

Oral History Program

**OH-460**

**Box #21**

Oral History Program

Florina M. Hut

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**Florina Hut**

**INTERVIEW NO:**

OH 460

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:**

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**INTERVIEWER:**

Jodi Visser

**SUBJECT:**

Growing Up in Holland During the  
Nazi Occupation

# **Growing Up in Holland During the Nazi Occupation**

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## **Introduction:**

Ever since I was a small girl I have been fascinated by the personal histories of my family members. I learned quickly that they endured numerous struggles and trials. Their dedication and perseverance is an example to the rest of my family. For years I have wanted to record some of these stories but in 1997 my great-grandmother, Oma Visser (Rini's mother,) passed away. I gave up on the cause at that time, deciding it was never going to happen. Since then my cynicism has faded. When Brother Wallace gave the members of his History 485 class the opportunity to do an oral history on a family member I immediately thought of my Aunt Rini. She is the last one still alive that lived in Holland during the Nazi occupation of WWII. I knew I had to interview her or I would miss another amazing opportunity.

Due to the distance between us, Rini is in Salt Lake City and I am in Laie, this interview does not follow the conventional patterns of an oral interview. I wrote Rini a letter and received a written response to my questions. I then called her to fill in additional details and information. The following interview indicates whether the information came from the letter or from our phone conversations. Anything that comes from the letter is a direct quote. If it comes from our phone discussions the answers are often direct quotes but they may be paraphrased.

I love my family. They are an example of strength, courage, and above all faith. I am thankful for the opportunity to be reminded of this and to share it with others.



(Florina M. Hut in the Spring of 2003)

## **Key:**

R.H.- Rini Hut, Interviewee

J.V.- Jodi Visser, Interviewer



**R.H. Letter** I, Florina (Rini) Maria Visser Hubert Hut, was born on June 12, 1928 in Rotterdam, Holland. When I was 5 years old my Brother John, your grandfather was born. I was always very protective of him and loved him very much.

**J.V. Letter** I would like to hear about your life in Holland and what it was like to live there during the war.

**R.H. Letter** When I was 12 years old on May 10, 1940, the Germans invaded Holland, and bombed Rotterdam. 30,000 people were killed in 20 minutes. Soon food was very hard to find and it wasn't a pleasant time. Our father was taken to a concentration camp. There he lost 2 of his fingers on a saw. After he lost his fingers he escaped from the camp and we had to hide him. Bombs kept falling and windows broke as well as chandeliers fell from the ceiling. When I was 17 and your grandfather was 12 the war ended.

**J.V. Phone** Do you remember which camp or where your father was sent?

**R.H. Phone** It was actually a work camp. No, I never heard anyone say a name. It was a work camp in Germany.

**J.V. Phone** Why did you have to hide him?

**R.H. Phone** In the work camp he cut his two fingers on a saw. He ran away. He wasn't supposed to leave. He walked home hiding all the way. He was very careful. He walked all the way from Germany to Rotterdam. At the beginning of the war all men 17 years and older were taken by the Germans. They roped off a street to gather all of the men. They went into every home to find them. We lived in apartment buildings. The Germans would search one floor and then move onto the next floor. All the way through the building.

After my father returned from the camp he started to work in a prison. He would stay there at night if he thought he was going to get caught. He worked in the prison after the war ended. The Dutch held some of the top German officials in that prison after the war.

**J.V. Phone** How did the Nazi's treat the Dutch?

**R.H. Phone** The Germans were okay. We had to be in by 9:00 at night. We had to put black paper on the windows so no light could shine out at night. If you did have light show the Germans would come and be mean. Things were rationed and it wasn't all that bad. Sirens would blow. It is the same for the people in Iraq right now. There was always bombing going on. The sirens would blow and you wouldn't know where the bombs were going to hit.

The last year and a half was terrible. You couldn't even go to school. After the war every one tore all the paper off their windows and threw it in the middle of the street and burned it. There were dances at the end of the street every night for weeks and weeks. The people were so happy the war was over.

**J.V. Letter** I'd like to know more about my grandpa's childhood too. What was he like? What did he like to do? Was he a good brother?

**R.H. Letter** Your grandfather was a very good brother and a very smart man. As a child he was always kind and respectful of others. He also was a very good student in school. Our parents were good people. Our father loved to play soccer which he played every Sunday while our mother took us to church. Our father also raised and raced pigeons. When he raced them he won lots of trophies. Our mother was also a very intelligent woman. When she was in school they moved her up 2 grades. She enjoyed writing and wrote many plays during the time she was a Primary President. I would often find her in the middle of the night writing.

Your grandfather, my brother, graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in Electrical engineering. I loved him dearly and still miss him at times.

**R.H. Phone** Your grandpa was a lot like my mother, honest and good in every way. So was he.

**J.V. Letter** Tell me about your childhood family. What were your parents like? What did you do as a family?

**R.H. Letter** As children we were given every opportunity to learn. We had violin and piano lessons, dance and Ballet etc. Our parents sacrificed everything they could to afford these things for their children.

**J.V. Phone** Were you able to do these things during the war?

**R.H. Phone** Yes! I was never very good at any of it. I did a little of everything.

**R.H. Letter** Once a year we would go to the Beach. I would ride on the back of my Dad's bike and your grandfather would ride in the front. My mother had a bike of her own to ride. That was always a big treat for us to look forward to each year.

**J.V. Phone** Did you go to the beach during the war too?

**R.H. Phone** Well we went with the primary too, it must have been before the war.

**J.V. Letter** What role did the church play in Holland during the war?

**R.H. Letter** The church was like our family. Our mother was the Primary President and helped the Primary grow until we had 100 children. We had lots of non-member children who attended. When we put on special programs some of the non-member children's families would come, and many of them because of this would join the church. My father was not a member of the church and would not let me be baptized until I was 13. My brother was able to be baptized when he

was 8. Dad eventually also joined the church. That was a very happy day for our family.

**J.V. Phone** What made him join the church?

**R.H. Phone** My mother's example.

**J.V. Letter** I'd like to understand life in Holland better. What were the everyday things that made you happy? What was hard?

**R.H. Letter** The things that made me most happy were the times when we were all together as a family. The church was our spiritual happiness as well as our entertainment. The war was a very hard time but again as church members we stuck together.

**R.H. Phone** When you live in Holland families all live together and distances aren't so far. My own children are spread out all over the country. Except for my daughter. She is in Salt Lake.

**J.V. Letter** Do you remember the differences between life in Holland before the war, during the war, and after the war?

**R.H. Letter** We were poor before the war, but always clean and well taken care of. We also always knew we were loved. During the war it was hard. I was sent to the farm and was away from my family. The doctor said I would not live if I did not start getting the right food to eat. So the last year of the war, I was away from home. I missed my family. In 1945 the war ended and my Dad came and brought me back home. I was never happier in my life to be back home with my family again.

**J.V. Phone** Was the family you stayed with nice?

**R.H. Phone** We called them Uncles and Aunts even though they weren't really. They were very very good to me. It wasn't really a farm that I stayed on. It was a little store in a little town, a mercantile store. I went back to visit it when I was in Holland three years ago. My Uncle and Aunt had both passed away, as well as one of their daughters but one of them was still alive and I called her. I didn't have very long but we talked for a little while. While I was there I visited a lot of family that is still there.

**J.V. Phone** How much family do you have over there?

**R.H. Phone** My mom's older brother joined the church before the war and came to the U.S. My mom came to the U.S. after the war. Her little sister joined the church after the war and came to the U.S. then too.