9-27-1977

Westerink, Gerde Oral History Interview: Class Projects

Randy Durband

Tom Taylor

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Interviewee: Gerde Westerink
Interviewers: Randy Durband
            Tom Taylor

September 27, 1977
In the Durband residence
Holland, Michigan
Interview #1
Number of tape sides: 2

Topics discussed:
- daily life of the Dutch people
- some of their political views
- Dutch school system
- religion in the Netherlands
- the cities and towns in the Netherlands
- the Dutch military
- recreation in Holland
- traveling, within Holland and abroad
- influence of Communism in Holland
Randall Durband (RD): I guess I'll start off. Is this your first visit to the United States?

Gerde Westerink (GW): I've been here in 1971.

RD: What part of the country did you visit then?

GW: Kalamazoo and the surroundings of Mackinac, Mackinac Island, St. Ignace, Traverse City, just traveled around Lake Michigan.

RD: So you stayed within mostly Michigan, then?

GW: Ja, only Michigan.

RD: O.K. What are you found the main differences between the United States and the Netherlands, so far?

GW: Main difference, ah, you see a lot of different people, different colors. We don't have them too many, and everything is bigger and wider and you have more room to live and to work, and... yeah.

RD: Can you see any differences like, just in the everyday lives of Americans?

GW: I think they are easier. If they, ah, after work they do what they like, I think.

In Holland, every time has something special to do.

RD: Your leisure time and...

GW: More scheduled. This day you must do this and that day you must do this.

RD: What would you, ah... in the Netherlands, what would most people do when they came home from work?

GW: Well, they went home and they pick up the paper, and read the paper and have dinner and mostly watch television or do some sports or go to the movies, on the weekends mostly--not so very often.

RD: It would be more relaxed instead of fast-paced like the United States?

GW: Yeh, and not so much sports. The younger do, but not... ah... when they are married, it's over. They just stay home and sit with mama and the children.

Tom Taylor (TT): Is the Netherlands more of a rural country or mainly big cities?
GW: Ah... In the western part of the Netherlands are some big cities. But eastern and northern, there are more little towns. They have agriculture, more cattle. The western part is really where the big industries are, and the big factories.

TI: What part are you from?

GW: The middle...just between. We do everything.

RD: So you're a rural community or what? How would you classify your town?

GW: We had a very small town, but now it's growing fast, and it's not so nice anymore.

RD: What do most of the people in your town there do?

GW: Well, most work in the factories, or in the shop, or in the office and there are a lot of unemployed people...too many...and too many who can find a job but they don't want to work.

RD: What was the name of that town?

GW: Harderwijk.

RD: I remember that now.

GW: It's on the border of the IJsselmeer, and there are very interesting places in Harderwijk and in the surroundings, but tourists come. In summer, it's very busy. In the winter, it's nice and calm. Not so many people around, and the people who are around, you know them so you can talk to them.

RD: What are some of the things that bring the tourists in in the summer, then?

GW: Ch, they bring in lots of money.

RD: Yeh, but...I mean...what...why...why do they go there? What's the area like?

GW: There are many woods in our surroundings and we have the IJsselmeer, the water, and several old buildings. Harderwijk is a very old town. We have, ah, the town wall, parts of it...(sentence in Dutch)

GW: That's a big attraction and the beach where children can play. And boats go on
GW: ...the I Jasselseer and show where they make , how they do it and what they did in the and what they do different now in the . They explain it to you and that's rather nice. And that's about what the people, the tourists do in Harderwijk, and go into the bars.

TT: I have a feeling that lots of people think of the Netherlands as an old country, where, you know, the traditional things still are there, like the wooden shoes and things.

GW: Oh, no. That isn't true. Just near the farms, and in the more quiet parts where the church religion is... ah... that's it. You have to listen to the church and that's what they do. And they live more quiet, easy, and just try to behave well so that the minister doesn't have anything to say about you. But that's... ah... not so many parts of the Netherlands is that.

RD: So there are some people who do where wooden shoes, then?

GW: There are some, yeh, in the fisherman, they wear them when they come back, but so many.

RD: But then you would say the rest of the country is... would you say it's more... what influences the rest? Would it be America or what?

GW: Well, it used to be America, but I feel that lots of Russian influence is...

RD: Oh, really?

GW: Ja. (Dutch for yes.)

RD: How so?

GW: Well, the younger politis- difficult word.

RD: Political?

GW: Political people- they look at the United States as a bad country. People make money there and try to earn from somebody else and that's not good. And they look to the Soviet Union, and they see the bad parts of it, but they don't
CW: ...mention it. They only see what they think are the good part—everything together and you work for your country and not for yourself. They are trying to bring Holland, too.

RD: Are you referring to the newspapers, or just the general feeling, or what?

CW: Well, it's just a general feeling. Especially the young people try to make us a bit red—too red.

TT: The Netherlands has a monarch form of government, right?

CW: Yeh, we have Queen Juliana. She doesn't have to say too much. Now she's busy making...ah...trying to make a new government and then she listens to several people and then she thinks, well, he can work with them so let them try to find something, but that's about all she has to say, just advice. And mostly, they don't listen to her. No, not too much. I wish they did. She has some very good ideas.

RD: Do most of the people as a whole really...ah...are they really loyal to the queen?

CW: No, the old people, but not the younger people. They want a republic. They don't say it in so many words, but you can feel it. And they would like to have a president, or something.

RD: So, you wouldn't be surprised if someday you wouldn't have a queen or anything?

CW: I think it would take some time. She has a very good name in other countries. You must think about her too. So, I think they try to slow down a bit. And her daughter, Beatrix, who will be the next queen, she is different. She's younger. She has other ideas. She is a bit socialist. I think the younger people will like her better than her mother, so I don't think they change it very quick now. It will take some time.

RD: Getting a way from government, I guess.

CW: That is a difficult part.
RD: How would you... I mentioned before or asked you to explain the differences in the daily life. How would you explain the differences in like, possessions and wealth and luxuries of Americans?

GW: Well, that's not so much different between that. People in Holland can get anything they need, and mostly more. Even if they don't work to get enough money to live and buy a car and a camper and... Now, there are some people who never have enough, of course, but...

RD: Yeah, you get that everywhere. But in the United States, we got... we usually think of people as lower class, middle class, and upper class and most people like to think of themselves as middle class, that's the large majority. How would you say it is in the Netherlands?

GW: Well, that's in the Netherlands, too.

RD: Same way?

GW: Ja, you have the middle class and the lower class.

RD: And you would say that most people are in the middle class?

GW: Ja, most of them are. Most people you meet... Most people who are really in the middle class think they are in the higher class. It's about the same here, I think. And we have lots from Spain and Morocco, Turkey. They do the dirty jobs. And people in Holland think they are really the lower class. Everything that's colored is a bit lower than the rest. They have to work hard, and do the jobs the Dutch won't do.

RD: What is your vocation, Gerde?

GW: (responds with a puzzled look.)

RD: What do you do for a living?

GW: My father owns a bakery, and I work there, in everyplace where they need somebody, I must be. Mostly in the shop and the bookkeeping. And when there is somebody ill in the bakery, and delivery man- I have to do that. I do everything. You meet a lot of people in the shop. But, it's difficult... you hardly can talk to them. If you go in... If they go in, they say hello and they say what they need.
And if you ask 'how are we doing' or 'how have you been', they look at you as if it's none of your business. There really are just a few people you know better. They talk to you for awhile something. They talk to you, but the rest just come in and say what they need and go out again.

RD: Are you pretty close to your neighbors?

GW: Well, we don't have any neighbors.

RD: No neighbors.

GW: No, we live in a very old part of Harderwijk. They tore down all the houses. Now they make a parking lot in front of us. So we sell a lot more bread.

RD: You live in the bakery, then?

GW: Ja, we live in the bakery. Behind it. In the street a few blocks away there live some people and we get along very good. But they don't come over to our house and have coffee or something. They don't do that. They come in at night, if they forgot anything, and they talk a bit. Some of them come in the room, but I think they're a bit afraid.

RD: What about... like... Everywhere in Europe there are so many bicycles. Is that how you get around mostly or does everybody own a car?

GW: If I have enough time, I go on a bike. It's nice to be out in the air. But if I don't have too much time, I go by car. That's very dangerous. But then they go in front of the car, and that's nice.

TT: Are there a lot of motorized bicycles, you know, those little things that you peddle? Are there a lot of them around?

GW: Ja, but it's getting less. They are dangerous. And lots of boys ride on the bicycles till they're eighteen and then they go for the motorbike license and they buy a real big motorbike. It is dangerous too, but not so dangerous. But there are quite a few (Dutch word).

RD: What about traveling through Europe? Do a lot of people get around Europe or do they stay at home pretty much?
CW: I think about forty or fifty per cent of the Dutch people go abroad to Germany, or Belgium, France, Spain—Spain is a favorite now—Italy.

RD: Most Americans would like to go to London, probably, and Paris. Is that about the same?

CW: London is getting bigger now. It's a bit cheap now for us. So most people go to London just for shopping, and just a few days on a weekend.

T: That's the way it's getting now because they just started today a real inexpensive airline flight that you can get from the United States over to London, making it very possible.

CW: Yeah.

T: You don't have to go for three weeks anymore to make it pay off.

CW: Really not. They mostly do it in the summer on their summer vacation. And sometimes the higher class people...they go to Paris for a day, it's not so far. By plane to London is about forty minutes, I think.

RD: Oh, really?

CW: Yeah.

TT: Takes us that long to get to Chicago.

CW: The people in the plane...they don't like it. The stewardesses and the stewards...when they take off, they have to serve coffee and everything else.

RD: And then it's over.

CW: Yeah, and they have to start all over again.

T: I can see how that could get quite boring.

CW: Flying up and down to England, yeah.

TT: I don't know how much you know about the American school system, you know...

CW: No, it's very different than our school systems.

TT: What is the school system in the Netherlands? How does it go?

CW: They start at four-kleider school. I think it's kindergarten. They stay there until six, two years. At six, they start at (Dutch word). They begin to learn everything—reading and writing. Then after there six years...after that they go to the
middle school, where you pick out what you like to do...and different languages, and geometry, algebra, history, and different kinds of things. And after that, you can go to a higher school, just as preparation for the university. Or you can go to business schools, or something you like. And if you're not good enough for the middle school, you can go to another school where you learn to be a carpenter, or a brick layer—something like that. To work with your hands, and not so much with your head. And most of the children,... they go to the middle school and after two years, they tell them if you can go on or if they must go back to another school.

RD: Are the universities pretty affordable for everyone or does everyone get a chance to go to the universities?

GW: Several, like medicine and dentists—they hardly can get in, so many people want to become a doctor or a dentist. But in English, and French and German, there is room enough.

RD: At the universities, is the problem money or grades?

GW: Most of it is the money. Government doesn't want to give anymore.

TT: Sounds familiar.

GW: I know a girl who wanted to become a doctor and... They give you a number and then they pick it out. The first year, she didn't get in, so she started psychology. And the second year, they didn't get in, so she went on. Now, the third year, well, she could become a doctor. She switched, and still has possibilities to go on psychology. First, she wants to be a doctor, but you must be patient. A lot of boys... if they come from school and don't get in, they go in the army. And if they come out of the army... then they can go right away. And there are lots of places for people from Africa. Too many places, I think now. For they learn how... they become a doctor in Holland and mostly they stay. They don't go back, and that's that's the reason for a lot of them coming over. They want to be a doctor and then go back.

RD: Do most of the people... does everyone learn English in school?

GW: Most of them do. Mostly English and then French and German.
RD: They're a lot of people who speak three or four languages?

GW: Yeah. If they go to the middle school, they at least speak English and if they aren't to go at languages, they don't take it. Mostly they take other languages... another language with it.

RD: It's rare for anybody in the United States... some people speak a second language fairly well and that's it. You don't see many people who can speak four languages. That's rare.

GW: That's not so important for you, I think.

RD: That's true.

GW: You can go everywhere.

RD: You're so close together there.

GW: They are such small countries. Drive two hours, you must speak German. Drive three hours, you must speak French.

TT: How many languages do you speak?

GW: Dutch, English, French, German. French is the worst—not so good. But you must speak German rather good for they are close to Holland and don't speak Dutch. Even if they live in Holland, they keep talking in German.

RD: Aren't those languages kind of close?

GW: Well, ja. There are some words in it that... they are pretty different things between us. You ask them and they don't have it. They always have an exception. At school they have so many rules that they have at least so many exceptions. That's difficult. Most people (indecipherable). They say it's easier but I don't agree. That's a Roman language, I think—French.

RD: Pardon me?

GW: French is a Roman language—just like Spanish, Latin.

RD: I don't know...

GW: Yah, French and Spanish—they're a bit the same.

RD: Oh, really? I had a little bit of Spanish. Maybe I should go into French.
Do you have any crafts of your own that you do for spare time or anything?

CW: No, I don't have many spare time. I like drawing and making things, knitting... what else?... uh, driving the car, bike.

RD: Do you sell anything you make? For just a hobby, like knitting... do you sell anything?

CW: No, I give it away.

RD: Give it away. That's nice.

CW: (ft) we knit for the neighbors, for the children. It's not too big... you are quickly ready with it. Or people come over and ask if you want to make something. Just what you are good in.

RD: Is that the way people do it then-- kind of share things with your neighbors?

CW: Ja, together. Or they do it for the church, so they church can sell it. I have a lot of hobbies, but I don't have time for it, so I don't do it anymore.

RD: You mentioned the church. Would you say that's pretty important in the family life of most of the Netherlands?

CW: It's getting less.

RD: Getting less?

CW: It's not so important anymore to most people. Churches are nearly empty.

RD: Oh really?

CW: Ja, especially the old fashioned church. You just have to believe what they say. If they ask, but maybe?, no! It's in the Bible and you have to believe it.

RD: Does the church resemble what the Dutch tradition has brought over here, or has that changed quite a bit?

CW: Ja, it's about the same, yeah. Some parts are really in religion, but not especially in the big cities... people hardly go to church there. In the country they go every Sunday, sometimes twice. But the cities are not so good in that.

RD: It's pretty much the same, I would say, here.

CW: Yeah, I think they are; another kind of life.
TT: In Holland (referring to Michigan), the church is a big part of the people's life, but in other places, even around this state, there is much less influence caused by religion—almost nonexistent.

GW: We have now a lot of Spanish. The Spanish are Roman Catholic. They go to church, but the Turkish and Morroccan, they are (indecipherable). And now... we didn't... I think there is one church in Holland for them, but now they're building churches for them. Or they move into a church other people left over.

RD: You say you were in Kalamazoo. Is that the biggest city you've seen in the United States? Where did you land? What have you seen of our cities?

GW: Well, the first time I landed in Detroit, but just the outside of the city.

RD: You didn't see much of the city.

GW: This time I landed in Chicago—O'Hare, I think. And you don't see too much of the city.

RD: From what you know of the American cities, would you say they're... Netherland cities like Amsterdam and... I don't know... Rotterdam... are they modern?

GW: Rotterdam is, but Amsterdam is old fashioned. The outside is new, but the nicest part of town is very old.

RD: The smaller cities—are they modernized mostly?

GW: Ja, they are busy with it now. Building houses like crazy, but... at first, they built the high flats for people to live in, but it's calmed down a bit. Now they try to build normal houses. People like it better.

RD: So you have anything else, Tom?

TT: I'm checking.

RD: Well, I have something else. Do... maybe not... um... not just... I'm not thinking just of the Netherlands but the area around Germany... wherever... I'm not familiar with geography, but are there any signs left from World War Two?

GW: Not really from destruction, but from the things the Germans used. I don't know how you call them... you call them bunkers, I think. There are some left.

RD: Concentration camps?
CH: I've been in Germany, near Buchenwald, and there is a big sign and a statue but I didn't... I think the camp is near there, just as a kind of museum, or... But I haven't been there. I haven't seen it.

RD: Are there any effects from it at all... from the war?

CH: No, not so much. They rebuilt everything they ruined, or they just left it if it was very old or inconvenient... they didn't rebuild it again. There is a bit of hate between the Germans and the Dutch people. I think that's about it... what's left of it.

TT: I think I better flip this over now.

END OF SIDE ONE

TT: We're ready to go. You mentioned the Army a couple of minutes ago. Does the Netherlands have a large army? Is it divided like the United States is... the Army, Air Force, Navy?

CH: Yeah, we also have that, but it's not so big, and it's getting less every year. There are some Dutch soldiers in Germany, near the East German border. The other countries say they are good, but the rest of the Army isn't too good. Young boys with very long hair and dirty uniforms.

RD: A lot of people in the United States are kind of paranoid against the Russians... kind of always looking over their shoulders. Most Netherlands people... do they think about Russia or other larger countries?

CH: Well, they aren't so worried about it. They think about it and they talk about it but not so much as they do here. I think. The people in the Army do. My uncle is in the Army and when he must go to Germany for exercise or something, he says 'I go back chasing Russians again'. But the Army is not too big, and not too good. They have very old cars, and tanks... very old. They try to replace it, but the government... some parts of the government... they don't want to give in. They had to fight for their new F-16, I think (indecipherable).

TT: The F-16 is an American fighter.
CW: Yeah, it was a very big fight to get it.

TT: So the government puts more of an emphasize on spending on things other than the military.

CW: Yeah.

TT: Do you know what they spend most of their money on?

CW: Schools and they give it to the countries in Africa. Unemployment is very high and getting higher every month and that takes a lot of money. But they don't spend so much money on rebuild roads or something. That's getting less. They don't want to do it anymore. The Army saves quite a lot of the money but...first it was the biggest part but no anymore. Now, really, the schools are the highest—schools and universities.

RD: I think we're running out of questions. Do you have anything you want to say about just life in the Netherlands that maybe we didn't talk about at all?

CW: Life in the big city is a bit rushy. They are always in a hurry and busy with everything. And life in the country is a bit more quiet. They have more time for their own, or they can take more time for their own. They just do what they want to do, and don't... when they come... it's Monday night I must do this; it's Tuesday night, I must do that... they don't do that. But I don't think there is much difference between life in Holland and America. It's getting closer every time I think what I see of it.

TT: You mentioned that unemployment is very high, but they still bring Turkish and Spanish people in to work. Why don't they have the Dutch people do that work?

CW: They don't want to do it. There was a carpenter... was last month... he used about... a big firm... he used I think twenty carpenters. He asked everywhere and went to the unemployment agency and nobody came. So he went to Belgium and he could get them there. They know there are lots of people who can do the job and don't want to do it. They get eighty percent of their wages and then they work during the night with their friends and neighbors and the rest of the money, so they don't want
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to work. And the Spanish and Turkish people—they do the dirty jobs. They clean
the street and work in the (Dutch word), cleaning the planes, and the Dutchman
don't want to do it. And they ask the government if they don't want to stop it...
just the Turkish and the Spanish. Different people who are in Holland—they can
stay...don't hire new ones. But they don't want to listen. They just come in.
RD: It's too easy to it that way.

CW: Yeah. Life is really about the same now. First, people went to the shop every
day, buy groceries and vegetables and meat, bread. But I've seen they don't do
here...mostly one time in the week, one night. That's what's happening now in
Holland, too. They have big refrigerators and they put the stuff in there and they
go shopping once a week. And all of women do work here. That's getting more of
a habit in the Netherlands, too. Most of the young women go back to work again
when the children go to school. Maybe when...I don't know...I haven't been here
in a bar. I don't know if you have them here.
RD: Yes, we do.

CW: I'm not too fond of it, but in Holland the boys and girls from about fourteen
or fifteen—they go to a bar mostly every Saturday night.

RD: Oh, really? They can buy liquor at fourteen or fifteen years old?

CT: Oh, yeah. It's allowed at sixteen, but...

TT: And here it's eighteen, but they're moving it back up to nineteen.

CT: I think that's better.

TT: In Holland (referring to Michigan), there's not really that much because of the
more conservative society. But, like if you were to go into a town or a city
like Grand Rapids, you'll find quite a few taverns, bars lining the streets.

RD: They're pretty full here in town on the weekends, though.

CT: If there are only a few.

RD: You mentioned discitheques, too. They have those?
Yea. You sit there and you look each other for you can't understand each other. So noisy, I don't know what they do there. Some of them are dancing, they say it's dancing, just jumping around a bit. And the music is much too loud.

RD: You don't appreciate that personally.

G: I like music, but you must also be able to talk, and to listen to what somebody else has to say. The young people are crazy about it in Holland.

RD: There are quite a bit of movies, mostly the movies that are best here go off to Holland after about 3 or 4 months, sometimes half a year. But, they come over.

RD: Are they pretty popular then?

G: They try to make them popular, it doesn't always work out. They were very busy with Rocky, it isn't too popular now. "A Bridge Too Far" they like. I think because it's made in Holland partly.

RD: "Rocky" is kind of, it seems to me, an American film. I think Americans could relate to it more.

G: I haven't seen it, I have heard about it. I've the older movies, "The Sound of Music" and all that stuff, they still play it. Yea.

TT: Does that happen with television shows, too? American shows go over, and wind up on Dutch television?

G: Well, yea, they come over, but we don't have much television. Only during the night from 7:00 'til 11:00, half past 11:00 Saturday 'til 12:00, then it's over. And, then, they buy a lot of American shows, and English, and German, and sometimes a French show. And they have they have the Dutch shows, so they don't have much time to show the American shows. Mostly, like "Charlie's Angels" and uh--

RD: Is that pretty popular there, too?
Go: They try to make Parrah a bit popular, but they didn't succeed. I think the other one with the short brown hair, I don't know her name, Kate?

TT & RD: Kate Jackson.

GW: She's popular.

RD: She's popular?

GW: But, they don't have so much time to show it, every night or once a week. There are many other shows they put on.

RD: But, there's no shows at all during daytime? TV doesn't run at all.

GW: No. Just Wednesday afternoon for children, Sunday afternoon mostly sports and a little program for the children. Not so much.

TT: And because, in this country, we get 3 or 4 stations running from 5:30 in the morning until 1:30 in the morning.

RD: And then in the cities there are some all-night stations that never go off.

TT: And if you live in a big city you can sometimes hook up to a TV cable, where you can get like 60 stations running all day.

GW: That's not too good, especially for children. Well, when the weather is not too good it will be nice for them. And during the school holiday they have a think twice a week movie for children in the afternoon but, that's about it. Not so much. And they spend a lot of time with news and commentary.

TT: How many channels can you pick up where you live?

GW: There are two Dutch channels and three German channels we can get now.

RD: That's right, you're so close that you can get those other countries.

GW: Now they're busy to bring over English channels. And in the southern --
RD: I never thought of that before. It's kind of hard to comprehend the size of the countries.

GJ: Yeah, that's the main difference, I think, between Holland and the United States. It's so big. You can't believe it if you see it. And the way of driving here is much better.

RD: The roads are better set up?

GJ: No, that's about the same. The roads are a bit bigger, but our cars are smaller so. It doesn't bother, just the driving, it's calmer. If there is a stop sign, you stop.

RD: You think the drivers are more educated here then?

GJ: Yeah, the speed limits.

TT: You don't have speed limits in --

GJ: Yeah, we have speed limits but nobody looks at it.

RD: I didn't know that those movies we saw about European drivers were for real. They always seem to just drive anywhere.

GJ: Ja. If there's a stop sign and no cars coming, they drive on. Even if there is a car coming, they try to get over in time. And the lights, when it's red, they drive on. But it's not so bad as in Holland. Paris must be horrible.

TT: Do they have traffic policemen?

GJ: Yeah.

TT: But, they still don't stop the people?

GJ: No. Sometimes when the weather is nice and they are in a good mood, they stand near the road and watch how fast you drive and then they come after you and they stop you if you are a hundred meters away, but they don't do that so very often. They watch you when the children come out of school. They liik around a bit, but they don't do so much. I'm glad they don't do it. Everybody does it, so I do it, too. If it's 100 kilometers, I drive 120 or 130 if it's possible on the highway. In town it's 50 kilometers. You can't go faster in town. In the older cities, it's a bit narrow and you can hardly drive through, but on the normal it's 50 kilometers and when it's quiet, you drive on, not too fast when
there's lots of curves. I like it very much, the traffic here. I try to do it in Holland, but I don't think it will work out. Start blowing the horn and yelling "woman behind the steering wheel."

RD: They yell at women drivers there, too?

GW: Yes, I have heard that women drivers are mostly better than men.

RD: I've heard some people say that.

TT: Mostly women.

GW: I heard the man say it.

TT: It's always been a thing where the big brawny American men after he gets cut off, he'll make a fist and yell at the woman driver, but that's going out now.

GW: It was in Holland, too, but now they are changing to Delph. I don't know if you've heard of Delph cars. They are very small cars. They are automatic. Mostly older people and older women drive them very slow. If there's something wrong they ask there must be a Delph car up there. And we don't have so many automatic cars.

RD: Do you have anything?

TT: No, that's about it.

RD: #### Maybe this is an unfair question, but where would you rather live?

GW: I would rather live in the United States. If you want to start a business or something, you can start here. And in Holland they try everything to make you stop starting it. There hardly is any help from the government for a loan or somethin'. If you want to start a business you really must be rich so you can afford to buy a building or what you need. And if you start, they help you with the taxes, you don't have to pay all at once. If you don't have this, you must pay. If they come up you must pay. They just try to arrange everything for everybody. Everybody has the same doctor.

RD: Oh really?
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Gw: Yes, and the same dentist. Sometimes people can't get along with their doctors so they like to have another one, but it's very difficult to get it (changed). Everybody is insured. I think that's good that they are insured but there must be left something for you to do for yourself and to figure out how to do it and what best than have everything arranged by the government. That's ... I think that's a bit like Russia.

RD: Sounds like it. You're going to do this --

Gw: You go to that doctor.

RD: I didn't realize this.

Gw: Well, it's going so slow that you can hardly notice. If you look back, then you see the difference. It's coming. I don't like it too much, but I'm born there so I'll stay there probably.

RD: Well I guess we don't have anything else, so I'd like to thank you very much, Gerde.

Gw: OK, you're welcome.

RD: You did a really good job.

Gw: I hope you can use it.