

FOREWORD:

First, and foremost, this remains a translation of 'Een Ijsbaan Hebben we Alleen in de Winter', a booklet issued in 1985 by the administration of the municipality of Heerjansdam, the Netherlands, commemorating World War II events. Focused on Heerjansdam, my birthplace, the story stands well on its own. It is beneficial, however, to be aware of the broader context in which the story unfolded. As well, I'll relate how I saw the war growing up as a young child, born just weeks before it started. This expanded war-time history provides background to why things happened the way they did. Details beyond my initial translation of the booklet appear in italics.

*John Kruithof
Ottawa, Canada
2014*

Stories from Heerjansdam (the Netherlands) during the Second World War (1940 – 1945)

“EEN IJSBAAN HEBBEN WE ALLEEN IN DE WINTER”

“Only in winter do we have a skating rink”

Tales from Heerjansdam during the Second World War, told, gathered and edited by:

mej. M. Sloof, L. de Kool, H. J. Trap, and F. van ‘t Zelfden.

PREFACE

Heerjansdam, May 1985

On one of the first days of the war, young Kleis Broekhuizen found himself near the harbour of Heerjansdam, when a German soldier approached him and asked “Wo ist hier der Eisenbahn?” (*Where is the railway?*). The response that young Kleis gave is the title of this booklet: “Een ijsbaan hebben we alleen in de winter”. (*Only in winter do we have a skating rink*). This deliberate misinterpretation was one of the tactics of resistance used throughout the Netherlands, thus also in our village. But other forms manifested themselves in and around Heerjansdam, a high point being the raid on the town hall by the resistance group of Johannes Post.

Heerjansdam had its share of anxiety.

This booklet is dedicated to keeping the memories of the occupation alive, written primarily for the youth of Heerjansdam, who know of the war only through the tales of their parents or grandparents. In great part, this booklet is the work of two former municipal employees, mej. M. Sloof (Koojsje) and de heer L. de Kool, assisted by de heer F. van ‘t Zelfden, who contributed his historical knowledge of our village. This booklet is meant as a warning. To warn of the consequence of hate towards people who are different: Jew, gypsy, Jehovah witness, homosexual. Warnings, alas, still necessary.

Finally, it is in recognition to those who fought for the freedom we regained in 1945. Thanks to them, we can remember liberation. Many gave their lives for this.

Heerjansdam has only one street named after a resistance fighter: de Johannes Postlaan. May in this name live on our gratitude to so many others.

DE BURGEMEESTER VAN
HEERJANSDAM,
H. J. TRAP

The village of Heerjansdam, current population 3,500, is situated 20 km. south of Rotterdam. It received its name almost 650 years ago, in 1368. It literally translates to ‘Lord John’s dam’, referring to the landlord who built a dam around his ward. In 2003 it was amalgamated with the larger community of Zwijndrecht (population 45,000). At the outbreak of war in 1940, only a few hundred people lived in Heerjansdam. It was an agricultural village, its houses more or less strung along a secondary, sleeper dike. The town centre consisted of rows of townhouses, a few stores, two churches, a town hall, a school, a windmill, a baker and candle stick maker. From that centre, along the dike into the countryside, were modest dwellings interspersed with farmsteads. The characteristic old center of Heerjansdam has remained virtually intact over the centuries, still exuding the nostalgic atmosphere of times gone by.

May 10, 1940. It is war! From the diary of Doctor Mees of Rotterdam: “At about three thirty this morning awoke to the noise of airplanes and anti-aircraft fire, mostly from the direction of Waalhaven. It is soon obvious that we have also been drawn into the war, now underway. We, a completely innocent and neutral land, whose Queen had only a few weeks ago conveyed birthday greetings to Hitler”.

On the Maasbrug in Rotterdam, well-known defense agent Hordijk stood firing at German parachutists descending from the sky. They shot the revolver from his hand. When he tried to reach it with his other hand, they shot him dead. The May 10, 1940 edition of De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant reported: Germany attacks the Netherlands. Notice from General Headquarters. This morning at 5:15 we were informed that German troops had crossed the border at three o'clock. Air attacks attempted on some airports. Defence effective. Inundations carried out according to plan. As far as is known, at least 6 German aircraft have been shot down.

The war is on, also in our village. Early in the morning, German fighter planes roared over the heads of Heerjansdammers. Parachutists can be seen floating down in the distance. The occupiers want to conquer our entire country in one day; *(not as farfetched as it sounds. The distance from Germany's western border to the Dutch shore on the North Sea is less than a hundred miles)* thus as quickly as possible capture strategic transportation points. In our area, these are the bridges at Zwijndrecht and Barendrecht, and the still existing Waalhaven airport in Rotterdam. War naturally changes everything in our village.

The burgemeester (mayor) of Heerjansdam, responsible for maintaining good order in the community, quickly reacted to the new situation. He issued general instructions to his staff. One stipulation: If a German officer presents himself at the town hall, the burgemeester will meet him personally. When an officer showed up, he was often accompanied by an adjutant. A town staff member formally led them to the chamber and announced them to the burgemeester. Naturally, the adjutant was not allowed to enter, but the officer was. The burgemeester then conspired to keep the officer busy for the longest possible time. He was conversant in German and, as was often the case of the officers, belonged to nobility. The Prussian aristocrat was actually delving into the makeup of the German army. The adjutants were left to cool their heels. Some of them became suspicious, wondering “what is going on here?” Although free to knock on the door of the chamber, protocol demanded this not be done. Eventually, the door would open and burgemeester Beelaerts van Blokland would appear, saying ‘Er lebt noch’ (He is still alive).

Queen Wilhelmina that same day, May 10, 1940, issued a proclamation:

My People,

After our country had observed strict neutrality with the most scrupulous exactitude during all these months, and while she had no other intention than to persevere uncompromisingly and consistently in this attitude, a sudden attack was made last night on our soil by the German Army, without the least warning. This, in spite of the solemn promise that the neutrality of our country would be respected, as long as we ourselves maintained it. I hereby launch a vehement protest against this flagrant breach of good faith and this violation of all that is proper between civilized states.

I, and my Government, will continue to do our duty. Do you likewise, everywhere and under all circumstances, each in his station, with extreme vigilance and with the inner peace and devotion that is to be gained from a clear conscience.

May 11, 1940. Second day of the war. Looking from the dike, in the direction of Dordrecht, great plumes of smoke could be seen on the horizon. It turned out to be farms in Dubbeldam and Wieldrecht, going up in smoke. Fighting was going on at the north side of the Hollands Diep, on the island of Dordrecht. German parachutists had landed there, and wherever Dutch army units existed, fighting ensued. Battles played themselves out mostly on flat land. Dutch soldiers positioned themselves in, and behind, barns. Germans set them ablaze.

Against this backdrop, Heerjansdammers talked among themselves of its significance. Everyone knows everyone else, but no one knows exactly what hung overhead. In fact, overhead French fighter planes were in the air. For many years, Mr. De Kool carried in his pocket a cartridge he picked up on the Dorpsstraat, after it had been fired by a French warplane, bounced off the storefront De Deugd, at the top of the Kerkstoep. But then, suddenly, Dutch troops appeared from the direction of Veerdam in the Groote Lindt, originally from the Hoekse Waard. They had crossed the Oude Maas at Puttershoek, with the objective of catching the Germans in a pincer movement at the Barendrechtse bridge. Carefully, they crept along the south side of the dike, then among homes. They had a machine gun, with tripod. Advancing fifty meters, they hid, and set up the machine gun. The next group followed. When they hid, the first group advanced another fifty meters. So it went, forging ahead meter by meter. Leading them was a captain, a short, thick-set man in a black leather coat. So far, so good. No enemy in sight.

In the meantime, German General (Kurt) Student had set up his command post in the establishment “Het Wapen van Rijsoord”, right in the middle of IJsselmonde island. From its strategic location, it completely controlled the Barendrechtse bridge. Dutch troops, on the other side of the Oude Maas, thought buildings of the Velo factory contained enemy supplies, so set it on fire. The scene was set for the advancing Dutch soldiers, with assistance from those on the other bank, to take on the Germans at the Barendrechtse bridge. To questions by the advancing Dutch military “Are there Germans here”, Heerjansdammers were able to consistently reply “No Germans”. Slowly, but surely, the Dutch soldiers made their way. Tired, they were offered milk, or water, to drink. Carefully, they advanced the length of Dorpsstraat. They had to be watchful. The greater concentration of houses meant the enemy could appear from anywhere. Nothing happened. The harbour of Heerjansdam was now behind them. Then...at a bend in the Noldijk, at the intersection to the Buitendijk, by the dairy farmer Lems, a German scout drove up by motorcycle with sidecar. Was he perhaps meeting up with comrades at the ferry?

Unsuspecting, he rode towards his death. The Dutch soldiers, positioned behind their machine gun, aimed, and Rrrrrrrtt, the German toppled from his motorcycle. Dead! What to do? Quick deliberation followed. The captain considered it justifiable to turn around, as counseled by the burgemeester. The dead German was left where he fell, his motorcycle ditched in the harbour. The planned flank attack is abandoned. Afterwards, it is still a mystery why the motorbike had to be dumped in the harbour. At the time, the harbour was connected to the open water of the Oude Maas. High and low tides affected the harbour also. The Dutch military turned around, and villagers returned to their daily existence. Or so they thought.

Things changed around milking time. Suddenly, a German military vehicle arrived. Soldiers sprang out and started pounding on doors. Whoever answers is arrested. Adrianus Plaizier and his son Floor are detained. Jo Kruithof, *my father*, in the process of repairing a milk block, hears pounding on the back door of his boss Plaizier’s farm. He opened the door and immediately feels a bayonet thrust against his stomach. Pleun Leenheer jr., also there, vividly remembers a gun being shoved in his back and ordered to remove his hand from his pocket. With a number of other Heerjansdammers, they were driven to their place of reckoning. They were dropped off at

the house of Jan Prooi on the Buitendijk. German gunners stood on both sides. No matter how vehemently Janus Plaizier protests that the timing was inconsiderate (he has the milking chore to attend to), it is in vain. *At a crucial time*, Burgemeester Beelaerts van Blokland arrived on the scene, stating these innocent Heerjansdammers can in no way be held accountable for the deed. It was done by the military. Also (Reverend) Ds. Kampherbeek, in his characteristic long black coat and Garibaldi-hat, nervously paces back and forth, trying to intervene. Finally, through the persuasive power of Beelaerts van Blokland, the detainees are released. That the Germans would consider such *punitive* intent was understandable. In Zevenbergschenhoek, Germans had been shot at from homes. They thought the same had happened here. This military action is written up in L. de Jong's "Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de tweede wereldoorlog" part 3.

At the outset of the war, Hans Rauter, Germany's appointed commander-in-chief of Security Services, instigated a system of retaliation for assaults on Nazi officials and their Dutch collaborators: one killed Nazi equaled ten Dutch victims, one killed Dutch collaborator equaled three Dutch victims. During 1944 these numbers sharply increased with the rise of resistance violence. When Rauter himself was seriously wounded on March 7, 1945, in a resistance attack on his vehicle that killed fellow passengers, he had 117 prisoners taken to the site of the attack and shot, as well as 130 in other locations. For this, and many other crimes, he was found guilty by Dutch courts and executed by firing squad on March 24, 1949.

Despite being at war, not many Germans were seen here. It was known they were in Rijsoord, and that meanwhile hundreds were deployed in Zwijndrecht. But, by the thousand, they flew over Heerjansdam in large, low-flying planes. One could see parachutists standing at exits, then jumping out at Rhoon and IJsselmonde.

On Monday, May 13, Queen Wilhelmina, against her will, left for England. The day before, Princess Juliana, Prince Bernhard and the two princesses had left.

May 15, 1940. The Netherlands was now five days at war. The Germans had bombed Rotterdam and threatened leveling many other cities. Our Queen and her government had left for England, to govern our land from there to the extent possible. General Winkelman had orders to defend our country. But against German might, the Dutch army was inadequate. In face of German threats to bomb additional cities, Winkelman decided, in order to save lives, to surrender. Very early Wednesday morning, May 15, 1940, Winkelman received the message that German commanders wished to speak to him, at 8 o'clock, on the Maasbruggen in Rotterdam. Arriving there, they drove to the Christian lower school on Rijksstraatweg in Rijsoord, across from Mauritsweg. In one room of the school, a long row of tables had been set up. Dutch officers were seated on one side, Germans on the other. German General von K  chler gave well-deserved praise to Winkelman for the heroic conduct of his soldiers. Winkelman mumbled: "Thank you", and remained silent. Terms of capitulation were laid on the table. Winkelman stipulated the province of Zeeland could not be discussed. French troops were there, over which he had no authority. After negotiations, the protocol for capitulation was drawn up. That took half an hour. German and Dutch officers silently faced each other. At ten o'clock, Winkelman gave his signature. The Netherlands had surrendered, German occupation had begun!

*The **Rotterdam Blitz** was the aerial bombardment of Rotterdam by the Luftwaffe (German air force) on 14 May 1940, during the German invasion of the Netherlands. The objective was to*

support the German troops fighting in the city, break Dutch resistance and force the Dutch to surrender. Even though preceding negotiations resulted in a ceasefire, the bombardment took place nonetheless, in conditions which remain controversial, and destroyed almost the entire historic city centre, killing nearly nine hundred civilians and leaving 30,000 people homeless. The psychological and physical success of the raid, from the German perspective, led the Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (OKL) to threaten to destroy the city of Utrecht if the Dutch Government did not surrender. The Dutch capitulated early the next morning.

The war is now into its fourteenth day. Rotterdam had been bombed. The enormous and impressive shock troops and tank units were past. Heerjansdam had been chock-a-block with anti-aircraft guns. Citizens must sleep in ground-level rooms, not upstairs. During the evening, curtains must be completely drawn. It was forbidden to look outside at night. Lights must be kept off. During darkness, troop movements occurred. Units passed through, stayed, or were replaced. Day and night, massive infantry forces filled the streets. From time to time, among the advancing Germans, one could spot typical, long farm wagons pulled by one, or two horses. The wagons were loaded with rucksacks of the infantrymen. Soldiers sang as they marched. The wagons were also loaded with some forage for the horses. When evening approached, a halt would be called and an encampment established. What to do with the horses? Behind the farmstead of Kornelis Labriijn, near “De Hors”, lay grassland, meant to be mowed and turned into hay. What was to stop the Germans from letting their horses loose in this pasture? Which they promptly did! Plenty of grass. Dozens of horses were herded into the hayfield. Neighbours, not yet comprehending the extent of German might, thought: “That’s not right, horses in a hayfield?” Kornelis Labriijn was a taciturn man. He marched to his hayfield, and with his pocket knife cut off a twig from a willow tree. From a corner of the field, Labriijn chased the horses towards the open gate. Observers muttered: “This is not going to end well”. It is the Wehrmacht, now lord and master, who’d led the horses to the field. How the burgemeester happened on the scene is a mystery, but there he was again. Likely he’d been observing from his residence as events unfolded in his neighbour’s hayfield. Germans threatened to lodge a complaint with their commander. The moment the commander appears, Beelaerts van Blokland leads him urgently into his official residence “De Hors”. Labriijn, undisturbed, carries on, and wonderful news, nothing happens. Probably the junior officers dared not interfere while their commander was engaged in prolonged talks with the burgemeester. More bystanders are now following the event at farmstead “Voorzorg”. The tension is palpable. All horses have been chased off the hayfield and now wandering around the barnyard. What everyone expects does not happen. Labriijn is not hung by the neck. The intervention of the burgemeester allows the situation to fizzle out.

June 2, 1940. A Heerjansdammer noted the following in her diary: “In the month of May no rain of any significance fell. Every day beautiful, some even warm. This morning at seven thirty the Germans quartered here left our village, singing as they went. It’s Sunday and in church we stood to remember the dead and listen to a message from the churches. In Kijfhoek not a German has yet been seen”.

On June 27, 1940, Dutch General Winkelman, denied access to the press, surreptitiously circulated a written statement outlining the perfidies of the occupiers. As a postscript, he expressed the hope that readers would copy his statement and distribute it among the population.

“We are counting on you. COURAGE!!!! LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!!” For a number of Heerjansdammers this was reason to organize themselves in a group to indeed spread the news. They also spoke among themselves on how to mislead Germans and secretly oppose them to the extent possible. It’s called resistance.

Four days after General Winkelman’s statement was distributed, he was arrested and sent to prison in Germany. The earliest record of organized resistance in the Netherlands is attributed to a carpet-weaver of Haarlem named Bernard IJzerdraat, occurring on the very next day after the German invasion. He expressed his outraged feelings in a pamphlet, which he distributed anonymously to friends. Less than a year later the Gestapo caught up with him, executing him and fourteen of his friends. By this time, traitors had infiltrated the circles of the resistance movement. Swiftly and silently the first arrests were made. Within prison walls, patriotic Dutchmen were confronted with the most brutal methods of interrogation – the methods of the German Gestapo. Most of the prisoners could not endure it; they gave away the names of their friends, who, in turn, were also trapped.

The first act of the Heerjansdamse resistance was to circulate a poem written by head clergy Ds. Welter on the occasion of the Queen’s departure for England. The pamphlet, adorned with an orange ribbon, was delivered to a number of loyal Heerjansdammers (*as well as throughout the country*):

No it wasn’t a flee what ye did.
But following God’s voice
I’m not asking what’s happening inside you.
A battle, so tough, so deep.

We kneel near you and with you
Till God’s eyes and hand
Return the Netherlands to orange
And Orange to the Netherlands.

What come will come
We worship, remain silent
The night is black, crepes the day
Lord Thy will be done.

Later, in early 1943, a national organization for the underground was established. *By the end of the war, it was possible to take stock of the resistance. It appears the number of Dutchmen who had in some way taken part in the resistance could be put at 76,000. From among these, 22,500 men and women died in concentration camps and prisons, 2,800 men fell before firing squads, and thousands returned from camps to their liberated country physically spent and mentally exhausted.*

September 7 – 9, 1940. Because troops of the German Wehrmacht occupy the Christian Lower School, no school on Saturday, September 7 and Monday, September 9.

October 14, 1940. As of today, in order to conserve fuel, school time on Saturdays from 9 to 11 in the morning for Christian education is discontinued. The time will be shifted to Wednesday afternoons.

October 25, 1940. Various newspapers and periodicals, such as *De Nederlander*, *De Zondagsbode* and *De Spiegel* are outlawed by the occupiers. During the sugar beet campaign, the sugar factory in Puttershoek was bombed. There were 23 deaths.

This was not the only time the sugar beet factory came under attack. Some months before liberation, my dad took me to the top of the dike to see several allied bombers attacking the same factory, now suspected of being a German rocket launching site. Looking straight up, I could see bombs being released from open bomb bays of the aircraft, gradually descending towards the target. Reflecting on that scenario now, I wonder if it instead could have been the September 17, 1944 event, recounted later on in this story. Not everything is clear while it happens. I had seen, and heard, a German V-1 rocket heading for England. The sight, and distinctive droning sound, I'll never forget. There was a reason for them being called buzz-bombs.

November 1, 1940. Burgemeester Beelaerts van Blokland becomes burgemeester-elect of Barendrecht. The present mayor there, Bax, was at his own request honourably discharged.

July 31, 1941. Our burgemeester Beelaerts van Blokland says farewell to his first community. The deputy-mayor, in his address on the occasion, said among others: "For us, you have been a community father in the fullest sense of the words. There is so much to thank you for, in public and in private, particularly by the poor. You were with us, in joy and in sorrow". Within days, his installation in Barendrecht took place. His selection there was thanks to Barendrecht citizens circulating a petition indicating their wish that Beelaerts van Blokland be appointed.

Heerjansdam received a new burgemeester: Jhr. C.W. Stern.

Later, on May 25 1943, the German occupiers dismissed Baalaerts van Blokland effective immediately and replaced him with someone who did precisely what they wanted.

In 1940 the German occupation government had outlawed all socialist and communist parties; in 1941 it forbade all parties, except for the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland (NSB). The NSB openly collaborated with the occupation forces. Its membership grew to about 100,000. The NSB played an important role in lower government and civil service; every new mayor appointed by the German occupation government was a member of the NSB.

October 23, 1941. During this evening's meeting of the Christian school board, it was disclosed an allocation of 30 bags of coal would be received. Fortunately, 90 sacks were still in the coal bin. Thus there will be enough fuel until the end of January, 1942. But that does not make the situation any rosier. The Dutch Social Service had introduced school dental care. The school board wants nothing to do with it: Children belong to parents, and it is the parents' responsibility to look after them. The local First Aid Society wishes to rent space for its courses. That's OK, but the society must provide its own heating. The concierge is to be given an additional 10 guilders this year, because everything is becoming more expensive. School sessions will be from 10:00 to 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., to give children an opportunity of going home to eat. The school inspector will be asked to close the school on Mondays, in order to save fuel.

At the start, the distribution of ration cards fell to the community secretariat. Additional help was brought in. When all details checked out, some tampering was applied to provide cards for

those in hiding, and Jews. Everything worked well, until the distribution apparatus was moved to Ridderkerk. A distribution team then came to Heerjansdam, and at a location in the Christian school one could take possession of ration cards. It so happened a Kees Janse de Jonge worked in the distribution team, who saved the day by letting things run as before. Until 'a not so good Hollander' joined the team. Still, the requirement for cards had to be met. Koosje (*Macheltje Sloof, municipal employee*) desperately needed extra cards, hoping to be served by Kees. It did not turn out that way. Quite a few villagers picked up cards for family and neighbours, but the number for Koosje surpassed the rest. She was watched so closely that it scared her near to death. Although lucky to get the cards this time, she realized immediately to never return to the school for more. Under the circumstance, she considered it prudent not to return to the community secretariat before the team had left town. She waited out the storm at the home of family P. Verkerk, with the nagging concern: Where to now? Wonders happened even in those days. She had barely arrived, when brother Gerrit Verkerk of The Hague showed up. When he heard why she was there, he said: "If you need cards for those in hiding, or Jews, I can help". That quieted her. From then on, the trip was taken to the distribution office on de Groot Hertoginnelaan in The Hague, which now houses the offices of Aramco, and then to his residence at 185 de Goudenregenstraat. Until liberation, Gerrit provided what was required.

April 13, 1942. Scarcity and unavailability were felt more and more. Oranges on ration cards, and only obtainable for children. Tobacco, cigars, all tobacco products, only obtainable on the cards. As is candy. Writing paper, all paper products are nearly impossible to buy. Since Sunday, May 3, 1942, Jews were forced to wear the yellow Jewish Star, also known as Star of David, sewn on their clothes. *Page 12 of the booklet shows a picture of family Simon den Hartog, born in Heerjansdam 14-10-1895, son of Marcus den Hartog, who for years had a butcher shop on Dorpsstraat. It pictures him, his wife, and four children, two of them young adults. Most of this family den Hartog did not survive the war.*

Winter Relief. One has to imagine what former burgemeester Beelaerts van Blokland would have said when project "Winter Relief" came into being. He would have said: "Think it over, act as if you are co-operating, but what you actually do is your own business". He would have declared himself too busy to organize the project. His successor thought otherwise and instructed municipal staff to organize the Winter Relief collection. Staff was singularly unsuccessful, not surprisingly since they surreptitiously encouraged Heerjansdammers not to contribute anything when the Winter Relief collection tin came around. Not a thing! Yet the effort had to be made. A pleasant, trustworthy and well-known villager was found, prepared to take the tin from house to house. Everywhere the whisper had spread: Don't put money in the tin, if anything, slip it directly to the man. He went through the entire village, with a variety of pins. Anyone insisting on putting something in the tin was handed a pin. Naturally, not once did he urge anyone to donate to the official effort, knowing full well the resistance movement was against this project. After making his rounds, the content of the tin was counted at the town hall. The then-serving mayor did that himself, never counting more than a very few guilders. The collector himself received more than was dropped in the tin. A common saying of the time was: "Geen knoop van m'n gulp voor de Winterhulp". (Not a button of my fly for Winter Relief supply).

Flower vases and church bells into bullets. (Story told by de Kool) The German Wehrmacht ran into severe shortages of basic materials, particularly copper, of which bullets were made. The Dutch population was asked for copper. An order came down from the commissariat of the province for mayors to institute a copper collection program (koperinzamelingsactie) in their communities. Citizens who possessed copper must hand it over to city hall on a specified date. Most citizens did not comply. Again, it was a case of residents being clandestinely instructed by municipal staff to ignore the order. An insignificant little vase, or something from the windowsill, was sometimes offered. But some people did bring valuable items. I remember a nice, antique copper milk can, of a size often used in entrances as umbrella stand. We found it a real shame. But then we thought of a list. When we knew how much copper had been collected, let's say 25 kg., we put 25 kg. of sand in the copper milk can, and kept back a corresponding amount of copper. Needless to say, we were curious as to how this was going to work out, because the milk can had become unnaturally heavy. We hoped for the best. Village freighter Pleun Leenheer had to bring the copper to Dordrecht. You can imagine our sigh of relief when he came back and reported everything worked out great. He had to position his horse and cart on a quay, unload item after item on a slide, which deposited it directly on a ship. It was not even weighed. It was signed for, and he got out of there. At home, we had an inner sense of satisfaction, knowing the Germans had received a load of copper partially consisting of sand.

January 6, 1943. At a quarter past ten this morning, church bells start ringing. Heerjansdam knows the significance of this. People come out for the occasion. This is the last time we will hear this sound. Everywhere church bells are being removed, and today is Heerjansdam's turn. On orders of the German occupiers, contractor P.J. Meulenbeek from Heerlen is removing the two bells. The small bell, cast in 1772 by Alexius Petit en Zoon, is destined as alarm bell in Lexmond (South Holland). Burgemeester Stern signs a waiver for the 65 kg. bell, which has a diameter of 46-1/2 cm. The Germans assign a number to this bell: 11-81-CP. The large bell is also lowered from the tower. This one weighs around 250 kg., with a diameter of 73 cm. Cast in 1766 by the Rotterdam firm of Johannes Specht. It's assigned the number 11-80-C. Community secretary de Kool signs that both bells have been removed. We know the small bell has a tentative destination, but the large bell will likely be melted down to make bullets. Who knows who will get killed with a piece of the Heerjansdamse bell.

Spring, 1943. (As told by de Kool). Before the war, the Netherlands garrison chief of Amsterdam was a certain Boswijk. Boswijk now needed false identity papers, because he was being sought by the German Sicherheitsdienst (S.D.) (Security Service). The Germans set upon his residence on the Minervalaan in Amsterdam, stepped out of the elevator, and into his home. They did this everywhere. Inside, without knocking! But Boswijk takes the same elevator, now going down. They had not left a sentry at the entrance, so he took to the street as usual, if you can call anything usual when you're being hunted. The Germans do not find him. The bird has flown the coop. Via a round-about way, Boswijk has come to Heerjansdam, awaiting false identity papers. He dapperly walked up to me, as if he had not a care in the world. He ate and stayed overnight with us. With him, he had brought a small jar of jam, or butter, I don't remember, but it had broken in the train. I contacted my friend Frans de Regt, community-secretary of Barendrecht. I told him the whole story and asked: "Can you help?" His answer naturally was: "Of course." I preferred personal papers for Boswijk from Barendrecht, because it is somewhat bigger than Heerjansdam, making identity papers more difficult to trace. Frans

said: "I have one to spare". I said: "Good, then you will get one from me in return". Frans arrived the following evening, bringing with him his own typewriter. It has a different letter type, untraceable. So Frans and I gave Boswijk a false name: Van Santen Montfoort. Some fancy that, a double name. Born in Batavia. We were so sly in those days. We reasoned: Always take the Dutch Indies, impossible to trace. Thus, on that evening, one Van Santen Montfoort was born, with identity papers. He looked a bit shy, although we did not pick up on it right away. Later he told us the reason for his worries. Want Plaatsman (community patrolman) bicycled past from time to time that evening, to ensure everything was in good order and to warn us at the slightest sign of peril. That had been arranged with him. Had danger developed, we would have sheltered Boswijk elsewhere. Van Santen Montfoort traveled back with his false papers and I've been unable to ascertain whether he survived the entire war. As far as I know, he was never arrested. In late 1944 I did meet him in Amsterdam under circumstances I can not reveal.

The following events are recounted by L. de Kool. I am now speaking of a time around spring, 1943. The underground resistance was not yet centrally financed. Money that became available was from voluntary contributions. Each village introduced an "assessment" and someone from the village took responsibility for collecting it. That individual himself decided from where to collect the money and how much to request from anyone. I remember well a meeting at the Gereformeerde rectory of Ds. Kampherbeek. That was the resistance, the embryonic resistance. The first beginnings of organized resistance. So here I was at the totally voluntary meeting in the rectory of Ds. Kampherbeek. One of the leaders of the national resistance was also present. I recognized him and he knew me. But we acted as if we'd never seen each other. "Is there somebody who has questions?" the aforementioned unknown asked. "Yes", I said, "I would like to know, since you just asked for money, and the reverend asked whether I would take on the responsibility, to which I've said yes, what guarantees can you offer that the money will arrive at the intended destination?" More to the point, perhaps asking too much, I asked: "where is the money going?" To which he answered: "No" (that is not asking too much), "the money is directed to the resistance". I pressed on: "So you guarantee that the money I collect will be for that purpose?" "Yes", was the answer. I asked because I was a member of a resistance cell, which he did not know. He knew less of that cell than I. Later, I passed through the village, collecting money. I could give names of those that gave, but I'd rather not. I can still point out the farmsteads of those who contributed. Nobody hesitated to hand over the requested amount, which was not at all inconsiderable. Nobody asked for a receipt, naturally not. Imagine what could be found should homes be searched. Nobody asked me what I did with the money. A week later I returned to Ds. Kampherbeek. The "esteemed gentleman" was there again. Coolly I handed him the money I had collected. We made no comments. Later, and that wasn't all that long, I was home with the entire resistance cell. The bell rang, and there was that "esteemed gentleman" at the door. We knew where we stood with each other. He came inside and saw the members of the cell (knokploeg) around the table, realizing then I was involved in illegal resistance. De Kool ends the story there.

The foregoing makes clear that one could not reveal too much of one's activities to others. It could be dangerous. What you don't know won't hurt you. The story revolves around the Gereformeerde rectory. In the case of Heerjansdam, we may take it for granted that the "underground" consisted mostly of Gereformeerde. That was because their own reverend led by

example. The Hervormden here were little urged by their reverend, or church council, to engage in resistance.

The preceding remark reflects the rivalry that existed between the two churches before and after World War II. Growing up in Heerjansdam, I was painfully aware that members of the two churches should not associate with each other. A little history is in order:

*Gereformeerde kerk: The **Reformed Churches in the Netherlands** (in Dutch: Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, abbreviated Gereformeerde kerk) was founded in 1892 in a merger of two groups that had split off from the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk).*

*Hervormde kerk: The **Dutch Reformed Church** (in Dutch: Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (or **NHK**) was a Reformed Christian denomination in the Netherlands developed during the Protestant Reformation. It was founded in the 1570s and lasted until 2004, the year it merged with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands to form the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.*

Now that that is cleared up, we can return to the story.

Back to de Kool. A parachute was found along the Lindeweg. News spread quickly and I was informed. First order was to determine where it was from. This was obvious from the material, which turned out to be Chinese shantung, therefore a parachute of the allies. When, do you ask? That would be at the beginning of 1943. The allied air offensive was then slowly taking shape. Cologne was bombed in that period. That was the first big allied assault, with 1,000 planes in one night. I was in possession of the parachute. Knowing it was allied, the resistance then searched why it was here in the polder. It turned out to have drifted from a drop in the Hoekse Waard. Apparently weapons dropped there were being transported via Heerjansdam to Rotterdam. We were thus happy with the parachute. My wife made a shirt of it for me, and a blouse for one of the children. This shows how much we still had to learn. In the middle of the war, walking outside with an allied parachute as a shirt! By then it was summertime, and very warm. Then you think about it, and learn. Perhaps that is a reason you survive the war. In time of war, one has to be careful and never spontaneous.

April 25, 1943. Bets den Hartog expresses her feeling in a letter. She wrote, among others: “Dear Mag, what truly dear people, I feel terribly sad and seek solace wherever I can and I know how you support me, but I will never overcome this grief, this is the worst that could happen to me. Herewith enclosed is the letter my dear mother wrote last. From it you can read how she had a premonition she would be sent on. Isn’t that terrible and are resigned that we will never see her again. It is joyful to read how brave she is, but that does not take away that I lost her and in this manner. Horrible it is, there is no other word for it”. The writer of this letter was the daughter of the Jewish butcher den Hartog, who before the war had his butcher shop in the village. It reveals her mother has been apprehended. Bets wrote this letter from Amsterdam.

April 30, 1943. A work stoppage took place throughout the country. While in Zwijndrecht, a Heerjansdam cyclist got a flat tire. The bicycle repairman refused to patch it. Thus it was a case of walking from Zwijndrecht to Heerjansdam. No water comes out of taps. People anxiously ask what this strike will develop into. At a cost to human life, the Germans crushed the strike.

May 11, 1943. Another letter from Bets den Hartog in Amsterdam. She misses her mother and has not heard from her. Last week a nephew was apprehended. Her entire family is pulled apart

through war and the persecution of Jews by the occupiers. The next day she wrote again. Now it is a plea: if at all possible, can a pair of bread ration cards be sent for her brother Simon, no matter what the cost. If some brown beans could be arranged for, that would be extraordinary.

Thursday, May 13, 1943. Newspapers carried notices that all radios and parts thereof must be handed over to authorities. House searches will be conducted and anyone ignoring the order can expect severe punishment. Legumes are no longer provided and meat rations reduced to ½ ons (50 gr.) per person per week.
(1 ons = 100 grams = 3.5 ounces)

June 1, 1943. More news from Amsterdam from our former Heerjansdamse Jewish family den Hartog. Bets wrote joyfully that via the J.R. (Joodse Raad) (Jewish Council) she had received a letter from Meta, requesting food, soap and fruit juice. Meta is in barrack 62. But Bets was unsure if she was still there, because every Tuesday there is a large transit to Germany. One never knew in advance if included or not. Still more refreshing news: She had received a card from Simon, who wrote that Marcus was also still alive. What a joy, despite the absence of other family members.

June 23, 1943. Another sign Bets den Hartog is still alive. She is in hospital, but nobody comes to visit her. She has so few family members left. She is slowly on the mend and is allowed two hours a day out of bed. Weak she is, but how could it be otherwise, with so little to eat. The doctor proposes an image of internal organs. She would like it done as quickly as possible; it is becoming too much for her. Days of worrying and crying.

Last Sunday morning a loudspeaker drove through Amsterdam. No Jew was any longer allowed on the street. They had to prepare themselves. They were all trapped. That Sunday, 1,100 Jews were apprehended, including 16 family members of Bets. Her niece, at home, was also apprehended. Meta is now in barrack 85. This coming Tuesday, 4,000 Jews will be put on the train to Germany. Simon, Mietje and Nico were called up the week before, but then released. Marcus and Loesje had not been called up, but decided to go voluntarily. At the last moment they were luckily sent back home. But each Tuesday was a suspenseful day for Jews in Amsterdam. Bets still hasn't heard from her mother, brother and sister.

Resistance work was given a new incentive when the persecution of the Jews became more and more severe. Nobody could know that the enemy was planning the total annihilation of the Jews, but the deportation of men, women, children, the sick and aged to concentration camps, first in the Netherlands, and then in Poland, and the brazen theft of household goods, money and other property were reason enough for many to do their utmost to help the persecuted.

It was in those years that 'going into hiding' became a meaningful expression. A Jewish family seeking to avoid deportation could either go into hiding in a barn, an attic, or an empty house, or its members could look for work as a farmhand, maid or nurse. But whatever they did, forged identity cards were necessary, as well as ration card, for without these it was impossible to obtain food. This not only applied to Jews, but also to thousands of men who wanted to escape the labour draft for Germany.

In order to obtain the number of ration cards that were needed each month for the ever increasing legion of people who had gone into hiding, it was necessary to make regular raids on the offices where these cards were issued. This became the work of small groups of 'specialists', men who were farmers, office workers, teachers, civil servants by day, but who turned into

burglars and bandits armed with pistols, or, later, with Sten guns, by night. These small gangs were 'knock-out squads', or in Dutch 'knokploegen'.

For a better understanding of the situation, more must be said about the Jewish resistance.

Future generations, amazed to learn of the millions of Jews murdered in Polish extermination camps may wonder why the Jews themselves did not offer any strong united resistance. Those who ask this question show little or no understanding of the crafty and subtle methods employed by the Germans as they set about this mass murder. In the Netherlands, the Jews were called up 'for work in Germany'. That sounded innocent enough. However, the call-up was always accompanied with warnings that severe punishment awaited those who did not report to the authorities. That warning, as everyone realized, meant the punishment was death. That 'work in Germany' also meant death no one could, or dared, or wanted to believe. The terrible truth of the mass murder did not leak out until the final stages of the war, and even then prospective victims themselves still could not, or did not dare, or did not wish to believe it.

June 30, 1943. Good news from Kees Rijdsdijk, in hiding. He gave an address to which could be written: W. van Damme, Loonploeger, Kanaalweg 21, Middenmeer, Wieringermeer. That was naturally NOT where he was hiding. Imagine Germans coming to that address, looking around, and van Damme, feigning ignorance, could with calm heart say to them to search as they liked. That's how it worked. He would however know where letters for Kees could be delivered. The following is recounted by de heer L. de Kool. No doubt there are people who remember that we, in Heerjansdam, received tea bags from the air. On a particular morning, tidings spread through the village: Tea bags had been dropped. I think about 50 were found. Not more. Many bags were lost, but those who had them showed them off as precious gems. I remember going out in a rowboat on de Waal, along the reeds, to see if I could find any. The bags were wrapped in some sort of orange paper. Hopes of them floating for any length of time did not last long. The tea became saturated with water, and sank. But I was able to retrieve some, which later in the war were traded for food.

November 1, 1943. The burgemeester, otherwise known as "Pitto", angrily left the Hervormde Kerk this morning. A visiting preacher prayed for the oppressed, the prisoners, and for our Queen, still in England. No sooner had Ds. Krijger said "amen" when Pitto took to his feet and abruptly, deliberately, exited the church.

There is practically nothing left to buy in stores. No glassware, or pottery, especially no luxury items. If you want to buy a gift for someone, the choice is not difficult: Only books are available. Everything is expensive and what you do buy is junk. One has to be content with margarine and cheese: 1 ons (100 grams) in fourteen days.

December 1943. Pleun Rijdsdijk has also fled. He left Heerjansdam. On his safe arrival, he wrote the following:

"With this I report my safe arrival; although a couple of hours later than expected, because the quarter to two train between Zutphen and Ruurlo did not come. It runs only on Sundays and holidays. I arrived in R (Ruurlo) at 7 past 5. I asked my way, which was clearly explained to me. When I stepped off my bicycle at the bridge, everything was OK. I was hardly inside when it was time to eat (bacon seems to be normal here). I was there for 10 minutes when my future boss arrived, who took me that Tuesday evening directly to the farmstead. The reception by these people was tremendous. They are young, around 30 years old, with a child of 2 years. I

have a room with a nice bed. I will survive well here, of that I have no doubt. They are such wonderful people. One thing is not so good; when they speak to each other, I don't understand a word they say. When they speak directly to me, it is somewhat better. That will improve quickly, says the "boss". I am happy, and can't write how happy and thankful I am that you, after so much difficulty, found this place for me. Kindest thanks for all you did. I gave my ration cards to the mistress, who promptly gave them back. Consider them your Sint Nicolaas present, she said".

It should be clear to readers that burgemeester Beelaerts van Blokland via Mag Sloof had a hand in the disappearance of Pleun.

January, 1944. Jaan Jiskoot provides this short account of the raid on the town hall of Heerjansdam on January 25, 1944, by the resistance cell (knokploeg) (KP) of Johannes Post. On January 22, 1944, the community-secretary of Heerjansdam was with immediate effect dishonourably discharged because he refused to write T.D.'s (tweede distributiestamkaarten). (T.D.'s were second level ration cards imposed by the Germans, designed to cut off food to people in hiding). That lit a fuse. The next day he went to Amsterdam to discuss the situation with Henk van Bergen, who determined that more than the T.D. issue had to be resolved. Identification papers and other falsification devices had to be recovered. A raid was in order. Attack plans were discussed at Jaan Jiskoot's (in Barendrecht). It was decided the raid would take place on January 25, 1944 at 4 p.m. Staff would have left the secretariat, and police protection would not yet have arrived. Koosje, who had been requested by Kees to come to Barendrecht, confirmed the presence of the required T.D. seals in the safe, as well as the population register. The T.D. seals were particularly valuable, considering they'd been picked up in Rotterdam only a few days before by a German Security Service contingent of six. Details of the attack were finalized. Since locals would be recognized, it was better that exclusively "unknown" KP agents be used for the job. Johannes (Post) would lead. Jan, Jaap, Arie and Frits completed the team. By bicycle they went to Heerjansdam. On arrival at the town hall, they noticed that Koosje had not yet left. She wanted to experience the entire episode. OK, she would get what she wanted and receive the complete KP treatment. Upon entering, brandishing the requisite pistol, she and the concierge were 'subdued'. The population register was removed from its container, torn apart, fed into stoves and set alight. While Koosje and the concierge were under arrest, a young man entered. The burgemeester!! He was also made to look into "steel", to which he readily submitted, but when it came to imparting information, a bit of added pressure had to be applied. He was also placed under watch. The plan was proceeding smoothly; the stoves were burning and Johannes methodically working through a list of items to be looked after.

Another visitor! The headmaster of the lower school had come to talk to the burgemeester about shoe vouchers. "Enter, mijnheer" said Jan, quickly closing the door behind him. The startled headmaster protested "yes, but I have nothing to do here". "You have to wait" was the laconic reply "and join the others".

By now, a part of the population register from which T.D.'s were written was destroyed, and other pieces, seals, etc. were in possession of the KP. Johannes Post asked about the municipal money-box. "We badly need that money for those in hiding" he said. He was handed the key. The time had come to leave. The men ended their activities and prepared their baggage. The arrested were placed in the jail cell, with a friendly reminder not to remember a thing about what the men looked like. The cell door would be locked, and after a suitable delay they were

permitted to raise the alarm. The key would be left just outside the door, so they'd soon be freed. With a "long live the Queen, long live the Fatherland" the KP left, met at the Noldijk by Jaan (Jiskoot), who took and safely stored the weapons and loot. The men left Barendrecht by train, for "Cor" in Breda, without incident.

The haul consisted of a quantity of identity papers, stamps, blanks for id's, blank T.D.'s, 1500 T.D. seals, remainder of the population register, plus the contents of the money-box and funds of the municipal water service. The population register was only about 25% burnt. The rest was stored in Barendrecht and returned to Heerjansdam after the war, in excellent shape.

Those in jail were later freed. The burgemeester, in his zeal to track down the KP, sped to the residence of the gendarmerie (the telephone line at the municipal secretariat had been cut), and on not being responded to when he rang the bell, broke through the window. The German S.D. was then informed of what had happened. They instituted a thorough investigation. Koosje, who had been present throughout the event, was also interrogated, which she withstood convincingly.

Macheltje(Koosje) Sloof was known as a resolute woman, not only for her work as municipal secretary and an official of the Civil Registry: she was the first female Municipal Receiver in the Netherlands. She was also one of the few women who liked to smoke a cigar and drive very early a car and motorcycle. It can rightly be said of her that she was a very active and assertive woman.

When an accounting took place of monies remaining at the secretariat, it was felt it could be further reduced. Before arriving at a balance, the treasurer took the opportunity of doing something for the benefit of the lower school.

Koosje adds the following to the story: "After the interrogation, everyone was allowed to go home, except the treasurer (herself), who had to reconcile the cash. There was a tin with 'cash for the poor' written on it. This money we will not take, Johannes Post had said. In fact, it was ordinary municipal money, but he did not know that. When the treasurer, under the watchful eye of local policeman Pel de Jonge, took the money out of the safe, she was able to quickly empty the tin, its content disappearing in the pocket of Pel. A heist within a heist". End of Koosje's account.

The local gendarmerie deserves praise for their worthy conduct. Everything went according to plan, and the island of IJsselmonde now had its second such assault under its belt.

Johannes = Johannes Post

Jan = Jan Wilschut

Jaap = Jaap Veltman

Frits = Frits Schmidt

Arie = Arie Stamrood

Jaan = Jaan Jiskoot

Koosje = Macheltje (Mag) Sloof (community treasurer Heerjansdam)

Kees = L. de Kool (community secretary Heerjansdam)

This was dangerous work and the occupiers were not soft in punishing those they were able to get their hands on. Johannes Post, farmer from Nieuwlande, was executed on July 16, 1944 in the dunes of Bloemendaal. Arie Stamrood, electrician from Zeist, on that same day met the same fate as Post. Jan Wilschut died on New Year's Day 1945, in the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen.

Jaan Jiskoot still lives in Barendrecht. Kees, after the war, became burgemeester of Zuidland, then Voorschoten, where he still lives. Koosje still lives in Heerjansdam. She is not often

nervous anymore. She still knows that if you lower your leg a certain way, you start trembling so much that even the German S.D. believed it.

February 21, 1944. De Kool, known to have been deeply involved in illegal resistance, tells the following:

The resistance always needed many ration cards, the distribution of which among those hiding out we had well in hand. By arrangement, a number of distribution offices were broken into. Each month an estimate was made of how many cards had to be obtained. This also involved my good colleague den Hollander, director of the distribution team in Zwijndrecht. I had made an arrangement with him. He would ensure that on a certain day the greatest possible number of ration cards would be ordered, coupled with the greatest possible number of unstamped cards. Unstamped meant the name of the Zwijndrecht distribution team would not appear, and that these blank cards could be used anywhere in the country, once you stamped it with your own seal, which in those days we had. The raid in Zwijndrecht was carried out by Johannes Post and his team, successfully. Only at the last moment things got out of hand, some shots being fired. Nothing too serious, but the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) in Rotterdam was alarmed. They came with their cars via Rijsoord. Some members of our raiding party, on their way back to Barendrecht, also passed by the Rijksstraatweg through Rijsoord. Another group returned home by way of the Langeweg. Yet another group took Develsluis, via the Groene Steeg (Green Lane). The last route we termed ‘the safe side’. Why? Along that stretch of the Oude Maas, Lindtsedijk and Develsluis, no N.S.B.-ers or German sympathizers lived. Only ordinary (patriotic) citizens. Through local constable Plaatsman we were informed this area was rarely patrolled by the German Grüne Polizei (green police), and little other control exercised. Thus it was also known as the quiet side. Later we took advantage of this, when weapons, dropped over the Hoekse Waard, were transported along this way to Rotterdam by local knokploegen. Back to the story. Everything went well in Zwijndrecht. Our ‘boys’ are returning, with 12 to 15 potato sacks full of ration cards and coupons. The Germans, in the meantime, were alerted due to the shooting. One of our boys, Frans, returning by way of Heerjansdam, is cycling alone at “de Baak”, halfway between Zwijndrecht and Rijsoord, when he spots an oncoming car with shielded headlights. That has to be S.D.! Frans steps quickly off his bike, and lowers himself, and bike, along the ditch. The car passes unsuspectingly. By Arie Huizer, better known as “the toll”, Frans takes the Langeweg, to the Groene Steeg, and at the Develwegstoep reaches the top of the dike. I had taken measures beforehand. Plaatsman was instructed how to proceed if something unusual took place. Members of the raiding party were to return a variety of ways, so that if one got into a bind, others would still have the remainder of the loot. Well, Frans gets to Develsluis, close to where Plaatsman lives. This particular day turned out to be good for Plaatsman to keep an eye on things. Along the inner dike, he has a shack where he clandestinely kept pigs. By chance, he decided to slaughter one that evening. “When the boys come by and the light is on in the shack, the coast is clear. They can proceed normally”. Frans paid close attention to the light. Plaatsman also was doing something he shouldn’t be doing. Safely at Plaatsman meant safely to Barendrecht. Among ourselves, we always spoke of “clean” instead of “safe”. Frans (officially named Nico de Regt) was one of the first to return to Barendrecht with an enormous haul of ration cards. The others arrived at various times. Thus sleepy Heerjansdam was then one of the crossroads of the K.P.

March 3, 1944. Heerjansdam experiences a very anxious day. On awakening that morning, it was discovered all access to the village had been cut off by over 100 Germans. Nobody could get in or out of town. Anyone on the street was picked up and placed under guard at the school. A house to house search was conducted for the presence of radios. Nobody was allowed to have one at home. Some time ago orders had been issued to turn them in. But the houses were also searched for onderduikers (people in hiding). Every house was thoroughly searched and unfortunately six persons were found and taken away. By master Van der Schoor, teacher at the Public Lower School, a radio was found. He was among the six apprehended. He was transported to Vught, while the five others were transported to Amersfoort. Pleun Leenheer managed to stay hidden for two days, high in the barn at the farmstead on Dorpsstraat.

March 22, 1944. The unsettling rumour turns out to be true: The polders are to be inundated. All residents are urged to assist in forming an embankment behind the houses along Lindtsedijk, Develsluis, Dorpsstraat and Molenweg, in the hope of keeping homes water free. Both reverends, and assistant reverend, are digging and shoveling. Wheelbarrows go back and forth. *(The booklet shows a photo, taken behind “De Hoef”, of men with wheelbarrows. From right to left: Two unidentified, then Gerrit Punt, Gerrit Leenheer, Jacob Leenheer (seated) and at the extreme right Adrianus (Jos) van Gameren, bicycle repairman. Another picture shows the flooded Langeweg, at Leenheer). The only war-time picture I have of myself is with a spade in hand ‘helping’ villagers in their chore. My sister Leny appears at the far right. The Church is in the background. That would have been taken from behind our house, of which I have a picture in its vastly renovated state in the mid 1980s, with my sister in front. My understanding is the house has now been torn down. But memories linger.*

April 5, 1944. The polder “Buitenland”, where B. Plaizier lives, among others, is completely under water. The Molenweg has been breached by two holes, each some three meters long. Farmers have a problem: When can the cows return to fields?

April 9, 1944. The Molenweg is now breached in three places and the water of the Waal has free rein in the polder of Heerjansdam. At H. Rijken, another breach was made. 85% of the Heerjansdam area is now under water. This inundation was by order of the occupiers, to prevent liberators from landing, or dropping parachutists. Food shortage is steadily becoming more noticeable; people here and there are suffering from hunger, also in our village.

*A **polder** is a low-lying tract of land enclosed by embankments (barriers) known as dikes that forms an artificial hydrological entity, meaning it has no connection with outside water other than through manually operated devices. The Netherlands is frequently associated with polders. This is illustrated by the English saying: God created the world but the Dutch created Holland.*

April 11, 1944. Second day of Easter. The breaches in the Molenweg will be repaired. The railway can operate through this waterlogged area.

Sunday, April 17, 1944. After Sunday service at the Hervormde church, an association of boys met in an upstairs room for their weekly gathering. It is not known exactly what drew their attention, a loose plank or something. In any case, a plank was pried loose, and an amount of hidden clothing articles discovered. In no time at all, our youngsters paraded around the village wearing new caps. What jolly fun. Such excitement, on a Sunday no less! Afterwards, it turned

out to be merchandise of Janus Kramer. Eight men of the Controleurs van de Centrale Crisis Controle Dienst (C.C.C.D. or C.C.D) (German directed anti-black market service) appeared. Many residents hoped, in view of the scarcity, that this would lead to a mandatory liquidation sale. The C.C.D. was told that items were hidden in the church to prevent them from being stolen from storage on Dorpsstraat.

April 18, 1944. From a height of 36,000 feet, the British Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) took pictures of Heerjansdam. These pictures will possibly serve later as direction finders for British warplanes to area drop sites.

April 22, 1944. Saturday morning a telephone rings in the community secretariat. (Burgemeester) Stern calls from his chambers, down to where Kees Janse works. “Kees, Landwachters (German organized Dutch paramilitary), come see”. Kees goes upstairs, to a window with Stern. Two Landwachters entered the store of Kramer, while one stood guard outside. Stern rings his residence, and departs. Eventually he returns with the Landwachters, Kramer the draper, Bas and his father Joris van Dijk. What is going on? The Landwacht had gone to the cemetery, and in the mortuary had found two radios and a bundle of textile. Betrayal!! Old Joris van Dijk was allowed to go home. But Bas van Dijk and brother-in-law Kramer were to be imprisoned behind lock and bolt. Thanks to the burgemeester, in whose care they were entrusted, they were detained in the kitchen of van Dijk, concierge of the town hall. There will be a hearing on Monday.

In 1940 Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the Reichskommissar for the Netherlands, had approved the creation of an NSB paramilitary police formation named Landwacht Nederlande. The Landwacht served as an auxiliary police force and was involved in the rounding up of Jews, Communists and other groups deemed undesirable by Seyss-Inquart and the NSB.

May 12, 1944. An awful lot of noise in the night sky over Heerjansdam. Everything rattles. *This was at a time of massive allied air raids over Germany, like the 7 May 1944 flight of 1,500 bombers of the US 8th Air Force attacking Berlin and on 12 May 1944 when 800 US bombers hit the German synthetic fuel plants at Brüx in southern Germany (post-war Most, Czechoslovakia) and Lüna-Merseburg, Lützkendorf, and Zeitz in eastern Germany. When there was air activity during the day, I'd most likely be made to shelter in our basement, which was little more than a small concrete bunker for storing a few bags of coal and the odd potato or two. My parents would be outside, waving white towels cheering on the allied airmen.*

May 19, 1944. Late in the evening, close to midnight, Jan Groeneveld on the Lindsedijk was raided. The Landwacht appeared suddenly with 15 men at the door. Everything was turned upside down. Fortunately nothing was found and at two o'clock in the morning the Landwachters left. The Nederlandse Landwacht was recruited from the ranks of the N.S.B. with the aim of combating resistance. They were mostly armed with shotguns, hence the nickname “Jan Hagel” (Jan Hail).

May 31, 1944. A train was strafed. Great consternation everywhere. The two o'clock train from Dordrecht was fired on by an aircraft a short distance before the Molenweg crossing. An overwhelming noise. It was thought an air battle was going on. Fortunately, because of the recent inundation, the train traveled very slowly, allowing the gunner to aim precisely, and limit

hits to the first coach. What a panic! Everyone had to immediately get off the train and walk to the station in Barendrecht. Doctor de Roest was quickly on the scene with members of E.H.B.O. (first aid). They performed heroic service. Help arrived too late for 4 people, they were dead. Additionally, 5 were severely wounded and 3 light. The victims were mostly from Dordrecht and Rotterdam. Around four o'clock the train resumed its way. Fire damage was limited to the first coach.

The railway line could easily be seen from our home. Nothing obstructed the view. I remember seeing smoke rising from the train and uniformed personnel scurrying about.

September 17, 1944. This morning a Rhine barge arrived in the harbour of Heerjansdam. On board were some two hundred German soldiers, who on disembarkation departed by horse and wagon for Barendrecht. Some fifty of the occupiers remained in various homes in Heerjansdam. Around two p.m. it really started to happen. Allied fighter planes flew low over our village with deafening noise. They dropped their bombs on the Buitenlandse quay, close to the harbour of Develsluis. The pilots tried to hit ships tied up in the Develsluis harbour. One skipper was wounded in the arm, fortunately not seriously. The flyers were wrong. It was the following harbour, the one of Heerjansdam, that should have been the target. That's where the German Rhine barge lay. Luckily for Heerjansdammers, no bombs fell on our village.

October 24, 1944. This morning, two houses on the Noldijk, with contents, were burned down by the Germans. A radio had been found, which is punished.

On October 27 many German soldiers are in Heerjansdam. Everyone feels something is going to happen. Two days later, German tanks enter the village, and make place on Dorpsstraat for a large canon which can fire projectiles of 17 cm. diameter. It is placed in the orchard of Pieter Labriijn, where the Gereformeerde church now stands. This canon is meant to fire on our advancing liberators, already in North Brabant.

October 31, 1944. A terrible day. The great canon has started firing. Everything reverberates and shakes. At the first shot, all windows in the vicinity are shattered, roof tiles slide down. The entire Dorpsstraat, from harbour to Kerkstoep, is one great havoc. Also on the harbour quay, behind baker Reedijk, another canon is firing. With the same results! Inhabitants have to cope elsewhere. It rains constantly and houses, without windows and roof tiles, suffer. On November 12, fortunately the big guns disappear.

March 4, 1945. The situation becomes more serious. No electricity, no gas, no fuel to buy. Along the railway, discarded coke from steam engines is sought, but it does not ignite. The taps are dry. No water. The ration lists: 8 ons bread, 1 kg. potatoes per week, only 1 ons of meat for three weeks. A committee has arranged for "school soup", that is to say on Wednesday noon school children could collect a portion of soup from butchers Noordzij or Simons, first come first served. They endeavored to prepare nutritious soup, which for families rich with children was a godsend.

Increasingly, then here, then there, our land is bombed. V-1's and V-2's were launched by Germans towards England. For the slightest of reasons, Dutch detainees were executed. This, in order to create fear in our hearts, and for the occupiers to show who is boss, that our fate rests in their hands. Many people in our land starve of hunger.

The following is derived from notes by mej. Hannie v.d. Berg. Everything is becoming expensive. There is little in stock. One bottle edible oil costs 100 guilders. Up to a thousand guilders for a sack of wheat. One kilo sugar, if obtainable, costs 80 guilders. Meat is also scarce and costs 50 guilders per kilo. Household goods, clothing, carpets, gold and silver jewelry, everything, that means everything, one tries to barter for food. Food is the only thing one talks about.

Several books have been written about the hardships of that “Hunger Winter”, some of them so harrowing that I’ve refused to keep them. The one memory that haunts me most is of beggars from Rotterdam. Mostly on week-ends, they would come to our village; walking skeletons, scrounging for any scrap of food, from whatever source. Waste dumps sometimes provided apple or potato peels, or if one was lucky, a rotting carrot. Mom and Dad were very resourceful. Being gardeners, they grew vegetables. Although mostly confiscated by the Germans, a very limited choice of sustenance filtered through to meet the needs of our family. I don’t know how Mom did it, but on most week-ends she would cook a large pot of porridge, and ladle it out to beggars as they came to the door. Dad’s contribution was to trade a potato or so for a tin of tobacco brought by beggars from the city, knowing full well the tin was filled 99 percent with sand, and only the slightest covering of tobacco on top. With so little food around, even the Germans themselves did not fare well. One day, three or four of us village boys happened to wander into a barn while German soldiers were eating. Their food consisted of a heap of moldy chunks of dark bread. Nothing else! Seeing us, they offered us a small chunk, which we declined, hurriedly leaving the barn. Foods that I remember are slices of bread, spread with lard, and covered with sugar beet syrup. On Saturdays, just before going to soccer matches, we’d have a sandwich with cold cuts, which was quite a treat. When cheese was available, we’d shift a narrow slice of it back on the bread as we were eating, so that the cheese would last the entire sandwich.

More than fifteen thousand men, women and children in that occupied part of Holland perished that winter from starvation. If the entry of the Canadians had come one or two months later, the number of victims would have run into hundreds of thousands. No part of Western Europe was liberated at a more vital moment.

LIBERATION!

On Saturday, May 5 1945, at hotel “De Wereld” in Wageningen, terms of capitulation are read out to German General Johann van Blaskowitz. This general was the commander of German troops in our land. The hour of liberation has come. Queen Wilhelmina spoke on the radio: “Our language has no words for what goes through our hearts at this time of liberation of the entire Netherlands. Finally, we are again masters of our domain in our own land.”

The next day will see the official signing of the terms of capitulation. The German general was present, as was Canadian General Foulkes. Prince Bernhard was also there. Germany had surrendered. On the fifth of May, here in our village, the bell tower was rung. The bells, alas, were no longer here. Instead, use was made of a steel oxygen cylinder. Then, flags appeared! For many it is still incomprehensible: PEACE. Yet, in the vicinity, some German occupiers remain, thus the joy is somewhat tempered. You just never know with these German soldiers! At half past six in the evening, a thanksgiving service is held in the Hervormde Kerk, led by Reverend Kampherbeek, speaking from Psalm 126. The church is filled to the rafters. A collection is held for relatives of those who fell.

When Koosje, after the church service that evening, entered the home of Willem (Bastiaan Broekhuizen), money was piled on the table. The collection during the service had been counted. Proceeds: 1,970 guilders. Someone rounded up the amount to 2,000 guilders even. Koosje herself had through previous efforts raised 3,276 guilders, towards the same goal. This increased the balance of the Nutsspaarbank account by 5,276 guilders. This money will go to Stichting 40/45 (institute for service to resistance participants).

By May 10, 1945 it appears all remaining Germans have departed. Heerjansdam can now breathe freely. Only now are we truly free. Men returned home, after hiding out for short, or long, periods of time. Also those, who had been deported to Germany for slave labour, and survived, returned. Joy in reunited families, but also grief in those whose father or son never returned.

Celebrations on May 9th, 1945, in Amsterdam developed into an unforgettable manifestation of joy and love of freedom. In front of rapturous crowds, several Dutch dignitaries spoke movingly on the significance of liberation. Colonel Bell-Irving spoke for the Canadian Forces in Amsterdam. 'Friends, we are happy that we could come; most of us have been away from Canada for a long time. You may have asked yourselves why it has taken us so long to come, but we've had to do some hard fighting. However, each day we have spent here has been well spent. To look at you, you are obviously happy, and I must say this: We have nowhere in Europe received such a glad welcome. We have our work to do here, and we will do it gladly among you, but then some of us would like to go home'.

Sometimes during the war one could see someone owning photo frames with the letters O.Z.O carved in the sides. For those who knew, O.Z.O meant "Onderdrukkers Zullen Ophoepelen" (oppressors will be turfed out) and "Oranje Zal Overwinnen" (Orange will overcome). These sayings helped many during the occupation. Now, the oppressors had been turfed out and Orange had overcome. Nevertheless, it had been five scary years. Also in our village. Forty years after liberation, we stand silently for a moment. Those who read this will hopefully never go through an experience like this again.

Postscript:

*World War II is way behind us. Why bring it up now? From a personal perspective, I want my family members to understand the repercussions of war as a prime motivator for leaving the Netherlands. We left in 1951. As the story shows, German war criminals were still being prosecuted as late as 1949, no doubt touching raw nerves of those who lived through it. Economic recovery from the devastation of war was not easy. On a larger scale, the story of what happened in Holland during World War II is hopefully of interest to new generations of Canadians of Dutch origin, and to families of Canadians who saw their loved ones off to Europe. A great amount of information is available for those who are interested. Hundreds of books have been written on the subject. One in particular, *The Occupied Garden – Recovering the Story of a Family in the War-torn Netherlands* written by Tracy Kasaboski & Kristen den Hartog in 2008, mirrors to a tee what happened to my family. Furthermore, I hope the dissemination of these details will foster a greater understanding of the special bond that exists between Canada and the Netherlands. Most importantly, we must never forget the agonies caused by wars.*