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## Hidden Letters

Documenting the Destruction of Dutch Jewry

November 06, 2013

1 hour, 18 minutes, 16 seconds

Speakers: Deborah Slier-Shine and Ian Shine

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Hidden Letters: Documenting the Destruction of Dutch Jewry (2013)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Time	Transcription
00:00	[The Library UC San Diego]
00:04	[Holocaust Living History Workshop (HLHW) / Fall 2013 Series / Journeys, Memories, Echoes.]
00:09	[Sponsored by The UC San Diego Library and UC San Diego Judaic Studies Program]
00:15	[November 6, 2013 / Hidden Letters: "Documenting the Destruction of Dutch Jewry"]
00:05	<p>Brian Schottlaender: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Brian Schottlaender. I'm the University Librarian here at UC San Diego. I'm absolutely delighted to welcome so many of you to this evening's Holocaust Living History Workshop. Um, on Monday evening I have the privilege of introducing, um, a speaker at the Jewish book fair at the JCC [Jewish Community Center] um, and it was my privilege to do that because for the last six years now, um, the Library has been partnering with the Judaic Studies Program here on campus, um, in the delivery of this Holocaust Living History Workshop. There are only a handful of universities in this camp, uh, in this country who have permission to provide full licensed access to the Shoah Visual History Archive from USC [University of Southern California] and we are one of those campuses. Um, my colleague and partner in crime on this initiative is, uh, Deborah Hertz. Um, she is actually not able to be with us this evening, but it is really Deborah, working with Susanne Hillman - whom I, I will turn the mic over to momentarily - um, who have who have taken that licensed content and really turned it into a living thing, as manifest in these workshops. Nothing is more gratifying to us than seeing so many of you, from the community, join us and participate, because it makes it all worth it. So thank you all very much.</p>
02:02	<p>Susanne Hillman: Thank you. I am Susanne Hillman. I'm delighted, I'm absolutely delighted to see so many of you. When I took over this position as program coordinator a few years ago, there really were a lot of empty chairs and in the meantime, we've been able to grow and to expand our visibility thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, Judaic Studies, and the Library, and select community members. We are very grateful for them to make this happen. I am, as the program coordinator, I am on campus, available to, um, help you explore the visual history archive. It's a wonderful resource and, uh, about 52,000 stories like the one - different but similar in a sense - to the one you'll hear tonight, are in that unique database. So if you're interested in learning more about this, uh, you can contact me. And now, I would like to, um, introduce, uh, where are you Dr. David Slier? He's a Fellow of the American Academy of Traumatic Stress. He's, uh, Deborah's - one of the speaker's - cousins, and he's one of our most loyal attendees who has</p>

supported this program for many years already. He has been at almost every single one of our events. So please help me welcome David, Dr. David Slier.

- 3:32 Dr. David Slier: Thank you, uh, very much. And, uh, welcome. I assume you can hear me pretty well. Okay, uh, so, uh, ladies and gentlemen, uh, welcome to the first west coast presentation of *Hidden Letters*, a Holocaust masterpiece that is being sponsored by the UC San Diego Library, and Judaic Studies Department. The Holocaust Living History Workshop Program is made possible through its generous donors and its program coordinator, Susanne Hillman. So, thank you very much. Among our guests, this evening are Dutch Holocaust survivors and Jewish Dutch resistance fighters. Some of them are on their way, some of them are in the room, and their families including Leo Roos and Hilda van Neck-Yoder, so thank you for your presence at this event. So, the Council General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Hugo von Meijenfeldt, was unable to attend this presentation, in letters has generously shared these words with us.
- 04:35 Dr. David Slier: Shortly after World War II, we took the wise decision to bring the German and Japanese communities back into civilization. At the same time, we decided never to forget the horror that this war brought over human mankind, especially the Jews. The Dutch have mixed feelings about their behavior. On the one hand, the Netherlands was seen as a safe haven for persecuted Jews over the ages and the years before World War II. We had two general strikes because of the deportation of the Jews. We hid and or saved a number. On the other hand, the Dutch police was quite cooperative with the Nazis. There were quite a lot of traitors and SS officers among the Dutch. We did not welcome the Jews returning from the camps very well. Therefore, it's important that the older and younger generations read and write about the Holocaust in order not to forget. This excellent book is a good example for all. So thank you Council General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Hugo von Meijenfeldt. See the slide, you see these two lovely people right here. I wanted to thank the San Diego Union-Tribune for this wonderful article. [applause]
- 06:07 Dr. David Slier: So our authors of *Hidden Letters*, as you may know, are Deborah Slier and Ian Shine. Istvan Deak, Seth Low Professor Emeritus of History, Columbia University writes that *Hidden Letters* constitutes one of the most valuable contemporary sources on Jewish life and on Dutch life in general during the War. In brief, like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, this is a masterpiece. David Barnell the Netherlands Institute of Documentation of War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies of the Netherlands, and authored the definitive edition of Anne Frank has voiced similar praise *Hidden Letters*. And Deborah Slier has worked as an editor for Penguin Books, Random House, and MacMillan. She is the founder and CEO of Star Bright Books and the author of several best-selling children's books. So we're fortunate to have her here in the Dr. Seuss room. Ian Shine received his medical degree from Cambridge University. He is a prolific author in the field of

genetics with several more books on the way. My dear cousin Deborah and dear friend Ian are with us today to present these inspiring stories of rescue that occurred in the Netherlands during the Holocaust and to tell us of those who were not rescued and of those who perished in camps like Westerbork, Vught, Auschwitz, and Sobibor, to tell us the history of the Slier family, and the collection of hidden letters written by Flip Slier, Deborah's first cousin.

07:39 Dr. David Slier: Because of the often heroic and compassionate effort to rescue Jewish children and others, often by Christians, many lives were saved. To more fully appreciate these heroic and compassionate stories of rescue, we must understand that many more were brutally, brutally murdered in camps like Sobibor. Jannetje J [Philipse] van Buren was 97 years old when she was sent from Westerbork [unclear] at the opening of Sobibor, the Dutch, on the second march in 1943. In Western Europe, and among all countries with Jewish populations, the Jews of the Netherlands suffered greatly. At least 72 percent are conservatively estimated to have perished, while the actual figure is more likely to be around 80 percent. Eighty percent. Among the Dutch children who were not rescued were many from the Slier family, who perished along with 30 percent of all Dutch Jewry at the Sobibor extermination camp. Shown here in an earlier photograph of five loving sisters, Sara and Rachel Slier were nine and ten years old when they perished at Sobibor on the 11th of June 1943. Their sisters Betje, who was 14, and Derika [Henderika], who was 13, Liesje, 8, and not shown their infant brother Philip, who was just a year old, all perished with their mother Johanna on the 2nd of July 1943. Their father Moses, uh, perished a few days later on the 9th of July 1943. They had lived at 295 Vrolikstraat, Amsterdam, just several doors from Flip's grandparents.

09:48 Dr. David Slier: At this same address 295 Vrolikstraat, living one floor from them was my father's uncle, Louis Slier, who perished at Sobibor on the 2nd of April, 1943. It had been just a few months earlier on the 9th of April 1943 that Philip, Flip, Slier, Deborah's cousin - who was 19 years old - and seven other Slier family members perished together at Sobibor. Among them perishing with Flip in the same gas chambers on this ashed April day were his aunt Catharina, uncle Joseph and cousins Henri, 14, and Elisabeth 13, and my father's aunt Margaretha and niece Aaltje, who was only eight days from her 17th birthday. There had been hundreds of Sliers in Amsterdam before the war but when Manus de Groot found the letters of Flip Slier in 1997 he looked through the Amsterdam phone book for Sliers, there were none. And so, it is with love of broken heart but an unbroken spirit that I, David Slier, introduce to you my beloved cousins Deborah and beloved friend, Ian, and in so doing may it be, may it be that in hearing these inspiring stories of rescue in the Netherlands and of the Slier family that perished and those who were rescued that we hear each voice.

- 11:46 Speaker 1: Forgive me, can you hold the microphone close? All of us in the outflow cannot hear at all. If that's possible, thank you.
- 12:02 Deborah Slier-Shine: I have to start with an aside if you'll excuse me. For those of you - can you hear me? For those of you who saw the Royal Wedding, if you remember when William and his bride walked out onto the balcony and she saw all the people - she said, wow. And this is what I feel like here. Thank you all for coming. In 19 - you need to be on the side - in 1997 Manus de Groot the - oh hang on, I've got to organize this for him, sorry, right. Okay, in 1997 the gentleman on the right, foreman in charge of the, of demolishing a house at 128 Vrolijk Street, the house where Flip Slier lived. We interviewed Manus, who's a lovely man, and he explained, I was standing on the third floor and as the crane lifted up the ceiling. Two bundles fell down. I took them home and discovered they contained 86 letters, postcards, and a telegram. They were written by an 18-year-old boy, Flip Slier, to his parents. He was in a forced labor camp in Holland in 1942.
- 14:05 Ian Shine: That's Flip in the center and behind him is his friend, and you can see the ditch, the ditches that they're digging, and the wheelbarrows in which they're carrying away the dirt.
- 14:19 Deborah Slier-Shine: Manus told us, as I read over them over two evenings I was much moved. I could feel the boy's fear increasing month by month. I did not know what to do with the letters. I looked in the Amsterdam phone book to find some Sliers but there were none; in 1942 they took a whole page.
- 14:48 Ian Shine: Give me a second, I'm just putting on the slides. But that's what the Molengoot work camp looked like. The Dutch, just to confuse one, don't know how to pronounce the g.
- 15:08 Deborah Slier-Shine: Manus eventually gave the letters to the Dutch Institute for War Documentation. The letters came to me eventually as I was the closest relative. Flip's father and my father were brothers.
- 15:30 Ian Shine: The gentleman in the middle is Deborah's father and that is, um, that's Johnny who is her nephew.
- 15:38 Deborah Slier-Shine: Yeah, who survived.
- 15:39 Ian Shine: That was taken in 1953.
- 15:42 Deborah Slier-Shine: My father had, had been an unemployed diamond polisher in 1922 and so he immigrated to South Africa where I grew up.
- 15:58 Ian Shine: That's the family tree. The only important things to see on that are the solid black circles represent people who died in the Holocaust, and those who survived have white circles. And you see, they're only, I think, you see there are

only two or three. All those on Flip's mother's side of the family - on your left-hand side - um, perished. On the right-hand side, you'll just see, I think, none survived of Deborah's father's siblings. And one generation further down, they're just two cousins who survived and their wives.

- 17:00 Deborah Slier-Shine: Oma and Opa [Betje Benjamins-Slier, Philip Slier], are you going to show? I knew my Dutch family. That, this were our mutual grandparents. I knew my Dutch family through letters, and postcards, and birthday greetings because my father kept up a strong correspondence with his family. I grew up with a large green photograph album - many of the pictures were very useful for this book - and during the war, my father posted a large map in Europe in the, of Europe in the kitchen where we daily followed the battle, especially when it reached Holland. In 1945, my father received notification from the Red Cross which had been [unclear] in the concentration camps. The notification let him know that his mother, all his siblings, their wives, and their children - all but two - did not survive the war. It was the only time I ever saw him weep and I heard him say, I can understand the Germans killing my brothers, but what harm could my mother an 86-year-old woman have done? I went to Europe when I was 21 and met Ian in Cambridge in 1953.
- 18:43 Ian Shine: Excuse me of interrupting. This is one of the cousins that survived. His name is Arthur and his wife there is Willy [Wilhelmina]. He's wearing a police uniform.
- 18:54 Deborah Slier-Shine: Which he joined after the war. They were both in hiding, hiding during the war. I met Ian in May 1953 and a week later I went to Holland to stay with our friend [unclear] in Amsterdam and while there I witnessed the marriage of another cousin, Nol.
- 19:20 Ian Shine: That's, Nol. This gentleman here in Canadian Army uniform, he spoke of German and Dutch, and English and so the Canadians hired him as a translator.
- 19:33 Deborah Slier-Shine: It was an unusual marriage as it took place in a prison where, where Nol was sitting. In hiding, during the war, he'd been taught to forge IDs and ration cards, a skill he found useful after the wa, when he got a little bit. I asked Marion van Binsbergen-Pritchard, a friend, a murderer, an international hockey player, and the daughter of a Dutch supreme court judge to translate Flip's letters into English, as she was fluent in Dutch, English, and Yiddish. Marion saved 150 Jewish children for which she received a Yad Vashem medal and a Raoul Wallenberg award. When I got the letters, Ian took some sabbatical from his medical research to help do the historical research. Believe me, I couldn't have done it without him and he, we've wanted to know the circumstances under which Flip and his family and friends had had lived during the war. And it wasn't until I got the letters that it occurred to me, I didn't know what happened because nobody talked about it. We found many people who had known Flip, and we obtained over

250 primary source documents that are presented in the book, unedited, stark but true. Alice van Keulen [Woudstra], can you? Alice van Keulen [Woudstra] was the Dutch editor who translated the documents for us. Sorry.

- 21:52 Ian Shine: May I just interrupt a second to say that we also, um, just now received another half a dozen invaluable documents, um, from a gentleman, um, called Bernard, um, Bernard Cohen who said he was the fifth inmate in Westerbork prison.
- 22:15 Deborah Slier-Shine: And was there during what? From 1939 to 1945. Alice van Keulen [Woudstra] was the Dutch editor who translated the original documents. Her father was sent to Mauthausen for not wearing his yellow star in his own office, in his matzah factory. Alice said the power of this book is not the horrors one can read about - they happened and should be remembered - but the people coming alive in the book, and they will not be forgotten anymore. Jack Polak, president of the US Anne Frank Society, he and his wife were both from Amsterdam and was sent to Buchenwald. He, he phoned me to say, this is the best Holocaust book I've ever read, and I've read them all.
- 23:34 Ian Shine: That is Truus Sant Flip's first girlfriend. His girlfriend in 1939 and 1940, who we had the great pleasure of meeting 70 years later in the Amsterdam Bos.
- 23:40 Deborah Slier-Shine: We, we had, uh, lunch with her and I asked her, in my bad Dutch, what was Flip like? And Truus no longer looked like that. And she put her arms around herself and she said, he was crazy about me. And as we sat there having lunch she said, when we broke up he wrote a poem to me. And as we sat there she recited the poem. Truus's son is called Philip. We also met Flip's close friend Karel van der Schaaf. Karel, um sorry, they've been friends since school. And Karel, you know [unclear].
- 24:53 Ian Shine: So that's Karel van der Schaaf.
- 24:56 Deborah Slier-Shine: Um, Karel walked about 90 miles, sometimes went by bike, from Amsterdam to Molengoot to bring Flip food, and letters, and messages, and clean clothes. And often after visiting Flip, he would go on to other camps to visit other Jewish friends. We we met the farmers whose farms were around the camp. The Veurinks, the Vrijlinks, and the Vittendens, local farmers who helped Flip and other boys in the camp. Flip's second girlfriend [crosstalk] - you concentrate on your job - Flip's second girlfriend Bep, Bep [Elisabeth] de Vries, survived in the war in hiding, but she died of cancer 20 years later.
- 26:23 Ian Shine: That is the last on the extreme right. You notice they're all, they're all wearing a yellow star.
- 26:34 Deborah Slier-Shine: She she married, uh, Karel after the war and we, uh, Karel later remarried and we met his wife. And the Germans were skillful in applying

graduated, incremental oppression. Each month new laws were passed. The Germans never did anything illegal. They made the law, then did it.

- 27:10 Ian Shine: For example, in July 1940 all Jews were prohibited from serving in the air raid service. In August, no Jews may be hired or promoted to the civil servants, civil service. In September, there was the, what's called the Aryan Declaration. Everybody in Holland had to go and register and state how many of their grandparents were Jewish. They were also banned from the street markets, which for poor families like Deborah's, was an added burden. In October, civil servants must - is this still going - that in October civil servants had to declare whether they were Aryans or Jews. IDs were issued. I've got Bep's ID there. And Jews were fired from the civil service and from the universities and from schools. And then in 1941, they were banned from cinemas, football clubs, parks, park benches, libraries. In June the, um, regulations stated that Jews may not own pigeons, and they also in the regulations say that the pigeons are forbidden to fly. In 1942 they instituted the yellow star, which Mr. Kobner gave us his own just now. It was required that these were sewn onto the outside of your garments at all times and as Deborah just said, Alice van Keulen [Woudstra]'s father was sent to Mauthausen, where he died, because he wasn't wearing the star inside his own office.
- 29:33 Deborah Slier-Shine: There was signs saying - let me get to my page - the Germans, uh, also changed the spelling of Jew with the capital, capital j, to a lowercase j, as Jews did not deserve the capital j. Strangely enough, this took a long time to change in Holland after the war. Uh, that in many dictionaries Jew was still spelled with lowercase j.
- 30:19 Ian Shine: That is, that is Bep's ID card that you can see there. The j on the left-hand side, um, is a lowercase j as it was on all official documents.
- 30:30 Deborah Slier-Shine: The other interesting thing is, this is Bep's Jewish ID, and this is her false ID.
- 30:39 Ian Shine: The top one is her Jewish one and the bottom one is the false one. She went into hiding using this false one.
- 30:57 Deborah Slier-Shine: The Germans were not the first. You want to do that?
- 31:02 Ian Shine: I mean the Germans were not the first to, um, use a lowercase j as a way of humiliating Jews. The first that it was done that we know of was by TS Eliot in two poems, one in 1918 *Gerontion* and one in 1920 which goes "The rats are underneath the piles. The jew is underneath the lot. [Money in furs.] The boatman smiles." Um, and the j in that, printed by Faber & Faber, is lowercase j and in *Gerontion* the line is "the jews squat on the windowsill" again lowercase j.



- 32:03 Deborah Slier-Shine: Um, and then we developed a very strong friendship with Karel van der Schaaf and he came to America for, for a holiday and we went to the Grand Canyon with them, and we went to Florida with him. And, I don't know where it is. All right, doesn't matter. We have lost a picture. And we, in our search to find out what had happened to Flip we interviewed as many people as we could who had either known him, had experienced the same sort of trial that he had. And when we learned about Sobibor because that's where he ended up we tracked seven, we found six people in America who would all be in Sobibor, and one person Selma Wijnberg - she's down - had experience, had a very close experience to him. They were both sent to Vught, then to Westerbork, were in the prison barrack and were on the same, at the same train to Sobibor. Selma was pulled out of the line and, as a worker, whereas we don't know what happened to Flip. She didn't know Flip. We, Selma, sorted clothes and belonging and she and her husband, Chaim Engel, were among the 300 people who escaped from the Sobibor breakout on October the 14th 1943. The Sobibor breakout is the largest prisoner escape from any camp, including all POW [prisoner of war] camps, in World War II.
- 34:33 Deborah Slier-Shine: After the Selma and Chaim managed to find sanctuary in a barn from this, a Polish woman called Stefka Nowak, who Selma sent money and greetings to, and, until Stefka died. When Selma was in hiding she began writing a diary and to quote, Poland, October 19th, October 24, 1943, All of a sudden I have the feeling that I have to write everything down. What when, what we went through, my husband and I. First of all, what I still remember most, is the escape from Sobibor. There was talk for at least a week, under great secrecy, that something was going to happen. There was no work in the camp. Tuesday 3 p.m. Chaim came to me and asked me to be at the warehouse at 3:32. I was punctual. Five minutes later Porzyck [Pozekki], a kapo, arrived and ten minutes later he killed Wolf, an SS man. After that five men, including my beloved husband Chaim, made mince-meat, mince-meat of Beckmann, a Nazi. This is for the 10,000 Jews that you killed, my Chaim said. We ran fast for three or four kilometers while they were shooting at us, but fortunately, we were not hit.
- 36:39 Deborah Slier-Shine: Sobibor 9th of April [1943], we arrived at the camp, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and there was much screaming from the Ukrainians with vicious faces and sticks in their hand. An old woman who walked in front of me was hit. We must throw down our packages. We must throw down our rucksacks and we were walked further and further. We saw two crowds who asked us if we were married. We said, no. Come and stand here, they said. We stood together. Twenty girls from one transport of 3,000 people. We were pulled out. We came to a small barrack where we were asked our names and told where we must sleep. We had to sort out the contents and the backpacks from the people. We had no idea of what we were doing; we didn't know what was going on in Sobibor. We thought such good food from the backpacks, and clothes for everyone.

- 37:54 Deborah Slier-Shine: Everything that your heart desired, chocolate, cigarettes, the nicest clothes, four or five pairs of glamorous sheer silk stockings, and you could change your clothes as you sorted. In the evening I spoke to Maurits [Ziekendelaar] saying, Alhamdulillah. His parents and my parents had been best friends in Zwolle and also, excuse me, Mau Troostwijk who was also from Zwolle. They had been in Zwolle since March the 13th, excuse me, sorry, I mean Sobibor since March the 13th. He, excuse me, explained, they explained to me all the people I came with and all of those that had come here before had been gassed and burned. They pointed to a big fire in Camp 3 for me to see where almost 10,000 Jews were burned. This is beyond belief. Written down it does not seem as terrible as it was; it's not believable.
- 39:10 Deborah Slier-Shine: Excuse me, it is a really filthy Krautish thing but they did, eg. when you arrive the women go to the right and the men to the left and they tell you that you're going to bathe. Thus, first women all run to the bath leaving clothes in a barrack nearby, then naked to a further barrack. There are for example three barracks. The last is the bathhouse, where there are some 32 young Jewish men, out of the young men in our camp. Also, there are three camps. We sleep in Camp 1. We work in Camp 2, and in Camp 3 we are murdered. But nobody from the first two camps can come into Camp 3, for if they do, they do not come out. Now, these 32 young men stand there cutting the hair of all the women. I became acquainted in the camp, with whom I became, no. I learned from my man, with whom I became acquainted in the camp, he always spoke of the terrible shame, miserable it was to watch and see so many young people walk to their death. He always had to go along. He had to comply. He told me that, the Dutch women really do know, do not know what is all about to happen to them, and many cried because their hair was cut off. Thank God they did not know what was about to happen to them.
- 41:09 Ian Shine: Just to interrupt, one of the, one of the things that Selma said is that she had a dilemma often when she was in her barrack and a new transport of one to three thousand of the number in the transport arrived sometimes she would see people from the Zwolle or from the Groningen that she recognized. For example, the rabbi of Groningen's daughter she recognized, and her immediate tendency was to want to go and, and, and greet her and say hello. But she held herself back, for two reasons, one, she didn't know what she would say to her. You know, do you say, you know when you walk along here you're going to be killed, or is, as, as she just declared before, is it better not to know? And the second reason, of course, is that it was forbidden for any inmate, any of the workers, to make any contact with the people just coming in to be gassed.
- 42:18 Deborah Slier-Shine: On the Polish transport there is a much greater drama. One by one these people know that they are heading for death children four and five years, old they know it. It's terrible to see how these women and children were hit by these Krauts. They have leather whips which they hit. I personally felt this

myself on more than one occasion, especially from the men. I can still see it before my eyes. Everything happened very fast, and the people who are arriving, and they throw aside the bags they have with them, and if they do not do that they get hit. Many women carry their children in their arms and they also have a lot of bags with them. An old lady walking in front of me was hit when we threw our baggage away. They hit her because she didn't throw her baggage away. They screamed at us, walk fast, walk fast, throw down your bags, hurry. A woman next to me threw away her backpack. Her child was snatched from her. She cried, oh my God, my child, my child. An SS guard hit her, blood streamed down her face, but she screamed my child, and he hit her again. And she screamed, my child. He said we will look after your child. After that, we sorted the bags, and many times we found a child among them. I cannot write everything that I experienced and I just hope that some people will survive these camps. This is a scandal and a disgrace for every Kraut because all of them wanted their Hitler. More about the women, they had no hair anymore, and they came quickly into the barrack where everyone must shower. There is no water but only gas comes out, unquote.

- 44:31 Ian Shine: As the people were hurried along the 100-yard walk from the ramp at the station entrance of Sobibor to the gas station, the fence on either side was a barbed-wire fence. But it was woven with trees and twigs so that it was hard for anybody to see in or out but one young lady an 18-year-old girl from Hamburg called Luka [Gertrude Poppert-Schonborn] was, had the job of tending rabbits in the Camp 3 area and she could see, uh, she watched through the the fence. And she said, I quote, I can see the naked men and women and even the children. They march to Camp Three. I watch them and begin to shake as if I had typhus, but I can't turn my face away. I can't close my eyes. Sometimes they call out, where are they taking us? As if they sensed that I was there listening. I tremble when they call out to me, but I just peer at them through the crack, unquote.
- 45:54 Deborah Slier-Shine: This is the terrible tale of the destruction of Dutch Jews - 70 to 80 percent perished - the highest in western Europe. But the terrible tale has an uplifting silver lining. The Dutch population's display of compassion, decency, and courage is outstanding. Their resistance to the Germans exceeded that of any other nation. They received a higher percentage of Yad Vashem medals than any other country, and the second-highest absolute number and we know one more to come, and many more that are deserved. Here are a few examples of people whom we had personal contact. Marion Reid, do you want to? Marion van Binsbergen-Pritchard, do you want to tell that story?
- 47:05 Ian Shine: Marion van Binsbergen was a friend who, as Deborah said before was a murderer. We, we approached her to ask if she would translate the letters because she was fluent in Dutch. She was born and lived in Amsterdam and, um, until after the war. She was a coeval of Flip's. Her father was a Supreme Court Justice and her mother was English. And so, it was easy for her to learn what, in

this country, is called American English. And she, in 1942, she was guarding, um, a young lad, um, called Polak, Fred Polak with his two children that were hidden in their house in Huizen, about 13 miles from Amsterdam. And she had a basement, um, a cellar where the children were hid. And after a police raid once, she had a routine down pat so that she could get the children into hiding whenever the garden gate went. But after, after a raid, one of the policemen came back and the children were out and hiding, and so she took a gun that she had hidden behind the cupboard and shot and killed him. One very splendid example of resistance is from a man called Gerrit van der Veen who, um, he organized resistance. He forged, I think, 70,000 ID cards and ration cards. He went and blew up the registry where all the records were kept and he published what he called a *Slavery Manifesto* which is astonishing.

49:15 Deborah Slier-Shine: Quote, stand up and defend your countrymen, therefore defend the Jews where you can. Hide them, give them shelter and food. No matter how difficult it may be for you. Dutch policemen and special police, think of your human and true professional duty. Don't arrest Jews, help them to escape, and hide themselves. Know that you will be the murderer of every man, woman, and child you erased. Railway men, drivers, remember that each trainload with slaves goes to the slaughterhouse. Citizens of all walks of life, convince everyone you know that they must resist. Everyone should do what they can, and in their own circle by word, by writing, and above all through action. Save your persecuted, downtrodden, fellow citizens from death. Know that we have no higher human duty. [unquote]

50:32 Deborah Slier-Shine: He organized an underground movement and he was shot in the back, paralyzed, and killed. Supreme Court Justice [Lodewijk Ernst] Visser was actually head of the Supreme Court when the Germans invaded, and he was discharged. And Marion van Binsbergen was embarrassed to tell us that, that he was the only one her father, her parents, never invited home for dinner. He urged non-compliance with the Germans. He urged the Jewish Council not to cooperate, but the council was outwitted by the German, Germans, whom they stated that they thought were not clearly hostile. In 1939 Geertruida Wijsmuller-Meijer of Alkmaar organized the Kindertransport that saved 10,000 children from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia and found sanctuary in Great Britain. In Amsterdam in February 1941, the Germans seized 425 Jews this provoked the Dokwerkers strike, the only strike to occur in any German-occupied country. The student - sorry do you want to talk - the students at Leiden and Delft Universities went on strike in protest at the dismissal of the Jewish faculty. The University stayed closed throughout the war.

52:31 Deborah Slier-Shine: Karel found a scarf, and his family were amazing. Karel, as I said, repeatedly walked miles from Amsterdam to his friend Flip, and other friends. His brother Dick hid Flip when he escaped from camp and hid in Amsterdam. His,

and his brother also hid Harry [Gerard] Elzas's books and belongings, an offense that was punishable by death. Their mother, Hanna Cecilia [Meyvogel-van der Schaaf], saved the life of [unclear] a young boy of about eight and her neighbors Jopie and Juutje Lierens who, for some unknown reason, never received a call-out card to report for transport. So, they stayed throughout the war in their own house while Mrs. van der Schaaf brought them food, even through the hunger winter. The Reverend Frits Slomp was a rock on which Nieuwlande was built. The village of Nieuwlande, 10 miles from Molengoot camp, had a population of 117 people - that they hid 300 Jews. Slomp also, also started and ran an organization called L.O. [Landelijke Organisatie voor hulp aan Onderduikers] which organized finding hiding places for Jews and Gentiles. He urged the Jewish council to encourage the Jews to hide. The local farmers around Flip's camp were the salt of the earth. he the Vrijlinks, the Vittendens, and Veurinks, again, and again, and again gave food. That's the Vrijlinks family, gave food, food and clothing, and hospitality to the boys in the camp. Gees Vrijlink who was the eldest daughter in the family -

- 55:02 Ian Shine: That is the lady on the right-hand side. Gees, G - double E - S, Vrijlink. The young lass on the bottom left is Hermina and we had the privilege of being able to drink her health and wish her happy birthday when she was 77.
- 55:22 Deborah Slier-Shine: And we had dinner with her on the 2nd of October of this year. Um, Vrijlink wrote to the mother one of the boys she was feeding, we absolutely cannot stand by and see someone else go hungry. Flip's letters are important because they report what life was like in a forced labor camp, where there was never enough food. They're also important because they revealed the amazing generosity of his Christian neighbors. Quote, we are still -
- 56:07 Ian Shine: This is the quote from Flip's letter.
- 56:09 Deborah Slier-Shine: We are still always helped with everything by the Vrijlink's. Gees is like a mother to us, so kind and loving. We can never ever be grateful enough to Gees. These deeds exceeded the compassion of the good Samaritan, who did not risk his life or livelihood. Moreover, these were real people, not parables. To them, and the people of Netherlands, we can never be thankful enough.
- 56:58 Susanne Hillman: I think we'll go around with a microphone. And I'm sure there are quite a few questions, and I know we also have some people here who had, um, who grew up in Holland. The lady who came with, um, our, yes, Walter and the gentlemen who brought the star. So I think we are all interested to hear about your experiences.
- 57:36 Speaker 2: Hello? I'm here to listen to the story about Westerbork and I talk louder than anybody. Old people have the hard problem hearing and you understand what I have to say. I'm a little accent but I'm a survivor from Westerbork. I'm 93

years old. [unclear] Camp Westerbork on October 9, 1939, with the first transport of Jewish refugees from Germany. The Dutch queen opened the borders and let us in and they put us in a refugee camp to save our lives. Now, I ended up in Westerbork April 10, 1945, when the Germans took over, and with a profession an electrician. And when the Germans needed people to fight the war, the only gentile electricians had to leave the camp, and there was nobody that could take care of things for them and for us and building new barracks. I had the right profession to write for it. That's how I survived and I'm here to talk about it. I'm in good shape, 93 years old, no glasses, no hearing aids. I beat it, I beat it. My wife is very shy. My wife is a survivor also. We married in Camp Westerbork. We are going to be married now 71 years. My wife survived because she was a tailor, she fixed uniforms for Germans. That's how she survived. So we both survived. It's amazing that we're here. I don't know where the Westerborkers are here, people who were there. I think I'm the oldest one and the longest one who was there who survived. So that's my story. I didn't write a book. I couldn't write a book and make money on it too but - I'm not talented - anyway, that's my story, okay. The star, I want to show you this star, the star we had to wear. That's the Judenstern, the Jewish Star. Yeah, you wear it over your pocket, over your heart. Sewed on, not pinned on, it had to be sewed on completely so you couldn't remove it. And if they felt like shooting you, they had a target, right over your heart. And that's what you wear, this is 70 years old, and it's priceless. And that's what we had to wear, right here. That is one of the things I cherish and I it will end up in the Holocaust Museum. And people should know about it. I'm here to talk about it because we want to make sure there is no more Holocaust. We want to make sure that people remember that. Don't listen to the people who say there was no Holocaust. They're liars. The government, the politicians, see them in Europe and all over, the people who say there was the Holocaust. There was a Holocaust, believe me, I lost all my family. In my whole family, I am the only survivor, and lucky I'm surviving because of my profession. Any other profession, I would not be here to talk to you. So anyway and hopefully I'll live a long time yet and together in happy days, 71 years, okay. Thank you for listening to me and make sure, no more Holocaust. Tell your children and your grandchildren.

1:00:57     Susanne Hillman: Thank you very much.

1:01:11     Lou de Beer: My story is somewhat different. I was born in the Netherlands, uh, Amsterdam, and I saw the Germans march in May of 1940. I remember because I was standing on the, on the Amstel, which is the main river through Amsterdam. We were American citizens and I was an American citizen, and Germany declared war on the United States on December 10<sup>th</sup>, and within a few hours, the United States declared war on Germany. And immediately, because of that, according to international law, we were considered enemy aliens by the Germans, a belligerent nation at war with Germany. Uh, when the Germans first came in we were living in an area not too far from a street that's mentioned in the book, the Vrolikstraat. And

I was just reading the letter up there in Dutch, it's interesting. And what happened was that, the early part of the occupation, the Germans needed labor for the defenses in north Holland because they were concerned about the invasion of British troops, which, the British had defended in Norway. So what happened is my father was called up for forced labor in northern Holland. So he went one day but he came back the next day. He refused to continue and the German police actually came by and said, why didn't you stay up there? Just because they didn't want to, and they actually left him alone, primarily because it was an American citizen. About a year later or so, when the, the oppression - if you will - by the Germans became more and more evident, I went to a school with a lot of Jewish children, and of what they called the Oranje Vrijstaatschool, the Orange Free State School. And every day we saw the children disappear.

1:03:21 Lou de Beer: Because I was a youngster, I didn't really know what was going on, but what was happening is they were emptying the schools of all the Jewish children and their families. And we had an opportunity to write letters to the children who went to Westerbork. And we exchanged letters with them for a while, but that stopped. The Germans no longer permitted it. Well, as time went on rationing was imposed, and food became more and more scarce. You didn't have any coals for your, uh, stoves - because people use indoor stoves. What we used to do, we used to go to the railroad tracks and tear up the ties for wood, which was a very, uh, serious offense - considered sabotage by the Germans. If you were caught, they'd send you to the concentration camp. Well about a year and a half later, I was coming home from school with my younger brother and the neighbor said, the Germans have arrested your father. So we went home. My mother was all upset, etcetera. And she said, okay, tomorrow morning we're going to go and see what happened. The next morning my mother and I went to the Dutch police and they said, no this was none of our business. You have to go to the German authorities. So we went to a square, something. I'm sure some of you have been to the Rijksmuseum. There's a big museum in Amsterdam, Museumplein, which is the headquarters of the German command, Army Command. We went in there, I remember, with my mother. Very polite he said, no we have nothing to do with that. You have to go to the German security police.

1:05:01 Lou de Beer: So the following day my mother and I went to the security police, that's called the Sicherheitsdienst, and uh, we were there, nothing imposing. It's not like in the movies, you know, Germans with black uniforms, just civilians. It was in the place called the Euterpestraat, which was a former girls' school. My mother went in, we had to wait a little while, went inside and this fella brings out, gives me an ice cream cone to eat, which I thought it was great. And my mother got permission to see my father. He was sent to an SS prison in Scheveningen - which is on the coast - and she went to see him. She was allowed to see him. She was allowed to bring him, uh, clean clothing, some food, and my mother got - my father got sick in prison. I don't know exactly what was wrong. He was treated by SS

doctor. Well, after that we heard nothing. My mother tried a couple of times to find out where he is, never heard anything. Three weeks later they arrested my elder brother and we didn't hear anything from him for the next five years.

1:06:13 Lou de Beer: And they were both sent - of course, I knew this after the war - to southern Germany, in Bavaria to a, uh, an American and British prisoner of war camp where part of it was, was used for internees - American internees particularly. So he stayed there the duration. In the meantime, we were still in Holland, myself, my mother, and my younger brother. And a couple of weeks later the uh, plainclothesmen came, Dutch police. He was a German but he was not in uniform, and they said, pack your bag, bags. We were allowed a suitcase each, and we were taken by car to uh train station at the Centraal Station, the Central Station, and they took us to Westerbork. We arrived in Westerbork and they put us where the guards were, in the guard, because they didn't know what to do with us at the time. We're American citizens, so they didn't know how to handle us. So we stayed there a couple of months, and the camp at that time was not surrounded by barbed wire. That came later when the SS took over. In the meantime, the Dutch were actually guarding it.

1:07:28 Lou de Beer: So from there we, we went to Arbeitsdorf which was a concentration camp and there we stayed in the barracks - half was for the guards the other half was for us. We were the only family in it and there we stayed a couple of months. From there we went to a place in Germany called Duisburg and from there we went to a southern town in Germany, in Bavaria, called Liebenau. This was a castle which was originally used by the Germans for mentally ill people, insane. They apparently had removed them - I found this out not too long ago - and they, uh, had perished. They killed them. It's part of the Hitler policy to get rid of them. They call them undesirables or unfit. And from there, sometime later, we went to a large internment camp in France, in Vitell. A lot of people there and part of the camp was housed or housed a lot of Jews who had southern South American passports, and the Germans became suspicious of this and they started to investigate and contacted the southern South American countries. Do you recognize these people? Did you give them these passports? And they found they were all forged. So the Jews, some of them apparently, had committed suicide by jumping out the windows of the hotels. And we stayed there, I guess it was a couple of years and we were liberated by the French and the American army. And then we came to the United States. It was quite a journey for five years. So we enter into interacted with the story that you're telling here but of course, we were not in that kind of danger or peril of our lives.

1:09:34 Martin Haas: I'll make it very short mostly because my story is so long. I was hidden. I grew up in a well-to-do family in the south of the Netherlands. I was hidden all through the war with a Catholic family. At the end of the war, they didn't know what to do with me because there was nobody for me to go back to. There



was only one sister who survived. She also was small, young. What hasn't been described here clearly, and thank you for your story - it's wonderful, but what you did not do, and I do not want to be a naysayer - you did not describe the sheer terror in the life of upright people in the Netherlands, the Jews. Terror of a degree that you cannot imagine, and we heard here about one thing the other, but we didn't hear that Jews couldn't have bicycles. Jews couldn't have cars. Jewish children couldn't go to school. That's why the school of the town was in my, in my parents' home for Jewish children only. The synagogues of course were destroyed. The Jews couldn't work, couldn't go to parks, you mentioned that. The terror, one step after the other, was incredible but the terror came from the German authorities who took over the Netherlands in the Hague but it was totally and completely - almost completely - managed by, excuse me, the Dutch. The worst were the Dutch police, who hated the Jews like they hate, I don't know what. They sought them out. They had the lists. They transported them to the, through the town's theater that's in Amsterdam. They transported them to Westerbork.

1:11:37 Martin Haas: They drove them or rode them. They ran the trains to Sobibor and they did it. There were only a handful of Nazis in the Netherlands. I don't know the real number, a handful, and the Dutch did it themselves because they didn't like the Jews all that much, and that's an understatement. One sentence today, this is repeating itself, and you will probably remember this guy here standing. I'm a professor here at UCSD. I made it here and everything is fine but history may well repeat itself and currently, in Europe, things are way worse than we here in wonderful La Jolla can imagine. I get letters and emails and emails, emails, with articles in the respectable press of what's going on there today, yesterday, and unfortunately probably also again tomorrow. My whole family was - almost the whole family - was, was, were - like I don't say kill, never - murdered, gassed in Sobibor and Auschwitz. And I was, I participated in the trial in Munich three, four, five years ago, uh, against [John] Demjanjuk.

1:13:02 Martin Haas: I testified there and there the entire story was unfolded in that German courtroom, in Munich. What we heard here today was very good. I've never heard it spoken so well. But if you heard what went on there, the accusations against Demjanjuk, this Ukrainian guy, and you saw how these camps, in this particular case Sobibor, was organized, with cunning, and secrecy, and quiet, and fast, fast, fast to your death. Within a day, everybody came in a train of 3,000 people was dead, and then burned, with stench. So what we have to do, all of us here, which is probably why you are here, is make sure that anything like that does not repeat itself, because the seeds for it are already coming out of the ground. And of course, we close our eyes to this. I do too. But if we open our eyes and understand what's being written today in Europe, in this country it's substantially free of it, then you'll see that this is a repeating process.

- 1:14:23 Martin Haas: It started early, in the year, 200 years before the, the current era. It went through the Middle Ages. It went through the occurrences the inquisition in Spain, in 1492. It went through an additional tremendous inquisition during the crusaders. It went to tremendous disturbances in Germany and then it led to the Second World War with the Shoah. The only lesson we should learn is that we should save each other, to our right and to our left, because this may occur again. And there's a lady here who just said, told me, well the Holocaust wasn't the worst crime, the rape of Nanking, of Manchuria was. What's being written about that? Very little, at least we don't read anything about that. That also was very bad and the lesson is, let's be careful, people to our right, to our left, in front and in the back, that we support each other.
- 1:15:43 Speaker 3: Thank you. Today's lecture is very informative and I learned a lot about what Jewish people had gone through during World War II. And you may not know, like this professor has indicated, in China and other Asian countries there are a lot of things that happened. One book you may want to Google is *Forgotten, The Forgotten Holocaust [The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II]* By Iris Chang] which described what had happened in, during World War II, December 1940, 1945 - I believe, I could be wrong, okay - in Nanking, 1937, December 19th, until December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1937, thank you. And during two weeks to one month time, there were 300,000 Chinese civilians - from the little baby to 80-year-old - okay, man or woman. The women had suffered great deal, raped, killed, and little boys were put in the boil of oil to die, and the many Chinese militaries were put, buried alive by Japanese soldiers. Actually, the Japanese soldiers were using that scheme as a competition. Okay, how many can you kill each day and they were just think it was fun. But anyway, we should not forget history even though they are ugly. If we forget history with the [unclear], it will happen again, and we do not want that kind of things to happen in the future and we all learned a lesson tonight.
- 1:17:50 Susanne Hillman: I would like to thank uh every one of you for coming especially also the people, well our wonderful guests, and the people who contributed, uh, their own comments. I think we would like, uh, to open up the floor so people can approach, uh, our speakers or each other and mingle a little bit. And uh, come again in February. Um, I hope to see you again, and have a good night.