



People Across the Sea, by Passchier Stouthamer

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Dedicated to Krijn Van Tatenhove
Born 1901 in Terneuzen, Zeeland, Netherlands
Died 1978 in Palm Springs, California,
United States of America

*Because I remember, I despair. Because I remember, I have
the duty to reject despair. – Elie Wiesel*

Prologue

In my early schooling, I was not fond of history. It seemed dry and dusty, a lifeless catalog of names and dates to remember and regurgitate on tests.

My attitude changed in high school. I had a teacher who brought the past alive, illuminating the drama of human beings as if they were standing in the room with us. This was history as story, full of victory and defeat, passion and despair, love and indifference. It was the chronicle of living, breathing people like you and me.

I loved it! That love remains, and in my travels around the world, I am eager to explore not just the general outlines recited on historical plaques, but the fine points of human lives that lie beneath. The drama is in the details.

Any student of history knows that primary sources are priceless. These raw materials (letters, diaries, physical objects), offer firsthand information unfiltered through secondary opinions. They open our eyes to events in a way that is immediate and gripping.

In my family, I have been blessed with two wonderful examples. The first is the diary of my great-great-grandfather, Lucius A. Edelblute, nicknamed Cariboo Ed. He caught the Gold Rush fever, traveling throughout the west coast, one of the first explorers in the Cariboo Gold Rush of British Columbia. His diary was preserved in archives, then published with an introduction by my father, James Van Tatenhove, in a volume entitled *A True Story of the Adventures of Cariboo Ed in the Far West – 1856-1867*.

I briefly taught American history in a middle school, and I shared excerpts from my great-great-grandfather's diaries. It amazed me to see how his words, written a century-and-a-half earlier, were still evocative, holding the attention of contemporary teenagers.

Now, our extended family presents *People Across the Sea*—a lengthy letter from Passchier Stouthamer, a cousin-in-law on my paternal grandfather's side of the family. Written in English, not Dutch, it was sent to relatives in the United States, where it languished in a desk drawer for decades. It surfaced again only because my relative, Ethan Meylink—twelve-years-old at the time—chose to focus on the Netherlands for his school's cultural fair. His study of *People Across the Sea* led to the copy being digitized and emailed to relatives. Without Ethan, this story would have continued to collect dust, lost to future generations.

I have edited the final version, retaining the original voice and drama. I am sure that as you read it, the pathos of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands will come into sharp focus. You will gain deep appreciation for the resilience of the Dutch people as seen through the drama of one amazing family.

There are certain words in Passchier's letter that are probably unfamiliar to many of us, so I have included a short glossary to help you in your reading.

– *Krin Van Tatenhove, October 2019*

Glossary

Polder: a piece of low-lying land reclaimed from the sea or a river and protected by dikes

Mud: a unit weight equivalent to a bushel

H.B.S.: Citizen High School

N.S.B.: Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, the only Dutch political party recognized by the Nazis during WWII, collaborators with the enemy

f.: abbreviation for guilders, the Dutch currency

Junkers: German aircraft, primarily bombers

V-2: an attack rocket used by the Germans, the world's first long-range guided ballistic missile

Moffen or **Mof:** a derogatory slang word for Germans

Voren, snoek: types of fish common in Holland

People Across the Sea

This letter will give you a brief history of our family during the war years. During all that time, we have been unable to write to each other and have almost become like strangers. Five years ago, we had several children, quite young; they have now grown older and some of them have married. We are still a family of six, and we consider ourselves blessed because there are many families that have one or more missing. The saddest instance I have come across is an advertisement by a widow seeking information about her husband and three sons, presumably all dead in Germany—either deliberately killed or starved to death. She lives in Groningen. Thanks be to God that we still have our family intact.

Let me first give you an overall picture of our family as we are today.

Mother, Leentje, 44 years old, is a well-built blonde dame, who appears healthy, yet because of the war is suffering from an ailment which will not be easy to overcome.

Father, Passchier (me), 46 years old, a man beginning to lose his hair, rather thin in appearance, very much tanned in summer but pale in winter; strong and healthy with a good grasp of conditions in general, especially through his intellect. He credits his health to smoking cigarettes, which he does all day (smoked meat does not spoil) except in recent times because no smokes were obtainable.

Paul, 23 years old, a big robust chap with a rather sharp nose and pale complexion which makes him appear less healthy than he is. Strong in body, yet blithe because of sports activities. Tenderness is strange to him, and often he is too hard on himself. For a time, he would rather sleep on a bare board than in a bed. He sings all day long, has a joke about everything and everyone, including himself, and all in all is a jolly good fellow with a heart of gold. At present he is a student at the vocational high school in Rotterdam. He learns very easily, and he takes an instant interest in everything he does. He does not worry about holes in his sleeve or even in his pants, and sometimes looks more like a tramp than a gentleman's son. He acts more like a big windbag than a student. He swims like an otter, even diving under water almost across the Rhine, bowls, plays tennis, goes yachting, and sometimes makes runs of 50 kilometers afoot. He is an unusual jester and seems to make light of everything. He seems impossible of betterment.

Tanny, 22, is just the opposite of Paul, a slender-built girl, always dressed just so and with polished manners. Almost from her earliest days we said she was "a born lady." Not that she is proud or conceited. On the contrary, she is a highly consistent girl, disapproving of all pretense in speech or bearing. I believe that she could never tell a lie, a girl who has given us much pleasure. She loves athletics and has often won prizes in contests, is wholly unafraid and takes too many risks, but loves adventure in apparent

contradiction to her true self. In fact, people who do not know her are apt to consider her too prim, saucy, and conceited. She is now married to a man scheduled to be a civilian government employee in the East Indies, Goop Ubbink, who has just completed his education and has received the degree of Doctor of Indology. He is at present in England awaiting transportation to his future field. Tanny will have to remain here for at least two years before being allowed to join her husband and has taken up her favorite vocation by returning to her studies at Utrecht University.

Cocky, 21, still another type. At first a plump “molly” but at present very much thinner because of the heavy demands of her work as a nurse in a psychiatric hospital. Tanny is very pensive and says no more than is necessary, while Cocky blurts right out and is not afraid to tell anyone where to get off. She knows her mind and has a sharp tongue. Yet she is very sympathetic and cries at almost every suffering or pain. She cannot bear to see anyone mistreated and rebukes anyone she catches doing it, and so is respected by everyone who knows her. She laughs hearty enough to shake the building, loves parties, and can kiss so that you hear it smack. She is almost bursting with life. She has been the cause of much care and worry to us, and yet has given us pleasure and is still a joy to us.

Fred, 12, with the smile of God on his face, at first a roly-poly lad but now very thin with an ailment of thin blood, for which he has been sent to Denmark. Rather languid (he was 11 months before he could turn

himself in his crib) and that is still his trouble. He seems to have no pep. He has been smiling from his birth with a free and open expression so that you can almost look right into his soul. For his mother he is a very gift from heaven, and truly he is that. Tender and sympathetic, with a continual longing to give love, but also to receive it. His only fault is that his feelings are easily hurt. Probably that is just as well, because a perfect boy would be too unnatural, and a complete change might come that could bring us grief. I think of Paul, who was in his youth a retiring, loving lad, but who in his 14th year made a complete change which caused his mother plenty of care and trouble. He became hasty, rough, and restive. At 19, he became almost overbearing and developed early into a full-grown man, but whose droll manner immediately made you forget his bullying.

And so, with two we have had our share of trouble in rearing them, and with the other two we have had very little worry. Tanny and Fred, who are named for Leentje's side, just seem to grow up by themselves, while Paul and Cocky, who are named for my side, have often been a problem to us. Can it be that there is something to it that blood goes with the name of the generation? However it is, I have had no less pleasure from the rowdies than from the others, and it has been a joy and privilege to rear all of them. So now we have made you acquainted with our family as it is today.

Now I want you to think back five years.

Paul was 18, a youth just shedding his last wild hairs and mischievous streaks. He had just registered as a student in Rotterdam. Tanny was a loveable young lady of 17; Cocky, a rather naughty dear of 15 who just hated to study and whom we had to force to go to school to get a diploma; Fred, a sunny jewel of 7, who could not help but sympathize with Hitler about whom he never did hear anything good. With trembling voice, he asked me one time, “Doesn’t Hitler have a single friend?”

May 9, 1940. We were listening to the broadcast of the H.B.S. chorus with Paul and Tanny singing along. That evening I had already sensed a feeling that we were singing while on the rim of a pit. The papers and radio had not given us much information on the strained relations with Germany, yet I had been given some inklings by an engineer of the waterworks. He said that the main highways were filled with autos and trucks placed there to prevent the German airborne troops from landing, or to hinder them in every way if they did invade. I had said nothing about this to Leentje, but it worried me a lot. I did get some comfort from an English hymn that was being sung freely during those days. “Lo, He comes with clouds descending,” and I prayed fervently that Jesus would come soon to make an end of the terrible confusion and troubles of our old earth.

May 10, 1940. We were awakened by the heavy roar of motors—black monsters in squadrons of tens roared over us with the rage and fury of war. We

became speechless. We tuned in on the radio and heard the endless alarms, dark and sinister voices: *Hello, hear Dordrecht, 50 Junkers dropping parachutists; hello, hear Rotterdam, waves of hundreds of planes over the airport, dropping parachutists; hello, hear Utrecht, 80 Junkers; and hello, hear Breda, 60 Messerschmitt.* And that was only the beginning. We kept waiting for the radio to announce: *hello, hear Rotterdam, hundreds of English planes coming to help attack the Germans.* Waiting and waiting, but in vain. No Dutch planes appeared. Alas, we only had a hundred, and though they shot down about a hundred German planes, they themselves all perished in doing it. True, our Air Force was brave enough, but what could they do more than sacrifice themselves by fighting to the death?

And the marines in Rotterdam? How could they expect to hold the airport and the bridges without the help of the English? They fought as though possessed, they jumped on the German autos, stabbed and shot the occupants, even chewed their throats after losing their weapons. The army fought in sheer desperation. Bodies of both friend and foe floated in the Rhine, dying the water with their blood. All in vain. They had to retreat, and among the higher officers there were numerous Nazi-minded traitors who purposely gave contradictory orders and commands—the N.S.B.

On the fifth day of the war, a squadron of German planes machine-gunned and bombarded the outlying wards of the Alphen, although there was not a soldier anywhere in the region. This was not a

military objective; it was a murder of civilians. They threw out poisoned chewing gum and candy. Little Fred came running with two packs in his hands, but luckily, we discovered it in time. And yet, what is this bombardment with a death toll of fifty compared with Rotterdam of which the whole central part was completely in ruins. That was more than war; it was the downright extermination of people.

That evening, the radio announced the news that the army had capitulated, and the Queen had fled to England. I cannot describe how abandoned we felt. For the last time, the radio played the Wilhelmus. The soldiers, in desperation, destroyed their weapons; an ominous silence swept over the land. That evening, strange and threatening shadows seemed to be sweeping our fields, and on the horizon the clouds were red with the glow of burning Rotterdam. We sobbed like crying, homesick orphans.

May 11, 1940. Endless columns of German army autos, motorcycles and tanks thundered along the highways. I had taken my motor car to drive towards Wilnis where my sister lives and had to meet those hated enemies with their hard and insolent faces. They did not even look at us. They were the victors. I realized that I was very pale and felt a heavy lump in my throat. Tears, although without a sob, ran down my cheeks. Even months later when I rode among our beautiful sunny fields, the tears coursed freely and that lump came to my throat. I became leaner and paler

daily, though not so much from hunger because we did not know hunger yet.

However, the Germans did everything possible to make friends of us. They had planned to win the Hollanders with superficial kindness. They promised us that they would not interfere in our affairs in any way. They excused themselves with the claim that they had invaded our land to head off England. The German soldiers were required to salute our Holland officers. They behaved very discreetly, and one almost had to love them. My school was taken in charge by a German Major who assured me that every provision would be made for the care of the building. He was sitting opposite me in my office when Leentje came to see me. She eyed the major defiantly and contemptuously. He jumped up and stood at attention and continued to stand until she gave him a nod that he could sit down, but tears filled her eyes and he immediately arose, saluted her and left saying, "Pardon, I will not disturb you." He left the office and us alone. The following day he had reason to cry himself. His son had been killed. "The whole war is not worth the life of a single man," he said, then returned to Germany to bury his son. We never saw him again. On the way, he was killed by a bomb.

Not only he, but all Germans, did their best to make friends of us. We never forgave them for what they did to us. From the beginning of the invasion we never looked at them, and when we met them on the street, we turned our heads away. That made them

almost desperate. Sometimes they even would grab a man by his clothes and make him face about and said, "You will have to look until the troops are past." The Hollander smiled faintly and just stared with a vacant look in his eyes.

All too soon it became evident that their fine promises were written on mere scraps of paper. They began to take a hand in one thing after another. They forbade this, they commanded that. Our school books were inspected and if there was a single statement in them that irked them, the books were condemned and confiscated. In our language book we had one line: "August 31 our flags fly." It was condemned because August 31 is the birthday of the Queen. Oh, we laughed about it and mimicked the moffen and told jokes at their expense, but they never comprehended. A German is not witty. In Katwijk by the Sea, one of the moffen asked a fisherman, "Is the sea very wide here?" "Oh, surely not," replied the fisherman, "You could easily swim across and when you come up on the other side, they will be standing ready to dry you off." The mof looked surprised by it, but he did not know that "to dry you off" really meant to give him a good thrashing.

During that period, it is hard to realize how we could retain any faith in the future, for the German tanks were following through Belgium with little opposition and then on into France. England had her terrible Dunkirk retreat across the channel. France folded up in three short weeks, and only the London radio beamed out courage, practically without any

good reason or foundation because even at that very moment the life of England hung by a slender thread. Three times a day we listened to the English radio. What a help it was to hear that rousing voice, "Hello, hear radio Orange, the voice of the fighting Netherlands. Courage and Faith! Our land shall never be a German province." And then came the messages of which I never believed half. At home I always saw the dark side of things, a real pessimist, and yet later it appears that I had been more of an optimist than any of the others. Lucky for us, because otherwise we might never have lived through those five ghastly war years.

The Germans soon detected the importance of those inspiring encouragements from the BBC. To listen to them was strictly forbidden. They told us that when they rode in the streets with autos they could detect any radio that was tuned in to the British wavelength. They threatened us with heavy punishments. We just looked skyward and listened to the radio. They jammed the British wavelength, they screamed, they chattered, and ranted so that it was hardly possible to understand the English. I made a receiver that caught only waves that came precisely from the direction of London and so circumvented the disturber. The Germans became even bolder; they cursed the Hollanders. In Germany the people obeyed every order of the government, but the Hollanders just smiled and went their way.

Alas, we could have made fools of them from 1940 to 1945 if those cursed N.S.B.s had not interfered,

those treacherous Hollanders who cooperated with the Germans and betrayed their own countrymen. I had told the children that they had to watch and pray for the return of the Queen. I was apprehended after a traitor heard my comment to the boys. For 14 days I stood ready to flee. The scamp who accused me was a Dutch captain. Why the case was dropped I never learned, but they left me alone. Later, I received threatening letters from him for other reasons which only left me cold, although I did spend a few hours on pins and needles. But the moffen went still further—I could no longer appoint teachers without their approval. They determined that we should only have N.S.B. throughout the Netherlands. Almost all the officers and teachers wrote at the same time to the Hague, denouncing these orders and refusing to obey. They were furious, but what could they do? A few of our outstanding leaders were seized and taken to concentration camps, but that did not faze the rest. They just had to leave us to ourselves. They tried the same thing with the doctors and dentists. These, too, took a united stand against the enemy and defied them to their face. More fury and new persecutions, but they were only hastening their own defeat.

Up to that time, our family had been able to avoid any trouble. Then came the decree that all students would be required to sign a declaration that they were not hostile to Germany, and that they would not engage in any subversive activities against the Nazis. Most of the male students refused, including

Paul and Goop, Tanny's fiancé, and that was the end of their studies for a long time. They could no longer appear on the street openly. Hollanders were required to have passports or identification cards with complete description of themselves and their vocations. On the street, road, or in trains, inspectors were constantly on the watch and requiring people to show these papers. If they found a student that could not prove that he had signed a declaration, he was arrested and deported to Germany to work in their war industries. It was therefore too dangerous for the young men to appear in public, especially not in their home town where some N.S.B. would recognize them and betray them. Only in the dark could they go out to get a little fresh air.

Paul often went out, nervous, always on alert, and while he was in the house he would sit by the fireside with his ears pricked up for the slightest unusual sound. He would often disappear suddenly when any suspicious sound reached him. Even in their homes these boys were not safe, because if someone squealed on them, or the German police suspected that there might be a student or one of the Underground in the house, they would make a raid in the evening or late in the night to make a search. Escape was impossible because no one was allowed on the streets after dark. Anyone found venturing out at night and found was immediately arrested or shot without warning. We made a hiding place for Paul under the closet floor of his bedroom and over the parlor doors, with the catch of the trap door concealed under the

threshold of the closet floor. Each one of us was trained to do his part in case of a search. The trap door was always open, and when a raid was suspected, Paul jumped into the opening, one closed the door after him and put the threshold in place, one immediately went to lay in his bed so that they would not become suspicious because the bed was warm with no one in it, and another had to delay the police as much as possible in conversation. We had everything arranged. Paul had to seek refuge only a few times, but somehow they never made a search while he hid there. The only time they did search the house, he was not at home. You can well imagine that such conditions made life a constant strain and not very pleasant. Then Paul decided to depart and go underground completely, as the saying goes. He went first to Terneuzen and then to Zaamslag, but the people of Zeeland are not any too brave and not one dared to take the risk of taking him into their home. He naturally sought for a hiding place among the farmers, because in the small houses of the villagers there was too much chance of discovery.

Paul stayed a week at one farmer's house, but the farmer did not want to keep him any longer. He then asked at least ten more farmers to take him, but none dared to do it. On the other hand, many of Zeeland, when called up by the moffen, went to Germany to work and in that Zeeland did not play a very honorable part. The province of Holland was somewhat better, but it was in Friesland and Groningen that we had the staunchest loyalty. There

they would not go and left the Germans to work out their own problems. But there naturally were some in Zeeland who were honorable, and it gives me great satisfaction to name among them Ko De Vos, the son of Kees and Jane, and my own brother Ko Stouthamer, who was an intelligent spy for the English. Later when the Germans got on his trail, he fled through Belgium and France to Spain and from there made his way to England where he rendered invaluable service.

When he could find no one would lodge a student, Paul found refuge with Ko De Vos. He spent a peaceful two months with the big-hearted Ko and his devoted wife, Coba, until he was betrayed as he had expected, and he had to flee again. He then went to Harlemmermeer to a farmer where five or six others of the Underground were lodging. There he spent a week, but I felt that it was too much of a burden for the hospitable man, so we looked for a different place. Nevertheless, Paul found them very congenial and the farmer got along with him very well. Paul sang constantly, and the farmer enjoyed it immensely. "A fine bass voice!" he said laughingly to me. "I could listen to him all day."

In the meantime, I found a place for him with a boatman, a former student of mine. Paul then became a boat hand which, for him, was a strange life—student, boatman, but he made the best of it. When I offered to pay his board, the owner refused, saying, "He works like an experienced seaman and need not pay anything, I am paying him his spending money." But there was

danger there, too, because among the boatmen there were also N.S.B.s. While Paul ran dirty and ragged, he was soon in trouble. He had grown a mustache, did not shave, wore dirty overalls, and had the appearance of a real sailor, but he had a refined manner and spoke cultured language. Every boatman had an “a la Marine” appearance and Paul’s language made people think, “that is a student.” One time, I went to a factory where he had been sent on an errand for the boatman. When I asked if a boat hand had been there, they said no, but that a student had been there at noon.

Sometimes the boats were inspected and searched by the river patrols. Once they asked to see the list of employees and, finding everything in order, the officer, pointing to Paul, asked, “And who is that?” “Oh,” said the boatman, “that is Robinson Crusoe.” The officer, evidently not a Nazi sympathizer, laughed a little and went on his way. In his free time, Paul studied in the fore cabin and prepared himself as a candidate for examination. Whenever the boat came in our vicinity we looked him up. He appreciated that and was very thankful for our trouble, as for instance, when I had come a long way on my bicycle, or Leentje had come a distance with the bus. I wanted to bring him home, but Leentje thought we better not. I let things slide for a while, and Paul continued with his disgusting work hauling garbage—especially decaying potato peelings which emit a sickening odor and attract flies by the thousands. Then Paul was given his own boat with which he had to follow that of his boss to Wiringmeet

to get sugar beets. I brought him my leather auto coat, and he wore it. Standing in the rain and mist, he looked like an experienced sailor. Leentje looked him up in Halfweg and had a long talk with him in a small café. On the way back to the boat, Leentje walked ahead along a long line of boards in the mud, but when she reached the boat she looked around and Paul had disappeared. On the boat coming out of the cabin, she noticed the cap of a German patrolman.

Cocky had also paid him a visit in Amsterdam and strolled along some of the smaller side streets to keep out of sight as much as possible. When she returned she said, "They will never catch him. He seems to have a thousand eyes. If in a crowd of people, he spies a uniform, a cap, or even a German boot, he is in another street before you know it, without haste and wholly unconcerned, but fast and determined."

The boys were like hunted rabbits. Often, I could not help pitying Paul. One after another of his comrades got caught in the German traps and were deported. So was Goop, Tanny's fiancé, who was seized and thrown into prison. They asked him, "What are you studying?" and when he replied, "Indologie," they struck him in his face so hard that the filling came out of his teeth. He was taken to a notorious concentration camp near Bosch.

One day Leentje went to meet Paul in Harlemmermeer where he was expected. They spent a pleasant afternoon. When she came home that evening, she remarked, "My bus left earlier than that of Paul,

and when we left he stood looking after me like a dog deserted by its owner.” “Then he comes home,” said I. I went to get him and was he glad to be in the old home again! He then was with us until the end of the war, but no one knew it, not even my best friends. You can imagine, of course, that it requires vigilance and care to keep such a young man concealed, and his singing was out of the question.

Some days, in the dark of the morning, he disappeared in his dirty sailor overalls, bound for Rotterdam to keep up his studies. He rode along with a truck, helped load and unload it, assisted the driver, and when he got to Rotterdam, he took off his overalls, stepped into the office of a professor, received his lesson, got some practice, or took examinations. In this way he took seven tests, one after the other, continuing his studies until he became a brilliant candidate for enrollment in economics. He wants to become an accountant, which requires one of the longest courses of study, and he still has at least two years ahead of him.

During that time, Tanny was secretary to an attorney in Alphen. Despite having her fiancé in a hated concentration camp and thus being lonely, she bore up very well. Only once did I catch her weeping. Meanwhile, she had undertaken to provide bread cards and ration stamps for those in the Underground. Those who had gone underground naturally did not share in the distribution of food and clothing, and some provision had to be made for them. Crafty, bold men would break into townhouses or ration offices of banks

and rob them of bread cards or stamps and divide them with their fellows. Sometimes this was at the cost of their lives. Paul's friend was shot dead. Each week, Tanny made the trip to Geist. She wore a corset in which she had sewn pockets to conceal the cards and stamps to take to her patron or employer, Mr. Meyer. She also visited various provinces—Gelderland, Zeeland, Overijssel, Brabant—and there gave lectures urging the people not to go to Germany to work. Speaking at clandestine meetings, she inspired the workers to develop an attitude of living for principle rather than money. After her first experience she said laughingly, "Father, I never knew that I could speak, but it just seems to come naturally." She was indeed a brave girl. Naturally, she never mentioned her work with the Underground. She went her way quietly and unnoticed, but the parents of Goop could never approve of it, believing it to be too big a risk for her. They never knew just what she did, but they suspected one thing and another. One time, Mr. Ubbink asked me if I would forbid her doing her work and naturally I refused to interfere.

But it was different with Cocky when she became involved in the Underground. With her happy, vivacious nature, she just gave herself zealously and 100%. She traveled regularly to the Hague to the office of a colonel who was a ringleader in the resistance. Every day we had five or six people at the door to see her. To camouflage her work, which sooner or later would get her into trouble, she organized singing clubs

and recitals at our house. Our house was a regular dovecote of activity with people flying in and out the whole week. Church concerts were given, etcetera, anything to throw the N.S.B.s and the Germans off their guard. However, the leader in Alphen was a conceited foolish young person who thought it unnecessary to work strictly on the Q.T., and I became afraid that he would give it all away, especially when I found out that both Tanny and Cocky were on the list of suspects of the German secret police. Immediately I made both girls go underground. One of the leaders of the resistance organization, one who had called at our home, seems to have been a spy for the Germans. When he was discovered by the organization, they took him prisoner, but he escaped or they would have killed him. Two cousins of Tanny's fiancé were arrested and deported to Germany. One was a fine boy and had done a great piece of work for us. He was confined in a concentration camp where he soon perished. After this, the case against our girls seems to have petered out and they returned home. Somehow, I was able to allay the suspicions of the Secret Police and they left us alone. Then it was that Cocky became a nurse.

A short time later, Tanny resumed her work with the Underground and regularly carried confidential messages, cards and stamps. This was done for Mr. Meyer, her patron, who was responsible for providing cards for all the Undergrounders of the Hervormde Kerk. Everything was done quietly and smoothly, highly necessary since Paul was at home. A

visit or a search by the German police at that time would have been very unwelcome, as that would have been risky for Paul. Besides all this, each day there were delivered to our home about fifty illicit news sheets which I distributed around Alphen, and so we had to keep out of the public eye as much as possible. I hid these papers in my socks as I delivered them. Whenever I suspected inspectors were at work in the streets or a raid was in prospect, or a manhunt was on, I remained at home and had Fred deliver the papers. He hid them in his school bag and went out as usual. Not a single German ever bothered to look at him; he was as secretive as a grave.

I had a good example of Fred's secretive nature in the case of my revolver. Possession of firearms was punishable by death. I had fastened it to a low beam with nails where it could not be seen unless you crawled under it and looked directly upwards. It was safe enough; not even Leentje knew about it. Then, one day, every house was being searched for contraband and weapons and Fred came to me and whispered, "Father you better get rid of your revolver because they'll be here any minute. It is too dangerous." I asked him how he knew that I had a revolver. "Oh," he replied, "I noticed it when I was playing with Reiny upstairs." Reiny had moved away a year before, so for a whole year Fred kept that secret to himself.

One of the forbidden items was a radio. Ever since the Germans discovered that we listened to the British broadcasts despite their jamming the

wavelength, they had ordered all receivers to be turned in. Whoever was found keeping one back was deported to Germany. In place of the radio news, which many now could not listen to, came the little secret news sheets with all the war news. I can imagine how bitter the Germans became against our people because there was not a single order of decree, no matter how strict, but what the Hollanders found a way around it. Those illicit secret news sheets effectively spurred resistance. Our spies often knew days beforehand just where raids would be, or manhunts begun. This news gave ample warning so that our men and boys were on the alert. Despite this, in many of the raids a number of men would be caught and deported, but not a tenth of what the Nazis would like to have taken. Only once was Paul in danger. The raid came early in the morning before six o'clock. Paul did not stay home that day because the police never hesitated to shoot through the ceilings and floors if perchance boys might be hidden there. Paul decamped.

Luckily, a detail of police was late in getting to Alphen so that the polder road was still unguarded, and Paul could escape that way or he would have been captured.

On a certain day, Mr. Meyer and a friend were suddenly arrested. Mr. Meyer took advantage of an opportunity and made his escape. I have mentioned before that the Germans and the N.S.B.s were dumb or stupid. They are cruel, not smart, but that incident brought us a new worry. Tanny, who was at the office

at the time, was taken into custody and questioned. They took her up to a small attic room and began a thorough examination. She acted innocently enough and tried to throw them off their track in their quest for information about Meyer, but it had been better for her if she had just pleaded ignorance. They had reasons to suspect that she knew more than she admitted and said, "You are not just a common clerk here, but the confidential secretary of Mr. Meyer. You know more than you have told us." She never yielded an inch. They placed her under guard in that attic room, pressed a pistol against her side and threatened to shoot her without warning if she made any attempt to escape; and then left her alone.

Now what to do? She was in complete charge of Mr. Meyer's affairs in his absence and feared that those brutal scoundrels would not hesitate to torture her to make her reveal what she knew about his secret affairs. Before her guard was down the steps, she took off her shoes and outer clothing, sprang to the trap door to the roof, squirmed through and escaped over the adjoining roofs. Then she dropped herself to the balcony of a porch, then into a garden, then over a fence and stood in the rear room of the Director of the H.B.S., on whom she had made previous calls. A half hour later we had the detectives in the house, furious. I was not at home, so Leentje had to face them alone and somehow managed to calm them down and told them that Tanny no doubt would show up soon because she was entirely innocent, but because she had fled she had unwittingly

placed herself under suspicion by the police. They left but promised to return later. Tanny had gone to her prospective husband's parents who were living temporarily in Alphen but they were timid and feared to take her into hiding. That was a keen disappointment to her.

In the meantime, Goop had been liberated from the concentration camp through the aid of Mr. Meyer and the influence and importance of his father's trucks. When I arrived at the Ubbink home, Tanny was crying. She had risked her life for her people and now her intended parents-in-law did not dare to take her in to protect her. They finally yielded, so I controlled my anger and told them I would take care of her myself. Leentje and I took her outside of Alphen a few miles to a friend of ours, but it was not as easily done as all that. All the roads were guarded by German patrols and Tanny had no passport now, the detectives having taken hers, but somehow we got her through. I immediately had a false passport made for which she had to have a photo made. That photo portrays her as a dejected girl with a sickly smile around her mouth, apparently deserted by everyone. Never have I had such sympathy for any one. During Goop's confinement in the camp she had not cried, but now she was very pale and often her eyes were red with weeping. She was with those friends for five days and then her passport was ready. She was registered with the authorities as Elizabeth Geist, then went underground for more than half a year. She was

stopped and questioned but once, and her papers were not questioned.

So far, I have said very little about our feelings during the time of which I have written, our deeper feelings as we lived through these various events. You can well imagine that we were injured and deeply hurt. True, we made fools of the moffen, often deceiving them and never obeying them, and often laughed about them. But underneath there was always that painful, gnawing knowledge that you were under the heel of cruel and unprincipled scoundrels. You could look at the beautiful skies, the trees, clouds drifting overhead or the fluttering of the leaves, but somehow you felt detached from them. Many were the days that not even a smile was seen anywhere. We gritted our teeth and struggled on with renewed courage. How long? How long?

Back to Tanny and her situation. You can imagine that the police did not just let it go at that. One evening, just after she had left, I was sitting in the parlor talking with Mr. Terwee, the publisher of those illicit news sheets, when I noticed a pair of figures near our house. I called Leentje, "Take a look to see who those fools might be." She returned immediately and said, "Secret police." Mr. Terwee turned pale but quickly thrust his illicit papers under the pillows as the secret police threw themselves on the sofa, stretched out their legs and said, "Isn't your daughter home yet?"

"No."

“Who is that?” pointing to Terwee who was very uneasy.

“That is the father of some school children. I am principal of a school.”

“O yes, we know that.” They ignored Terwee and began about Tanny.

“What do you think about her running away?”

“Very foolish.”

“Oh? Why?”

“Because she now has made you suspicious of her while she is as innocent as a newborn child.”

“That’s what you say. However, she seems clever enough.”

“To be sure, she is a very intelligent girl.”

“She was the confidential secretary to Mr. Meyer?”

“That is putting it too strong. She was an office girl.”

“Confidential secretary, we tell you. She knew, without a doubt, much about Meyer’s confidential papers and affairs.”

I laughed. “You can believe that if you want to. Do you think that an experienced attorney such as Mr. Meyer would trust such a young girl with his confidential papers and affairs?”

“That could very well be possible.”

“Don’t act so dumb.”

“Has she been home yet?”

“No, for if she had been, we would immediately have taken her before you.”

“Do you mean that?”

“Naturally. Such a child does not realize what she has done.”

“You are a sensible father.”

“Always.”

“But we don’t trust you altogether.”

“That’s not fair of you. Why not?”

“Your daughter fled in her slip and on stocking feet. She has to have clothes and naturally would come here to get them.”

I could have told them: *No, you asses, she provided for herself because right on your heels she went to Meyer’s house. As soon as you had left, she got her things and Meyer’s confidential papers, and received underclothes and some of Mrs. Meyer’s dresses, knowing that you are all robbers, the silverware she could not save because you already had taken that, you thieves. But because you thought more of silverware than you did of valuable papers, she was able to get all his valuable documents safely away. Asses!!!* This all ran thru my mind and I smiled.

“We want to see her clothes. Where are they?”

“Upstairs. My wife will gladly help you. Now, can I take care of this gentleman?”

“Go ahead.” The bandits went upstairs. Terwee, smiling feebly, departed.

So far so good. She was safe, but I was still in a pinch with another. Paul would be home almost any minute that evening and it was now 9:30. Those rascals would surely stay another hour, and our boy would run right into their arms. I waited until I heard them go

into the attic, because from there they could not look through any windows into our yard. I ran to a neighbor and said, "There are secret police in my house. Paul will be home soon. Stop him."

"All right." And a big load was off my mind.

"Man, come up at once," called Leentje, "now they want to take Paul's clothes along."

They were in Paul's room. Five suits were on his bed.

"What are you up to?" I asked them.

"Taking along the clothes of your underground son."

"Who said that he is underground?"

"Your wife."

"Wife, did you tell them that?"

"No, they are lying."

"Who says that these clothes are my boy's?"

"Then they are not your son's?"

"They are mine."

"Which ones are yours?"

I picked out three of the best and said, "These."

"Where are your other clothes?"

"In my room."

"Put on this suit." So I did.

"A very poor fit."

"Just as you want to, but you keep your hands off."

"Put on one of the suits of your own room." So, I did.

"These fit you."

“Yes.”

“These don’t. We’re taking them along.”

“You leave them where they are.”

“You will have to sing a different tune or we take them along.”

“That is just what I mean to do. If you take those clothes along, then I go too, and when we get to the office, I’ll talk just as I have done here.”

With a savage look on their faces, they left the clothes. The prize was gone for this time. *Asses!*

But there was another scene, this time about Tanny’s clothes. There were far too few. They were absolutely right, but we brought them to their senses by saying that a girl in these times when you could hardly buy anything, would wear out her clothes, and could hardly have many left. They were satisfied with that. Disappointed, they had to leave the suitcase which Leentje had been compelled to give them. Then they went downstairs.

“What will you do, Mister, when your daughter returns?”

“What is your address?”

“Hoorn. Rode Steen Number 10.”

“If our daughter should return, we will immediately take the train and pay you a visit at Number 10 Rode Steen.”

“Sensible of you.”

They seemed to actually begin to trust us.

“Well, we’ll be seeing you, Mister.”

“Until next time.”

“Say, Mister,” said Leentje when she took them to the door, “How is it that you don’t trust us? You surely noticed that we have only good intentions.”

“You are right, my lady, but you should know how often we have been deceived.”

I could hardly control myself from bursting right out in laughter. I slammed the door behind them and doubled up with laughter.

I sent a letter to Tanny, telling her to copy it in her own handwriting and mail it back to us. It read as follows:

Dear Parents: As you know only too well, I have disappeared. The secret police made me a prisoner in the office, but I managed to escape. That was not a very good decision on my part because now they will naturally think that I know too much and do not have a clear conscience. However, they had threatened me with a revolver and so I feared them, and I could not help but remember Goop, whom they had locked up for eight months though he was entirely innocent. I had no desire to be locked up in prison even though I am innocent. As things now stand, it is best that I stay away until the end of the war, which we hope will not be long. I am not giving you any address as that would only cause you worry. Goodbye, until I see you again. Best wishes from Tanny.”

Tanny sent me this letter by post and I immediately forwarded it to No. 10 Rode Steen, Hoorn. There it made a good impression and they wrote me a nice letter that they now understood that my intentions had been good and that from now on they

would leave me in peace. This they actually did. Now I had what I wanted. I could not afford to have the secret police get inside our house and had to keep them outside the door. But you can see that I am somewhat of a rogue. I had shown them only my good side, while they had shown me only meanness. One week later one of those scoundrels was shot dead, and I never heard from the other one again.

Tanny remained away for more than a half year, but she returned when the incident with Meyer had died down. The two friends of Meyer who had been arrested were both shot.

Then, suddenly, we were happily astonished with the news that the Allies had landed on the coast of France. June 6, 1944. D-Day!

I brought out my radio at once, since I had not dared to listen for a long time. That is to say, I descended into my cellar and turned it on while the whole family and many of the neighbors gathered above the floor opening. It was exceedingly dangerous, but I could not wait any longer. How anxious we were during the following few weeks. First, it went altogether too slow according to our wishes. Then we suddenly heard that the Allies had broken through at Caen. We shouted! We drew lines on our maps, we followed the Allies with the point of our pencils. Forward, brothers! We are awaiting you! Along about the first of September the going seemed exceptionally fast. Our comrades in arms seemed to be moving on wings. Ah! Just as the Germans had smashed thru

Belgium, now these God-forsaken scoundrels were being ground to bits. On September 2, the Allies reached the Belgian border. Suspense, terrible suspense! COME ON, BROTHERS! We are waiting! We cannot wait any longer! In three days, all of Belgium was wiped up.

September 4, 1944, twelve o'clock at night. Last radio broadcast for the day. I was lying on the floor. All the others had gone to bed. I had my ear against the loudspeaker. I heard: "The English have reached the Netherlands border; their vanguard has reached Breda." I almost shouted. I awakened Leentje: "They are in Breda!!!"

September 5, 1944, the same news, but a little more cautious. Breda was not mentioned again. "But they are in Breda! Hurrah!" They just must be farther by now. Yes, they have reached the banks of the river. Everyone seemed to lose his head. "They're coming! They're coming!" The Germans were altogether bewildered and very nervous. The wildest rumors were going around. In Rotterdam, they reported: "They are in Dordt." In the Hague they said, "They are in Rotterdam." In Leiden they said, "They are in Utrecht." All telephone service was broken. The radio announced: "At the Netherlands border!" But people said the radio was usually 24 hours late and that was also true. Often the radio waited a day after the Germans had admitted their losses before announcing what had happened.

The women ran to the main highways to greet the Allies with flowers and welcome. A victorious feeling of jubilation went thru the whole country. The N.S.B.s began to flee. They gathered on the platforms of the stations. Hundreds of people gathered to see their flight. Each time they saw a group of the traitors coming they let out salvos of "Hurrahs." That was in the beginning. Then their hatred broke loose. There was a lanky redheaded young fellow, an informer for the Gestapo. "Ho!" cried ten or twenty voices, "here we have that dirty red bastard." Hurrah! Ha Ha Ha! With his homely and forbidding face, the fellow stood out above the whole crowd. He smiled faintly and opened the door of the station for his father. His polite manner and concern for his father in the midst of such an angry surging mass of people upset me for a moment. God never really forsakes anyone. Then the people set upon him and I last saw him spring over the railing. I turned away and thought, "This probably means bloodshed." Little Fred pulled my arm and said: "Come, Father, let's get out of here." It happened to be his birthday. We left. When we got out of that mob he asked: "Do you think that is right?" I said, "No, my little man. That young man should be given a trial before the judge and not condemned by a vengeful mob."

Paul was also on the platform, the first time in many months that he had shown himself openly in public. He viewed the situation with a lot of satisfaction. Then he spied a German soldier and went right up to him. He advised the man to get away and

hide with a farmer. When the man hesitated too long, he told him to come along. Then he tore off his coat and sent him on his way. Later, he came home with that coat. On the platform the crowd became a raging mob. An N.S.B. fired a shot. A son of Captain P. dropped dead. Then the mob cut loose on all those traitors, running and screaming. Leentje happened to be present, too, and it looked very much like a bloody battle had begun. Suddenly around the corner of the street, an auto appeared with German soldiers. They let go with their machine guns over the heads of the mob. In ten seconds, the people had fled, Leentje having stepped into a nearby store. The streets were empty again. One man was left dead on the pavement; he would never run again. Suddenly, Alphen realized that the Allies had not arrived and that the moffen still had the upper hand. Quietly they vanished into their homes. A sullen stillness came over the whole place. Two were dead. The radio announced, "At the border of the Netherlands." Since then we refer to it as "Mad Tuesday." "I had rather a sad birthday," said our little man Fred.

We waited one day, two days. The radio announced, "At the border of the Netherlands." It was plainly evident that the armies had been stopped at the border. Universal anxiety and waiting! Then came the news of the breakthrough at Eindhoven. The armies pushed forward again. With a forced march they reached Nymegen. Everyone held their breath. At Nymegen was the beautiful new bridge across the

Waal. At Nerhem was the bridge over the Rhine. Would the Germans actually blow up those precious bridges? If so, contact with the North would be broken. A long hard winter fight at the river was in the making! The Waal is our widest river. The bridge over this was new, something to be proud of, a work of steel and concrete, scarcely one mile in length. We had just, in the later years, built great wide auto roads through the whole land and that fine bridge at Nymegen, and also one at Moerdyk, Arnhem, Keisersveer, Zalt Bommel, and Kuitenburg.

And so began the struggle for the bridges at Arnhem and Nymegen. The allied men stormed into the city. A fierce and terrible fight followed—man to man. At the bridge it was almost exclusively with knives. Friend and foe were all mixed in the terrible mass of humanity. The Germans soon realized that they could not hold out. They retreated hurriedly over the bridge. They had not seen that underneath the bridge a young Hollander had slowly worked his way from pile to pile along the braces. It was John Van Goop, a boy of the fighting Underground, filled with strength and desperation. With death staring him in the face, he said, "I will save that bridge." He was a fine, dark young man with oval face and sleek black hair. For a time, the Germans seemed to have the advantage except for those men with the long knives who continued their fierce battle hand to hand. Then came the command: "Blow up the bridge!" One touch on the electric button and with a deafening roar both friend

and foe would go skyward with that bridge! One push on that button, but nothing happened. Jan Van Goop had cut the wires and the bridge was safe. The fight continued for another two hours. The bridge was covered with bodies, mutilated by knives of the fighters. The following day they found John Van Goop. They carried him away in a German car. When he alighted, he was felled by one of those dirty moffen without a chance. We are now erecting a monument for him.

In the meantime, we had reached September 17. It would be impossible for you to realize what those days were for us, the tenseness of our countenances. A large part of our people sobbed, "We have arrived, we are free, the Germans are through." But those who had followed things with more understanding knew full well: "It is now or never. The bridge at Arnhem."

Then suddenly came the report: *the British were landing airborne troops beyond Arnhem*, and a few hours later, *the bridge is safely in the hands of the British*. During the whole war I was always a pessimist, thinking that it would take longer than most people believed, but then I said: "Now we are through. We have won. The second army is coming directly from Nymegen. The Germans have no chance left now." One thing I was afraid of—the British would go from Arnhem directly into Germany and leave us behind. But then I thought, "Better keep still," because I always received a rebuke when putting a damper on the optimism of others. I

said to myself: “You eternal pessimist, why don’t you shout now?”

If you know history, you know full well what happened. The English were being held at Nymegen and in the Betuwe, while the airborne troops at Arnhem held out only five days. One battalion was wiped out to the last man, and the remainder of the second battalion was wiped out to the last man, and the rest had to retreat. Arnhem, beautiful Arnhem was in ruins. The inhabitants met and welcomed the British, had received chocolate, tea, cigarettes, but when the worst of the fighting came, they had disappeared into their cellars and hiding places. In some houses there were moffen upstairs, English downstairs, and the people in the cellar.

A week later when the people finally could come out, they saw only moffen, nothing but moffen. For a short time, there was still uncertainty—would the English resume the attack? But nothing happened. Sullen dejection descended over the land, the unspoken recognition that we were in for another winter and would have to wait for the spring offensive.

The times that then came upon us were terrible in the extreme, a winter of misery, death, hunger, and oppression. True, in the first four years we had suffered a lot. We were poor, robbed, tormented, persecuted. We made the Psalms of Israel and the Lamentations of Jeremiah our comfort. If we had been liberated we would have said, “We passed thru a dreadful time of evil. We have lived in a world of suffering.” And we

would have been right. But terrible as they were, those years were not to be compared with that terrible winter that now faced us. If I live to be a hundred years old, that terrible winter will lie in my memory as a grim ugly blot, a mist, which like a shroud lay over our starving country.

No trains were running—a universal suspension of rail service. The Germans were furious, vengeful. It was then that their true devilish nature came out in the open. They cursed us, left us to perish in our troubles. They made no effort to provide us any food. Not a single wagon, auto, or boat was assigned for our use. They robbed us of our last reserves. Our potatoes were used to make fuel for the V-2 with which they were bombing England. Complain as we would, it made no difference. Up until now we had received 1800 grams of bread with butter, cheese, and meat. From then on we had less, week after week, absolutely no butter, fats, oils, cheese, or meat. Finally, we were down to 400 grams of bread and one kilogram of potatoes per week. You can easily understand that no people could live on that. Coal was scarce and there was no gas at all. We had no electric current either. And that winter was cold, exceptionally cold, a severe winter we had not known for years.

Older people used to talk about the winter of 1890, which must have been a bleak winter indeed. Hardly had the war started when the winters began getting colder, longer, ages long. Frost or freezing of 20 degrees. Snow a meter deep, lying for months. Now

just let them talk about the winter of '90! We know what it is. Four barren bleak winters, one terrible cold, and one mild. Those were our war winters, just when our shortages were worst. The last winter was not so severe but very cold for a while. The snow lay in great drifts for four or five weeks. It froze each night sometimes down to 14 to 15 degrees. You will probably smile about this, because I know that you have very severe winters, but I can assure you that with 10 degrees of freezing without stoves or anything to eat, that is something terrible to experience. Many people remained in bed until eleven o'clock since they had nothing for breakfast anyway. Then they crawled out, ate a plate of water soup from the kitchen, danced around a little, ate a slice of bread, put their children to bed and at six o'clock crawled under the covers themselves. There was no more to eat, no fire and no light.

How did we fare ourselves in that fearful winter? Tolerably well, with plenty of worry and misery, but we did live through it. We are especially grateful to Tanny and Paul. They ran afoot or rode on bicycles without tires from morning till evening. Somehow, they gathered food from east, west, north, and south. Especially Paul. What cares that young man had! The smile had died from his face, not a trace of joy to be seen, not a line did he sing. He was thin and blue. He offered to try to get away to the English so there would be one less mouth to feed, but then he would have to get through the German lines and somehow

get across the Maas in the night. He would have tried it and no doubt would have made it because what he wills to do, he can do. But I could not consent and much less, Leentje.

Every evening, he and Tanny made new plans and each morning they set out. When they came back once with a swan, a fat swan—that was a feat! What it cost them you had better not ask, and whether Paul had to trudge much through the polders either, he just kept still and looked grim. You might ask whether he could now appear on the streets without being taken. Yes, you see ever since Mad Tuesday, the N.S.B.s had disappeared and could no longer betray him. For the moffen he was too foxy. They made raid after raid, but he always got away. I almost think that he smelled them. He even went out at night and stole wood out of their trenches, laughing glumly. Sometimes Cocky came home and brought a loaf of rye bread. She was living in a region where there still was something to be had. Evenings we usually sat around the table in the light of a small oil lamp, Leentje, Tanny, Paul, yours truly and Corry from my brother Jan who happened to be in Holland when the rivers were closed to traffic and could not return to her home in Terneuzen, which had earlier been liberated by the Poles. Fred usually went to bed early. Those around the table would read and in a dark corner by myself I sat and worried. Oh, those evenings!

The house was filled with the odor of sugar beets which we had boiled to get a little syrup, while

the pulp we mixed with flour and made small cakes. The stove burnt faintly, large shadows were on the walls, shadows of those around the table. I glanced at Leentje. She appeared poor and sickly, suffering from a blood ailment, and slept where she sat. I looked at Paul. He was blue and thin, looking glum. I looked at Tanny. She was thin and pale. Only Corry was still plump and sleek as an oyster. Then I thought, "We are starving." I began to figure out how long we could hold out with our small store of food. Then came the voice of Paul, "Father we are down to our last mud of potatoes." "I know it son, but I have gone from Koudekerk to Zwammerdam, and not a kilo could I get." "We have to have potatoes, father." "Yes." Silence. The children kept reading. Mother slept.

One day Tanny rode to Harlemmermeer, traveling for two days on her bicycle with a small trailer and returned with 60 kilo of potatoes and 40 kilos of wheat. A call at Harlem, where my brother Reindert lives, brought results, a promise that in North Holland we would be able to get potatoes. Reindert had formerly been at the head of a school there and had just gotten eight mud from there. But by now he had given about half of them away to his friends. He could not know about our need because there was no mail service. We could hardly let Paul go, because for him it was too dangerous. Tanny went. Five days she was gone and came back empty, disappointed. We continued for another two weeks, very sparingly. Always the days were the same, the evenings also. Then one Saturday I

made a trip on my bicycle, calling on many farmers and bakers in nearby villages. Many people in those villages knew me because their children had attended my school, because they wanted to attend a gymnasium or the vocational high school, for which I had a special department. I came back with a big bag looking like St. Nicolaas. They all gathered around me. 10 kilos flour, 10 kilos peas, four big loaves of bread, two bottles of milk and 25 kilos potatoes. Such a day was like a feast. However, such a trip could be made only once. Those people had too little themselves. A month later when I tried it again, I got one lone bottle of milk, nothing else. And now Christmas was drawing near.

One evening Paul came home and said, "I have rented a push cart, I'm going to the Betuwe to get potatoes." "Alone?" "Yes, alone." "That's too dangerous. It's in the front line of the Germans." "I am going. We have to have potatoes." One of my teachers, who was from there, wanted to go along. I gave him a week off. They chose a large handcart and set off. Would they be able to scare up anything or would they return empty handed? They went by way of the country roads, the first day 40 kilometers, the second 30, the third 40, the fourth 40, and the following day they were pulled along by a stone boat drawn by horses. They slept at the homes of farmers and were entertained freely. They ate with the farmers, sat with them evenings in their kitchens, joshed their daughters, were provided with bottles of milk in the morning, and journeyed on towards the land where

there were reported to be potatoes to spare, making their way right through the German front lines.

On the Betuwe polder road, they met many people from Rotterdam and the Hague with the same purpose as themselves. The German soldiers did not interfere with them nor did they show any animosity. It was only the secret police, the Gestapo, and the Green police, who made life unbearable for us, and those scoundrels you don't find at the front. In the Betuwe were many women and girls with a few old men in the hunger procession; the younger men did not dare show themselves in the open. The women pulled heavy carts and the girls hobbled along on their worn-out shoes. They met one cart, drawn by two young girls, filled not with potatoes, but an old coat covered the body of their dead father who had succumbed on the way. Paul went through the Betuwe from Gorkum to Geldermalsen and came to a road which had been flooded by the Germans. Walking in water is not very inviting because soaked feet get very sore. Paul told Kees to get in the wagon which he reluctantly did. Paul took off his pants, shoes and stockings and pushed the cart thru the flooded road. I wish I had seen them. Near the middle of the flood stood the cart with the two young men. Paul called to Kees, "That is something to remember. When you have reached 60 you can tell that to your grandchildren." They returned happy, they had seven mud of potatoes or 280 kilo each. How they ever managed it can hardly be imagined, two emaciated men, but when the need is urgent even the impossible

gets done. However, a doctor told me that that same week 13 of his patients had died through worry and exhaustion. We had provisions for a while and could eat two big plates of potatoes every day. We also had a few vegetables but absolutely no fats. We had enough to satisfy our hunger, but you feel weaker and weaker. You become as poor and thin as a rail, and as weak as a rag. Yet, we were thankful.

On New Year's Day, Paul said to me, "Father, how long do you think the war is going to last?"

"We cannot expect to be liberated before May 1," I said.

"When will they begin the Spring offensive?"

"Probably about the middle of March, but the moffen have cut the dikes of the Roer and that is going to hold them back for quite a while."

Paul began to do a little figuring. "May is about 20 weeks. We are eating 40 kilo per week. We have hardly 300 kilos left, or about enough for eight weeks. We will have to get more potatoes."

"Yes, my boy, but where are you going to get them?"

By January 4 we knew where we might get them—from a canal boat loaded with potatoes for the moffen. Paul had been hanging around there for a few days. Paul bribed the captain and arranged with him that when he heard an agreed signal he would not give the German sentry the alarm. Five o'clock the next morning I awakened Paul and Tanny. I dressed and went outside. The moon was as bright as day and not a

leaf was stirring. I went back into the house and told them that they might as well go back to bed because any sound could be heard at least a kilometer away, and the raid would be impossible. Tanny and I went back to bed. Paul went to look at the Rhine, soon returned, and said, "You are right, it is impossible," and then he got under the covers himself. However, I was uneasy. If we waited another day, the boat would be gone and such a chance might never come again. But the day before a man had ventured too near the boat and had been shot dead. Paul had planned well enough, but at half past six I awakened them again and said, "It will have to be done."

Silently we went, saying not a word. Paul got a rowboat and worked our way through the drift ice. It was a matter of life or death. Now the noises of the new day were beginning to be heard and it was not as still as at five o'clock. We reached the canal boat and fastened the rowboat. Paul quietly pulled himself aboard in his stocking feet and walked along the deck. Near the cabin, he heard a voice and hurried back. "No chance," he said. "The sentry is in the cabin and asking whether the coffee is done. Just listen. Loosen the boat." "No," I said, "just a little patience. The sentry will not remain in the cabin. He wants coffee and goes ashore to get it." After five minutes we again heard the voice. Paul slid towards it and returned at once. "Hurry, he is already on shore," he said. And so, we got busy. We clambered aboard and found a hatch open. We lowered ourselves into that inky black hole. We

bumped up against someone, another chap on the same errand as we. We said nothing and went to work. Tanny held the sack, I scooped it full, Paul carried it away. In his stocking feet he climbed the ladder with 40 kilos on his back. I pushed him through the small opening and hurried back to fill the next bag. Paul was back all too soon. "Forward, march!" Under such circumstances Paul is not easy to satisfy. He would work you off your feet, thinking that everyone is as strong as himself. We had to work in cramped quarters. "Hurry, hurry, another bag, heave ho," and we pushed him through again. Down again, fill again, and there was Paul again. We filled nine bags before the captain appeared at the hatch. "Better see that you get out of here. It is getting too light." We climbed out of the hold and leaped into our rowboat. We cut it loose, but it crunched against the sides of the boat. An anxious moment now. Would that sentry become suspicious? In suspense we hurried away. After 100 meters we were out of danger. Paul raised himself upright in the boat. "Bravo, Father!" he called. "In later years when you tell this to your grandchildren, they will never believe you."

Then the winter became more severe. Along the highways moved thousands with bicycles and sleds. Holland was drained of food, and the reserves of the Betuwe and the Veluwe were exhausted. They pushed on to Overijssel and Drente. They ran and they traveled from morning till night, in endless lines. They slept at the farmers' in a shed or in haystacks. They awakened

next morning and pushed farther, or they never woke up again and stayed still in death. We had potatoes enough now. We even gave a few away, but that did not go far. We ourselves did not hunger, we had to watch our land slowly starve.

Added to all that was the increased violence and oppression of the German secret police. Raid after raid in every city and town. From Rotterdam they deported the men by thousands, conscripted to help with the German defenses in Overijssel and Gelderland along the Ysel River. All afoot, they came in endless lines, driven like animals. Whoever hesitated was forced or carried along. The Underground was busier than ever. Many officials especially of the police and Gestapo were shot dead, followed by terrible vengeance from the Germans. At the place where a moffen executioner had been killed, they brought ten or twenty Hollanders, lined them up and mowed them down with machine guns, but first all pedestrians were forced to go to that place and compelled to look on. That only filled the people with greater hatred. The sight of such a group of defenseless men with hands and eyes towards heaven in prayer, silently waiting for the bullets of death—that sight only made men swear vengeance.

In Alphen we had a 17-year-old girl with the Underground. She ran almost frozen right through the forbidden places and guards, seeking weapons which the Allied planes were dropping at pre-arranged spots. What cared she for her life? Her father had been shot

and her brother hanged. She was alone and so were hundreds of others. With flashlights they signaled the location of bridges which the English bombardiers had vainly tried to blow up. They broke into prisons to free their fellows. Jan Campert, a poet, who was convicted and condemned to death, wrote a poem the night before his execution:

*A cell is only two yards long, and only two yards wide
But smaller still a lonely place, I cannot know as yet
Where on the morrow I shall rest,
and friends condemned with me none again shall ever see,
O, loveliness of sky and land,
'Tween Holland's spreading coasts,
Now by a fiendish foe o'er run, it would not leave me rest.
What can a man do, upright and true,
but fight at such a time
Just kiss his child and kiss his wife,
and fight in vain the fight
I see the new days breaking light,
e'en tho' I have thee failed,
As any man can also fail. Thy mercy now I crave
So that my courage will not fail, when I face my enemies.*

To subdue such people is impossible. Our finest and our bravest were sacrificed in death. They were dragged to prison to await the next day of execution or were shot down on the way without a chance to defend themselves, their bodies thrown behind a fence. One day in Putten, a village of the Veluwe, two Germans

were found dead. Who had killed them? Who shall say? All the inhabitants of that village, men, women, and children were driven into a nearby meadow and the village set afire behind them. After permitting them to witness the burning of their homes, the women and children were driven back into the ruins while the men, about 600 in number, were all taken along to a concentration camp and put on starvation rations. Thirteen came back, and of those, seven died a short time later. Do you think we just sat and sobbed or cried all day? Never! We just cursed those hounds of hell.

In the meantime, hunger gripped our nation. People died by the hundreds. Soon we were without flour, nothing but potatoes. Leentje became weaker, Fred as thin as a board. I went to Harlemmermeer to see if any wheat, beans, or peas were to be had. It was Friday morning. The wind blew like a hurricane. The first person I saw at Harlemmermeer was a very fine-looking woman. She was sitting at the side of the road completely exhausted and crying like a child. The second was another woman trying to climb out of a ditch where she had been blown off her bicycle. I rode past lines and lines of hungry people, begging at every farm home. I came to Harlem to my brother Reindert. He had just been evicted from his home by the moffen. I found him in a large, empty, gloomy room in the center of the town where table, stove and bed seemed almost lost in a vast space. His daughter was baking clammy pancakes. Near a small oil stove, we exchanged our sad stories and went to bed. The following

morning in the early dawn I rode away through the flooded fields.

I looked up many farmers, old acquaintances, but none had anything for me, beggars had begged them all bare. I stayed at one farmer's home and watched the crowd as it passed. One mother with three small children, two lonely old women, one old man, two young girls, women thin and blue, but what almost broke my heart was their resignation. In lines of hundreds, one after the other, knock, knock, knock, no light in their eyes, not even expectation on their faces. "Farmer, have you anything for me to eat?" "No, people." They plodded on, heads bowed, without any hope or expectation, or even disappointment. They expected no other answer. "Have you anything for me to eat?" "No, my girl, nothing." Tramp, tramp, going farther. A hundred farmers, a hundred times the same question, a hundred times the same answer. I was completely discouraged when I returned home. I could not bear to see any more of it, and I said, "I am not going again." I returned with practically nothing and had become thoroughly downcast because of the appalling misery of our starving people.

Then came spring, a glorious spring, days flooded with sunshine, birds singing everywhere, and in early March! No rainy or cloudy days, very mild, with blue skies and fleecy clouds. We went to the farmers for milk. New hopes awakened, each day brought six, seven, sometimes ten quarts of milk. Tanny took a trip to Gelderland to Achterhoek. She

was gone a week and returned with 15 lbs. of oatmeal, 25 pounds of rye and 70 eggs, and we had a feast. We thanked God for ourselves and wept for the thousands who were starving. At times, in Amsterdam, there were as many as 100 bodies lying in the church because there were no coffins to bury them. They had to keep a watch there so that the rats would not mutilate the bodies.

The spring offensive began, and our spirits revived. I had followed the strategy and plans of the war campaign with a great deal of anxiety, but most closely the battle of the Rhine. From the standpoint of lives lost, the war was worst from the middle of September to the end of December. On December 16 began the counter offensive of Von Runstedt, when the Germans broke through to Ardennes and stormed into Belgium. That is when new life was injected into the Brewery. During November and the first half of December, nothing much happened. Rain, rain, gloomy rain, mud and ponds at the front. We called those days The Battle of Muss, and while there was not so much fighting, nevertheless the strength of both sides was being dissipated. After Von Runstedt had overreached himself and had been driven back, when the Allies had recovered somewhat, they were again halted at the Roer.

But then began the period of real advance. It began early in February when Montgomery began to pound the Siegfried Line, followed almost immediately by the advance of the American 9th Army under Simpson and in early March by the 3rd and 7th Armies

under Patton and Patch. The Hollanders were actually too tired and exhausted to follow them very closely. And yet as I said once more, “What happens now is highly interesting, especially the exceptionally capable manner in which General Eisenhower plans and carries out his moves. It’s like moving man after man on a giant chess board.” However, in the case of the bridge at Remagan, which he had not reckoned on taking until early March, he miscalculated. It fell into his hands so easily and he could now cross the Rhine. It had come unexpectedly, and so soon that the Allies seemed wholly unprepared and hardly knew what to do next, but only for a few moments. Eisenhower knew early enough to make the most of his opportunity and went over in his advance. It was almost shockingly interesting to see how those moffen struck again and again, only in vain and to lose more and more of their hard won and costly gains. It was enough to make you want to pity them, the way they were being rolled back, those proud moffen who scoffingly had said the Allied military leaders were idiots. Just as I was writing the word “interesting,” I was brought up short with the realization that it was during that period, on March 17, that one of those triumphant Americans fell in battle, one who was very dear to us and to you also, our nephew Leendert Hengst. He had given his life’s blood for the victory. All honor to his memory and may his soul be at rest with God.

There was one incident in the persecution of our students I have overlooked. I want to insert it here.

When the students had been called up for deportation to Germany to work in their war industries, most of them went underground. When the parents were asked, "Where is your son?" they replied, "We don't know, he is gone away," and that seemed to be the end of it. But about six months later, the moffen decided to make parents responsible if their sons did not report within a couple of months. Many students then gave themselves up rather than make their parents victims of the Germans. Paul, too, asked us what we thought about it. I had my reply in an instant. "Rather me in prison than you in Germany." And Leentje said, "My boy, when you are gone and if you hear it said that your father and mother are confined in prison, don't you come out in the open. They will let us out again in a couple of months even though you do not report."

Throughout the war I carried this unbearable thought. Imagine yourself or Paul in one of those German war industries, forced to make grenades which all too soon would be used against your own friends. It is traitorous, but even worse would be to make ammunition used to murder your own family, a thought that was terrible beyond words. I am thankful that not one of us was ever seized, for if we had been I don't know what we would have done. I never said very much about such an event, but I can assure you that to obey the moffen and be the cause of the death of even one of my relatives was farthest from my thoughts.

And now back to my story.

The last period of the war was for us Hollanders the most perilous. The Allied planes began to machine gun and bomb the roads on which the Germans moved with great regularity, and also the railways by which the Germans transported materials for the V-2. We lived right alongside of the Utrecht-Leiden Railway.

The sketch above should make the situation clear. From Wassenaar, the V-2 projectiles were released, and from our house we could plainly see them go up—by day a large white streak in the sky, and by night a streak of fire. All the materials for those bombs were transported on the railroad or on the road for heavy traffic, with a little by boat on the Rhine. You can readily see that we got a good taste of it. In the beginning it was horrible, for it seemed that inexperienced pilots were being used. Too often, they missed the railroad and their bombs landed in Alphen. Many people were killed and two of our wards were soon in ruins. Later the dive-bomber came whose aim was much better. From then on there were no more casualties.

In time you get used to almost anything, even bombs. When you see a bomb falling you can tell at once whether you are in danger or not. If you see a bomb descending like a streak or a heavy line in the sky, you can be sure that nothing will happen to you, but if it appears like a dot in the sky, it is coming straight for you and you only have about ten seconds to get under cover. One time I saw nine of them coming at once and it was some sight. They screamed over our

roof and exploded between and along the rails, which had been their objective. Machine gunning from a plane is more deceptive. The bullets reach you before you even hear the gun, and you may be dead before you realize bullets are flying around you. When you saw a plane coming, you immediately began to look around to see whether there were any Germans or German autos nearby. If not, you were safe, but if there were Germans it was best to make a quick getaway unless you wanted to be treated to a round of bullets.

On the Rhine, river traffic was bombed. Sometimes you could not help but get angry at the Allied flyers when they shot up an innocent rowboat or a canal boat, or a farm wagon with horses when there were no Germans in sight. Such seeming carelessness did happen occasionally, but it got better as time went on. When the dive bombers and fighters first circled overhead and took note of the situation, and it appeared that no vehicle of the moffen was visible, they disappeared and left the boat or vehicle undisturbed. With the larger boats, it was assumed that they were in the service of the Germans and must be strafed even though there were no Germans visible on deck. But if the heart of the pilot was in the right place, he would first make a dive and fire a couple of warning shots, fly on and give the seamen an opportunity to jump overboard to escape. A moment later he would be back to send the boat to the bottom. They did the same with the trains. In the beginning they first shot up the locomotives purposely but caused the death of too

many civilians. Later, they were more humane about it. They would fly low over the trains and fire a few warning shots. The engineer jumped and ran for all he was worth when he heard those shots, and the people jumped out and scampered through the ditch and into the fields. Then the bomber returned to shoot up the locomotive in earnest. Even with all the terror, it was an interesting time. The moffen no longer dared to show themselves on the highways without danger of being killed, and they began to complain that they had become night soldiers.

About that time, we began to look at the Germans again. For four and a half years we had turned our faces away, but now we could look again. It was plain to be seen that their morale had deteriorated to a miserable low. Their uniforms were worn out and they had no gas for their cars and had to run them with peat, wood, or charcoal, or use horses and wagons. Towards the end of March, when Montgomery got over the Rhine, many of their soldiers were withdrawn from Holland to help in the defense of Germany. O happy day! They hobbled past afoot, rode on worn-out wagons and carts, or in dirty old autos, and looked like tramps. They had to seek cover in the foxholes that were dug 25 meters from the highway as hiding places. When they came out again, they found their vehicles in flames or blown to bits. One of those days I went fishing. I had to flee oftener than I had to pull up my bobber, when the shots began to fly. Finally, I gave that up. I walked along the road along which the

moffen were leaving, a grin on my face, satisfaction in my heart. So, these were the people who in 1940 had come into our land as fiendish, cold conquerors!

“Fishing?” do I hear you ask. “With all those difficulties, did you still find pleasure in fishing?” Don’t forget how feeble our bodies had become through inefficient diet. Our food gave no strength, while fish is very healthful. Most of the time I did not catch much because through the very severe winters the fish had suffered and many had died. Besides, too much illegal fishing had been done and our waters were much depleted. Then again, I was lucky. One time I caught 60 vorens from which I made fish patties in the evening. Sometimes I caught a snoek. One time, two snoeks weighing six pounds. and that was most fortunate.

That week, Leentje remarked, “Now I feel more like myself, when I get real food,” At that time hunger began to be fatal to so many. We saw them fade and die. Even the rich people became poor and thin as a rail. Wheat was f. 3500 per mud (80 kilo) and that is almost f. 44 per kilo. Turnips, beets and even tulip bulbs were held at impossible prices. Women and children were at our door constantly begging for even a potato. The feet of many people began to swell from excessive tramping and improper food, followed almost invariably by death unless the ailment was arrested in time.

Ever since the opening of the Rhine campaign, we could not get to Overijssel or Drente because the Ysel River had to be closed to traffic. Holland was

dying. If it had not been that all signs pointed to an early collapse of the Germans and the end of the war began to be in sight, we should all have starved together. We had one mud of potatoes left and with much uncertainty we asked ourselves, will the Allies come to our help first, or will they continue into Germany? What I had feared for a long time now became actual. Only a small division of the English were deployed through the Betuwe in the direction of Holland, but the flooded lands prevented them from penetrating any further. Their line was at Ede and the Germans were still strengthening their defenses. Everywhere they could, they cut the dikes and we began to feel that with victory in sight we would have to perish.

O, yes, the reports from Germany were amazing—the Russians were at the gates of Berlin, the Americans had crossed the Elbe, it could never last much longer, and yet every day was an eternity. We were still receiving 400 grams of bread per week, but now the last time had come. Utrecht got nothing more. Gouds, in which district Alphen was included, had flour for only one week more. The Red Cross packages from Sweden were being held up. How long would those stubborn Germans hold out? Would they have to be completely exterminated? If so, all of Holland and Utrecht would be starved to death. In England, America, Sweden and Portugal, all knew that we were starving to death. Everywhere supplies were being assembled for us, but they could not get into our land.

What kept us alive in Alphen was the milk. We live in a district where the farmers are practically all dairymen. Now that no boats were allowed on the rivers and canals, the milk could not be transported to the larger cities. For us, it was the staving off of starvation, but for the larger population it was the death sentence. Newborn babies were nearly all lost and of the older people, thousands perished. "How long can it last?" Victory was in sight, but we were without hope, lifeless, listless, in dumb submission.

Then one day towards the end of April, we saw giant bombers flying heavily in waves of five, coming low over our houses—five after five in mighty flights bringing their airborne parcels, life packages. That was the most impressive and mightiest moment of my life. What a sight! Those dark monsters, which had been sowing death and destruction, now bringing life! Like screams from the dead rose a mighty shout from the starving world. I wanted to shout but found no voice. We ran up the streets with waving sheets, pennants, flags, we waved and waved. We ran after them. O, those poor sufferers, we tried to meet them and to follow them: A window opened, a hand came out and down came packages of fruit and food. The children stared in amazement for a moment and chased after them. It is not possible to describe it. One must actually have gone through it. I can still see them, that mighty flight of roaring, rushing giants, bringing bread, bringing life itself, yes life! Life! Life! Life! Day after day they came, more and ever more, dropping their

priceless packages of freedom—on the Hague, on Leiden, on Utrecht! The Germans stared, dumb, they had nothing to say, they made no move. And now came the report that hundreds of autos and trucks with food were coming thru the German lines, unhindered. Just imagine! Canadian autos filled with Canadian soldiers rode right through the German lines unhindered. It was almost laughable. Then we realized that the end had come, for them, there was nothing more they could do. They had commandeered a bicycle from us, so Paul said, “I am going after them, otherwise they will take it along.” He came back with a bicycle. It was all over.

May 5, 1945, the day the Germans surrendered Holland. Can you realize what that meant for us? Those two words—May 5—with just a simple square drawn around it like a frame? I’ll not attempt to describe to you just what it was for us. Words utterly fail to describe it. I just want to write one word and let it go at that. Free!

Yes, we were free, our tormentors were forced to go without their weapons. The Judasses, the N.S.B.s, disappeared into prisons. We were free, but it seemed unreal to us until we actually saw our liberators. For two days we had to wait before we caught sight of the first auto. Time seemed to drag too slowly. The streets were filled with people. I was a member of the Home Guards, and so had to help to keep order. Those were busy days! Sometimes seven hours of service on the street in one shift. One morning I went on duty quite early and wandered around in the quiet and restful

dawn. Here came one of my men (I was Captain of a group.) He asked, "Do you speak English, Mister?" "Gladly, in five years I have never spoke a word of German, but the first day I can speak English, I do it gladly." "There go two strangers. Will you speak to them?" I went after them. They were two escaped prisoners of war, an American and a Canadian. The first thing they asked me was, "Have you a cigarette for us?" I replied, "Well, now I remember cigarettes, I did not know the name still." They wished to rejoin their companies as they had been wandering around for 14 days. They asked whether there was a bus running to Utrecht or Leiden. "A bus, a train, a cigarette, they are all things from the remotest ages. We are as poor as church mice. We have nothing but our freedom." "We are hungry," they replied. "Have you something to eat?" "Look, there is my little boy, he will bring you to my house and my wife will have something for you." They went to our home and stayed there a half day. They ate, they smoked. Yes, they smoked! As soon as it was known in the neighborhood, there were some who had a little tobacco left and gladly supplied our friends. Tanny and Goop speak English fluently, and Paul does quite well, so they had a pleasant time together. Tanny took them to their destination.

Now, about our waiting for the Canadians. They were coming. The streets were black with people all day long, and at last they came, endless lines of them. Our liberators! And then a mighty shout! Hands and hats and flags waved everywhere! I wanted to shout but

could not find my voice. Those were MOMENTS, my boy, those WERE MOMENTS!! We almost looked our eyes out. The cars had to move very slowly because the people hardly gave them room. Such magnificent and grand men! Brown as a berry, well fed, healthy and smiling, in shiny uniforms with bare arms and white flashing teeth. "What magnificent people!" is all I could think. They beckoned, they scattered cigarettes and dainties, they made the "V" sign for victory. Yes, they too, had every reason to rejoice, it was V-Day that day, and there would be no more fighting for them.

The people went almost crazy, boys and girls climbed onto their autos and rode along. I saw one of my teachers in a casement window. She jumped right into the arms of a laughing Canadian soldier. There seemed to be no end to those lines of cars, hour after hour they came. Floods of joy overwhelmed the masses, yet hour after hour they kept it up. And I just stood and wondered about those men and thought, "These are the finest men in the world." Then, at noon, came the Iron Brigade, our own men, Hollanders, who through France, Belgium, and Brabant had fought so valiantly and distinguished themselves so proudly. I stared at them and thought, these too are magnificent men. They appear like sons of gods, ruddy, brown, healthy, well fed and so grand in stature! I could hardly realize that they were Hollanders. They, too, are the finest men in the world. Then I took a tumble to myself and began to realize that we did not know anymore what fine healthy men looked like, we who were starved, the

pallor of death on our faces. Those Canadians and Holland soldiers were not supermen; it was just that we were not like living corpses.

That day, many wrongs were righted. That day, the reproaches we had endured for five long years were lifted. Then was healed the cancer which for years had been gnawing at our lives.

That evening we had thanksgiving services in the church. In the audience was a young man of Alphen who had served with the Iron Brigade. When he was recognized, the people lifted him to their shoulders and carried him out of the building with all the homage they could pay him. Out of his family had come three who had distinguished themselves. One who had served in Africa, and two had been with the Underground in Brabant, but each one came back as a member of the Iron Brigade. Yes, many wrongs were righted that day.

When I arrived home that night, who should I see coming to meet me but a big broad English officer, who greeted me with a handclasp so hard it almost squeezed out the blood. I recognized my own brother, Ko, who had had to flee to London and who now had five honor stripes on his sleeves and wore five medals—one from the Belgians, one from the English, and three from our queen. Then there was rejoicing in our home!

But after these happy days there followed a period of pain and anxiety, of waiting for news on our deported boys and men, and of our prisoners of war.

Suspense held everyone for weeks, yes, for months. One after the other came the dispatches: dead, perished, succumbed, starved to death. One young man was there, a student whose parents were not very brave and had urged him to volunteer to go to Germany. That is what he had promised them to ease their minds. Later, it appears, he had gone to Kampen and there had joined the Underground and done a fine work for our land for five years. Towards the end of March, the Germans had captured him and confined him in one of their cursed concentration camps. In five weeks, they had starved him to death, dying in the arms of another Alphen young man, who survived until he was liberated, but too far gone to be able to return. On August 31 we had memorial services for our dead, including Leonard Hengst.

The picture out of your American newspaper we had reproduced and enlarged. We also have a photo of the liberation in Alphen on which Leentje and I appear, just as the Canadians were coming in. These two photos we expect to have framed and hang them under the other in gratitude to Leonard who gave so that we might be liberated. We have two photos of the liberation in Alphen. One we will send to the widow of Leonard, but not until we are sure that it will be delivered, because if it should get lost we would never forgive ourselves.

And now, just a few closing words about our family after the end of the war.

Leentje has already gained 10 kilos and is looking good; she does not tire so easily now. Every five days she has an injection of liver extract. She should eat a lot of beef, still hard to get, but through the aid of a veterinarian, a friend of ours, she is now receiving a fair supply. Her ailment, a lack of red blood corpuscles, is practically incurable, but at present is well under control. Twenty years ago, she would live at the point of death. Now we hope that with renewed confidence, further progress will be made and that in time she will be well again. Paul is himself again. He laughs, he sings, he jokes. Tomorrow he leaves for Rotterdam. It will be very quiet without him. In the meantime, Tanny was married, as I told you before. Her husband is still in London and she is continuing her studies at Utrecht. Cocky is changing her work today. She first goes to Zeeland for two weeks. She needs rest. She is rather strained in nerves, thin and pale. She is very conscientious and works very hard. Fred is in Denmark where he is growing very fast and gaining from one to two pounds per week and will return in about a month.

And now we will get busy to restore the ruins of our land. We are as poor as ants, don't even have shoe laces, but we are free. We are thankful, and we have a lot of courage.

With God we will go forward.

Epilogue

(The following information about the Stouthamers comes from four of Passchier's letters, dated 1946-1948, saved by Bernard Huenink and his wife, Elizabeth Van Tatenhove Huenink. More recent information is from Paul Stouthamer, who immigrated to America in 1952.)



Photograph of the Stouthamer family, taken after the war. From left to right: Passchier, Tanny, Fred, Paul, Leentje, Cocky

Passchier: He returned to his job as Headmaster of three hundred students in a training school. In addition, he taught three hours a day and sometimes in the evenings. He finished writing several books that were printed after the war. He said this in one of his letters. "Now you understand that I mostly work. This is not very agreeable for my wife, but I don't like sleeping. Sometimes in the summertime, I take my bicycle and drive from sunset till the morning. It is a beautiful thing to see the light disappear and the morning come slowly. Sometimes I take one of my children. I wish to show them the greatness of God's creation." Passchier died in 1970.

Leentje (a nickname given for Magdalena Van Tatenhove Stouthamer): Leentje was very thin after the war. She had a blood sickness and required frequent injections to bolster her health. In 1946, Passchier wrote that she was regaining her strength and quickly becoming stout again. An American niece visited the Netherlands in 1979 and wrote that Magdalena had breast cancer that was not being treated.

Fred: After the war, Fred was sent to Denmark for three months to stay with a friend of Passchier and regain his strength. The Danes fed him cheese, sugar and butter. He came back looking better but was still thin. He retained his cheerful smiles and developed a hobby as a stamp collector and trader. His father approved of this since it expanded his education. Passchier said, "Fred is a gentle and mild child, a joy to the family. He is so innocent for the hardness of this world, but he will stand it." In 1986, Fred vacationed

with Tanny and Paul and his wife for two months in France.

Cocky (Cornelia Stouthamer Warmenhoven): Cocky was married during the war years, and while in the underground, decided to become a nurse, very conscientious in her calling. After the war—thin, tired, her nerves strained— she spent time in Zeeland to heal her spirit. She later immigrated to the U.S. and lived in Richmond, Virginia.

Tanny: Since there were no jobs available in the Netherlands, Tanny's husband Goop Obbink, took a position as a civilian government employee in the West Indies. Tanny would have to wait two years to join him and continued to study law at Utrecht University. After serving for years in the West Indies, Tanny and Goop returned to the Netherlands where Goop took a job in the insurance business.

Paul: After the war, Paul continued his university studies. He planned to take the examination in economics within a year. Passchier counseled him to go and get knowledge of the world when he finished. He told him there was nothing in the Netherlands for him. Perhaps he could go to Australia, South America, or India. Paul finally did immigrate to the United States with his wife, Gonnie, in 1952. He found employment with Good Year, a position that took him to France for four years, and the Philippines for three. A letter written in 1979 by an American niece of Magdalena, indicated that Paul and Gonnie planned to retire in France.

Paul said that his father, Passchier, was an introvert and would write for days in his room. He felt it was his duty to inform Americans about what was happening in the Netherlands. Paul did not want to read *People Across the Sea* or any of his father's letters.

He said he had lived through it and that was enough.