

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mrs. Iris Zwanenberg

Date of Interview: March 23, 1974

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Interview in progress.

Interviewer: We are visiting with Mrs. Iris Zwanenberg. It is March 23, 1974.

Welcome!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: You're welcome! Thank you. I...I'm Iris Zwanenberg. I was born in Isimayer (sp?), Java in...at the time it was the Netherlands East Indies of the Dutch (unintelligible). And we...what else did you ask?

Interviewer: What took your parents there?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well, it was...it was a Dutch colony.

Interviewer: I see...I see.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...a Dutch colony and my father was working as a...as a accountant in a...in a Dutch import firm, and much of the stuff that was imported to the United States...it was a very big firm. Also had (unintelligible) and they had also offices also in New York. (unintelligible)

Interviewer: I see. At the time that the Japanese invaded Java and began to round up prisoners of war...what...approximately what date was that?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well it...it was actually...it...it went in stages. I think the real prisoners of Army...the services. But as we were Germans and my father was working...everything kind of stopped at the time that the Japanese came.

Although the war was practically finished the...the invasion was a very quiet one...at that point.

Interviewer: No resistance? Not much resistance?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: None...whatsoever. They were just...moved right in, and we were told before they came that we had to kind of register all of our vehicles like cars and stuff like that...and leave them at the shared spot because they were afraid that we would...so we had no movement of traffic anymore...and we were just waiting...invasion of the Japanese. And when they did come in, they...they were looking for quarters. So they came and they observed a billion homes and unfortunately ours was one of them.

Interviewer: One that they picked?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and they gave us fifteen minutes to get out.

Interviewer: Well that meant about one suitcase for each of you?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well, we were...of course fifteen minutes there was not much instructions so...we all must have taken the wrong things (unintelligible).

Interviewer: And...and from your home...where were you taken?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well we were not taken anywhere. I mean we were still free. What happened was that the first (unintelligible)...and I'm trying to think what it was...I think maybe it was in June of 1942. And you must remember that I only (unintelligible) things that I was told by my parents.

Interviewer: Surely.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and...you know...some of these things registered because they (unintelligible) but I also think that many of their worries were not...they...they thought not to worry us too much you know...so that we were not told too many things. And one of the things that...right here...in my mind...is that they were asked to donate...I...I shouldn't say donate...to buy a passport...they called it a passport...safety...like...to register...every civilian. And I remember that those passports were (unintelligible) at the time. And my mother wanted my dad...to (unintelligible) family...her family...(unintelligible)...person...and gave it to...paying for it. So...but you see everything stopped; business stopped; schooling stopped; everything stopped...(unintelligible)...it wasn't...really going on. And we had to move...send fifty quarts...and they were very small quarts...but we didn't have very much, but anyway I'm trying to think what happened...so that must have been June and a little after that...the men in the neighborhood...all the men...over eighteen years...were asked to register and (unintelligible). And then...so I remember that everybody was (unintelligible)...worked an hour or two...(unintelligible). All had time; they said they had to move in...maybe the call came in about seven o'clock in the morning...from door to door...it was sad back then. (unintelligible), and so the men left; they had to be there before nine, I think. Anyway they...everybody was (unintelligible)...because they were go... leaving in groups, and...the

(unintelligible) at that time...(unintelligible). A little bit (unintelligible), you see. And that was when my father was taken.

Interviewer: But you and your mother were left in your...quarters?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes, but there was...there was no...and there was no income...and that meant that (unintelligible) because there was no income.

Interviewer: So what about schooling? Did your mother home teach you or...?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no.

Interviewer: Just no...?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well no, the times were so upsetting that you really didn't know one thing happening after the other...no schooling. Schooling had stopped with...like the banking stopped. You have no idea what...what (unintelligible) like that. It...it just seemed to stop the world (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well where was your father sent? Some place in Java or...?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well he was...oh yes, oh yes. Why we first had to...we...let's say that he was first interned in...in...building...and I...I just recalled the name of the building which is...I think it's Addick (sp?), if I remember correctly because I was then asked to...by my mother to...to stand in line as parcels were accepted because they had nothing. They had no (unintelligible); they had no change, they had no (unintelligible) like that. So...long lines of people and of course we were...all the (unintelligible sentence)...food.

Interviewer: No food? And yet they were not providing food to the...?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible)...well...(unintelligible)...canteens they had...I don't know. We were not there. (unintelligible) were never...we really never asked them...what it was like. But the...the first three days were very hectic because the...(unintelligible) was organized and of course they had to...very cheaply, I mean, there was no...no way this man...they were separated...of the families like...like that...and it's a shock!

Interviewer: Of course it is! Did your father ever say whether they...within the compound...the prisoners...ever developed a form of government or tried to make some rules and regulations among themselves?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: There was no...there was no...no I don't think that there was such a thing. And you know they were transported (unintelligible)...all of a sudden you lose track of them...whoever it is.

Interviewer: Oh I see. So actually you didn't know where your father and...was?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, and perhaps...and...whether he was alive or dead or (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well did he ever express any mistreatment when he was interned?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes he did...just once and that was it. I guess...and that was...when (unintelligible)...and his...his name was...his name is Frank. His (unintelligible)...name's Frank, and apparently somebody...(unintelligible) had done something wrong and so they came to get him and he was beaten up...and (unintelligible sentence). And he'd never intended to do anything wrong either...it was...it was (unintelligible)...which...just normal to live by these things, you know.

(unintelligible)...without...(unintelligible), so...but then he was
(unintelligible) for the...

Interviewer: Yeah, the harm had been done. Well back to you and your mother...how
did you secure food?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well...I first...that was another thing...and there was no...there was no
income...so...and...I was trying to find a way to work...and work we
could do...(unintelligible)...I'd say...there was somebody who
was...making shoes from (unintelligible) and so that was peaceful, and we
could...(unintelligible)...and...well you could see from my
(unintelligible) shaped like...(unintelligible)...and we (unintelligible) but
so I had to...find something. But the churches (unintelligible). They had
taken all (unintelligible) and it was people that say...working for
companies (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Druggists?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible)...and until I guess they found out that (unintelligible).
Everybody who was
white...actually...(unintelligible)...concentrated...(unintelligible)...
sooner or later, but our (unintelligible) and my mother had some
Indonesian background so for us the time for us...the time came...later.

Interviewer: I see.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: She was...she was Dutch, but she had some Indonesian ties and she was
(unintelligible) by...by friends and family. And two of...children were
taken to...a (unintelligible)...my father had to...was interned...for reasons

I just mentioned and they had...they had food supplies and
(unintelligible), and so my sister and my brother (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Were they younger than you?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, I was younger. My mother stayed with us (unintelligible)...younger
brother...and so, and...my mother was (unintelligible). Under the
circumstances, she had lost...lost a lot, but...and I guess not realizing
what was all happening and just taking (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and also the churches. My mother was...Roman Catholic and...and my
father was Protestant, but the church were....supplies...(unintelligible).
The priests were also (unintelligible)...immediately, so our first help came
from the church.

Interviewer: ...from the church.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and also from (unintelligible).

Interviewer: I've heard that story with so many prisoners for...that their former
servants were...would...would slip food and other necessities to them
whenever they could.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: The servants probably were very helpful also in...in...well, they
would...they...they were a part of the whole situation because...I guess
my parents had been pretty good employers and...and they always came
to help...to help my mother...help (unintelligible) do things for her, and
then in return she would ask favors of them...secure things...because they
had to stay and serve...Japanese (unintelligible). So then they would

exactly (unintelligible) places...of the photographs we (unintelligible) we still have...many of them...(unintelligible) guards. Some came back...and some were dug up by other people that found out that they were (unintelligible). Some of the...(unintelligible) and some (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: How interesting.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: But the help...and the...well...their goodwill was actually what helped us and...(unintelligible).

Interviewer: And...most...moral help...(unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and the major...as things were getting worse for us also...my mother said that she said that (unintelligible)...so we were actually out for a long time. But times were (unintelligible).

Interviewer: I'm sure they were. Well now...as far as...during the time that you worked, did you work in your home or were you taken to a place...where there were large group of workers?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no my mother didn't...no my mother didn't work...(unintelligible) very young.

Interviewer: Twelve.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...didn't want to work...so I was getting supplies (unintelligible)...because she was afraid something would happen to (unintelligible)...much closer to home (unintelligible)...because as I said (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well these...these shoes you...you made...were they for...Japanese soldiers?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No.

Interviewer: They were civilians?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: For...for (unintelligible) let's say...Tuesday...you would buy to market...they were just market that you buy. They were rubber made from sheetrock (unintelligible)...size, so we (unintelligible). But we got...we had to make as much shoes as we were made (unintelligible), so you would give sizes, you know.

Interviewer: Exactly.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And you had to (unintelligible) and you had to make one pair of shoes and then slippers in the same size...so (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well I'm sure that helped out (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: My mother said that (unintelligible), but she wasn't very good at economizing...and much better at that too...(unintelligible)...I was (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Good for you!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Because she...she would have much food one day and maybe none the next, so I don't always...

Interviewer: You did the marketing as well as well as...as the shoes then?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh yes. And we cooked a lot because my mother didn't know very much. You know...

Interviewer: And you...and you were learning as a child.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: That's correct. Actually...(unintelligible)...I was very lucky my mother (unintelligible) and you know...those were not easy times...for relationship between mother and child. It was...but...you know she...she (unintelligible)...we (unintelligible)...but my father didn't fare too well. He came back from concentration camp (unintelligible sentence).

Interviewer: Was he starved?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes...all...all of us (unintelligible). I was...after the war...(unintelligible)...lose sixty pounds.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible)...and he was...(unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Were you in a city or a...or a...?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: We were in a city, yes.

Interviewer: It's a pity you didn't have accessibility to the jungles...though...that would have helped the food supply.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: I wonder...maybe...I've heard from other people who were in our...in our posts...who were...let's say from...we had many plantations types...tea plantations and things of that sort...concentrated in those areas...they didn't really (unintelligible) much...

Interviewer: They didn't? It's...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and I guess...maybe we had better support because of the larger community...more people.

Interviewer: And your church...as well as your church.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes.

Interviewer: Now when you were interned, I mean after your mother revealed that...that she had...had... did not...I mean after she...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: We were not safe outside anymore, you know, because... it was very hard also at that time there was (unintelligible)...people (unintelligible) Japanese...were on our side...after (unintelligible)...so we (unintelligible)...because, you see, being white (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well where were you taken when you were interned then?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh, in the campus already...their system, you know, just more people.

Interviewer: Were there soldiers patrolling these camps and all of that?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: It was...it was the (unintelligible)...how do you call...military police...that was what...what they would say in Germany; I don't know what you would call it. The SS something like that.

Other voice: The Dutch had...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: They had the capital...capital...it was actually all...irregularities...had to do with (unintelligible)...

Other voice: (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well I have...schools were stopped..schools were stopped, so we had no...no way of...of getting an education...and as a matter of fact, it was forbidden. We had nothing to write on. We couldn't have any pencils or sort of...(unintelligible)...my mother said one of my friends was trying to...she was a teacher and she tried to teach us...the teacher and myself...English; mathematics.

Interviewer: Well it's a good way to learn!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: So that's...so when I see some (unintelligible) come up now in the city (unintelligible) programs, I see sometimes on TV the ABC's and mathematics...and seem to learn (unintelligible). But...my father (unintelligible sentence). But liberation wasn't easy because...it...we were all separated and we didn't know where the others were, so it was just a matter of registering and waiting...the Red Cross was very busy. And many (unintelligible) were not even open to (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well what about your older brother and sister? Did they remain with the (unintelligible) throughout the entire time?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no they...they were of course eighteen earlier, and so he was taken (unintelligible)...I think at the time they changed...he was sixteen...sixteen I think he was taken, and Armeden (sp?), of course...of course also more...European than my mother, so she was also...gone. And then I had a younger brother that was taken from (unintelligible).

Interviewer: And all four of you were in different...separate places?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes.

Interviewer: As was your mother or were you able to stay with your mother?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, I was...I was still with my mother. But that...that was actually...we...she said that later that was lucky...that was a lucky break...(unintelligible) to take care of me.

Interviewer: What about privacy after you were interned? Did you have any priv...?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no.

Interviewer: There was no privacy?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No privacy (unintelligible)...worked...and absolutely no privacy...(unintelligible sentence). I...you can...let's say...that it would be safe if...if say the...it's...bathrooms and so forth were not...normal bathrooms...they were...

Interviewer: Tents?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no, they were open air and they were like...canals if we had to dunk ourselves...

Interviewer: Well then sanitary conditions were poor then?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Not only poor...they were devastating. If you caught a disease then you had no resistance...that's how...but you know that 25% of...of (unintelligible)...25% of all died as an immediate result...(unintelligible).

Interviewer: And you're talking about civilians, not captured soldiers.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: That's right. Twenty-five percent and so (unintelligible) absolutely (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Of course!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And that's why I'd never want to be (unintelligible). But...and that's the one...those are the records from immediately after the war...not the captured ones like my dad who died six years afterwards.

Interviewer: As a result of ...of his treatment.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yeah, and...and the things that happened as a result (unintelligible)...and I think he...he suffered (unintelligible)...I don't know how he tolerated it. But my brother-in-law (unintelligible)...

Other person: (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well...he's not normal...he's not normal...

Other person: No, he's (unintelligible)...at least now...he is (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yeah, well we...we assumed that, but it could have been a lot of...

Other person: ...has affected him as a young...as a student (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...but he has never been able...really to make a living for himself...be a normal thinking person.

Interviewer: Well he's probably just emotionally devastated.

Other person: (unintelligible)...father...(unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: You see we had...there were...there were three children...three of us still in grade school and at first when the war was over...I was sixteen. And my youngest brother was fourteen and then the one...the other one was...eighteen. And we had stopped education...(unintelligible)...and we were all evacuated to so called motherland, you know. And we were...even not acquainted with life. And of course Europe had been through a war and they had had their shortages. They really (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: There was no comparison to what you saw.

Other person: I guess the opposite effects on you (unintelligible sentence)...even as a child...myself...I (unintelligible)...when the war was over...(unintelligible sentences).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: First of all, we had a difficult time....a different time.

Other person: ...affects all of us (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: They had shortages, too, and they were not really willing to share, and we had absolutely nothing. At least they had cups and saucers; we had *nothing!* You know...and we had...

Interviewer: What about the company...did the company for whom your father worked survive?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh yes, they survived...of course...and that's why they wanted him back because he was a very, very valuable employee, and he...he had a very good memory I suppose...and he knew an awful lot. And that's why...but he really didn't want to suffer (unintelligible) again...because...

Interviewer: But the company didn't help you out for rehabilitation so to speak to get back into the culture?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no...too many people...to many people...

Other person: ...existed at the time...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: At the time they didn't even have pension plans, you know. I mean here I am speaking...you're speaking of the '40s...you know...'40s. (unintelligible) even a pension plan, so forget it. And with too many people...were involved in this war, I mean there was no regulations...no...only thing was...that was the...the Red Cross, and...and I guess half of the United States or all the free countries that...(unintelligible)...

Other person: Marshall Plan.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Marshall Plan, sure. And then we were still in this conflict with the (unintelligible) government, so I mean, practically...and everything was all lost, you know, (unintelligible) was just too bad...

Interviewer: Because that faction wanted their own government.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And...and the banking, too. I mean, you know, you...you had your money in the bank and it was...

(end of tape 1, side 1)

(nothing recorded on tape 1, side 2)

(beginning of tape 2, side 1)

Interviewer: That should do it!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Let me see, where were we? Money was...broke...and that happened on the first day of the war. I mean you have no idea, there's no transportation; everything stops...it's like (unintelligible) and prices of course rise (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: But I guess really...your family was very fortunate that your dad was able...was able to go back to a position...a job.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes, he was. There were many people left without the...money coming back at all, and that was one of the reasons that my father said that we all needed to a formal education. And he said (unintelligible) we...we were...just I think sixteen, I was still (unintelligible) level. But they...and in Holland there were more children (unintelligible) like us so we had lots land (unintelligible)...had special schooling and we could choose...but

I...and my brothers...my brothers chose the...the (unintelligible) for the...how do you say it?

Other person: (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible) classes...like you know...but Dad said we could go...choose our own method of studies and...and I decided to try out (unintelligible). And (unintelligible)...

Other person: (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible)

Other person: (unintelligible sentences)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: But we had...

Other person: (unintelligible)...the effects...the after effects are continuously (unintelligible)...situation.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well I came into class with young children...was twelve...twelve year olds (unintelligible) that not experienced the same, but thank heavens I mean I wasn't (unintelligible)...in my class...there were eight...about eight of us and we were...we were recognized as special students by our...by our teachers I guess. And in the first six months we were not given any...marks. We...we were just graduated to the next class and only after six months we had to try and compete with every part of the program and even fail (unintelligible). So...

Interviewer: And I'm sure you did well. Well tell me more about the food while you're still in Java. What did you eat?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Okay. Well rice was our main...staple and there was not...there was not much else. I mean we...we were not given much food so our...our food supply was very, very little.

Interviewer: No meat I guess.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No meat, no vegetables, and that didn't (unintelligible).

Interviewer: No it didn't. So that was it...just rice?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Rice (unintelligible)...and some of it (unintelligible).

Interviewer: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Right...and so it was like...heavy cake...rice cake that was (unintelligible), but it was...there was no, no...

Interviewer: No sugar, I guess?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No sugar. But lots of people had sugar (unintelligible) in the war...

Interviewer: That's a plus!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible). That was a plus, but of course there were no vitamins and all of the, you know, shortages...no calcium. I have seen (unintelligible)...and babies, you know (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Their bones just were not strong enough to support them. Isn't that sad?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well we...we, let's see...personally I think we...we felt the after effects also because (unintelligible) I didn't know it, but we had no children for the first twelve years of our marriage (unintelligible)...because I had (unintelligible) anemia and I (unintelligible)...till they found out in 1961(unintelligible) that I had one...(unintelligible). You know we all paid our price.

Interviewer: Of course.

Other person: I think we're still (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: You never had any fun!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No...

Other person: No, we didn't have the same fun that say the...the next generation had...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh we did...

Other person: In your case actually...even more severe (unintelligible) European war scene (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Sure, but I think that...

Other person: (unintelligible)...Japanese are (unintelligible)

Interviewer: ...become...become adults so...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and I think in real life...realization...of...of course you are very much aware that war is going on and the not knowing of what's happening to your loved ones I think is one of the worst things. And I was like telling (unintelligible)...after the initial separation...right after the occupation...as a family we never got under one roof again.

Interviewer: So you didn't develop a close...familial tie...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: We had very...we had...we are close...brothers and sisters we are close in fact because we all experienced the same thing. And we know...and we are there for each other and we would not leave each other stranded. But we each had a different experience, so we cannot...that's why I say, (unintelligible)...write a book. But...but (unintelligible) it's...it's all

segments and real bad things we don't remember...you don't want to remember. So what you remember are...better things and things.

Other person: (unintelligible sentence)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: You value things (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Well I was going to say, it certainly would develop appreciation.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Value...value...

Other person: ...completely different...(unintelligible)...absolutely...even today...(unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Value for...value for (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Value for freedom.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Value for friendship...value for freedom and...freedom is good, but also value to guarantee...guarantees of freedom. One of the reasons why...at this time we are living in Canada and we...we came to live Quebec and I said...there was some political problems there and the minute you got retired...you retired, I had to get out. And this was like a frantic...frantic thing I had to get out. I wanted my...I wanted to have something...I wanted to live in a place that was peaceful and I had nothing to do with all...with all the...was all the...

Interviewer: The French versus the (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well whatever...and I'm not saying anything bad about the French you know; I had very dear friends, but...it's political...

Other person: (unintelligible)...fishing in muddy water...you don't have to be in muddy water anymore...you've had enough.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And so (unintelligible)...I would say (unintelligible) people were very kind...kind people...I grew up with them; I spoke their language...(unintelligible)...I no longer speak it...I don't know as...(unintelligible)...I've (unintelligible)...but as I said (unintelligible) also. And so I finally...business...we developed a much closer now, but I...I'm not saying I want to raise my children (unintelligible)...valuable lesson. So there is many things...that my children (unintelligible).

Interviewer: I'm sure they will at some time in their lives.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: I hope so. Well one day they might realize it. And there...there are things that they think now that they say.

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible).

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Actually...

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Actually that's (unintelligible)...it was (unintelligible). I think if...if you have experienced at all...(unintelligible)...have actually...don't remember...maybe because I don't want to...and thank heavens I don't because otherwise it would be a nightmare.

Interviewer: I think we're given that (unintelligible) when we're created to push away the bad and look at the...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: When it's over you don't...we have discussed also that we have a friend who was sent...very young at the time...a mutual friend of ours and very

close friend of ours...but he was maybe seventeen or eighteen when the war started and he was...he was just in the army...he was conscripted, you know, and he was sent to...to the Burma line and he was...

Interviewer: He was conscripted by the Japanese?!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no...the Dutch.

Interviewer: The Dutch.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: By the Dutch but he became an immediate person of war and as a young person he...he went...he had...horrible...horrible! And...and never ever even (unintelligible)...never!

Other person: (unintelligible).

Interviewer: I think many people did that; I think that was my own response.

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well sure, sure.

Interviewer: Well I hope you feel comfortable today.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh yes, I was.

Other person: She was comfortable (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well thank you.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well like...as I said... when I saw...whatever...whenever I saw the movie here...the battles that were fought, and I can only say that...you know... we never realized what was going on.

Interviewer: Well you've got no news; you didn't know what was happening.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And so it was very revealing to see the other size; and painful also I must say.

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well Ed, but...as...if...if they would ask me tomorrow if you were here in the program, I would...(unintelligible).

Interviewer: But we have material here...that...just on...you know...on...

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: I have...I have a friend that we have met afterward and he...he was (unintelligible) and he's in his eighties now. And when I first met him he had served in the Canadian army in Europe and when he saw me he said, "Don't tell me you are Dutch," because I was so small...I was so...

Interviewer: Tiny.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Tiny, I was so (unintelligible)...1951. And so he said, "I can't believe that you are Dutch!" And I said...

Interviewer: He expected you to be a little round person, huh? He...he can talk!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And so later...we've known each other now forty years and last year he gave me a tape also that was of the battles that he (unintelligible)...

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...in the southern part of France and he...he was in and he asked me to look at the tape and asked, "What do you know more?...where did we feel if it goes..."

Interviewer: Exactly that's the reason...I think...you...your point is so good that...our young people should see some actual clips.

Other person: Well I wouldn't force it on them; I think it would be very...(unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: But they don't want...no they don't want to. My children don't want anything...say, "No, we don't want to hear – not yet."

Other person: (unintelligible)...you look at...you look at North America
(unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: We are talking...

Other person: If you listen...if you listen to their words they say those Americans
(unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: You have to go everywhere.

Other person: (unintelligible)

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well I have...it's...I don't think...I honestly don't believe...and I think that this was the hardest (unintelligible)...because when you suffer...you have the dream of peace and one that really doesn't come to realize the (unintelligible).

Interviewer: That's right. Well I read recently that we have about thirty conflicts going on in the world as we're speaking here.

Other person: I think I heard it too. I think I heard it from (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Awful. And...and you know there was...we were...we were visiting...was it the...where were we the last...it's...there's something that is really sad about (unintelligible) countries...that I thought (unintelligible)...oh yes, I always (unintelligible)...it is...you...place of birth...and who you are born from...that makes it (unintelligible) because let's say...if you were born (unintelligible)...if you happened to be born in Boston or you happened to be born in Ireland or in places of

comfort...where we had...I was born in Indonesia and I was already part of the conflict (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: That's right. I think you've really summed up what you would tell people today...strive for peace.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh definitely...because I think...and the peace has to come from within yourself. And if...and the peace, to me, is a form of respect. Not respect (unintelligible)...and we can't forget...whether it is in the form of (unintelligible)...I would be so embarrassed. Medicare or (unintelligible) or (unintelligible) care or any care it is all a form of peace.

Other person: But you know we were talking that day (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: (unintelligible).

Other person: I still remember the KLM and the (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: But the thing is...

Other person: If you start to fail (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: That's right.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: We have the...we have (unintelligible)...we have...you think...my...my parents...my father left (unintelligible)...and my mother tried to (unintelligible)...three of us...(unintelligible) and after (unintelligible)...and with friends from Indonesia came back to Holland (unintelligible)...and she told my mother, "if you want to see your house (unintelligible)"...well she had two. My mother left us (unintelligible) so we were (unintelligible), that's why I say we never came under one roof again. We started boarding...boarding out...boarding schools...whatever,

so we were (unintelligible) separate, but...I was telling her...and I said if I had a problem who was going to fix it?

Interviewer: Split panels...and we're still doing it on...under different circumstances.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Different circumstances...I mean, there's no commitment, but we were committed. I mean even though my mother died just a couple of years ago...at the right date (unintelligible), and if I ever saw a changed person...it was her. If I did not have respect for her in earlier years of my life...when she was in trouble, I mean, she was a very nervous person...she...she just didn't know how to cope! And you know, the...your (unintelligible) was not being too friendly to me and I was the only one with her, so that was the easy part. But later...talk about...where she...things that she had done (unintelligible) over the years, you know, we often speak of the (unintelligible) only...(unintelligible) you know, not to have an education or a lifestyle of their own and (unintelligible) but my...my parents were very close. My father always kind of took charge (unintelligible), but in many ways now I see that...that wasn't always good. I mean he really didn't give her a chance to develop on her own know, so she...no wonder (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: She probably didn't even know how to write a check if she'd had money.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, she didn't...she didn't know anything. She didn't know how to cook; she didn't know anything.

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And...and so...you know we...we had to...maybe you had to...maybe in the days of...so we didn't have to (unintelligible)...had to marry.

Interviewer: That's right, for most of us...you know that...that were born to grow up in the '40s...late '40s and early '50s.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes.

Interviewer: We were programmed to...to marry...and to have children.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes, but the films...and those exactly the days when the war was over and we had so many widows...coming out of the war...that they hadn't really talked about and that coming out...not knowing what to do. My father said, "As far as I'm concerned, they can take everything away from you but (unintelligible), but they can never take away (unintelligible)...So that is another lesson...another war lesson and...and...oh yes, you can grow up very fast but you don't grow up the wrong way...you grow up in...in (unintelligible) you know...which is (unintelligible). And I think the respect that we felt for each other and the time right there was...it was a lot more. And those are lifelong friendships (unintelligible)...if you believe in...good things, you know. You find out fast enough (unintelligible). And then you...

Interviewer: It's not the real world.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...and then you wonder what was the (unintelligible)...

Other person: (unintelligible)...it's not the real world...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well...still...

Other person: ...a difficult time (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: And still I think I say to myself (unintelligible)...

Other person: (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...I can say to myself...

Other person: (unintelligible)...But still I think this will always (unintelligible). It's part of (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: You never really feel secure any more.

Interviewer: That's right...it...it just (unintelligible). Well, that's so interesting, I do...appreciate being able to meet you and visit with you...(unintelligible).

Other person: (unintelligible).

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes. Well as I say, I...I've learned...I learned a lot, too, and I...I was glad actually for (unintelligible) but from what I hear and I said to my husband, "I will...I will never be afraid of not taking it, I mean, you can take an awful lot away from me. You can (unintelligible) me; you could do whatever you want as long as (unintelligible)..."

Interviewer: The strength to handle what comes up from day to day.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Yes.

Other person: You're ready!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: They...they can take an awful lot away from me, I mean, we are very blessed with this country, you know...

Interviewer: Absolutely, and I certainly...I...I've tried to impregnate my three girls' minds with that...I have three girls, and...and...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: How old are they?

Interviewer: Well my oldest is forty-four and one was just forty this month, and my youngest is thirty-six. So I...they were raised in...in a different world, you know really. But I do believe they are appreciative.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Of course their father was in the service in the United States Air Force and his...he...that helped.

Other person: That (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Right. They gave her...a bigger spectrum of the...of what we went through...I mean I went through little. I was still in high school, but you know we had sugar rationing and (unintelligible). But...but still I was very in tune to...to the happenings.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh but I think...I think without...without...I think those people...and I tell you I get goose pimples still if I pass the wall and I see where they had fought...and so I...I think as I said that I wonder today we would be able to (unintelligible) these great men...we couldn't I don't think.

Interviewer: I've wondered the very same thing.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: I don't think people are really giving...there's nothing...there's nothing to give (unintelligible)...

Interviewer: They were committed to a cause.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: They were committed to a cause and...and even...even as...as people we cannot look at...my own son...I raised a very fine person...he would not go into any army...into any war...especially he didn't want to go when he

had a chance to study and...and in the armed...he said he would have nothing to do with it. And...

Interviewer: Well of course we had a pretty...good villain...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Vietnam.

Interviewer: Well in the...I was thinking about World War II...Hitler was a good villain, and we've never had...that...quite that same situation.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Lucky!

Other person: We were...we were on the way to Australia...(unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: ...when you go...I wouldn't go...

Other person: (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well we're coming...I'm not...I'm not...

Interviewer: Did you really?

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Oh yeah.

Other person: (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Do you really think we are in for peace...do you really think...?

Interviewer: As human beings...never!

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, no...that we will not encounter a third world war?

Interviewer: Oh, I'm sure we will somewhere...

Other person: (unintelligible).

Interviewer: I think that...I think human beings...well...we're imperfect.

Mrs. Zwanenberg: No, I think we're...almost ready for it...that's what I think. I think...(unintelligible)

Other person: (unintelligible sentences)...

Interviewer: I know.

Other person: (unintelligible sentences)...and that's it! Europe (unintelligible sentences)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Well...

Other person: Look at...look at the war and look at the things (unintelligible)...

Mrs. Zwanenberg: Equipment...actually look...look at how they (unintelligible)...

(end of tape 2, side 1, end of interview)

FINAL copy
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Transcribed by: K. Matras
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