<u>NPS-67</u>
MARIA JACOBSON BROWN
BIRTH DATE: 1941
INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 18, 1974
RUNNING TIME:
INTERVIEWER: MARGO NASH
RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: UNKNOWN
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: CHARLENE KEYLOR, 11/1978
CHICK LEMONICK, 7/1996
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

THE NETHERLANDS, 1968
AGE 27

PASSAGE: BY AIRPLANE
AIRPORT: ROTTERDAM
RESIDENCES:

- **HOLLAND: THE HAGUE; ROTTERDAM**
- **FRANCE: PARIS**
- **US:**

NASH: Today is July 18th, 1974. I am speaking with Mrs. Maria Jacobson Brown. Mrs. Brown came to the United States in---1

BROWN: 1968.

NASH: 1968.

BROWN: You -- you have my name. I came here in 1968 from Rotterdam. Actually, I was born in The Hague in 1941 and do remember little from -- of the first years, which is obvi-- obviously were the war years. The only thing I do remember in The Hague was that the English made a mistake in March1945 and bombed our part of town, which they didn't intend to do. And I do

remember sitting under the stairway and hearing the bombs fall and having my mother very upset about what was going on. We came out of it with our lives and our street was the only street that stood. The rest of the part of town was all bombed and gone. So the first couple of years we used to play as kids in the big city in an enormous area of ruins that were broken down and torn down, which was kind of great for us to run around in. The area now is all built up. I've been back and seen it. It's all apartment buildings and schools and so forth.

When I was fifteen we moved to Rotterdam because my father was transferred and worked in big port of Rotterdam and so in the middle of high school I had to switch back to another school. And after grade school I went to what's called a gymnasium, which is the French lycée classic, with German and French and English next to Dutch --- and also Latin and Greek for six years. So, after our fin-- my final exam, I said to my parents, "Well, wait a minute now. You know. You, Dad, you have traveled all over the world for about fifteen years and you have told us about all these foreign countries and for six years I have been slaving in school to learn all the languages and learn of -- about ancient history and so forth. I want to see something of the people in those countries." And he said, "Well, that's fine with me, but you'll have to get yourself a job or a diploma first."

So I became a registered nurse and then moved to Paris, where I lived for a year, went to the Sorbonne, got my degree there, and did baby sitting. And after that I went back for six months to home, worked as a nurse, and made up my mind if I wanted to go to England or the United States. And finally, I did get a job offer from both Houston, Texas, and Boston, Massachusetts, and both cities' names didn't mean anything to me really. America was something that my father told me about. He was there in the Roaring 20s, and Toots Shor and all that stuff he remembered. But on the advice of a doctor in the hospital who had been in the United States, I decided on

Boston because she told me that it was the most European city and assimilating would be the easiest in Boston.

So when I arrived in '68, I went to Newton, and I remember the day I arrived. It was the middle of January. It was awfully cold. The people who were supposed to pick me up weren't there and so after an hour of trying to call them and the phone constantly being busy, I took a cab and just told them Newton, having no idea where Newton was, knowing that it was somewhere near Boston. And I remember driving on the highways, the Mass. Pike. It just seemed endless. It's --from the airport in Boston to Newton is from Rotterdam to The Hague, which is two different big cities in Holland. So I was just wondering where the cab driver was taking me and all prepared to jump out of the cab, you know, if he was going to go somewhere where I didn't want to go. When I arrived, the family I was going to live with, the lady opened the door, and she was all upset because she understood, and it was, of course, the time I didn't speak my English so fluently, that I would arrive at twelve o'clock at night instead of twelve noon. So she wasn't there, had taken the phone off the hook and had taken a snooze because she knew she would be up late that night.

But after everything worked fine. I --- the kids in the family ranged from four to eight. There were three of them, were very, very helpful. My English was okay to get along, but there were a lot of words I pronounced the wrong way and then they would take me in the corner and say, "Well. You know, I know you not born here, but you really pronounce it the wrong way and can we teach you how to pronounce it?" And then, so I learned a lot and decided that I wanted to see more of the American way of life than just being in a family. They were very, very nice and took me along on all their trips and so forth. So I volunteered for six months in Boston City Hospital, which was quite an experience.

NASH: What sort of things happened to you? What did you see there?

BROWN: Well, it was, to me it was utterly shocking, being a European nurse -- that when I applied and said I wanted to be a volunteer and they asked me my background. And I said, "Well, I'm a registered nurse in the Netherlands, but I'm not registered here." But they immediately assumed that I knew everything and stuck me on a big ward. The time I worked there was the time that Boston City had lots of problems with licensing and being recognized and so forth. And the buildings were very old, which has been changed since then. There was this enormous ward of twenty-four old, senile men, most of them who had all kinds of urinary problems and heart attacks and there were pacemakers going and I didn't know the first thing, where things were and so forth. The head nurse came over and said, "Well, you're a nurse, right?" I said, "Yes, but not here. I'm a volunteer. I'm not licensed here." And she said, "That doesn't matter. Would you mind washing that gentleman?" I said, "Oh, sure. No, that's no big thing." So I did and she kind of looks at me, what I was doing, out of the corner of her eye and then she says, "Okay, I see that you -- you'll be all right so why don't you do the whole row," which was fine. But then at twelve-thirty, it was lunchtime, and I looked around and I was all alone in this big ward with three pacemakers going. I was really scared stiff because I knew if something went wrong and the alarm on one of the pacemakers went off you had to do something within the next two minutes and there was just nobody around and I didn't know my way around.

But everything went all right. I came out of there alive. It was nice because it was an introduction to American hospital life without really being responsible for what you were doing and the nurses were extremely kind. I was rather upset because the bathrooms were very dirty, so one afternoon I had nothing to do, I grabbed a bucket and started washing the walls. The housekeeping staff was all alarmed and upset because I was doing that and

it was their job and I had absolutely no ideas about unions and all that stuff and I couldn't really do that. So I was told very nicely to lay off and not do that. It was shocking because even though I trained in an old hospital in Holland, it was spic and span clean. And as a nurse, you do start on the wards right away with just scrubbing beds and nightstands and bathrooms and all that stuff. So it was quite an experience and I laughed a lot.

I tried to get my registration but in Boston it's very difficult. They gave me all kinds of hassles and so I just decided this is not for me. And at the same time I decided that having a gymnasium diploma, I should try to see what I would do in an American college. After a year, I thought I spoke the language well enough to follow courses, and Northeastern University has a very good adult education program. So I applied and went back for two courses -- English and Western Civilization, I think -- which I really knew from A to Z. But just to see what I would do. I remember the first night in class our teacher, a very nice lady, gave everybody grammar tests to see what we knew about grammar, and with Latin and French and English and German as a background, it was absolutely no problem for me. I was the only foreigner in the class. The rest were all Americans. And when the tests came back I was the only one with a seventy-eight and everybody else had fifty or lower. And then I told the teacher, "My God, I'm really surprised because I am a foreigner." She kind of looked at me and said, "You've got to be kidding." It was -- that was really fun then.

From there, after the three months at school, it was my time to go home. My visa was up. And on the way home, I met a doctor whom I met a party. This is really a hilarious story. And he says, "Hi, how are you?" I said, "Fine." He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I'm on my way to the Pan Am office. I am changing my ticket. I am going home." And he said, "Oh no, you're not." And he grabbed me and said, "Come on, come on." So I got in his car and he drove me to a very nice looking house. He went inside, he

came back ten minutes later and he said, "Okay, Monday-- Monday morning at eleven o'clock be here, talk to the administrator." This is a nursing home and they are looking for a director of nurses. So I said, "You have got to be kidding." And he said, "No." I went for the interview and the director said, "Okay, you're it." And I said, "Now wait a minute. What, what, what?" And he said, "You are director of nurses." And I said, "Well, wait, hold it, hold it. This is a forty-bed nursing home and I know nothing about geriatrics. My specialty is maternity." He said, "You'll make it, you'll make it." He has been very supportive and I ended up working two years as a director of nurses in the nursing home.

I talked with the government and by law I was allowed to be the director of nurses in that particular kind of nursing home. No problems at all and that was one of the reasons why I tried to get my registration -- knowing if I wanted to switch to another type of nursing home, like an extended care facility, I needed my diploma. But it didn't work out and I --in the meantime -- I nearly finished my hospital administration degree in B.S. So I finished that and then left the nursing home and switched and worked for Multiple Sclerosis. Then I met an American man and got married to an American, so even though I am still a resident alien, I feel very Americanized, which is, I guess mostly due to my background, the way I was brought up with a father who had traveled an awful lot before his marriage and felt that it didn't matter where you were born, it was much more important what kind of person you were, And from the time we were very young we always had visitors from foreign countries who did speak English or German or French, and so we were used to know -- knowing that there were other people than the Dutch around. And living in Rotterdam, of course, helped a lot. We saw an awful lot of foreigners. That, I think, plus the year in Paris, which is still Europe even though the language and the culture is completely different than the Dutch, helped me an awful lot in assimilating into American life, so much so that my mother accuses me of being more American than being Dutch at this

point.

NASH: What do-- do you think you could say what are some outstanding characteristics of Dutch people?

BROWN: I don't think there are any outstanding characteristics. The one thing that is different, and I find it every time I go back, which is just about every two years, is that the pace of life is slower and life is easier. It's very hard to express to my family what it means to live in the United States and have a job like the jobs I have held, which is constant pressure. Okay, people in Holland work very hard and when I was a nurse there were times I was exhausted, but never as exhausted both physically and mentally as I am sometimes here. And you cannot tell that to a person if you don't live in the same situation. I guess the Dutch are more--there is a Dutch word that doesn't translate itself, which is *gemoedelijk*. It's more easy-going. It's more come into my house and have a cup of tea and sit down and tell us about yourself. It's more friendly, more trusting, I think. Though Dutch by nature are awful complainers, they always complain about everything, most of all about the government, I guess. We do that here too, but they complain an awful lot. The country is cleaner. I guess that most Americans say the country is very clean. I think, yes, it is. It is very clean even though that's changing right now, too. My mother still washes her windows on the outside every week with a big bucket of water and a sponge and how do you call that--it's a skin.

NASH: Chamois?

BROWN: Yes, *chamois* is the French word for it. She does that and then when she has finished the windows and the woodwork around the windows, she empties the bucket on the sidewalk and has a big broom and brushes the sidewalk off and the front steps of -- of -- and the door. She was utterly

shocked when she came to visit me in Boston and said, "When do you wash your windows?" And I said, "Well, in the spring once and in the fall because then we change from screens to storm windows and vice versa. And that's the time I wash the outside because it's [not understood] times. You keep pushing these things up and down." She was very shocked about that, but she got used to it.

Of course, here in New York we don't have storm windows so I don't have to worry about that. She does much more housework too than I do still. She lives alone and, of course, I'm married now, but once a week I go through the house. Back home you do that every day. Even the friends I have who are married and working do much more housework than I do. The supermarkets, if there are any, and they are coming more and more, but most stores close at six o'clock so it's very hard for a working person to shop at night. Like here at nine o'clock at night if I feel like going to the supermarket, I go shop for the week. In Boston we had a car, so real American, you loaded everything in the car and went home. Back home you have to go couple of times a week unless you have a car and can shop for the week on a Saturday, which is a crowded day.

I guess another difference is that rents here are much higher than they are back home. The taxes at home are higher than they are here, even though you get more back, you know, national health insurance and safe streets and all that stuff, no slums. That was one of the things my husband was extremely amazed about. Slums, as we know them in New York City and in Boston, I'm sure they are there too, don't exist in Holland, no matter where we went. They just weren't there. And when I -- when we came home together, after we were married, and I said, "Oh, mom, it's ten o'clock. I'll take the dog around the block for a walk." He just about went through the ceiling and said, "Oh, no you don't. Not by yourself." And I said, "Well, everybody does that here." And so I did and he walked with me and was

amazed to see the other people with their dogs walking and saying good evening and nobody even worrying about being attacked or mugged or whatever.

I guess my sister, I have a sister and a brother that are younger, both professional people, they drive cars now, which is the little Citroen, the ugly ducklings as they call them, which is a luxury still. Cars are very expensive. I -- I drove a Chevrolet here which is really, Jesus, Maria, is really doing well, she's driving a Chevrolet, kind of deal. Not knowing that it's less expensive for us here to drive a car than it's there. But they earn much less. I am not in the higher income brackets here, but I earn as much as my cousin does who is an internist. The rents are lower, the food is the same price, so what they save on one they are spending on the other and I guess they are living well. Not as luxurious. It's still to me luxurious having washing machines downstairs in the apartment building or having a laundromat where you can just rush in twenty-four hours a day. And the big icebox or Frigidaire or refrigerator with the freezer compartment, and really big ones. My mother has a small one which to her is really something. All those things are still to them a luxury and to me still too.

I feel that the way we live is better in terms of having things. It's not better in terms of human things. I guess European life, as I have seen it, again two years ago in Holland, is -- as a human being, it's -- it's better. One cares more still about one another, without being nosey, and that is an interesting phenomenon because it's not disappearing. That part is not disappearing. There are more cars, more refrigerators, more stereos, more televisions, more telephones and all that, but the caring for one another just is not disappearing, which is very nice. The feeling that you can give your neighbor the key when you are gone and they won't rob your house blind, even though you know them -- don't know them so well. The visiting back and forth, the family ties, which certainly exists a lot. The country is smaller, don't forget.

You know, two hours east, west and you are out of the country. And three hours north, south and you are out of the country.

The interesting thing in Holland though, is that even though it is extremely small, it has an enormous amount of people, thirteen and a half million by the last count. And I was told it is the size of Rhode Island, which is certainly a small state in the United States. I -- I don't know how to express it. It's, how do I say this--there are a lot of people, but it's still--I really don't know how to say it. It's smaller without being confining, I think, and it's very hard to tell people at home that if you drive six days from Boston to California, you are still in the United States, with the same laws and the same language, even though there are dialects in it. The funny thing though is that even though Holland is very small, people from the south have a hard time understanding people from the north. My father came from the southwest, which has a totally different dialect, much more like Flemish than from the north.

And, of course, there is high Dutch that everybody speaks, but even in those small coun-- small country when you meet people you can usually place them as to the area where they were born. In the south they use a very soft "G," more like a *jsha* than a *kha* like they do in high Dutch. And in the north they--in Dutch you pronounce every word as it is written phonetically. Just about the phonetic -- phonetic language, the way it's written too. But in the north, if a word ends on "EN" it is pronounced "SEN." They drop the "E" and kind of swallow the "N" and that kind of characteristic never goes away even though they move to the cities and, so to speak, learn high Dutch. So that's the way you place people as to where they come from. And, of course, Amsterdam has a slang all it's own, which you always pick up no matter where you go. The costumes are disappearing, unfortunately. I guess Volendam and Maarken are really for the tourists now. It's extremely expensive. Where my father comes from, even though he was in they city, the farmers used to wear costumes with the *floddens* [sic][baggy trousers].

'53 a lot of stuff just disappeared and can't be replaced, but I have spoken to several farmers' wives who were still wearing costumes and the big caps that they wear. The lace caps are made in Belgium. A lot of the stuff is smuggled because it's so expensive. One cap costs them about five hundred dollars. And they usually have four or five or six because you have to have one for daily work, one for Sundays, one to go to church, one for weddings, one for when you are mourning. It's all different, the pattern is different. Sometimes the form of the cap is different. The gold they wear with it is enormously expensive. The rich farmers' wives wear necklaces, five strings of necklaces of coral, the red coral all put together with a golden clasp. One necklace is eight hundred dollars. And you have to have a different one for when you are in mourning. So the younger kids just don't want to spend the money anymore. And usually in the rich families it was when you got married as a girl you got a complete outfit -- the cap, all the jewelry that goes with it, the long dress, the skirts, the aprons. It would come to thirty-five hundred dollars per outfit and nobody can really afford this anymore. So that's why it's disappearing.

END SIDE A BEGIN SIDE B

NASH: I can't understand how they could ever afford it.

BROWN: It's given from mother to daughter. Most of -- even the material, you know, the old times they always said they made it better. My mother, for instance, still uses a beautiful linen damask tablecloth for high holidays. That's my grandmother's that she got when she got married, which was in 1898 or something. And it has survived all the washings and starchings ever since. And it's still in beautiful slate-- state. There is not a little thing that really you can say, well, it's getting thin there or it has to be fixed there, with the twelve big napkins, you know, the big ones. I guess our family, from way back

when, is very mixed. Holland is the crossroad of a lot of people, starting with the old Romans that came in the early one hundred, two hundred, and especially Tacitus, one of the Roman writers we studied in school. The only thing he says about the Netherlands is that beyond the big rivers that -- which border Belgium, which was I guess, he talked about the Rhine, there were people in animal hides that drank out of skulls and gambled for their wives. That's all he says about it though they had a fort there and they have found a fort near Leiden, which is the place of the oldest university in Holland.

And they're finding more and more right now because they are diking in the land and they do find old settlements. But after that came the French Huguenots out of France, the Jews out of Spain. Later, I guess this century, the Hungarians after the '56 Hungarian uprising. And so I guess my family, because my father had black eyes and -- black hair and blue eyes, which is not Dutch. Blonde and blue eyes is more like it. My uncle had just dark blonde hair and blue eyes. There must have been an awful lot of intermingling, and Flushing, where he was born, has been a seaport for a long, long time, so I guess there is a lot of foreign blood even in my background. And my grandmother's name, I don't believe it, but she was very proud of it, was Stuart and she says, she claims that she descends from the family of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, so perhaps. I know my grandfather had an English mother so the language, evening -- when my father was young, in his family was English because of his great-grandmother and French because his mother went to French finishing school and, of course, in the old times, in the early 1900s, even in Holland one spoke French with one's friends and Dutch with the peasants and the laborers.

So she used to speak French to us too. I remember that. I remember very little of her, but she used to speak French a lot. And they were kind of

wealthy, so there is a lot of antique things in our family from way back when, which a lot of it has been lost. My aunt, who got part of her dowry in antiques, was for five years in a Japanese prison camp in Indonesia, so all that stuff was lost. It just disappeared when she came back. But some of it I still have and it's--I guess for the Dutch to drive around the country and find the church in Veere, for instance, which is a -- was a very prosperous port in 1400-1500 with the wool from Flanders going out, the woolen cloth from Flanders going out, and the wool from England coming in. I forgot what I was going to say.

All right, I remember -- I remember -- remember. Because I was back again and it struck me the same way it did. When you go to that part of the country, it's my favorite part, all or anything else, that I have to talk about it. When you drive up to Veere, from a distance it looks like it must have looked in 1400. Every town has its own church and every spire on a church is different. So one recognizes the towns from a distance by its silhouette of the church spire. And the one in Veere is a very squat Roman church with a kind of square tower, and the history of the church goes back to 1200 when it was built and they had, as a matter of fact, in those times they had women's lib in Holland because the owner of all the lands was Jacoba of Baer, Bavaria now, who owned an awful lot of land, who had four husbands and survived them all, owned all that, owned the Port of Veere, and I'm sure helped build the church.

The town hall -- The old town hall is renaissance, pure renaissance, and when you look at it and you remember that Napoleon was there and made four stories inside the church to make it a field hospital for his troops. And that when you visit the town hall, to the right of the entrance the windows are low so when you stand on the street you can look in. That's where they had the witch trials in the old times, or regular trials, and so the populous who weren't invited in, but they could hang in front of the window and see what

was going on inside. The brand irons are still there and all that stuff. One of the funniest things, I guess, was that when my grandmother died, and she was eighty years old, my father came home with a big box of all kinds of papers. He really could not look through it at that point. Then when he had a free weekend he went through and he found bonds floated by the city of Veere in 1810 and he was just -- didn't, hadn't the foggiest notion, first of all, how they got into my grandmother's possession. Number two, what in heaven's name they were all about. So he asked me to go down to Veere and find out.

And I walked into town hall and said, "Well, can you tell me something about this?" And the man behind the counter got all excited. He was just about jumping up and down, and he said, "What's your name, what's your name?" And I told him, "Jacoba." He said, "Oh, my God, turn around, turn around. See that big painting there. You see all those coat of arms? In the right lower side is your grandfather's or your great-grandfather's, because he was mayor and they put all the coats of arms for all the mayors on this big painting and it's hanging in town hall." I said, "Oh, well, that's nice. But what about these papers?" And he said, "Well, when Napoleon came to Holland he gar-- garrisoned soldiers in every town and the town was charged with maintaining the soldiers. Food, uniforms, the whole bit. Veere was very poor at that time. It was at the end of a long decline, ever since 1400. They couldn't do it, so the city floated a bond among its citizens and somewhere way back in my family somebody bought about a hundred guilders worth. The face value was ten guilders, bought ten bonds.

And Veere, right after the Second World War decided to pay off old debts and they were paying off the bonds which were in 1810, ten guilders. I'm sure they were worth many, many, many times over at that point, but they paid off face value and they had a lottery system. Every year they drew some numbers. The man looked it up in the books and I got thirty guilders

and I gave him three bonds and took the rest home and gave them back to my mother. Since they had our address then, every year they notified which numbers had been picked and last year the last one was paid off, which is absolutely funny to realize that in 1810 one of my forbears bought some bonds because Napoleon was in the country. And I ended up going back and getting ten dollars for every bond that was picked. That was really fun. Of, course, the southeast is much different. It's very, I guess, much more German. It has a different tribe of people from way back when living there. It was part of Belgium for the longest time. Luxembourg was part of Holland for the longest time. All of that. There's a lot left in Holland, I think.

I remember the Dutch are very history minded. They are very proud of their history. I'm sure like the Americans are. The bicentennial starts now already. There are big things going on two years from now. But the Dutch, right there where they live have the reminders of their past and I'm sure sometimes they falsely pride themselves of the past -- the Golden Age of Rembrandt and the East Indies Company and the Dutch ruled the seas, and all that. But it does something to you. For instance, in Rotterdam, we happened to live a half a block away from the church and the Port of Delftshaven where the pilgrim fathers left in the Speedwell. The church is still there, the bible they used the last Thanksgiving, whatever, service I guess, before they left, is there. The last sermon is written down and is in a little museum. The church is still in good repair. It's still used. And when my mother came I took her to Plymouth Rock and said, "Well, Ma, here they landed. Here is Plymouth Village, is the other end."

It's -- Amsterdam, of course, is world famous for its old things. But outside those big cities there's a lot of other things too that tourists never go to and, of course, we know because my father was very proud of his part of the country and told us all about its history and the rest of the country is very proud of their parts. So when you go visit, people really take the time to

explain and give little details of what happened there. And I guess other than the war, of which I have very little; I remember very little, it was just so long ago. I remember a very happy childhood with my mother always there because obviously, according to Dutch tradition, the wife stays home. Going to the beach in the summer for three weeks, having a cottage after '48. Since in '45 there was nothing. I wore wooden shoes, not because I -- it was nec-- it was tradition, but because it was absolutely necessary. There were no shoes for the kids and my father had enough contacts on the farms to come home with wooden shoes which keep your feet really nice and dry. Only in the snow, the snow sticks underneath so every hundred meters you have to stop and get the snow off the bottom and then you can keep walking again.

On the beach, the blonde beaches of Holland, which are just gorgeous, just absolutely fantastic, playing there in the summer, knowing the whole fishing village. Everybody knew because every family that ever rented a cottage usually came back. So it was like old home week. Everybody says, "Oh, how are you, what did you do this year, what happened? Oh, you are getting married, this one graduated, and so forth." The lifeguards were always the same. They knew always who we were --we went to the beach all by ourse-- by ourselves. I guess I was ten, my sister was seven or eight and my brother was four or five and we were perfectly safe there because the lifeguard knew my parents weren't there and he used to -- I'm sure he kept an extra eye out, but we never noticed. We just were there, safe as safe can be. And school, fun I guess. It was never a chore because it was expected of you and everybody went to school. From way back when you have to go to school until you were sixteen, so everybody was in some school. Perhaps not always the gymnasium, but the vocational or whatever.

After grade school one just went to school again. And the Dutch things about, of course, two days of Christmas instead of one. First day is family

affair, second day everybody goes visiting. Two days of Easter. And then they have another after Eas--, six weeks after Easter. I guess they call it Good Sunday in English, which is two days again. Sunday and Monday. Not that much celebrated, but it's a day off, helps a lot. Easter is, not the Easter eggs so much, it's the chocolate eggs usually. And, of course, the Nicklaus the fifth of December. It is just fantastic. It's -- Saint Nicholas gave rise to Santa Claus after the Dutch kind of disappeared out of New Amsterdam, is the firth of December, which amazes a lot of Americans very much. It's a holiday for the kids. You don't get big presents. At Christmas you get no presents at all. Christmas is strictly a religious holiday. Either the fourth of December evening of the fifth of December evening, when it gets dark, the doorbell rings and then mother or father goes to the door, opens the door and comes back with a bag of presents. They are all wrapped and you say, "Well, who was at the door?" "I don't know. It must have been Santa Claus." And he has a black helper. So usually the black helper brings the heavy stuff. And Santa Claus rides over the roofs with his white horse. So when you are kids, about two weeks before the fifth or fourth of December you sing songs at the chimney next to the--we had those, not the Franklin stove, but stoves to heat the houses with--you put your empty shoe there with a piece of carrot or a sugar cube or something for the horse, and I'm sure my parents took it away at night and put the little chocolate thing in there.

But in the morning it was gone and so the horse had eaten it and Santa Claus must have been listening in the chimney if we were good kids. You know. In those two weeks either one of the parents has a bag of small candies and when we are all busy and don't know what is going on, usually when my mother was washing the dishes. I found out later on she used to put the black glove on and just throw behind the door, throw all of the candies all over the floor. And your natural reaction, being a kid, is to go scramble for the candies and later on wonder who in hell threw them. And

then we ran to the kitchen and said, "Mom, who was that?" She said, "I don't know. I didn't see anything. It must have been Black Peter who threw the candies." It was really fun. It is still kept up, that tradition, in the big cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Santa Claus arrives from Spain, where he lives during the rest of the year, in a boat. He is still received by the mayor and gets the keys to the city and there is a big parade and all that. And all the mothers with the kids are standing there and he's on this white horse and all the Black Peters are running around. Lately, Santa Claus comes by helicopter in a small town so you just kind of--but he does.

And those are the traditionally Dutch holidays, really. Saint Nicholas is the only one that sticks out in my mind as being completely different from the United States where Santa Claus is a reindeer -- in a sleigh with reindeers and Christmas time and gifts and so forth. Christmas time, as I remember it, was church in the morning, dinner at home at night. And when we grew up we got a drink at home. And the second day, one went visiting or either people came to visit you, family usually or good friends. We had a nice time together, that's all--where you went to. Of course, the soccer ball games. They lost again last week, it's too bad. That's another national pastime, soccer ball. Even for us because the whole family is so interested that you automatically either watch the television, which is a new thing. When I was younger, we used to pay a quarter and sit in the bleachers and watch the local team play some other local team and yell and scream and say, "[not understood]," or whatever it was, "Off side," feeling very important about knowing all these terms in English and all that stuff. It was really, it was kind of nice. I'm sure it's changing.

Holland is becoming very Americanized too. The pressures are building up too, but not by far as they are here. There they have a racial problem now, which we never had when we were younger, because of the people from southern Europe and North Africa coming in for the factories. And now with

the economic situation things are really changing too. Nursing training is completely different than here. Like I went through, you really do practice together with school. It's tough, you have to live in the hospital, do all kinds of different shifts. But looking back I got a fantastic amount of experience that the American nurses never get and did a lot of things that I'm sure are helping me now one way or the other. For instance, I worked in--which is not a regular assignment, it was a special assignment--for six months I worked in a center that was strictly for suicides and cardiac arrests, no matter what the cause. So there was always something going on. All kinds of funny things, all kinds of tragic things. Kids eating things and dying even though the whole staff was trying their damndest to keep them from doing that. People ending up alive but a vegetable and all that because they were found too late and all that stuff.

But I met a lady there who was totally paralyzed because of polio. But also totally independent. Absolutely, totally independent person and with her I talked an awful lot. I still go visit her. She is still in the hospital. I still go visit her every time I go back, and what she told me and what we discussed helped me with multiple sclerosis an awful lot. Helps me here for what I am doing now. So I guess your background somewhere does show up in what you are doing later on. Do you want to know anything more? (laughs) I talk too much.

NASH: (laughs) Oh, it's wonderful. Thank you very much.

END OF TAPE