

Interview no. 25

After Hiroshima
Interview transcript

Interviewee: Hanneke Coates (HC), born 4/9/1941

Interviewee: Katie Nairne (K) and Ruth Dewa (R)

Date: May 9th 2015

[Sound of phone ringing]

HC: Hello, Hanneke Coates speaking.

K: *Hello it's Katie Nairne.*

HC: Hello Katie.

K: *How are you?*

HC: I'm fine thank you. And you?

K: *Yes I'm good. I er- I'm just here with Ruth.*

R: *Hello*

HC: Hello Ruth.

R: *Hello. Lovely to meet you, on the phone*

HC: Yeah, I'm sorry I can't see you.

K: *Sorry we couldn't come down.*

HC: Yes, I quite understand. Devon is a long way down I'm afraid.

K: *That's OK. Well hopefully we can meet you one day in the future that would be good.*

HC: That will be really nice, I know.

K: *Erm, and thank you for agreeing to speak to us. It's really kind of you.*

HC: Not at all.

K: *Um... We have a recorder here to record you speaking. Is that OK?*

HC: Of course.

K: *Great. That's fantastic. We've got you on loud speaker, so I hope you can hear us ok?*

HC: Yeah I can hear you very well actually,

K: *Oh, fantastic. Um, well, if you're ready to start the interview that would be um, that would be great. We're just going to ask some very broad questions and erm, yeah, let you lead some of the interview as it were. So whatever you'd like to tell us, but obviously don't feel obliged to answer anything that you don't want to.*

HC: Don't worry I'm fine with most things.

K: *OK. Fantastic. Um, okay, so for the sake of the tape, um, we are talking to um, sorry, Hanneke- tell me how to pronounce your name correctly*

HC: Hanneke.

K: *Hanneke Coates, could you erm, spell your name for the tape for us?*

HC: My name is spelt H- A- Double N- E- K- E.

K: *Lovely.*

HC: Coates.

K: *Er, could you spell your surname for us, please?*

HC: Right, C- O- A- T- E- S.

K: *That's lovely, thank you. Um, and would you mind telling us your date of birth for the tape as well, please?*

HC: My date of birth is er, 4th September, '41.

K: *Thank you.*

HC: Just before the war started out in the Far East.

K: *Great. Um, thank you. And er, we are interviewing Hanneke for um, the After Hiroshima project by London Bubble Theatre Company. Um, so please could you start by telling me about where you were born?*

HC: I was born in a place called Surabaya on the island of Java in what was then the Dutch East Indies. It was a colony of the Dutch, and of course it is now Indonesia.

K: *Thank you.*

HC: Surabaya is still called Surabaya.

K: *Interesting. And um, tell me a little about your parents.*

HC: Um, my father was a planter and he had- **(3:00)** Well his family had been in the far East since the 1700s. So they became the sort of erm, colonialists if you like. Erm, he'd never been to Holland until he went to a college, and it was called Davidter, and it's an agricultural college for um, basically people who wanted to become planters- tea planters, coffee, whatever- tobacco. Erm, We had very similar things here

in England, we referred to it as Cirencester. In Holland we would refer to that particular college as Davidter and everybody knows it's a tropical- er, a college for tropical um, agriculture. My mother comes from a very Dutch family. Erm, and she was a teacher when she married my husband- er my father. They met in Holland when my father went to Holland for the first time ever to- to go to college.

K: *And when did they move to Indonesia?*

HC: Well they m- My mother moved out, because of course my father's family had been there for many many generations, so she moved in... I think it was 1936... to marry him.

K: *Yeah...*

HC: She went out to marry him.

K: *Okay, um, and then you were born in 1941?*

HC: That's right. I have an older sister who was born before me...

K: *Mhmm.*

HC: and I have a younger brother who was actually born in the concentration camps. And I have another sister who was born after we were liberated.

K: *Wow... Um... So when did you go into the concentration camp?*

HC: Well, erm, if you go back to when the war started out there- Pearl Harbour, when I do talks, I often particularly when I speak to children or teenagers, I ask them do they know anything about Pearl Harbour? But of course they don't know anything. That is when the Americans were drawn into the, er, into World War 2. And it's when the Japanese, who bombed Pearl Harbour, started moving into the whole of that part of Southeast Asia. So they then sort of took hold of what was then the Dutch East Indies, Malaysia, Singapore, all those places... They moved in there and sort of... They culled us originally. My father had to- because war was pending, my father had to join the um, the- the Dutch East Indies Army erm, as a soldier and they told **(6:00)** him that his wife and children should move into what was known as the 'poxon' camps – the Japanese would look after us. And in fact, as soon as we were all in, all people with white faces basically, went into those camps, they put barbed wire around us, so they became concentration camps. So my father didn't even know he had a son, although he knew my mother was pregnant, in fact- right- when he- just before he was taken capture, erm, to work on the Burma railway, he erm, looked through what was then the fencing – they hadn't shut us off yet – and he saw my mother, and he asked her, he made some sort of- 'how much longer before the baby was due?' And she put up two fingers, saying, "Two more weeks."

K: *Wow.*

HC: And a Japanese man saw that, a soldier... He picked up a brick and he threw it at my mother's tummy because he thought she was making a 'V' sign, a victory sign. And luckily enough there were other women there, who realised instantly what was going on and they told her to run and get away and they- they sort of protected her. So she was quite heavily pregnant at that stage but my father never saw my mother again until 1946.

K: *Wow.*

HC: And so although she sent him a Red Cross card, to say that he'd had a son, he didn't really know, because the Japanese didn't pass on any of that sort of information. Sometimes they did, but I have actually in my possession, I was going to show it to you, some Red Cross cards which my father- my father sent after he'd been to Burma, they sent him to Japan to work in a copper mine. And erm, that ca- Red Cross card was withheld by the Japanese, my mother didn't receive it until after the war was over... So, they did quite mean things to us.

K: *I um, yeah, I can imagine it must be interesting and difficult to have those cards.*

HC: I've never seen it until this whole business of- of erm, Nagasaki erm, came up and erm, I decided I really wanted to go and I- my younger sister who doesn't know anything about the war, because we never spoke about the concentration camps. Very much like the people in Europe, **(9:00)** people didn't want to talk about it. One of the reasons we didn't talk about it was, when we came to Holland in 1947, erm, the Dutch had been overrun by the Germans, so they had been- they'd been through a horrible war and also the last two winters were bitterly cold- there was no food, there was no heat. So when we turned up after the concentration camps, they were given tiny rations of extra sugar and I can remember my uncle, my mother's brother, was furious about this. He said, "You were in a lovely warm country, what are you g-making a fuss about?" (Laughs) They had no idea what we'd been through. And it was really only, what, thirty years later that stories began to- and so people started talking about it. But I realised my younger sister knows nothing about those things. And she found an, um, an envelope with lots of information- When I was telling her I'm going to Nagasaki and I said, "Would you like to come?" And she knew, after my parents died, she had some information she never really looked at, so she went and looked at it and so she's given me the photocopies of these things, and so we're now talking about something that's happened seventy years ago...

K: *How strange...*

HC: and she had no idea. Y'know, we were looking at things and I said, "That's my camp number" and she said, "What do you mean, camp number?" I said, "Well, just like the Jews, we had camp numbers", but of course she didn't know, we didn't talk about it. It's only now, she's retired you see; now, that she's beginning to realise... What an incredible person my mother must have been looking after three small children on a starvation diet. You were whipped, we were beaten, we were abused, you mention it, everything.

K: *Yeah... Um... Do you remember, um, anything from, personally or-? Is- I guess you were very young.*

HC: Do I what?

K: *How old were you when you went into the camps?*

HC: Well I was little; I was only a very small baby, a year old. Well yes, but we didn't come out of those camps until well into 1946,

K: *Mmm.*

HC: because they didn't know what to do with us. And at that stage- remember it was a colony, and the Japanese people had told the people from Indonesia, y' know, that they should start a revolution, because they should be free. Ah well you know- Colonies all over the world had been set free and, of course, we were one of the first countries that was set free, so we had a revolution, straight from the concentration

camp. I have vivid memories of the revolution that was far more **(12:00)** scary than anything that happened before. Erm, my father- I mean we were constantly threatened. I remember they would- white, we had white houses because being in the tropics- and white walls and in the morning you'd wake up and they'd put down some horrible slogans 'froggies go home' and other things. So I have vivid memories of that.

K: *Yeah... Um... I'd love to hear more about those, erm... Could we, er, I'm just thinking the best route to go, um, so that um, we don't miss anything of your memories, um, could you tell me the first thing you remember from being in the concentration camps?*

HC: Yes I do and I'll tell you why. I was at a Christian camp, erm- erm- something called *Cassio* and I was part of the leadership and we had a day where we were 'bonding', as they called it, and erm, they asked us to turn to the person next to us and remember the first thing that was in our memory. But not only that, it was the first smell. What is your first smell that you remember? And I totally choked up because my first memory is... Sitting- and I suppose I must have been about four, a small girl – I was very, very skinny because- 'cause we weren't fed; we had a tiny cup of rice and a cup of water once a day. We lived on that diet for years. And erm, so I remember always being- having no energy. So I was sitting on the little steps early in the morning- and this is in Central- and that particular camp was in central Java, which was surrounded by volcanoes. And, so, I would sit there and a little group of women came past and they were carrying, basically what was like- like a sausage. But I knew what was inside the sausage, because if you died in the night we had no beds, we were given 45 centimetres to sleep on, each person. We had a 100 women and children crammed in a three bedroom bungalow, to give you some idea of the conditions...

K: *Wow*

HC: And, erm, this was my little friend, called Robbie and he had died of malnutrition. I don't know what he died of, but he died in the night. And so, there were no coffins, so you were sewn up in your own sleeping mat. That's my memory of the smell, because when you sleep on a mat, **(15:00)** y' know that's a smell you never forget. So that was my earliest memory... The sleeping mat and the fact that my friend that I'd been playing with, just days before, had been sewn up... And was being buried by his own mother and a few other women who were carrying spades, because the Japanese wouldn't do anything for us, so you buried your own dead. And that was my earliest memory.

K: *Wow*

HC: Another memory, v- very vivid memory I have, and I suppose- I can't remember which camp it was, I was in different camps, but we- every day we were called out to what was called '*Kupola*' or '*Appelle*' or '*Tenko*', there has been a film in this country called '*Tenko*', which means we were called out and we had to face where Japan was and bow to the Emperor of Japan. And this happened, three, four, sometimes five times a day and sometimes in the middle of the night, th- the Japanese soldiers would come in and scream at us. They carried whips in their boots and they would whip us and they always screamed. They never asked, they screamed and so we would stand and bow to the Japanese, erm, to honour the Emperor. And we were called out one day, and the place where we had to stand and- and bow and we were given instructions in Japanese, what to do, stand up, bow, stand straight, relax, whatever, and when we arrived and remember I'm talking about eleven and half thousand women and children, occupying an area of 100 square metres, to give you some idea of how concentrated it was, we had to go and stand on these um, areas where we had to bow and when we got there at the end of, of this erm, place was a big *Kapok* tree. A *Kapok* tree is quite large trees, a huge tree, with very, very horizontal branches and dangling from those branches were two Dutch soldiers. In fact, they were fathers of children that were in that camp and they'd been strung up and hung... Because they had tried to make contact with their wives and children inside-

They'd escaped somehow and that was their punishment and we had to stand and watch these two Dutch soldiers dangling and I can vividly remember their faeces and their urine, which of course had **(18:00)** run down, caking their legs and their khaki trousers. Those were the sort of vivid memories I have of the things that they did to us.

K: Wow... Erm... Yeah, I mean that's... I don't have anything to say that's erm... Y' know, I mean it's just completely outside any experience that I can compare to. But erm, yeah, thank you for telling me about those memories because, erm, I think it's important to share people's memories and erm, know what happened. Erm... Do you remember any other incidence from in the camp that you'd want to share?

HC: I, I remember vividly... This must have been right at the end because the Red Cross sent parcels, but the Japanese hid them from us. And it was not until after the war that they opened these, these um, places that were packed high with Red Cross parcels, Red Cross- information from loved ones, and erm, so I think this must have been right at the end er, of the war. Erm, and we were given a tin of corned beef (Laughs). I'd never eaten meat at all- I had no idea. I had never tasted bread or cheese, milk, vegetables, fruit. You mention it; I had no idea what those things meant. We lived off half a coconut of rice and a bit of water lily soup. And occasionally, y' know, they'd have a rat which they would put in it or whatever they could find. But of course, there were so many people living in those camps that in fact we had virtually nothing. Erm, so I can remember banging my fists on the table, on whatever it was, no- it can't have been a table, 'cause 'cause we didn't have them but I remember saying, "I'm eating meat! I'm eating meat!" and I had no idea what meat was of course and that was a tin of corned beef. And- and they'd apparently also put some chocolate in it. But my mother reckoned that we children never- we didn't know what chocolate was, we didn't know what sugar was, and so she thought, in the middle of the night and she hadn't eaten chocolate for years, she decided to have a little bit of chocolate, because we were asleep and having had her one tiny bit of chocolate, all she could think of was the next bit of chocolate and in the end she ate the whole bar and she was violently sick the next day because never having eaten anything like that for so many years, you can imagine what it must have done to her intestines. **(21:00)**

K: Yeah.

HC: And erm, I remember, my mother has always told us that story, how guilty she felt (laughs) but we wouldn't have felt any better anyway.

K: Oh. Could you tell me what a typical day in the camp was like?

HC: It was always about screaming soldiers. We were absolutely terrified of them. And if you did not do instantly what they required of you, which was mostly to go to these places where we would have to face Japan and bow to the Emperor, that took up hours and hours and hours. And eating was always very slow. My mother used to say 'you chew it, chew it and chew it' because we had so little, we had to digest it, y' know, in a different way. Erm, y' know, we were- To be honest; we were so weak we didn't play like normal children; we had no energy, we were sick, we had malaria. I've had all kinds of things: malaria and cholera, beriberi, we had all these, dysentery, all sorts of horrible things. So lots of people died of course. I tell you something else that's very strange, that the women and the teenage girls didn't have any periods, because they were so weak, I suppose their bodies sort of protected them by not losing blood. So they had no periods for years, very strange.

K: Yeah. Um... S-

HC: So, yeah, I mean basically, y' know, it was all about o- obeying the soldiers with their whips, doing exactly as you were told. Erm, you wouldn't dream of not instantly obeying, because not only would you be punished, but your mother or the entire camp would be punished by withholding food the next day. So, y' know, as small children we learnt very quickly that you did what you were told.

K: *Did they make you work in the camp?*

HC: Erm, not the children, but the- my mother did, yes. Erm, my mother had to er, move furniture. Erm... Because they'd pinched all the homes of these Dutch colonials, they got the women to move all the furniture which apparently then was shipped over to Japan, and y' know, all the officers had their pick and they shipped it over to Japan, for their homes, at home in Japan. So goodness knows what is in Japan that came from us. I have no idea. So that's what my mother did. **(24:00)** And then other people would erm, cook, because eventually they could only cook for your own sort of immediate area because they were given tiny rations, but, y' know. The teenage girls, because they were the strongest, they did a phenomenal amount of work apparently. And, you know, they were always very erm, optimistic- They were singing and you know, they did a lot of the work. Erm, and cooking was basically rice with water lilies in it or y' know, anything. My sister and I would be sent out with a bucket to see if we could find snails... But of course, y' know, all the children in the camp looked for snails so eventually there were no snails left and they would add the snails to the rice and the water lilies, (laughs) water lillies- erm, so I remember having to do that. But, to be really honest we were so weak, that we didn't do very much. We had so little to eat. We had- Y' know, we didn't play like normal children did. We weren't allowed- The children weren't allowed to be taught anything. The Japanese would not allow any teaching of reading. I didn't learn to read until I was about seven and of course, most children had no idea. We'd never seen a book or held a pencil in our hand. We had no idea. And the only books that er, the women had was their bibles and they even pinched the bibles at one time as a kind of punishment. And I got the bible that my mother- a Dutch bible that my mother carried around and they were confiscated. And inside this bible is my camp number and a Japanese stamp and I have never known what this Japanese stamp was. And erm, eventually it was translated and all it said was 'Possession of the Emperor' or whatever. I don't know- I don't think many of them were Christians anyway so... They- There was a group of women who were very courageous and they went and saw the camp commander who was called Sunai. He was crazy. When it was a full moon he did the most horrendous things to us. Erm, but anyway, they went and saw him, very politely bowed and scraped and y' know, did all the right things and said 'could they speak to him?' and erm, they said 'they would like to have their bibles back'. And- The Japanese are inexplicable people. You never know how they are going to respond. **(27:00)** And after a lot of bowing and scraping and a lot of courage, because he could easily have turned the other way and said 'I'm going to punish you, how dare you ask me things like that', but he eventually agreed. So, they got their bibles back and I've still got this bible.

K: *Wow.*

HC: So it's a very, very strange story. I'll tell you another story about how unpredictable they can be. Right at the end of the war, Easter, and remember we didn't finish our war until the Americans dropped the bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. And erm, because we were still in those camps. Erm, we were just forgotten I think and the Japanese would not erm, capitulate so, that is why- my mother always said we would not have last- lasted another three weeks, we would all have been dead by then, because we all so starved and so ill and so, everything else. There was- Right at the end, I think the Japanese must have realised that they were going to lose the war because at Easter and they agreed the women could go to a- a church. And in the area- we- my last camp was an area that is now known as Chikata and there was a Catholic Church there. And all the women regardless of whether they were Christians or Buddhist or whatever, they all went to have this church service for one reason only. You can imagine the noise level in a place of a 1000 square metres or yards, this eleven and a half thousand women and children, nobody had

any privacy whatsoever; y' know, we- we had a hundred women and children sleeping side by side, day and night. There were lots and lots of children. So they thought that they could go to a church and sit quietly, because they weren't allowed to pray, they weren't allowed to sing, they weren't allowed to preach, they were just allowed to be in the church. Anyway, so all the women were quietly sitting there, all the Dutch women had cleaned this church beforehand and they were simply sitting there and praying and they heard a noise. And the steps up to the church were marble steps and the Japanese officers carried huge swords on the side of them and they were- the Japanese are very small people, so, when he- they heard the sword clanking on these erm, marble steps and this Japanese officer came in and he sat in the back of the church and **(30:00)** he folded his arms and buried his head in his arms and he wept. He cried and cried silently and he sat there for fifty minutes just crying. And then he went up and went out and my mother always said this is another side of the Japanese they'd never seen. He's another human being, who knows what he left behind? Because we'd only ever seen them as, well, torturers because they tortured us, but yet here was another side of a human being. So, I've never forgotten that story. That's my mother's story, that's not my story. But, erm, you know. He cried, for, whatever. Who knows?

K: *That's, yeah... Strange and amazing...*

HC: Powerful isn't it?

K: *Yeah it is powerful... Yeah... Yeah... Um, do you remember the day when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima?*

HC: I remember- No because- 'cause we didn't know. Erm we were- Funnily enough, I do remember Lady Mountbatten after we were liberated, Lady Mountbatten came to our camp and she was wearing a khaki uniform funnily enough, I remember that, and we as children, there was a sort of- there was barbed wire and matting- erm, matting made from bamboo, I don't know what you call it in English, but it's matting anyway. So you could- We could never see to the outside and nobody could see inside where we were. We were completely surrounded in this, sort of, thousand square metres with matting. I do remember that. And I can remember my father- not my father because it was before that, because the Dutch soldiers were let- let out. And my mother had a picture of my father, but it was only a picture of his head, not a picture of him as a person... So, I remember... I couldn't understand it because I remember running to my mother and saying 'the daddies are here, the daddies have come and they've got legs'.

K: *(Laughs).*

HC: I had no idea what 'daddies' were, and- but they were human beings with legs, because all I knew was this head. And when my father eventually came he gave me a present and I've never ever forgotten it. It's a little- a little metal... erm... mirror, a khaki mirror, a soldier's mirror. And it was a sort of metal thing and you could see yourself- I'd never seen myself. I'd never ever looked in a mirror **(33:00)** because nobody had mirrors. But I remember that vividly. I remember, I kept looking at it and eventually my parents said 'stop looking in the mirror, your hair will go green'. So... I stopped looking in the mirror quite as often as I did before, but I was so fascinated by my own face and I'll tell you something else that I had very vivid memories of... After the war, the Dutch and the English came to liberate us and of course we were a bit like children from Belsen- y' know, we were just- well, bags of bone. I had such hair on my head and I was covered in tropical ulcers...(her dog barks, interruption)...there was a young Dutch Doctor and I can vividly remember he had red cheeks and I had never seen red cheeks because we being tropical children, we were yellow. And erm... We had no chairs of course, we just slept on the floor, we had no furniture at all. Anyway I remember him sitting down and I remember, he was so overcome by emotion seeing this young mother with her three young children looking like nothing that his tears were coming down his cheeks.

And of course, I had only ever seen a man scream and yell and abuse me. I'd never seen that kind of emotion before.

K: *Yeah.*

HC: And he came to give vitamin B injections. So once a week he would come in and sit on the floor and my mother said it was remarkable how quickly we recovered as children, y' know, having had such a terrible start in life, but I- I- that is something I vividly remember- This young doctor with his red cheeks and with emotion. I had no idea about these kinds of emotions.

K: *No. I mean, yeah. Why would you? Amazing. Um... Did- Have your parents (36:00) talked about, erm, the day the bomb was dropped since?*

HC: Well, yes. My mother has always said and it's always been a problem, because in England, come August we have all these erm... people who talk about Hiroshima and what happened there and the terrible things that happened. For a very long time it's been quite a conflicting thing for me and I've always stood up and said 'if those bombs had not been dropped I would not be speaking to you now, because we would all have been dead'. And people just don't know about that. I'm not saying it's right, but there are always two sides and there were more people that died in those w- I'm not talking about soldiers, I'm talking about women and children. Three- *Three* hundred concentration camps just in that archipelago. And more people died, women and children, than died in Hiroshima, but people don't know about that.

K: *Yeah.*

HC: And they died from malnutrition. From being punished. From tropical diseases that they wouldn't give us medicine for. And people just don't know about that. So you see how difficult it is for people. My older sister... She's very angry with me, because she found out that I'm a member of the forgiveness project. She doesn't understand at all. And in a way, y' know, I can try and help her understand it, but she is just angry with me. Marina said to me, "I don't think people realise how costly forgiveness is."

K: *No... Um... No that's... My experience of what people have said as well. Um... I mean, people have lots of opinions on it, don't they? How does your sister feel do you think?*

HC: Well, y' know, I feel very strongly that there is only one way forward. But it's not an easy option.

K: *No.*

HC: There is the decision we make and- I stopped someone else recently and I said 'the more you talk about forgiveness... You as a person change, your attitude to life changes and you get to a stage where you can no longer go back and be in any way a hating person'. But you have to keep talking about it. (39:00) It's not, um a sort of thing that you just touch on. You have to keep talking and reassuring yourself on it, that that is the only way.

K: *Yeah. How has your attitude changed towards your past experiences over the years?*

HC: Well I didn't realise- You've probably seen my- y' know, what the rest of my life was like. I married an Englishman, who was a complete control freak. He also had a terrible temper so he used to break my bones and beat me up. But basically he was a complete control freak- that was the worst of it. And because as a child I had instilled in me that if I was told to do something I did it, I didn't question it... That's what I did in my marriage. Until my children grew up and then suddenly I decided I wanted to go back nursing, I

wanted to do this and he wasn't having it. And that's when the conflict began to get proper conflict and it really affected me. I'd been married to him for forty years and in the end he walked out on me having broken so many bones. Erm... But, y' know. It was another year or so before I could begin to- I remember there was the forgiveness project had- had an article in the *Church Times* by Sister- I can't remember her name now but did she have something to do with that chap West? Who'd killed all the- What's her name?

K: *Oh! Marianne Partington*

HC: That's it! And she- it was a big article, and I was absolutely overwhelmed by this article because there was no question about it. It wasn't a sort of easy thing to do, she was really struggling, but it was clearly, y' know, the right thing to do. And that changed everything for me. That one article changed everything for me. And from then on, erm, I've not really looked back and the strange thing is, y' know, I'm going to Nagasaki in September and erm, y- you know about this do you?

K: *Yes, but do, um, I mean partly for the sake of the tape please do tell us more.*

HC: Well it's a- I'm quite overwhelmed by the kindness of the girls that are organising this... They've been so lovely. Suddenly, I mean- There's another group of people who've realised the other side of the story. **(42:00)** They've realised that all these young soldiers like my father who were tortured. They went through- I mean, I can't- I mean my father never told me very much, I know he had nightmares for the rest of his life and I used to hear him scream in the night, but he never ever talked about anything. He just wanted to wipe it away. And of course a lot- I mean I- I- His little bible has got sort of, so and so died, so and so died, you know, his friends. I don't know what they died of. But, y' know, it was easy to die in those camps. To see younger people now doing what I'm doing, talking about a different way. We have to communicate with people. There are always- There is always another side to the- to the war. And of course Desmond Tutu, when he started those reconciliation programs, I remember watching him on Ireland. And I-I- I was brought up to think the IRA were the most atrocious people until I watched some of his reconciliation programs, and I realised where their anger, their bitterness, their fury had come from. And it's always about previous generations.

K: *Yeah.*

HC: Other generations have instilled this bitterness in people. But it's come from something that wasn't right. The English did some terrible things to the Irish. I didn't know that, but they did. And so, you can see there is always another side to the story. These girls that are putting us up, I mean they're paying for our hotel bill; I mean she's going to get the money back. She's trusted me, she's organised it all, it's going to be unbelievable. And in fact my father was in a factory- She's ju- I've just had an email from one of the girls saying 'I realise, would you like me to take you back to where your father was because that factory is actually still there. There is now a plaque on the wall to say how many people died during the wartime.' Rather a lot- what I'm going to be part of in Nagasaki. But y' know, they're bending over backwards to do the right thing. And not once has- She knows my story, just like I'm telling you, but she has never ever been anything other than kind to me. Which is very, very different from the way I remember **(45:00)** the Japanese people. So there is another younger generation wanting to change things. Y' know, we are clearly very different people. Japanese people are very different from us Europeans, but they're human beings and I'm seeing them in a very different light now.

K: *Yeah. Um, so when will you be going to Nagasaki?*

HC: Well the ceremony is on the 13th of September, so I shall be going a few days before that. I- We'll only stay for a week or so because I can't get away very easily here. And my sons- One of them is coming over

from Panama. Andrew is coming over from Panama and James is bringing his twelve year old son with him. Now, you should imagine what effect that is going to have on a twelve year old boy. And the girls are putting into place, they are going to erm- erm- get Joshua to meet some of his age group erm- erm- and talk about this. And this will be in Nagasaki, the place where the Americans dropped the bomb that ultimately saved my life.

K: *Yeah... Yeah... What will the ceremony involve?*

HC: I've no idea yet. Well, I do know that there will be a- ceremony starts at 11am. The British Ambassador I think is coming. There'll be ten English people there, which includes me and my family and another family from Padstow, they're close by and we've been talking on the phone, but there will also be an awful lot of Dutch people and I guess I'm taking- I'm bringing some photographs of my parents in the early days, because I expect there will be people who were in the concentration camps with me. Because it's those sort of people whose fathers went out to Burma and Japan. So it'll be very interesting to see, erm, y' know, how- how they will respond.

K: *Yeah, yeah, really interesting.*

HC: And they're going to give us some sort of meal afterwards. So it's going to be very emotional I think.

K: *Oh, I'm sure.*

HC: But, y' know, I mean, they're actually trying to match Joshua up with his own age group. I mean, Joshua doesn't speak Japanese, but I'm sure the Japanese speak very good English. Erm... So... Y' know, they clearly feel that that is the only way forward. **(48:00)** Younger generations, they've got to start talking about this.

K: *Yeah it sounds very positive.*

HC: Sorry?

K: *It sounds very positive- Move Forward.*

HC: Yeah. Yeah. And of course they've done this before in Japan. You see this is another thing I didn't know. We've always said the official attitude of the Japanese government is that they have never ever acknowledged what they have done. If you look at the Germans, they've really repented of all they've done, they openly talk about it. But the Japanese, as far as I knew, had- just don't want to know. But that's clearly not true, because there's this group of people who are doing this. This girl who has been writing to me, setting this up, who has been booking my hotel out there erm- this is what she does for a living. She goes round the hundreds of concentration camps where they had Dutch and English and y' know, Australian soldiers who were in those- in those factories or in mines or whatever and so they are going round to find out, I had no idea until she told me that I could access my father's erm, Japanese records. I've got them now. But I didn't know until a couple of months ago that I was entitled to get hold of them. And for that matter, my records, of my concentration camp, my name, my mother's name, my sibling's names, I had no idea. And apparently after the war the Japanese handed all of that over to the Dutch government and no doubt they did the same to the English. So there are people and I had no idea that there were such a group that did this and this is what they do for a living. They go to these places, see what they can do, contact people y' know, who are, well, like myself who have been in concentration camps, but also um, the family from Padstow, it was their father who was there. He's written a book about it, erm, but they had

never been there, they weren't affected, they were in England. Whereas, the Dutch have got far more people who were in those concentration camps because we were colonialists.

K: Mhm. Um... Yeah, I mean, it sounds like it will be a fantastic experience. Um... Hanneke do you mind if I backtrack a little bit and um, ask you some more about the end of the war?

HC: Of course not, no.

K: I mean our focus for the project is er, sort of the years 1945 (51:00) to '63, um, so I was wondering if you remember anything er, from after 1945 in relation to the end of the war, so how- How did people's memories of the bomb dropping um... How did they relate to your own?

HC: Um, there was an awful lot going on but we were- My mother always said, she spent three and half years in concentration camps and then we spent another, what- eight months or so in those concentration camps because they didn't know what to do with us. We had no homes. They couldn't- We didn't know whether my father was alive or dead. Nobody knew where anybody was. So the Red Cross eventually put families together but we weren't- we didn't meet up until 1946 with my father and of course our war didn't officially finish until August/September 1945. And so although we were fed, we were cared for, we had Dutch soldiers protecting us, we were still in a war zone because as I was telling you they then had a revolution. In fact it became so dangerous for us we then, I also remember this, we were put on a bomber, with no seats in the plane- I'd never been on a plane of course, but they took us to Borneo, to a place called Balikpapan which was safer, because they didn't have so many locals that wanting to murder us Dutch people and I lived in a tented refugee camp for another- another eight months or so. I lived in a tent, because they had nowhere to put us. So, it was a very strange situation. So from the war, although we were liberated, it was a very long time before we finally were put together with my father and it was even longer before my mother actually was allowed to go to Holland. We didn't go to Holland until 1947, y' know several years after the war had finished and I have vivid memories of that... Erm... Because I'd never met my Dutch family. Erm... My father's parents died. Erm and- My father came from, he was a half blood. So all my cousins are coloured, whereas I don't look very coloured. (54:00) But they'd married- My father had married a very Dutch girl, blond hair, but his siblings had all married people from Javanese backgrounds so my cousins are all Javanese looking people, whereas we are not. So they didn't actually go into the camps because they looked like locals- brown. Erm... And both my grandparents died and of course again, my father came out of the war and he didn't know his parents had died... Although they weren't in camps, erm... It must have been- It can't have been very easy, but anyway they both died, my grandparents, during the war. And my father has got a brother called Eddie and he is quite a lot older than my father and he came out of those camps without any toes. He was in the Japanese concentration camp and where he was it was so bitterly cold that his toes all froze off.

K: *Wow.*

HC: And I remember, nowadays you wouldn't think about it, but in those days gentlemen wore leather shoes, but he didn't, he wore gym shoes because he couldn't wear leather shoes. I mean it sounds funny now because these days everybody can wear what they like, but those days. I can remember him wearing his black gym shoes. 'Cause they were soft you see.

K: *Yeah... Hanneke we just have to change the battery on the recorder, sorry.*

[Ends] (55:51)

Interview recommences

K: Yeah, well we would love to see those, if there's a way...

HC: Okay well I'll send them to you, I'll send you some!

K: Thank you that's really kind.

HC: My sister wants some of them anyway so I'm going to have to go in and have some more printed anyway.

K: Thank you that would be fantastic. Um, we've got the recorder up and working again now. Um, let me think where we'd got to... Um... So you returned to Holland, when was that? 1947?

HC: For the first time in 1947, and then I was sent to Holland. This will sound very strange to you, but in those days, children – I mean nobody would do that now, but you know that's how things happened. There were no boarding schools in Holland, so we were sent to foster families, because of our education. I mean nobody would dream of doing that in this day and age, but that's how it was. So my parents put an advert in the paper looking for a home for two little girls, that's my older sister and me, so they found these foster families one after another, one right after the next, we went through... um you know, because we were complete strangers because we were tropical children, and we had all these ghastly families, where again we were in many ways abused. Uhm... And I was in those foster families until I was about 17 or 18. So, you know... erm... And in those days the first time that my parents lost us, I did not see my parents for *four* years. There was no such thing as aeroplanes nowadays, because nobody, well I mean my parents had nothing of course, when we came out of those camps. So they paid for our fostering, but there was no way they could have paid for a flight back to Java. So we didn't see them for four years, and my father only got European leave every four years, in those days. So it wasn't an easy sort of childhood one way or another.

K: No, not at all.

HC: So then I went nursing, so I did my nursing in Holland, and then I got married. And you know the story of that.

K: Yeah. Do you remember people talking about the war as you were growing up?

HC: Well we... you see, when we went to Holland, we talked about the war in Holland, because they'd been occupied by the Germans. We did not talk about war. I mean we did, a little bit between ourselves as people who'd been in those camps, but on the whole the subject was taboo. We just did not talk about it. In fact, I have an old aunt, she's what, 99 now? And of course in Holland – she's Dutch **(58:51)** – I was talking to her son and apparently they're doing all these sorts of recollections like I'm doing to you now, people talking about the war out in the Far East, and so she watched them, and she watched one programme and she said 'never again, I don't want to know'. She does not want to be reminded. That's how horrendous it was. She just doesn't want to cope with that. She stuffed it away. I have a brother who was, I told you, born in the camp, and he lives in New Zealand, and erm, he became terribly depressed and he told me a few years ago that eventually they sent him to some sort of psychiatrist or whatever, psychologist, I don't what they are, and apparently he talked about the war. And nobody had ever talked to him about the war before. So he... he was very small, trying to remember, because he's probably gleaned bits of information, but you know, I mean can you imagine as a child, um, in that sort of, you know, environment, it's no wonder... I'm not, I've never been depressed because I'm not that kind of a

person, you know, I've got a very sanguine sort of personality, but my brother has really struggled. And I emailed him about Nagasaki and he was *very* dubious about the whole thing.

K: Yeah. Is he not going to come?

HC: Sorry?

K: Is he going to go to Nagasaki?

HC: Well I tried to persuade him, I said it'd be good for him to talk about it, but he's not keen. And to be honest if my sons weren't coming with me I'm not sure I would have the courage to go on my own.

K: Yeah... No that's understandable.

HC: Yeah so I do understand how he feels, but you know he's had years and years of depression which I'm fairly certain goes back to our very peculiar childhood.

K: Yeah. Do you remember people talking about the Japanese?

HC: Yes! Oh yes. My mother, oh! You couldn't use the word Japan! She would never *ever* have *anything* Japanese in the house. I mean you couldn't do that now, because you know you buy a washing machine it's got Japanese components in it, but my mother absolutely *hated* the Japanese with a vengeance. And I have to say I would never hold that against her. What she's been through as a young mother with three very small children... That must've been unbelievable. **(1:1:51)** And I'll tell you something else, somebody gave me a book written by a Dutchman who'd been in the same camp I'd been in, in fact we were in the same sort of street, which was surprising because it was such a very very cramped conditions, and I read this book, and he absolutely *hates* his mother – she's dead now – but he's a writer, and all the stories, I *know* all the stories because there are lots of stories that I know that happened to us. But he has... he tells these stories with such venom, it's quite shocking. One of the things that he hated, he hated his mother until the day she died, because he says, he hated her, because she didn't stand up to the Japanese. Why did she not stand up and object to all the things they did? And I can remember my mother saying, 'I wouldn't *dream* of objecting to the Japanese! All they did was punish you. I had three children to look after, they could kill you!' That's what they did, you know, if you didn't do what you were told, if you were in any way... I mean look at those two soldiers who were hung from that tree, just for looking through a gap in the perimeter, trying to find their wives and waving to them, they were strung up. So my mother always said, she always did exactly what she was told to do. This young- this chap, when he was young, he absolutely hated his mother for not standing up.

K: Yeah... Yeah, it's difficult isn't it because-

HC: These things are very very very complicated I think.

K: Yeah, absolutely.

HC: I don't ever remember my father talking about the war. Never. He just pushed it away. He died very young, he just did not want to talk about it. And a lot of, I think people are now, are people beginning to realise that unless we talk about these things... My sister won't talk about it. You know, it's just done and dusted. But because I was- I've been through such a difficult marriage, I realised that you know a lot of my problems went back to my childhood, you know where I did as I was told. Erm, I've- I've- I've tried to... puzzle out where that's come from – I've actually written my story, the things I remember, and that's

helped me a lot actually because I discovered something very interesting. I was dreading writing it but I knew I had to go back over there. **(1:4:51)** In fact, I realised very quickly that there were a tremendous amount of positive things in those camps. The way the women looked after each other. The way they you know, cared for their... My mother was taken away at one time she was so ill, and nobody knew where she'd gone. There was a small hospital somewhere, but she was put on transport, we didn't see her for months. But all the other women immediately took care of us. Whereas the men, the boys, when they were 10 years old, they were taken away from their mothers and they were put in all the male camps. But the men didn't look after the little boys. The women did. Because women have that instinct. But the men... So those boys, and I know my brother-in-law's brother was one of them, those boys became basically feral children. And this particular one, he's called **Kijst(?)**, he's dead now, but he became an alcoholic, he was one drugs, he never did a stroke of work, he lived entirely off handouts from the government – this is in Holland. Because he didn't know what to... you know he'd become a feral child.

K: Yeah. Do you remember your mother's opinions on Hiroshima?

HC: Yes I do! She would have said, 'Good! That's what they deserve.' And I'm afraid that is how, you know... I was brought up to hate the Japanese. So if we had anything Japanese... Ouf! She wouldn't have it. And that's why... I find it so surprising that I'm discovering another kind of Japanese.

K: Mhm. Did you have any comprehension of the outside world when you were in the concentration camp?

HC: None whatsoever, we were completely closed off. We had *no* idea what was going on. The only thing was that the Japanese, they would, um, punish us. They would suddenly announce that they would punish us, so they would hold the little food we had for two or three days, so we would literally go without food. And the women were always excited about it because they reckoned that there'd been such a little victory of the allied soldiers over the Japanese, and so the only way the Japanese could respond was by punishing us.

K: Did your mother tell you stories about outside the camp?

HC: Well, no because we had... **(1:7:51)** I really had... I can remember the first apple I ate, I can remember the first cheese I had. I can remember lots of things I had no inkling about. I mean, if you're brought up without any concept of *anything* outside the camp, which was nothing, we had nothing, I had no toys, we had no... no books, we had no pencils, we had *no* idea what the outside world was like. And that's... I have very vivid memories of the first this or the first that, the first so and so, like that young doctor. I remember watching him. I mean to see a grown man, and I mean a *man* not a woman, was an emotional new space. I've never forgotten it... So you know, I was totally deprived of normal emotions. And the women were very... the Dutch women are very strong women. They looked after each other. And so, you know, everything we did was always done in an optimistic way. Even right towards the end when we were all basically dying, they were still optimistic people. I, I... You know, I have so many memories of the first this or the first that, because by that time I was about 6 years old. I remember my first shoes. We went on a boat, we were put on a ship to Holland, through the canal, and at the end of – this is the canal in Egypt, the Suez canal – at the end of the Suez canal there's an enormous statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps, who built the canal. I never... I didn't know what a statue was! So I always remember... I can still... visualise that. And we were then put up in a camp where they had Red Cross outfits for us, because remember we came from the tropic, we had no clothes. Everything I had was from Red Cross. And I've still got a picture of myself wearing my first Red Cross outfit [laughs], a cold country! So yes, I have very very clear memories of the first this and the first that. And mostly to do with food of course.

K: Yes. When the war ended how did the news reach the camp?

HC: Very very slowly. Uhm, and one of the first things they did was our camp commander, he was known as 'the butcher', the butcher of Tjideng **(1:10:51)** – the name of the camp was called Tjideng – and he was known as 'the butcher', he did such... You know he committed such atrocities over all those years towards the women *and* children. And um, uh, they whipped him away because they reckoned that if he was allowed to – this is the Dutch soldiers and the English soldiers who came into the camps who liberated us – they took him away because they reckoned if they didn't the women would lynch him. And he was, he was... He stood for trial in Singapore, and he was shot by Dutch soldiers, that was his... You know, he was shot dead, for what he'd done. So all these stories sort of trickled through, but I think, you know... I think the women were so absolutely exhausted. Uhm... it was a very very long time, I think, before any sort of normality, uhm... As I was saying my mother always said it was worse because, you know, they thought we are liberated, we are going to wear pretty frocks, and lipstick, and things like that, but that didn't happen of course [chuckles], because we were still incarcerated in those camps for, oh, many many many many months, until finally my father was found and we were brought together. And then, as I was saying, I went and... We lived in a damn tent [laughs] for, you know, a refugee camp.

K: Did people, erm... So when the news reached the camp but before you were liberated, in that kind of in-between period, did anything change?

HC: Well I remember as a child, uhm, we were told we could rip – and I can remember doing this – the... I told you about the fence they put up which was barbed wire and this matting which was made from bamboo sticks, and we ripped all... We were so excited that we could do such terrible things like ripping all the... And I can remember doing that. Very clearly, and there was some sort of excitement about it. So all the children in the camp did that, we just ripped it all to pieces. I'm not sure that we really understood what the significance was but it was something we'd never ever would've dared do of course, but we were given permission to rip the fencing down [slight chuckle].

K: Yeah. But then you stayed there for several more months?

HC: Oh much more than that. Because um, you know, the bomb wasn't until August. And we didn't really meet up **(1:13:51)** with my father until I think February the following year. So can you imagine, September, October, November, December, January... another six months we were in that camp without having *any* idea where he was, whether he was alive, or what. We just didn't know. And they didn't know where we were, 'cause the Japanese... They kept *very very* good records apparently, but they'd hidden a lot of it. It was eventually all, you know, eventually people were put together, but remember a lot of people had died. And people had no idea where they were buried because, you know, they were just buried in a hole in the ground, there were no stones or anything. I had an aunt who lost one of her children, but uhm, she had nowhere to go because after the war, you know... The child was buried in the jungle basically, people had no idea where the child was. That must've been very hard. And the old died, you see. The old and the very young. And I was... You know it was remarkable that my mother had three children, where all three of us survived.

K: Yeah it's amazing. Um, do you think people in the camp understood that the bomb was something new?

HC: I'm not sure... Remember there was no such thing as radios or... We- we had stories. But I remember when I was about 15 years old that we were told about the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, and I knew it had to do with me, but it wasn't until then that I realised just what this bomb *was*. You know... A nuclear bomb... How could anyone understand what they were talking about? I had *no* idea until I was much older, that I began to realise the implications of it.

K: Yeah. Do you remember any more about that time when you were 15 and heard about it?

HC: Yes, again, you know... And this was in Holland of course when I was at school. But uhm, people had no idea I'd been in those camps, we didn't tell them. Nobody *told*, you didn't talk about those things. I mean things are very different now, people talk about themselves, we didn't. But also, it was very much a taboo subject, you know the Dutch people didn't want to know. And then in a funny way of course, then if you remember the Kaiser of Japan quite a few years ago, maybe about 17 years ago, came to England on an official visit, and he and the queen were **(1:16:51)** sitting in the carriage and they were drove through London, and there was a group of prisoners of war who'd been in the camps that my father'd been in, both on Burma railway and, uhm, and Japan, and when the carriage came past they were so angry because the Japanese have never acknowledged officially what they'd done, they turned their backs, which is of course the worst thing you can do to any Japanese person, you know it's such an insult. And I can remember that same time my daughter, her husband – who's an eye surgeon in London, at the Moorfields, and um, he has a flat in London, they live in Somerset – but my daughter phoned me up and she was *really* upset so I said 'what's she talking about?' and her husband's sister, called Fran, had an invitation to go to some drinks party which was – you know I don't know how, she was a dentist too, she was a dentist – to go to the reception with the emperor! So she asked my daughter Jasmine if she could ask Jonathon, if she could have a bed in his flat next to the Moorfields. And my daughter phoned me up and she absolutely blew herself up she was so angry. I just remember thinking, why is she so angry? What she'd got to do was apparently she'd said to Fran, 'how *dare* you go to the emperor, the emperor of Japan, when you know what the Japanese have done to me, to my family!' We hardly ever talked about those things in those days. It was only afterwards, it was years later, that I heard that the children of people like me, who'd been through camps, are somehow affected too, which I didn't know. So, you, know, the next generation is affected, although I hardly ever talked about it. And that's another reason I think, why I think it is so important that the next generation does generation does understand that there is a different way. I didn't want... I'm flabbergasted by my daughter absolutely losing her cool with her sister-in-law for wanting to go to a reception with the emperor. And what are we talking about, you know, 2000 and whatever [laughs]! 60 years later or 65, I don't know, I can't remember. But you see, if we don't stop this hatred, **(1:19:51)** the next generation will start it.

K: Yeah it's just a cycle, isn't it.

HC: It never ends, until somebody stops it, and you can go back through generations of families and there's a family feud, and it's carried on! And you think, what are people doing?

K: Yeah. Um, Hanneke, could I ask you more about what happened to your father? So he was in a camp as well, is that right?

HC: Well, we worked on the Burma Railway.... And, he was tortured on the Burma Railway. He then was put on a ship and I know those death ships, they're horrendous stories. They put all these... Hundreds and hundreds of allied soldiers in... Those were great big ships that would carry, uhm... food or whatever. So they had a big hole to put all this stuff in, and the men were put in these holes, and there was no water, there were no loos, there was no food, they were just stuffed in there and they shut the top off. And they roasted in those ships. Well they... my father actually, he went from Singapore- he was in a camp called camp Rivers, which is still there now, and they take people to show them. This is after he'd been working on the river, the river Kwai, you've heard that story? Bridge over the River Kwai?

K: I've heard a little, do tell me, for the sake of the tape that would be good to hear your...

HC: Well, there's a film made about it, and my father worked on the bridge that went over the river Kwai, and this is the railway bridge, part of this railway line that they cut out through the jungle. And for every sleeper that was laid to make – I can't remember how long the railway is – but for every sleeper, one man died. And if you look at the railway, how close the sleepers are together, will give you some idea what sort of condition, apart from the fact that they were tortured, I know my father was. So they were then put on these death ships, he then arrived in a place called Formosa, it's called Taiwan now, and they were then taken to uhm, Nagasaki, and moved to another place called Osaka, which is where he worked in this **(1:22:51)** copper factory. And there's a lovely story about this because there were a lot of Dutch people working there, they had to make the compound of copper to make bullets which of course would've killed our own people! But they had some scientists there, and they knew how to change the, the... compound so that – and the Japanese didn't find this out for months and months and months because they simply produced the stuff, they didn't see the end result of it – but what the Dutch people had done was they'd changed the compound of this copper so that when the bullets were shot at the English and the Dutch and so on, they were completely useless because they were soft. Because they didn't know about this. But of course once they discovered it they were severely punished, and people died. So he then worked for the rest of that and I didn't know about this until just a few months ago, but because I had now access to his Japanese records, and I had some, these girls have translated it- **(1:24:4)** for it, I had no idea... Some of it is in Dutch which I understand, some of it is in Malay which I understand, and some of it is in English, but some of it is in Japanese which of course I don't understand. So that's how I've now finally put together my father's story. Because of the records. And I didn't know about this. So, uhm, yeah, going to Nagasaki is going to be very emotional I think. But it'll be really good. Because I personally feel that, you know, part of my own story... I'm sort of... It's a bit like going on a pilgrimage, you know, I'm going to find out the final bits of my story, and as I said my father never talked about anything, so I know more about him

K: Would he have been in Japan when the bombs were dropped?

HC:... now, and I understand now, how he was always very depressed and... you know, he didn't want to live anymore, he died young, he just didn't want to live. Then he became old, he just... Maybe, who knows, the memories came back, goodness knows... That's where he was at the end of the war, and my sister sent me some fascinating... There's a sheet of paper which is dropped out of an American plane, over the camp he was in, and it actually says, uhm, the Japanese have surrendered. In two hours time we will come over in an aeroplane and we will drop you food, and water, and medication. And we will try and release you from these camps as soon as we can and take you back to where you came from. So that was the end of August. And so I've got this piece of paper that was fluttered out of an American bomber, all those years ago, 70 years ago, it's quite extraordinary... And there's a little notice that says 'please when we drop you the food, please don't overeat and don't over-medicate', because they knew those people were so... thin, and so starved, and their stomach has shrunk so much, that if they would overeat all the goodies they were being given, that could kill them. It's extraordinary documentation, I couldn't believe it when I saw it. My father kept it all this time.

K: Yeah, that's incredible. Wow. So was he in Japan when the bombs were dropped in that case?

[Brief silence – technical problem]

HC: Yeah. And I always understood, and this is clearly not true, that he was... This is why I responded when I was asked would I like to go, because I always understood that he worked in a Coppermine just outside Nagasaki. **(1:27:51)** And so, I thought we'd go there. But these Japanese girls who've now translated these records, they say he was in a place called Osaka, which is about an hour from Nagasaki. But she's going to, you know, if we're willing, she's going to take us there. I mean that's how kind they are, you know. She's prepared to take us on the train and because she knows exactly, she's been to that place, she wants to take us there. So it's quite extraordinary. I don't know if you've looked on the website, if you put in

Nagasaki memorial, you'll be absolutely amazed what the Japanese have done. But of course it is all about Japan and the bomb. So this recognition about other people having died at the hands of the Japanese, to me, is quite remarkable.

K: Yeah.

[Ruth takes over questioning].

R: Do you have kind of any specific flashbulb memories of that time, when the war in Japan ended, and you were kind of in that interim period before you kind of went into normal life?

HC: Well... as I told you before I remember that we were allowed to rip this fence down [laughs], which was very exciting because we didn't do anything exciting! You know, we were just too hungry to have any energy, we had no energy, but because we were given food and uhm, then we were called and it was really very very exciting. And also I think seeing... I'd only ever seen Japanese men, I'd never seen European men. Well not in my memory anyway. So to see European chaps with hairy legs – the Japanese of course had no hair at all! I remember all sorts of things, like you know they were big of course, the Japanese chaps are quite little, they're very small people, and of course the English, and the Dutch particularly, are very big blokes with very hairy legs and arms [laughs]... It's very strange how you remember things like that.

(1:30:51)

R: And you said that you had no comprehension of the outside world.

HC: Absolutely not, I just... If you had asked me about a cup of tea, I wouldn't have known what you were talking about. If you'd said to me something about a book, I would have *no* inkling what you're talking about. We were totally incarcerated in that place.

R: Did you understand that you were being held prisoner and the concept of the war going on?

HC: Yes but I think in many ways, my mother protected us from a lot of things, so you know when you're a small child, you accept a lot of things. Um, and as I said the Dutch are very down to earth people, so if you don't know any better... uhm... it doesn't matter very much. Yeah I'm hungry, but that's the way it is. You know, in the same way that when I was sent to Holland to go in all these peculiar foster families, well that was just the way it was. I wouldn't have thought even about complaining, because that's just the way it was. I mean children are very very different these days, they know their own way, they know their own right, I had no idea about any of that! You know we were so completely incarcerated, we never ever had... I mean, birthdays in Holland are very important. And we celebrated birthdays. But you know the gifts would be um, maybe... a piece of a banana that somebody had managed to get hold of. Not a banana... a bite! Or, you know, little things like that, or people would make tiny little things with needle and thread and little bits of material. But, you know, I couldn't have made a picture, because I never had coloured pencils, or paper! That just didn't exist. And of course after all when I learnt to read and write, I learnt to read and write on a slate, because it was a long time before we received any sort of normality. And there were no chairs when I went to sit, we just sat outside on the floor, under a tree. So, no, I think, y' know, if you have no... if you're small, if you're a small person, then you just don't *know* that there is a world out there. That probably sounds peculiar to you. [Laughs]

R: I think it's very difficult for us to comprehend. (1:33:51)

HC: Yes!

R: And when you were growing up, kind of, during your teens and perhaps early 20s, I'm not sure what it was like in Holland but were you at all aware of the arms race and have any opinion on it?

HC: Oh very much so. Oh yes. I remember a lot of that. I was always terrified. I can remember Hungary. I was probably about 15 then or something like that, and um, I don't know if you'll remember, you probably don't remember, but there was a revolution in Hungary, and quite a lot of these people came to Holland and we actually had a young man, he was probably a little bit older than me, but he came to us, we looked after him, he was like a refugee basically. And um, so he was telling us stories. So, it wasn't until I was in my teens that I began to realise that you know, there are refugees in the world, there are wars in the world, there are people who do horrible things to each other. And you sort of slowly pick up... I remember when I was nursing, I'd signed a petition for a young black boy in America who they were putting on death row, I can't even remember what he'd done, but the thought that you put a youngster on death row was so horrendous because we didn't have death **sentencing** in Holland. Uhm, and so you sort of slowly put things together and you realise... Oh I'll tell you something else I remember. Of course when we heard the... the business about... Fidel Castro from Cuba and the arms race, it was terrifying, absolutely terrifying! And I don't know whether I was particularly frightened because I'd been through all that, I just don't know that.

R: And when you say it was terrifying, would you say that it was an imminent fear?

HC: Yeah. We were convinced that it, you know, we were going to be blown up. And it was very very serious. I know now that you know, it's very much touch and go at the time. Politically, it was terrifying.

R: And were you given any precautions to take on what to do if there was a nuclear attack?

HC: No. No. One time I came to England and I came, I belonged to, we had a group in Exeter, and then I... goodness I'm talking about 45 years ago I suppose, and they were still even then talking about nuclear war, and I was, you know we were volunteers to... we had special waves where you did exercises, um, when certain things happened, **(1:36:51)** how you got involved, because I lived in a very small place, so you know everybody, so everybody was somehow involved in becoming volunteers in case somebody dropped some bomb on us. I mean that's all gone now but no, it was very serious. You know we used to go sort of every three weeks, we had these exercises so we knew what to do. That probably sounds funny to you too!

R: Yeah it's not something I've heard of before.

HC: Oh yeah I mean living out in the country I don't know how they dealt with it in cities, but certainly out in the country, we were very aware of what was going on, I mean you would have exercises, what would happen if your water supply was destroyed, and being a nurse, I had a role to play in case of you know, casualties would arrive, or- we had proper casualty arriving and you know you had to deal with the casualties in a particular way. And, yeah so, thank goodness all that's gone but there were some very worried times, certainly when I was a teenager I remember being very very scared.

R: And this kind of community of people in the country, did you say that was during the 70s?

HC: Yeah, probably, yeah. Yeah, probably was.

R: And was it just a kind of town or village community or was it affiliated to a particular society?

HC: No no no, it was just volunteers, you know village people, farmers. Because we were all... you know everybody was farmers here. I mean not now, things have changed, but in those days, this was very much a farming community.

R: Was that in Devon where you are now?

HC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Same place. I've been here for 45 years.

R: That's really interesting to know that people were doing that.

HC: Yeah, yeah. And there was a magazine I remember, we received a magazine with all sorts of, you know, how to do this and how... I remember they would tell you how to, if your water supply has been in any way tampered with, how you could get clean water by filtering it through certain, uhm, substances, and what eventually came out you could drink.

R: That's amazing. And just before you moved to England, during that kind of time, in the 50s and 60s, there was quite a prevalent peace movement in the UK. Was there any equivalent in Holland?

HC: Yes I think so, yes, yes. **(1:39:51)** And I was a nurse so I joined all sorts of things in those days because I had quite strong views on you know, quite... Well certainly the nuclear arm race. I was scared stiff. And I suppose because of what happened in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, I was, you know, much aware of the consequences of it, although to me at that time, uhm, it was basically what they deserved. You know... I mean we're talking about instant death, didn't we. I mean I shall no doubt – they've got a big museum there, so I shall certainly go and have a look at it. And the... there's a school now where the bomb dropped. And we're going to meet some of these students.

R: That'll be very interesting I'm sure.

HC: Yeah. Well, Joshua is going to do a, um... what do you call it... a project for the school. Because it'll be in school times you see, he's given special commission to go.

R: Yeah, I really like how you're connecting all these kind of levels of generations together.

HC: Yes, I, you know, that's what... I go and talk a lot to schools here, and to other people as well, but it's the schools that I find interesting because they um, you know there are so many youngsters now who... who come from broken homes. And so they're all struggling with issues that just didn't exist in my day, like all these awkward families. You know people didn't divorce when I was growing up, it just didn't happen. But now, they all come from broken homes, even in these very rural areas. And I'm always surprised at how... how tolerant these young people are, you know? And I have to say, you get a lot of coloured people here. We don't. We don't see any coloured people here. I'll go to Exeter I'll see them. But I just... don't see coloured people here. And the school I go to, the schools that I go and talk to, you know, in fact I'm going on the 24th of June, I'm going to talk with a... I can't remember his name, he's part of the forgiveness project. He was in a concentration camp in Bosnia. Can't remember his name... you'll probably know. And so he and I are meeting up at this school, and we have what they call workshops. So the children sign in to go to your workshop, **(1:42:51)** and so I get maybe a dozen teenagers. It's very interesting to talk to them and to see how, you know, where they stand. They're very world-wise the young people now, you know, compared to how ignorant I was as a teenager. But in some ways I think that there's other ways, 'cause I was world-wise, but uh, I found it really interesting to talk to them. And how open, how open they are to talking about the forgiveness bit. They really want to explore it.

K: That's brilliant. Yeah, great thing to be doing. I think, is that all the questions that we have?

R: Yeah, I just have one more question for you actually. So you were talking about this kind of... the absolute fear that you had of the arms race, and I'm just trying to understand what the fear was about? Was it about the kind of, the fact that it was such a, such an effective bomb, [Hanneke: Yeah] or was it the fact that you'd kind of heard about the consequences and side effects of it?

HC: Oh, obviously, y' know, by that stage I had seen a lot of what... Particularly in the 50s, people became very aware of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. And you know, we knew what had happened there, and so... Say the Russians would drop something on England, even if it was in your part of England, we in the west would have been very much affected by it, one way or another. You know, it's not something you do to one area. Very large sections of the community are going to be affected. So I was very aware of how utterly devastating – wherever, whatever, whoever was going to be the first to drop, because it was always about who would put their finger on the button first, but you know, whether it was us or the Americans or whatever, or the Russians, it's going to be absolutely shocking. As we've seen, from Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

R: Yeah. And do you mind me asking you how you got involved with the forgiveness project?

HC: Well because I read that article in the Church Times! *One* article. And I just, I instantly thought, that was what I want to do. That's the *only* way forward. I was so fascinated. **(1:45:51)**

R: So there was a real kind of point of clarity for you.

HC: Yeah, I instantly knew that's what I wanted to do.

R: Okay, thank you very much!

K: Yeah, thank you! Would you mind just a couple of slightly boring questions – could you spell the name of the camp that you were in?

HC: Yeah, it's T-j-i-d-e-n-g. Tjideng

K: Great.

HC: And if you put that in the computer, you'll see lots of pictures. Which were taken after the war, so when we were liberated. It'll give you some idea. And that was the worst camp that anyone could've been in. You know, if you've been in Tjideng, people always instantly – this is in Holland of course – they sit up and they think, 'wow, you survived that'.

K: Yeah. Okay, thank you so much for talking to us!

HC: Not at all!

K: It's been fascinating and...

HC: You know, if you think of something else that I haven't told you and you want to know just don't hesitate.

K: Thank you so much, that'd be...Great.

HC: I would very much like *you* to... is there anything you can send me about this project that you're doing because I'm very curious.

K: Of course, of course! I mean Ruth can probably fill you in better than I can, but we're basically working towards creating a theatre production that will be performed based on lots of different interviews that we're doing with people, and also there'll be education resources and pop-up exhibitions about the project...

HC: What do you mean by pop-up exhibitions?

R: So, it's a touring exhibition which will just kind of pop-up in one location for a couple of days and then move on to the next one.

HC: Oh I see, right, right. You're not coming down the West Country then?

R: Well we haven't actually set our locations yet, that's something that we're doing in the next month or so.

HC: Oh right, right. If you come to Exeter let me know!

R: I definitely will do.

HC: Because I'm not too far from Exeter. I just about close to Exeter. Probably closer to Plymouth, but uhm, yeah I'm very curious to see how you're dealing with this, and I'd love to know how people respond.

K: Mhm, we'll definitely stay in touch and let you know what's going on.

HC: Yeah, I'd be very curious to know.

K: Yeah, I'll send you an email after this and chuck some information your way. (1:48:51)

HC: Thank you, yeah I'd be really interested to... Because I've been... Because I'd expected James... but I didn't quite know what, you know... He immediately – of course James that's my son – immediately when I said something about the Bubble thing he immediately put it into his computer and he found you on there. I hadn't thought of doing that you see. [Laughs]. But I'll send you some photographs.

K: Thank you that's really kind, that would be fantastic.

HC: ... which I think you might find quite amusing. Gives you some idea of my sort of family background.

K: Thank you that would be great. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you...

HC: No you asked me lots of questions! [Laughs] It was really good talking to you actually.

K: It's been lovely talking to you! Thank you so much and thanks for giving us so much of your time.

HC: Not at all! As I say if there's something that you can't work out or... give me a ring and I'll be very happy to talk to you again.

K: Well thank you so much!

HC: Not at all. Good to talk to you Katie.

K: Yes you too, and have a lovely time with the lambs this afternoon.

HC: Yes I've just seen them, I'm looking out of my window and he's obviously decided to just arrive... They've all arrived, his stomach is rumbling I think.

K: I can imagine...

HC: I'll tell you what, because I've got some money for the forgiveness project, people give me money, so I'll send you a cheque with the photographs, you can pass it on.

K: Oh, thank you, that would be wonderful, I will do. Great, well hopefully talk to you again soon Hanneke.

HC: Alright, good to talk to you Katie, and Ruth too!