

What we did during the Occupation

Mobilisation 1939-1940

I worked then still in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Van Kol at Doorn. Dutch soldiers came to be billeted on private houses at Doorn and Neerlangbroek, not with us because of mother's heart disease.

December 1939

Harry departs to Woerden (between Utrecht and the Hague) to become a soldier.

April 1940

I get a job on Father's school at Neerlangbroek and take leave of Van Kols.

10th of May 1940

I awoke at 5 o'clock in the morning because of a terrible shooting by the soldiers at Doorn. I looked out of my window and saw an aeroplane upon which was fired. I looked at it in amazement, wondering what it would signify, when I heard a great noise of other aeroplanes, and in one minute the sky was darkened with more than two hundred of those things, all black Messerschmitts, and the shooting became terrible! I flew to my parents and looked out on the street. Our neighbouring woman whose husband also was away as a soldier, stood there with her baby, weeping, and said to us: "be listening in to the news: this is war!" and there was Wim on his cycle, also to hear what was happening, and hardly anybody of us believe that it was really true: The Boches had attacked our country. And Harry was away as a soldier and so was Wim's eldest brother Ko, and several other young men in our family.

13th of May 1940 Pentecost

We had heard the shooting of artillery in the Grebbeline (15KM from Doorn) during two days already. In the afternoon everything became anxious silent. The soldiers got orders to keep themselves ready for depart. Then the first rumours came through that the Grebbeline should be conquered. We saw people come, flying (fleeing), with nothing but their clothes they wore. This night we didn't go to bed, but sat up in the room and heard the flying Dutch army go along in the night. Then came in the wireless the news of the government transfer, and the depart of the Queen to England. We were deeply dismayed, and understood, that everything was lost, and thought of Harry.

14th of May 1940

11 o'clock in the morning the first Germans came in stolen Dutch motorcars and stopped just before our house. Then came long rows of troops, artillery and cavalry. They placed their cannon just in front of our house in an orchard and said they would shoot upon Utrecht. In the afternoon they said that they had sent a colonel to Utrecht with an ultimate (ultimatum): surrender the town, and when not, they would bomb the town with 200 aeroplanes the next day. Imagine: with all these unprotected people in it. Then we saw in the South West a thick black cloud, rising higher and higher. The sun became bloody red. It was a strange and anxious sight. Afterwards we understood that it was the smoke of poor bombed burning Rotterdam. At 7 o'clock, just when we also made preparations to go away from home and fly, if that would become necessary during the night, the German commander came out and cried to his troops: "Capitulation: it's peace (!!)" . Music began to play, the German soldiers were elated with joy and said: "within 3 weeks we are in England

and the war is over! Then we can also go home. But at first: Chamberlain". The civilians grouped together in silence. Hate rooted in our hearts.

5 Years Occupation

It did not seem so bad during the first time. It turned out better than was expected. But by little and little the rope was set up around our necks.

Summer 1940

Wim appointed as a teacher with fixed salary at Doorn. Salary too little to marry. Harry appointed on the Distribution.

Christmas 1940

Phyllis and all the other English girls in Holland taken in prison and brought to a camp on the frontier of Swiss.

Summer 1941

Father pensioned off. The school discontinued so I also out of my job. Countess Van Lynden Van Sandenburg asked me then in Phyllis' place for her two children. Besides what Phyllis did I should give them also lessons. In this time our aunt was so old and difficult that Father and Mother had to send her to a home for old people, where she had a very good and loveful nurture during the last time of her life. She died the next year, 93 years old.

April 1942

Wim and his Mother had a severe accident, being hit by an exploding object in the neighbourhood of their house, whilst providing the flowers. Wim had a wound in his cheek and numberless very little wounds all over his face and hands. After three weeks he could go to school again. His Mother's case was much worse. She lost an eye, became awfully deaf and during some time we feared for her life. Fortunately she recovered also.

June 1942

Wim's eldest brother to Ko married.

Autumn 1942

for a situation as a head teacher at Nederhemert and gets the job. A house is at our disposal: we can get married! Wim must start on the first of March 1942, but because we cannot buy things but with the permission of the distribution office, which permission you only get as bride and bridegroom, we had the banns put up already on Father's birthday, 21 November 1942. To be sure to have things in time.

11th February 1943

I took leave on Sandenburg. Got a watch for souvenir and a reading lamp for wedding present.

1st March 1943

Wim departed to Nederhemet, and stayed with somebody there. I came one week to clean and prepare the house.

12th March 1943

Our wedding day. Lovely weather! Alice and Alexander Van Lynden Van Sandenburg were brides-children. Rie was the only guest save the brothers and sisters, because we could not prepare meals for a very big society. But the church was really full with other friends and relations, several of which had come from far.

In the first month of our wedding I began to await a baby. I didn't at all feel well, was most of the time ill and sick and could not rise from my bed. The doctor became an often seen guest with us. I stayed suffering during 5 months! Then the doctor feared, that it wouldn't go right with me, I hadn't any force more and weighed no 50 KG. So he gave me an injection, I recovered and felt very well during the further time. It was September then! Wim had also been suffering during that time, a very painful disease: sciatica. You can imagine how we felt, never been really very ill before and now, the first time of our marriage suffering like two very old men! But I've felt very happy however, because we would have a little baby in the future. Save this all we had very less help during this time. The daughter of a farmer-friend came to help us now and then, but we could not really get a maid. In September I got a girl of 17 years old for half days. I had to make everything myself for the baby, for there was nothing to be bought even then! So my relations sent me parcels with old stuff and clothes and I sewed and sewed to have everything ready in time. A cradle and a child's bed I could borrow from friends. It was all very difficult but I got everything ready just in time.

October 1943

Wim fell suddenly very ill: influenza in his belly. Nearly unbearable painful. Fortunately he recovered rather soon.

7th November 1943

I received a letter from my Father that their house probably would be claimed for German lying-in women, and that they had to prepare themselves on it. Their neighbours offered them some rooms in their house and helped to hide beautiful things and furniture. They preferred to stay there, at Neerlangbroek instead of coming to us, because they liked to see what happened with their possessions. Harry, who had always succeeded in being free from working in Germany till then, and who hadn't gone when they called him up for captivity, should stay with a friend also at Neerlangbroek.

17th November 1943

I got a letter that it would really happen so they had to go on the 23rd of November and had to leave the house well furnished and ready to be occupied by others. I was very upset when I received this news, and wept all over the days. I suppose it has been a bit too much for me in that position, for on the ...

29th of November

In the early morning at about seven o'clock, three weeks before we awaited her, our little daughter was born. We had expected her about Christmas and intended to give her the names Koosje Christine, Koosje being Mother's name and Christine because that means Christmas child. Because she was born just one day after the first Advent Sunday, we did so as well. We shortly called her Kora, also written as Cora. Everything had gone extraordinary good and we were very happy. But 16 days after the birth I fell dangerously ill, got a terrible menorrhagia and thromboses on both legs. I was immediately sent away to the hospital in Herttogenboeck, where they helped the bleeding and saved my life by blood transfusion. Father, Mother and Harry were warned to come and see me, but thank God, I might live, and be saved for my husband and baby. I had to lay then for two months, but need not stay

in the hospital for long, so that I most of the time was at home. The formerly mentioned farmer's daughter did the household and took care for Cora. A nurse came daily for me. In the town the food position was very bad then, but the farmers of our village helped us and undemanded with meat, milk and eggs, so that I could have everything I needed so much. I thank the people of Nederhemest very much in this respect. Then also grew a friendship with our doctor and his wife, young people, who took care for me in an extraordinary way.

13th of February 1944

My first going to church. Cora baptised.

23rd of February 1944

Father and Mother can go back to their own home. Everything has been in vain: nobody came in the house during the three months they had to live with the neighbours.

End of March 1944

The underground workers at Doorn kill a dangerous Nazi person, a Dutchman, who made his work of betraying young people and Jews to the enemy. The Germans take in prison 20 voluntary persons and every man who can go flies away. (Fortunately the 20 prisoners all returned home safely.) In this time Harry slept already months and months from home in a shelter in a friend's house. The Germans accustomed to fetch up young people by night. He only came home to eat. He went to the office daily, however, and did his work, fortunately being in a totally reliable society. Most of them were underground workers and they succeeded in jobbery with the number of distribution coupons, by which they helped many poor Jews or other divers (hiders).

26th April 1944

Harry must also dive (hide). He is sought by the Grune Polizei because he refused to work for his enemy several times. Even Father and Mother did not know where he slept and lived. He came home rather often, always on different times. Had a false card of identity.

Pentecost, May 1944

We heard lots of your big bombs go over our heads every night, going to bomb the German towns. This night we awoke by a terrible howling sound, one moment of breathless, anxious suspense, then a heavy blow and the jingling of falling glass. I shrieked and followed Wim, who sprang out of bed immediately. Fortunately I didn't go out of bed on my own side, for just between me and Kora's bed a large window glass had come down and was broken in a thousand pieces, several of which lay on my pillow just round where my head had rested. A huge bomber had fallen down with his bombs on the bank of the river, fortunately not on a house! Poor people in it were all dead. Yan and Cor just stayed with us with their little daughter, and also were terribly frightened. Since that day we knew not many quiet nights more.

Typhoons began to attack the trains so that we didn't venture to go home by train in the summer holidays and we made the trip by cycle, drawing the pram with Cora between us (you saw a photo of that journey). Ten days after the former accident, when we were risen every night when the air artillery shot on the bombers, a heavily burning bomber skimmed our house and came down on a meadow. Six of the seven pilots themselves. I thought it came straight upon us (we were in the hall with our baby in a blanket) and awaited the blow praying together, but thank God, it passed.

Harry was engaged to a girl, who also did underground work of course. She fell ill this time and had to rest, it proved to be tuberculosis. Many people in Holland got it during the war by the bad food, by which they weakened too much. She was helped by the Action of course, who tried to give her milk, meat and eggs. She lay down for more than a year however, and was only lately declared to be recovered. She may go to Swiss or Sweden during three months now at expense of the society of Former Illegal Action, as a thank you for what she did for the good cause. I love her very much, she is most charming.

September 1944

The Allied Forces advance quickly in France through Belgium, to the Dutch frontier. Within a few days we await them with us! The flags are prepared, the orange broches produced, we see the Germans fly (flee), they spring munitions and stores and go back further and further. It seems as if they leave Noord. Brabant and we are very hopeful and point them the wrong way when they ask for it. We go thrice a day to our friend the doctor, to be listening in to the news, for he has a wireless hidden under the floor.

Then the advance stops on the Albert canal. We are disappointed: that means some weeks longer, we suppose. The S.S. arrives in our surroundings and with them: the misery. The little town of Zaltbommel was evacuated within three hours. We took two girls and some days later also the fiancé of one of them. Then the S.S. came by motorbike along the villages and caught every man to go at work and dig trenches and shelters for the Germans. Men hardly ventured to come outdoors, we made a shelter for Wim where he often sat hidden when the S.S. soldiers crossed through the village. Under these anxious circumstances there were no lessons of course. The doctor, who could not bear the terrible things the SS'ers did, was so imprudent to telephone to the Nazi burgomaster of Zaltbommel to say that he had to do his best that the soldiers should leave their ill treatments. (That morning he came from doing the autopsy of three young men who were ____ to death because they tried to fly (flee) when the S.S. called them for digging.)

The next day the S.S. commander stood for his ____ to fetch him. Fortunately he wasn't at home. They ordered his wife that he should be in a certain spot at 6 o'clock in the afternoon. If not, they would come and shoot her. We immediately helped them packing and took away all worthful things and provisions and clothes. At 4 o'clock they fled (fled) over the river. The S.S. commander came back indeed, robbed what he liked but didn't burn the house down as he threatened to do so at first. We took care for their things.

There's a kind of harbour at Nederhemert, and about 50 big and little river ships lay there in rest, awaiting the arrival of the allied troops. But the Allied Forces thought that the Germans probably would use those ships for war purposes so one day typhoons came and attached those ships with bombs and machine guns. Seven persons were wounded and a skipper's boy from Belgium was brought in our house as we lived no 50 meters from the harbour. The boy recovered afterwards, but he could not stay with us, as we lived on a dangerous spot, so close by the ships. The following days the typhoons came over and over again, and the skippers, struck with horror, dared not longer live on their ships and found friendly lodging in the village. People living on the dyke also fled (fled) and we were obliged to leave our house too. Three weeks we lived with a friend of us in another part of the village. The Typhoons came 8 (?) times a day sometimes! I became very nervous then. Then there came a lot of soldiers to the village and we feared that they would go into the house so went back home. Most of the ships were wrecked then, and they were only seldom attached more. It wasn't very good for Cora, always being picked up most unexpectedly,

from bed, out of the box, and then being taken to the cellar, the noise of the howling aeroplanes and falling bombs. She became troublesome and often wept.

Then we came under the search of artillery. The allied troops conquered Noord. Brabant. German cannon were placed in our gardens, soldiers were billeted in the village, more and more villages were evacuated. Lots of flying (fleeing) people came to us. Then the little town of Heusden. Just over the river, was conquered, and a part of ____ had to evacuate. We could still stay where we were and took 5 persons with us. We slept in the cellar then and had made a little bed for Cora on the cabbages with winter roots. Imagine: altogether, old and young, men and women in a little cellar where we just fitted! There was only one thing we thought of: may they come soon! But we had waited in vain. The most awful thing that could be had happened: the allied army stopped and stayed just 2 KM from our dwelling place!

Then the Germans had time enough to do with us what they liked. Those terrible VIs came over the village and nearly daily several fell down in the surroundings. Fortunately there were more meadows than houses! The S.S. had disappeared and the doctor had returned home again and also lived in the cellar. We dared not wash our linen, and everything became grey and unfresh of only being rinsed out. That was one of the most terrible things. I became nearly at my wits' end. Then rumours came: we must also evacuate. Two days before Santa Claus it was fixed. We tried to hide a lot of things we could not take with us, behind the wallpaper and under the floor.

8th December 1944

We got a farmer's cart and went to friends in a neighbouring village. Wim brought Cora and me away and returned to Nederhemert then, for he would stay with our possessions till he would be sent away. That was a terrible time, being separated. It lasted six weeks. Wim ate with the doctor, who had also stayed, and a German captain lived in our house with him ____ also slept in the cellar. I often heard the English artillery fire on Nederhemert or saw some building burn or a VI falling in that direction and prayed for him. On the 17th of January all people were sent away and he came back with us. I thanked God and didn't at all mind that our house and things were in the hands of three Boches. One week afterwards the evacuated people was sent away from the village where we were because there wasn't enough room for the German soldiers. They were grouped and sent to the North in goods vans; most of them arrived with lice and other vermin. It was very cold, the snow lay thickly, the most awful weather you can have for such things. And thousands of people were sent away, old people often died while on journey. We succeeded in escaping from the group and travelled alone to our parents. We could not get any vehicle so had to leave nearly everything. So we walked home with Cora in the pram, Wim with a cycle on which some luggage, struggling with snow and wind and slipperiness. On Monday we departed, on Friday we were at home. They were astonished and frightened at first to see us, then very glad. And we could wash ourselves and our linen, sleep in a common bed with our nightdress on, without shooting or VI and thought we had come in a Paradise. I lost my voice for a week and could only whisper, Wim fell ill and stayed in bed for about ten days, but Cora was healthy and hadn't suffered. We stayed on the farm because Mother couldn't bear very much and because of the food. Wim could not go out very often for the Feldgendarmarie picked up young men for Germany. So he mostly stayed indoors and learned spinning for pastime. I helped in the household and did a lot of knitting and sewing. [We later found out that Riek had only one needle] And so we existed until the end of the war. I suppose I told you about this time at Neerlangbrack. Did I tell you about the yacht they held on Harry, how he had some narrow escapes, how they arrested Wim one day,

thinking he was Harry? If not, I will tell you next time. And did I tell you how, in the end, the Liberation came, how we saw arrive the Liberators, and the aeroplanes with the food, how my parents had to leave their house again for the S.S., but stayed and didn't go? I don't quite remember.

There must be many mistakes against your language in this long history. But I suppose you will understand it and you will also understand how all your people did for us is really felt as a Liberation of very, very heavy times.

God save England and the other Allied Nations.