here, and then every year at Christmas time we all received a nice gift. I remember receiving material for a petticoat. How exciting children would be here to get! But we thought it was just beautiful! Those means things mean a lot to little children when you don't have that much.

MS. DAVIDSON: Why don't you tell about the packing cases. Why don't you tell about the packing cases that came to the house?

MS. VERHOV: Oh yes, oh yeah, of course.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, I was only seven. I can remember [. . .] these four huge packing cases arrived at our home. They were being packed for shipment. My mother insisted on bringing her featherbeds, and pillows, and her hand-operated sewing machine. Then, piles of clothing for eleven children, and a pair of wooden shoes for each, as keepsakes. And the trip on the ship was a wonderful experience--

MS. DALLETTE: Is there anything else you can tell me about the packing cases, and things you put into it, and [. . .] when you were ready to leave the village, before you got to the boat? Any excitement in Rotterdam?

MS. DEMAREST: No, not much. We did have a little lunch there at

a relative's home. And, but now, the trip on the ship I would like to tell about.

MS. DALLETTE: Okay.

MS. DEMAREST: It was a wonderful experience for all of us, especially the children. Fortunately, we had relatives in America who had reserved two cabins and we were very comfortable. We encountered a terrific storm, and many people were kneeling and praying, making my mother very nervous. And my father, as he was a seafaring man, having sailed his boat for many years. The two or three weeks became boring for the children, but father enjoyed every bit of it. What a thrill, what a thrill, when we neared New York. Here we are coming to New York Harbor, and the beautiful Statue of Liberty welcoming us to the land of opportunity. We were impressed with Ellis Island when we arrived, because everything appeared new and attractive, and surrounded with green flowers and shrubs. I don't know whether it's that way today or not.

MS. DALLETTE: Not at the moment, no.

MS. DEMAREST: But then, then, it was very attractive. We arrived because everything--how do I say--we were presented with a box lunch which thrilled us. The [system] bread and cheese sandwiches and coffee. Then we were separated for physical examinations. And we all passed, every one. And a number was pinned on each one of us, in case we became separated. We were not shoved or pushed, but treated with respect. Then, we were asked to pose in front of a building with a, which picture appears in the centerfold of Liberty magazine. And then our journey was almost over.

MS. DALLETTE: Take me back a bit, tell me more about the trip itself. Do you remember what the name of the boat was?

MS. DEMAREST: Yes. The Ryndam, wasn't it?

MS. DAVIDSON: I think it was the Ryndam. R-y-n-d-a-m.

MS. VERHOV: [. . .] of course is not being used anymore now.

MS. DALLETTE: Was it the largest ship you had ever seen up to then?

MS. DEMAREST: Well, yes.

MS. DAVIDSON: Of course, yes.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, we happened to be on the third class. We were not in the steerage. And we had one of the whole--the bottom of the ship, you know, the third class. And, I can remember, I was only a little kid, but I can remember watching the people up in the second class dance and they had a bar, and they were drinking there, and we saw quite a few German people, and there was one German lady, she kept watching us. She must have children of her own, I don't know. But I remember her buying a great big Hershey bar and handing it to me. I never had a bar like that ever before!

MS. DALLETTE: Did you like it?

MS. DEMAREST: Oh, it was delicious. And another thing I remember on the ship. I was seasick one day, it was a Sunday, and I was in my berth, and my sister came skipping in and she said, "Oh, what you missed today," she said. "Oh, guess what we had for dessert?" And I said, "What was it?" I was so sick. And she says, "Prunes." Oh, and I said, "Prunes!" And I love prunes! One of us was sick the following Sunday, we have prunes. 'Cause we were on there for two Sundays. There were many, many big long tables. And when it was stormy, these tables kept swaying, and the coffee cups and the plates kept sliding down these big tables. And, we liked the meals because they were plain. Usually had meat and potato and a vegetable. Very often they had a stew, which we called [. . .] We called it [. . .] And it was delicious, so, I mean, the children were happy.

MS. DALLETTE: How were the cabins? What were they like? You had three for the thirteen of you?

MS. DEMAREST: Yes, thirteen--that's right.

MS. DALLETTE: Do you remember how you divided up?

MS. DEMAREST: Yes, the girls--

MS. VERHOV: --were together, of course. The older boys probably had one. So there were three boys--four--Frank was a boy, too. So he was in there with the other boys. They had plenty of berths. Regular berths.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, there were four in each cabin, so there were plenty of space.

MS. VERHOV: Of course they weren't anything like the cabins are today. Because I remember I went back to Holland in sixty-five--it was quite an improvement--quite an improvement.

MS. DEMAREST: Yeah, the little ones were in with mother and dad. that's right.

MS. DALLETTE: And your mother wasn't well. She was seasick from the journey?

MS. DEMAREST: No, no. She wasn't seasick at all. I don't remember mama being seasick. But I do remember one of--I was seasick, and you were, and Jacob, I remember. Just once, but when they told her we had prunes on Sunday, she did say something about mother didn't like something but father--you did say something about that, that father liked--

MS. DALLETTE: Oh, maybe since she was frightened.

MS. VERHOV: Maybe.

MS. DEMAREST: 'Cause she--well, that storm was very, very bad. 'Cause we were not permitted up on the deck at all the following day. And everything was tied down. And I always felt so very sorry for the people in the hole, all the Russian immigrants. And I felt--

MS. DAVIDSON: Steerage.

MS. DEMAREST: Huh?

MS. DAVIDSON: That was called steerage.

MS. DEMAREST: Steerage? I felt sorry for them, because, of course, we never saw where they slept or anything. But they couldn't come up, and they were frightened. And I remember during that terrible storm, they just prayed and prayed.

MS. DAVIDSON: And cried.

MS. DEMAREST: It worried us, too, and dad said, "Now, it's all right. I know what the storm is like, I'm a--" you know, he's a seaman--he said, "Go back to sleep and it will be all right." So, we tried to go back to sleep. [. . .] period, when you're a youngster. Very difficult.

MS. DALLETTE: And do you remember actually boarding the ship in Rotterdam?

MS. DEMAREST: Oh, certainly, of course.

MS. DALLETTE: So you saw all the people coming on at the same time?

MS. DEMAREST: Oh yeah. Well, it was all very interesting, and, you know, awe-stricken, you know, when you're a youngster. Of course, now, Rotterdam was a large city, too, so when we came to New York, of course, it was all beautiful. But we had already seen some of it in Rotterdam. They had all the big buildings there, too. So--

MS. DALLETTE: Were there a lot of people from your village who had left to come to this country?

MS. DEMAREST: Not too many, but there were some, yes. Every once in a while you heard of some family leaving. Oh, yes, they are--they were all doing that, because living there was all right if you were a

fisherman, or a farmer. But otherwise, there was no way you could make a living, really.

MS. DAVIDSON: My father wasn't exactly a millionaire. Not wealthy, but he had enough to buy some property on the shore, and he invested in oyster beds, I think it was called.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, they have to--

MS. DAVIDSON: And--

MS. DEMAREST: --have those, if you're a fisherman.

MS. DAVIDSON: But overnight, it seemed that something struck, I don't know what, ate all these oysters, ruined the oyster beds. But that made him discouraged. That was another reason he wanted to leave, I think. He was really discouraged. Losing all that money that he had invested.

MS. DALLETTE: Then, coming into the harbor, you mentioned the excitement when you saw the Statue of Liberty?

MS. VERHOV: Oh, indeed.

MS. DAVIDSON: Oh, yes, of course, that was a thrill to all--I think I had mentioned that.

MS. VERHOV: Realize what the Statue of Liberty really meant. Naturally, we saw that beautiful lady standing there, and, well, in later years, you realize what it meant. But not when you're only six and ten years old. But of course, dad realized, no doubt, and it was all a wonderful experience to come to a country like this. Everything was so enormous. When we're used to a small village. And then, not to have anyone meet you, in this strange country, and you don't speak the language. You can imagine what that was like. Somehow or other, my dad had the address of my uncle. So, they sent us to Hoboken, to the train there. So, we got on the train, and we knew we had to go to Passaic Station. Well, that was all well and good, but we got off the train and there was no one there to meet us. So, dad knew we had to go to Wallington. That was a farm, my uncle had a farm. So he just--they just said, "Go that way. Go that way." So, the thirteen of us, bag and baggage, you can imagine, all bundled up, walking down the main street of Passaic. Fortunately, two men met us, and they immediately knew who we were. They said, "Oh, you're the Glarem family." Of course, you couldn't be mistaken! So, he said, "Your uncles were here for hours, at the station, waiting. But they had to go home to eat." It wasn't like today, where you just go into a restaurant, and they had to go all the way back to eat. I'm sure it was a half-hour drive with the little buggy, don't you think so?

MS. DAVIDSON: They each had a buggy and horses.

MS. VERHOV: So, they went all the way back to have their dinner, and then, sure enough, a short time later, we saw them coming. And, we all got into the little buggies, and they drove us to the--boys walked, the older boys walked, you know. 'Cause that's older, twenty and nineteen, and we all got into the little buggies and went to my uncle's house in Wallington where they have the farm. And you can imagine the excitement when we arrived there. She, of course, had a great big meal ready for us. She knew we'd be hungry--

MS. DAVIDSON: Six loaves of bread.

MS. VERHOV: She baked. And a half of them went to the one uncle. He lived quite a distance away on a farm, and the little ones all stayed with mother and dad. So, that was all. Oh, and he had an apartment, rented for us.

MS. DALLETTE: So your uncle had set that up for you?

MS. VERHOV: Oh yes, they had an apartment all rented for us, yes.

MS. DALLETTE: In the same town there?

MS. VERHOV: Yeah, but you see, we were used to the beds being in the walls, you know, in Europe, so the rooms were all full of beds. You can imagine! Well, dad--I think we only lived there for three months, in that great big apartment. And my dad realized that was dumb. There was no place to sit! All the rooms were filled with beds. Only the kitchen. So, well anyway, they found another apartment right away, or a little house. And then dad bought a little house where we had plenty of room. So we managed, and, but it was all very exciting.

MS. DALLETTE: And what did your father begin to do here?

MS. VERHOV: He went to work in a chemical factory. And he did very well. In no time, they made him the foreman, because he was very bright, very intelligent, and some of those other fellows--

MS. DAVIDSON: Very good in mathematics--

MS. VERHOV: Oh yeah. He was very good. So they made him the foreman, in no time. And that's where he worked until he retired.

MS. DALLETTE: And how did you all begin picking up the English language?

MS. VERHOV: Yes, that's another thing. Now, they talk about having teachers in schools for it. Didn't have teachers for us. We just learned, went to school, and just learned it with the other children, that's all. You don't really--and then, of course, the boys all took international courses. Night school, because they didn't--couldn't go to school, couldn't learn like we did. So they all took all these different courses. And that's how we learned.

MS. DAVIDSON: One of my brothers had a big concrete business in Clifton for years, and made out very well. And another brother became a supervisor in big parchment paper place. They all had--one brother took up an electric course and became an electrician. So, you see, we all fared very well.

MS. DEMAREST: Where there's a will, there's a way.

MS. DAVIDSON: And the girls--oh, you can tell them about the [operatic] family. About the musical family. No, well I mean, we all took music lessons.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, that came from my father. My father played two instruments, and my brother also played two instruments, and had--they both had fine voices. So, fortunately, that was inherited by the girls, and not the other boys so much, but the girls. I think we had--Jackie took piano, Paula took piano. Did you take piano? Or did you just sing?

MS. DAVIDSON: I took--

MS. DEMAREST: You took piano. So that was three. And I became a music teacher. I had a music teacher.

MS. DAVIDSON: Well, two of the girls sang in choir.

MS. DEMAREST: Yes, they were singers, too. Jackie sang in the choir. And Paula, who is not here, sang in the choir.

MS. DAVIDSON: [Marinas] did too, did you know that?

MS. DEMAREST: I never knew [Marinas] sang.

MS. DAVIDSON: In the Holland church. We had a beautiful choral there.

MS. DEMAREST: Oh, you mean in Holland?

MS. DAVIDSON: No, no, no. In Lodi. He sang.

MS. DEMAREST: Oh, well, I was a baby.

MS. DEMAREST: Yeah. That's how he met his wife. She was a real Dutch girl, and she was also singing in the choral. And, so.

MS. DAVIDSON: You know, my mother wasn't happy until she found a church, which was shortly after we came here. And, they joined the Dutch

Reform Church, where they had Dutch services, every Sunday afternoon. But the children didn't like that, they wanted to learn English, so they went in the evening to church. And that's where I learned a lot of the Dutch songs, too.

MS. DALLETTE: That's the end of side one of interview number 199.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

MS. DALLETTE: This is the beginning of side two of interview number 199.

We sort of rushed through the Ellis Island experience. So, is there just any details you can think of about how you were treated there? Do you remember the medical examinations that you went through?

MS. VERHOV: Oh, they were very--Oh, don't tell her, she said! All these little girls, you know, five little girls. They, they really didn't have to undress, because they just tested us all over, and we had good eyes and--

MS. DALLETTE: They tested your eyes?

MS. VERHOV: Oh yeah, oh, they were very careful. We had one brother who had eyes that were--what was wrong with his eyes?

MS. DAVIDSON: Nearsighted.

MS. VERHOV: Nearsighted. And they hesitated a bit, so when they found out that we're being sponsored by two uncles, they permitted us to go through. But they were very careful, examining all of us, to see that we were perfect. And we must have been pretty good, because we found no difficulties at all. We just all passed, only, just that one brother, whose eyes were a little poor. And, so, the uncles sponsor you, so we were permitted to go through.

MS. DALLETTE: So your father and mother had papers, signed by your uncles, saying that they would be responsible?

MS. DEMAREST: Probably.

MS. VERHOV: Oh, they must have had, yes. When he sent us the tickets, they must have had that too, that they were sponsoring us. Otherwise, I don't think that they permitted people to come through, years ago. Especially we were--a family like ours, you had to be fed. And you had to have someone reliable that will vouch for you.

MS. DALLETTE: And at Ellis Island, I assume the officials were speaking English?

MS. VERHOV: Oh yes.

MS. DALLETTE: How did your father know which way to go, or where?

MS. VERHOV: Oh, they tell you, they just tell you. Well, I think--

MS. DAVIDSON: You follow the crowd.

MS. VERHOV: But, he managed very well. I was really amazed.

MS. DAVIDSON: He had learned a few English words.

MS. VERHOV: I think he knew a few things. But, really, he couldn't speak English. But, I think they had some interpreters there. They must have had. Because we had no difficulty at all to get through, really. Everything went very smoothly. And the lunches were delicious, we all enjoyed it. You know, when you're hungry--the children.

MS. DALLETTE: They gave each of you a box lunch?

MS. VERHOV: Box lunches, they had. I think we had to buy them, I'm not sure.

MS. DALLETTE: So, it wasn't in a big dining hall?

MS. VERHOV: No, no, no, just--I don't know why we were always kept separate. We were never with the big crowd. Because, I think, it's because we were such a large family.

MS. DALLETTE: You were a large crowd yourself!

MS. VERHOV: And they really kept us--they really kept us separate, because we didn't have to sit down with all the rest of them. We just sat, our own crowd--

MS. DEMAREST: They wanted our picture.

MS. VERHOV: They wanted to take our pictures too, and--

MS. DALLETTE: Was it an official, at Ellis Island, who took that picture?

MS. DEMAREST: That, I don't remember. I don't remember the photographer at all.

MS. VERHOV: We were so surprised to see it in a magazine.

MS. DEMAREST: And he placed us all in a row, like a ladder.

MS. DAVIDSON: I was going to say, they must have given you some directions about how to go to [. . .] because how would you know? How would you know how to go?

MS. DEMAREST: To go from the station?

MS. DAVIDSON: No. How would you know--

MS. VERHOV: Oh, well they--I think they put us on a boat, don't they, to go to Hoboken, how else would we get to Hoboken? The ferry--oh, sure, you had to.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: That's probably how they got to Hoboken. And then from Hoboken, you took a train?

MS. DEMAREST: The train to Passaic, [. . .] a train, yeah. And that, of course, was all exciting, naturally. Well, we were very anxious to meet the family, that we wanted them to hurry. Because we wanted to get there. We had been on the boat, I guess, ten days, wasn't it, or more?

MS. DAVIDSON: No, longer than that.

MS. VERHOV: No, not two weeks. Two Sundays, I remember. But, it was quite a while.

MS. DALLETTE: And how much time did you spend at Ellis Island?

MS. VERHOV: Not too much, because the same day we arrived at my uncle's. We didn't have to stay any place overnight. So, it couldn't have been very long.

MS. DALLETTE: Did you come in in the morning?

MS. VERHOV: To Ellis Island in the morning? Of course, the boat landed before that, and then we had to take a boat to Ellis Island, or a ferry boat. And then they took us back again to where the boat landed, and that's how we--in Hoboken, and that's how we got on the train. But it all went pretty fast, because we did arrive before nightfall, all the way in Passaic. So, you see, it must have been very fast. But I still remember that walk from the station, down the street. Everyone glaring at us. You can imagine people, you know, wondering--all these people together. But, it was all very exciting. The stores all were beautiful to us. Because, from a small town, we had a couple of little shops, but not stores like you do in--of course, we children all stood and admired the pole, the barber pole--did you ever see them, years ago? The barber shops, they had these poles--

MS. DAVIDSON: That intrigued us, didn't it?

MS. VERHOV: And all the little girls, we stood there, and stood there, until mother said, "Come on, we have to get going, we have to walk on." But all those things, you know, they're really insignificant. But to us, they were just so unusual.

MS. DALLETTE: Were you seeing cars and things for the first time?

MS. VERHOV: No, no, they had automobiles there. The doctors and lawyers and so on. They had automobiles there. But I don't think any of our friends had automobiles that you know of. Not even the uncle on the farm.

MS. DAVIDSON: No.

MS. VERHOV: No. See, we had an uncle, in Europe, too, on a farm. So we were used to farmers.

MS. DALLETTE: Any other surprises you can think of, like the barber pole? Anything that sticks out in your memory about how--

MS. VERHOV: Yeah, what I thought was so unusual, the next day, after we had arrived, we took a walk around the farm. And, of course, they had tomatoes in bloom, and all like that. And I saw great big bushes of those small tomatoes, you know, and I thought they were plums. So, I said to my cousin, "Oh, what's that?" And she says, "Take one. Eat it." Oh, I've never eaten a tomato since. I dislike tomatoes because I thought it was a plum. And I would never eat tomatoes after that. I mean, it looked so lovely, you know, that bush full of these little red apples. I thought, "Oh, were they good!"

MS. DAVIDSON: I remember a little story in a [bar] where we went to buy ice cream sandwiches. And I thought they were delicious. And my brothers, I think they ate them by the dozen.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: That was in this country, you're talking about.

MS. DAVIDSON: In this country.

MS. DEMAREST: Oh, and I remember my uncle, he had another farm. So he used to have one of those wagons, and he used to go pedal all his vegetables. Well, I remember him standing in front of our place-- apartment. And of course, us children, you know, we all had to run and see what the uncle was doing. Well, they had the bananas. I'd never seen a banana. I thought, "Gee, what are they?" So, you can imagine how many bananas mother had to buy to give us each one. The house was full of bananas.

MS. DAVIDSON: We thought they were delicious.

MS. DEMAREST: That's right. We thought they were just out of this world. Well, and oranges. We did have an orange once a year in the Sunday school. They gave it to you as a gift. In Holland, you all had a little thing of candy and an orange. And we were very delighted with those things. As children, you know. We didn't have oranges, I don't believe. I don't think mother did every buy oranges, not that I know of.

MS. DALLETTE: Did your mother continue to cook in traditional--

MS. VERHOV: The Holland way, yes. Of course, we finally--in no time, I was old enough, they thought, to make cake and pie. I remember my first cake I made. Oh, it was--no, pie, lemon pie. I thought I'd make some pie. Well, when fourteen people sit down to have lemon pie, one meal was all done. And I wept, I said, "It took me all morning to make those pies, mother, and they're all gone!" She says, "Well, each had to have a piece." But all those things, when you're a child, you know, they're exciting. We really had a nice childhood. We used to have a lot of music singing in the house. Of course, in no time we had to get a piano and used to sit down and play, with the violin, and, oh, we used to have a lot of fun.

MS. DALLETTE: And did you speak mostly Dutch in your home? Or--

MS. VERHOV: Definitely. Oh yes. Mother and dad--dad learned to read the paper in no time. He was very good at it, but mother wanted the Holland paper. At that time, they used to publish the Holland paper. She used to like to read that. But--

MS. DEMAREST: We learned English very quickly, from the children we played with, you know, the neighbors. And in school, too. I can remember raising my hand. I wanted to read, like the rest of them did. And the teacher said, "Joanna," and she said, "You read." And I read, but they all started to laugh, when I read, because it really--the accent

was very, you know. And they thought it was cute.

MS. VERHOV: Well, I remember school [was] always outstanding, was I was good in arithmetic in Europe, so, in the fifth grade, your examples are quite difficult here too. Well, there was one the children didn't get, but I got it. So the teacher said, "Jacobra, stand up and tell them how you did it." I didn't even know what she was talking about. Or she said, "Up!" I shook my head; I couldn't explain it. I couldn't, no matter how, I mean, I wouldn't know what to say. So I just shook my head. So she said, "Now that little girl comes all the way from Holland, and she knows how to do this and you children are here in school and don't even know how to do." She scolded all the poor kids, because I got the example right. But, school for me was very difficult. Here. Because I was, you know, I had to learn the language in Europe, and I was almost eleven, and going into the sixth grade, it was very, very difficult.

MS. DALLETTE: So you were put into the sixth grade?

MS. VERHOV: In the fifth grade, right away. But it was very difficult. I could do arithmetic, and I could do spelling, because the words were on the board. But I couldn't get up and then--but I could do them on paper. But otherwise, it was very, very difficult. I should have gone to the lower grades and then they could have pushed me ahead quickly, but no, my brother and I were both put in the fifth grade.

MS. DALLETTE: Were there other children that were Dutch in your community?

MS. VERHOV: Oh, yes, we were--I remember there was one girl in the same class. And she had just come from Europe too. But she was a little more advanced. She was quicker than I, and she got up like Jo did to read, and I thought, well, if she can get up, so can I. I got up, but they didn't laugh.

MS. DEMAREST: We did settle in a neighborhood where there were quite a few Dutch families. We became acquainted very quickly.

MS. DALLETTE: And how long did it take before--you said it was difficult in the beginning, but it was--how much time did it take before you felt comfortable, and didn't feel a big difference between you and the other children?

MS. VERHOV: Oh, I think one year, don't you think so?

MS. DAVIDSON: Oh, yes.

MS. VERHOV: And, of course, the younger ones, they learned quicker, too. I mean, they didn't have to sit and learn, like you do when you're older. It's much easier. But in a couple of years you must mixed in with the crowds. Oh yes, that comes very quickly. That's why you really don't need extra teachers in school. We learned.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: Got to be careful about that, because I think now they should have. But anyway, I think what is most remarkable is that they have absolutely no accent. The girls. In fact, most of the children grew up without accent--speaking without accent at all, except maybe the two oldest brothers. Didn't quite lose it. But all the girls spoke very, very well, I thought. You couldn't detect any accent with either of the girls, can you?

MS. DALLETTE: No.

MS. DEMAREST: [Marinas], you could.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: Yeah, my oldest brother. Yes.

MS. DEMAREST: You have another story to tell?

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: About the accent.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, it was difficult at first, but, there were

many children--and in those days, there were more immigrants than there are today in the small towns, I mean. And, well, they treated us like immigrants.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: Of course, it all depends on how young you are when you come here.

MS. DEMAREST: That's right.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: And all of them were rather young. Because many of the older people, friends, have never lost their accent. It's impossible to, I guess. Unless you have certain courses, corrective courses.

MS. DALLETTE: But was that desirous? I mean, you're making it sound like people wanted to lose their accent.

[ALL INTERVIEWEES]: Oh yes, oh yes. Indeed.

MS. VERHOV: You wanted to be an American right away.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: They didn't want to have any accent. Mother and father, of course, never lost it. They always sounded--you could tell they were Dutch. If you were Dutch yourself, you could tell.

MS. DALLETTE: When you say "people treated us like immigrants" could you explain--

MS. VERHOV: Well, you can't mix in with the children and play the way they do, because you don't know the way they talk, and play. But, in no time, we became acclimated, and joined right in. I remember going back to Holland, you know, I went back in sixty-five, I thought that was quite an experience. But I was very happy to get back to America.

MS. DALLETTE: Why?

MS. VERHOV: Why--it's easier--everything seems so small. When I was a child, everything was large. But when I came as a woman, I thought everything was so small there. And even my niece, I said to her, "Gee, you are awfully little." She said, "I didn't get little, you got big!" I said, "For goodness sakes, what's wrong with me?" But I mean, I did not like it. Everything was--it looked so poor to me. I mean, they didn't have all the different things that we have here, that we had everything electric, you know, and bathrooms and all like that. And, in Europe, at that time, there were little towns; they weren't that far advanced.

MS. DAVIDSON: My mother went back to Holland too.

MS. VERHOV: Yeah.

MS. DAVIDSON: Oh a trip. She and my sister took a trip. And they were, they enjoyed that very much.

MS. DEMAREST: Father never went.

MS. DAVIDSON: No, father never went back.

MS. VERHOV: Well, mother had more friends. I was only ten years old when I left. All you have is memories of a couple of school friends, that's all. But mother had been married there and lived there, and she had all her friends.

MS. DEMAREST: Had a brother there, too.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: But I think one outstanding thing about father is that he always said, "This country has been very good to me. I would never have had the kind of life I have lived here." And I thought that was a very good thing to realize. He did appreciate it. So he had no desire to go back. He loved America, and that was it.

MS. DEMAREST: And, what I don't understand is, when you see all these parades in New York, why? There's Irish and all. I said even if the Dutch had a parade, I would never go. I would never go and parade. I said, "Well, if the country wasn't good enough to live in, why should we--"

MS. DAVIDSON: Oh, that's--don't bring that up.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: That's your heritage. I think you have a right to be proud of your heritage.

MS. DEMAREST: No, I can't see it, I'm sorry. When you're in this country, you're an American. That's how I feel about it.

MS. DAVIDSON: Like I said in your letter, that the children--the grandchildren--they certainly appreciate their heritage. And they all bought the book, too, the book called Liberty, and they show it to their friends, and they're very proud of it.

MS. VERHOV: Oh, my son, too. He said, "Of course, mother, I have the book." He said, "I was told about it at work." I said, "How did they know you--your mother came from Holland?" You know, "I told them, what do you think!" They're proud of it, so I'm glad they are.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: My son thinks it's quite a thing, too, and his mother was born in this country. And he said, "That really is unusual, to have a family of that many, born in another country." So I'm Dutch too.

MS. DALLETTE: Tell me about citizenship.

MS. VERHOV: Oh, I had quite an experience. You see, my dad too his papers very quickly. And, it was just as I was going to be twenty-one, the same year. So he omitted my name from the paper, because he thought I was twenty-one. So, I wanted to go to Canada, and my son lived near there, and he said, "Ma, you better get your papers, because you may have difficulty--" not going in, but coming back.

MS. DEMAREST: Yeah, very strict.

MS. VERHOV: So, I went for my papers to Newark. There were so many discrepancies, the man said, "I can't give you your papers." To begin with, my wedding certificate, the minister had erased the one name and put in the wrong name. He erased it and put in my husband's name. And then, on some other paper, they had done something different. And so, they wouldn't give me my papers. I said, "I have voted for twenty years already. So you're not going to give me my papers?" Because, see, my husband was a citizen. And so, I could vote. So, anyway, there was a little old man sitting there, and he said, "What seems to be the difficulty?" So I told him about it, and he said, "I'll give you your papers." So that's how I got my citizen papers. Yeah, it was so unusual.

MS. DAVIDSON: We didn't need ours, because we were all--became citizens through our father's naturalization.

MS. VERHOV: The date was--see, in October, I was twenty-one, and he got the papers in July. So I wasn't quite twenty-one.

MS. DALLETTE: Was it an important event, for him to become a citizen?

MS. VERHOV: Oh yes, oh sure, all the Holland people are anxious to become American citizens as quickly as they can, yeah.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: I always said my father was more American than a lot of Americans. Because he was so proud--I think it was because he knew the advantages the country had given him, that he wouldn't have had.

MS. DALLETTE: So they never had regrets about making that big--

MS. VERHOV: Oh, never, never. No.

MS. DAVIDSON: I often wondered, what would have become if we had stayed in Holland. You often wonder, you know. We probably would have gone to the city, and become something--I don't know what we would do there. Go to school, or something, I guess.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: I don't think there would have been too many opportunities for you to marry well, in that little village. Do

you?

MS. DAVIDSON: No.

MS. DEMAREST: No.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: I think that alone was--

MS. VERHOV: I probably--I didn't have a boyfriend yet. I was only ten!

MS. DALLETTE: Did you marry a Dutch man?

MS. VERHOV: Well, his grandparents were Dutch. His mother could speak a little Dutch, but not too much, and he couldn't at all. But, they had a Dutch name.

MS. DAVIDSON: I married a Demarest, in Hasbrouck Heights, and he had lived there all his life. He was a twin, identical twin, to his brother.

MS. DALLETTE: Did he have a Dutch background?

MS. DAVIDSON: No, they weren't Dutch. I don't think so. No, no, the Demarests, they settled in this country although they were--with the Huguenots, in the 1600s. And, the little house, the little house that they built in Hackensack is still there, from 1600s--eighty, I think. And the house still stands. She married [. . .]

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: Ah, yes, my husband was not Dutch, any way, at all. No, his heritage was English and Scotch.

MS. DALLETTE: You carrying on any of the Dutch recipes now? Will you pass those along to your grandchildren, who are now interested in your heritage?

MS. VERHOV: Well, not too much, really, because mother was just a plain cook. I mean, potatoes and stews and soups and things like that, you know, a large family. No, not that much.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: I think they like the American cooking better.

MS. DEMAREST: I do.

MS. DAVIDSON: Yes, I do.

MS. DALLETTE: Okay, I think I've asked you everything I need to, unless there's anything at all you'd like to add.

MS. VERHOV: No. We're very happy in this country and that's about all. I mean, when I went back I was very glad to get back here again. So, I'll never go back again, that I know. We still have family there, cousins. And we do--you just got a letter from them yesterday.

MS. DAVIDSON: We Correspond, right.

MS. DEMAREST: And they come here. They love America.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: They'll never be transplanted. They like it in Holland.

MS. DEMAREST: Well, they have a business and they made out very well.

[UNIDENTIFIED VOICE]: They were a later generation, too.

MS. DALLETTE: Okay, thank you very, very much for telling me the story.

MS. VERHOV: I hope you can use some of it.

MS. DALLETTE: I'm sure we can.

MS. VERHOV: Some of it is nonsense, but anyway.

MS. DALLETTE: We're looking at a picture here of the whole Glarem family.

MS. DAVIDSON: This is the oldest brother, [Marinas], Daniel, Jacob, this is my oldest sister Marie, this is Jackie, Frank, he's exactly one year older than I believe--should be standing here. This is Paula, Joe, Minnie, Johnnie, Herbert. Now, Johnnie is still living, and then Joe, and Minnie's gone. Paula isn't here. But you never remember all those names anyway.

MS. DALLETTE: And the next family--

MS. DAVIDSON: Can you tell where I am?

MS. DALLETTE: And the next family portrait--includes--  
That's the end of interview number 199 and it's 12:15.