GOUDLIJSTER

My family during the Holocaust

Arnold Troostwijk

For my children and grandchildren

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

I have told my story. The egg — Goudlijster — is laid, and I am very happy with it. At the same time, the entire process has been very emotional for me, because it brought the Shoah very close again.

When I started on this story, I knew almost nothing, so that I didn't realize what I might find. Naïve, perhaps, but initially I didn't think I would unearth much. Starting from nothing, I was able to bring my family, many of whom I never knew personally, back to life.

I wasn't able to bring the past wholly into the present; too many sources have been lost, irrevocably so. The generation that lived through the war was not very forthright about its wartime experiences. Many generations will remember the war. But for many, as the years go by, "the war" will increasingly turn into an abstract concept. Events recede farther, first-hand witnesses grow scarce.

I am one of those witnesses. Our society needs these stories to continue to be told, so that they'll endure in our society's collective memory. Let's not allow the memories to die with the last witnesses.

Looking back, I see that it has taken over two years to get to this point. A great deal of time spent sitting at my computer, which in the family became known as my "hangout". So I'll have to find another interest now to fill my time. Perhaps I'll just quietly keep digging, to discover even more.

Arnold Troostwijk, Amsterdam, March 2021

Goudlijster I

"Goudlijster"[1]: that is the name my foster sister Ans Doets and her husband Herman Matthijsen gave me when they introduced me to the other guests at their 50th wedding anniversary. Herman, veterinary in Heino, was a true bird-lover and had given bird names to all of his guests.

That name, Goudlijster, was meant to infer that I was a lucky dog. I have indeed always felt lucky, thanks to my parents' sensible decision to hand me over to Jan and Jannetje Doets-de Waal, who would hide me during the war.

The start of my lucky life was on August 6th, 1941, when I was born in Arnhem, the third offspring of Sara Troostwijk-Hiegentlich and Alexander Troostwijk.

I spent the first year of my life living with my parents at 64 Mauvestraat, in Arnhem's Hoogkamp quarter, one of the last houses in the row. From the front garden, you looked out on fields stretching down to the Schelmseweg. Schelmseweg led into Warnsborn. After the war I had a school friend, Wijnand Dalmijn, who lived on the Bakenbergseweg, and their house backed up to No. 64 Mauvestraat. A happy piece of luck, since it allowed me to walk right into the home of my foster parents, who had moved into my parental home after the war. Their previous house, 80 Sweelincklaan, in Alteveer, was bombed at the end of the war and rendered uninhabitable.

On our return from Brussels in late 1945, we first moved into the Koningstraat, across from butcher De Haas, and then lived at 31 Rembrandtlaan in Arnhem. That section of Arnhem, just north of Sonsbeek Park, is known as the Golden Bottom. It is ringed by parks: Sonsbeek, Zijpendaal, Mariëndaal, Warnsborn. That is probably where I got my love of nature. I spent a lot of time wandering in those woods.

Why am I writing down this story? There are three reasons, the most important of which may well have come from our oldest son Ruben, who thought I should put it down on paper for the sake of the children and grandchildren. I was also prompted by *Together*

[1] In English the bird is called "White's Thrush"

again at the table, an exhibition at the Amsterdam City Archives in 2018, featuring people who were reunited with their families after the war. I was interviewed for that show.

Another reason was the rude awakening I had on a visit to Camp Westerbork Memorial Center. I had gone there with my wife Guya to accept a CD on behalf of Edith Velmans van Hessen. Edith, my father-in-law's niece, had written a book about her time in hiding: *Edith's Story, the True Story of How One Young Girl Survived World War II.* The theater company "de Kern" had based their dramatization "Kom vanavond met verhalen" (*Come this evening with stories,* after the famous poem by Leo Vroman), on Edith's diaries. A CD had been produced of the show.

It was over ten years ago that Guya and I drove out to Westerbork to accept this CD. We had never been to Westerbork. I said, "It's funny, really. Here we are, driving there of our own accord, when all the people who were deported were taken there against their will."

We were too early, as usual, and I walked toward the Westerbork Memorial Center Museum. I did not go in, because I decided I didn't need to be told what happened there. And I didn't have any interest in delving into it more. At the exit of the museum hangs a screen with the names of all the Jews who passed through Westerbork on the way to their death in a concentration camp. Turning around, I saw the name Hiegentlich scrolling on the screen — my mother's maiden name. That's when I realized that I really had no idea what happened to those members of my family in the war. It was time to do something about that. Let me just say it was a wake-up call. In this story, I will try to reconstruct my family, on both my father's and my mother's side, in order to put faces to them. It isn't for nothing that people say, "People are truly dead only when they are no longer remembered."

Ans Doets as bride

My parents with Sari and Jacques before the war

On my mother's lap before the flight

As a baby with my proud brother and sister

On the seesaw, start of the war

With Sari and Jacques on the seesaw

Opa and Oma Troostwijk

My father comes from a family of ten. My grandfather (Opa) Arnold and grandmother (Oma) Saartje had eight children. At first I thought there were only seven, but I found there had been a stillborn Troostwijk, a boy, in May 1905. Four of the seven offspring survived the war: my father, Lex; Uncle Sam; Aunt Betsy, and Uncle Ies, who was already living in England before the war.

I was named after my grandfather. I'm not the only one. Both my cousins Arie Troostwijk and Nolly Hony were actually named Arnold. Ivor, my cousin Greet Troostwijk's little brother, had Arnold as his middle name, as did my brother Jacques.

Opa Arnold, born in Zwolle, was the son of Salomon Troostwijk and Kaatje Bot. Arnold was married to Betje de Leeuwe until the year 1900. That marriage produced a daughter, Helena, my father's half-sister. After Betje died, my grandfather married her sister, Saartje de Leeuwe. They lived at 46 Thorbeckegracht in Zwolle, across from the night ferry that ran from Zwolle to Amsterdam. When they were older my grandparents went to live with their daughter Kaatje in Deventer, at 20 Assenstraat. In 1942 they moved to number 21 Brink (now 24) in Deventer, with Kaatje and her husband Jacques. My grandmother was blind as a result of her diabetes, and had to give herself insulin injections at regular intervals. My grandfather was a salesman in bicycle parts, and was often away, so that he was unable to provide her with the necessary care. My grandmother got on well with her children, and was a very intelligent woman. She taught herself braille, and read one book a week. She also had a typewriter with a braille keyboard, which allowed the receiver to read the letter in regular writing. My cousin Arie learned to write in braille in order to correspond with her, using something called a reglette, a small strip of aluminum with holes, and a stylus to punch the marks. In 1942 my grandparents were forced to move into Amsterdam's Jewish ghetto, at 34-I Transvaalstraat. Its former occupants had already been deported. My grandfather was arrested by the Nazis in 1943.

My cousin Arie has recorded his wartime memories in depth. From time to time I will quote from his story. About my grandfather, he writes: "He was taken by the Germans

one night in April." In this case, Arie was probably mistaken about the date, since Opa was recorded as arriving in Westerbork on 16 March 1943 (Barak 70).

Arie writes: "Fortunately my grandmother didn't have to go with him. My father tried to get Opa to return from the camp. But my grandfather didn't dare to go with the person sent to fetch him, he said, "If Sam isn't coming, I'm not going…." He was sent on to Sobibor a few weeks later."

Opa Troostwijk was killed on 11 May 1943.

Arie writes about Oma Saartje, "Shortly thereafter my grandmother went into hiding in the Lennaeusstraat. She died during the hunger winter of 1944, and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Diemen."

As it turns out, Arie's facts were incorrect. Through Amsterdam's City Archives, I was able to find out her last address: 7-9 Alexanderkade (today number 47-56, on the corner of Alexanderstraat). I was curious to learn more about Oma Saartje's fate, and I decided to find out how she had spent her last months on earth. How had she managed to escape the Germans? Who were the people who had taken her in and looked after her? She was old and blind, and her husband had been arrested and deported in 1943. I found out that my grandmother had taken another name: Pieternella van Eijgen. The lady who bore that name was living in Leiden at that time. My grandmother died in February 1945, and was buried in Diemen's Jewish cemetery. Upon her death, the death certificate was recorded in her assumed name. The certificate revealed her last address: 9 Alexanderkade, Amsterdam.

How had Oma ended up at 7-9 Alexanderkade? And how did she end up in Diemen of all places? Not knowing kept niggling at me.

Via *Geheugen van Oost (Memories of East [Amsterdam])*, a website where residents of East Amsterdam tell their stories, I came into contact with Frist Slitcht. Frits writes about the Transvaal neighborhood's Jewish past for the site, among other things. Unfortunately Frits wasn't able to help me further in my search for my grandmother. He did pass me on to Eric Heijselaar of the Amsterdam City Archive, who finally was able to assist me.

Via Eric I discovered that 7-9 Alexanderkade was a so-called "rest home", run by Sijbrand van de Lelie. It therefore appears that my grandmother lived in a nursing home

until her death. Having this information meant the end of my quest. Knowing what my grandmother's life must have been like in her final years gave me peace of mind.

On betrayal

So my grandmother made it almost to the end of the war in the nursing home. Many of the people hiding, however, including Greetje Troostwijk, were betrayed. What was the motivation of the people who gave them away?

It is estimated that in the Second World War, at least 350,000 people went into hiding here, including 25,000 Jews. Approximately one third of these were discovered. Helping to hide people, especially Jews, entailed severe penalties. Therefore many Dutch citizens would have nothing to do with hiding Jews, afraid that their neighbors, friends or parents-in-law would come in for punishment as well. Also, many of the Jews in hiding were betrayed. Money was an important incentive, often in combination with something personal, such as vengeance, envy or deeply held anti-Semitism. For some, betraying others felt good, giving them a feeling of supreme power over life and death. Some Jews gave fellow Jews away out of fear of being killed, or in hopes of saving their own loved ones. What's more, the Dutch authorities were disposed to cooperate with the Germans. In the first years of the war it was still a matter of form; later it changed to something more nefarious. By 1943 cooperating with the occupier had turned into a grim, sweeping manhunt. The Germans were more and more fanatic in their hunt for hidden Jews, and in Amsterdam they were actively assisted by collaborators of the Henneicke Column. The Henneicke Column, named for its leader, Wim Henneicke, consisted of a group of more than fifty Dutchmen working for the German police, who between March and October of 1943 hunted down hidden Jews. They were rewarded to the tune of 7.5 guilders per head (about 40 Euros today). The gang of fifty Dutchmen scoured town and countryside in search of Jews in hiding. Even though their prime motivation was the money, as well as the Jews' belongings, most of the participants were dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semites. The group was disbanded on 30 September 1943, the official reason being that Amsterdam was now declared *Judenfrei* (free of Jews) by the Germans.

About Westerbork

Opa Troostwijk wasn't the only one to be sent to Westerbork. My cousin Greetje, Opa Hiegentlich, Uncle Jacob Hiegentlich and his wife Johanna van Brink, all wound up there. Therefore, some background.

Westerbork functioned as the transit camp for concentration camps like Auschwitz and Sobibor, known in the second world war as hell's anteroom. Initially Camp Westerbork, an area of about five hundred square meters in the province of Drente, was built to be a refugee camp.

After Kristallnacht, the night of 9-10 November 1938, many Jews wanted to get out of Germany as quickly as possible. But there weren't many countries that would accept Jewish refugees. By 1940, the Netherlands had taken in approximately 10,000 Jews. Since the Dutch government thought it best to have the refugees housed in one camp, the Central Refugee Camp Westerbork was built. The camp's construction costs were borne by the Jewish community. The first twenty-two refugees arrived in the camp on 9 October 1939. It had space for a maximum of 3000 people, and consisted of 200 small dwellings, each with two or three rooms, a kitchen and a toilet.

On July 1 1942, Camp Westerbork was seized by the Nazis, upon which it became a transit camp. In taking possession of the camp, the Nazis used the existing structures.

Two weeks later the first transports departed for the East. In this first period the camp was rapidly expanded. Dozens and dozens of barracks were ordered, steel was requisitioned for the production of 17,000 cots; other companies received orders for chamber pots, tables and dishes.

A barbed wire fence was erected around the entire compound, with a watch tower at each corner. New facilities were built, such as a hospital, an outpatient clinic and a children's ward, as well as administrative offices, central kitchens and a laundry. Various manufacturing plants were set up to put the temporary residents to work. The men were employed in construction or farming, while the women and the elderly were made to smash old batteries to retrieve their carbon, or take apart machines for their parts. The

prisoners also built an entertainment hall for Saturday night performances. Some of the prisoners were famous artists; it was their task to amuse the camp's leadership. Most of the prisoners stayed no more than a few days in Westerbork; some stayed for a few months or a few even for a few years. From 1942 to 1945, 107,000 Jews were deported to the East, most of them from Westerbork, in addition to 245 Roma and Sinti gypsies and dozens of resistance fighters. A mere 5000 people returned.

Grandma Saartje

Grandpa Arnold

The Troostwijk family. From left to right: Uncle Sam, Grandma Saartje, Aunt Betsy, Grandpa Arnold, my father, Uncle Ies, Aunt Kaatje , Aunt Marianne

בר מצוה

van onzen Zoon

ALEXANDER,

op ש״ק פ׳ ויגש 7 Telweis 5682.
7 Januari 1922.

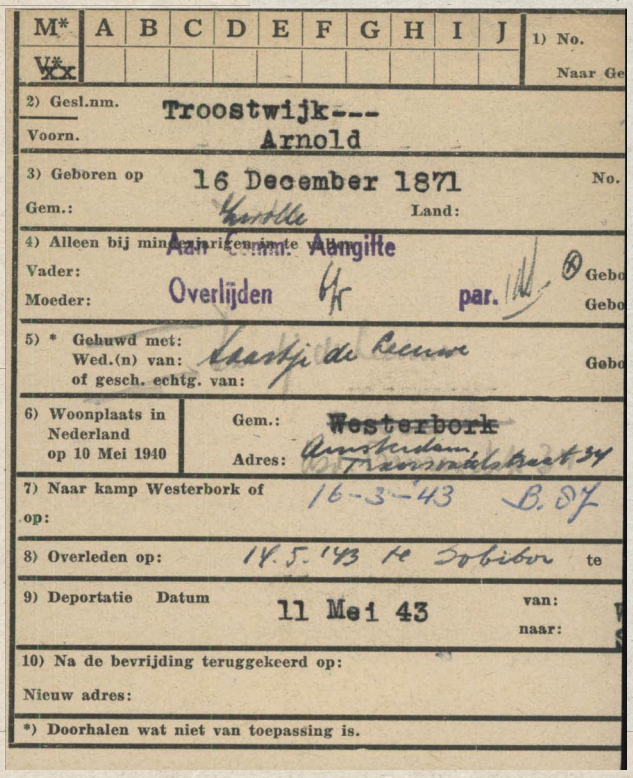
ARN. TROOSTWIJK.
S. TROOSTWIJK—
DE LEEUWE.

Op 4 Telweis / Januari a.s. hoopt onze geliefde Man en Vader,
de Heer
ARNOLD TROOSTWIJK
zijn **50ten**
Geboortedag
te herdenken.

S. TROOSTWIJK—
5152 DE LEEUWE
en Kinderen.

Receptie ten onzen huize, Nieuwstraat 16, *Zwolle*, op Zaterdag 7 Januari 1922.

Advertisement about my father Alexander's bar mitzvah and my grandfather's 50th birthday



M* V**	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	1) No. Naar Ge

2) Gesl.nm. Troostwijk---
Voorn. Arnold

3) Geboren op 16 December 1871 No.
Gem.: Kerkrade Land:

4) Alleen bij minderjarigen: Aangifte
Vader:
Moeder: Overlijden par. Gebo Gebo

5) * Gehuwd met: Geboo
Wed.(n) van: Laatje de Leeuw
of gesch. echtg. van:

6) Woonplaats in Nederland op 10 Mei 1940
Gem.: ~~Westerbork~~ Amsterdam
Adres: Transvaalstraat 34

7) Naar kamp Westerbork of op: 16-3-43 B. 87

8) Overleden op: 14.5.'43 te Sobibor te

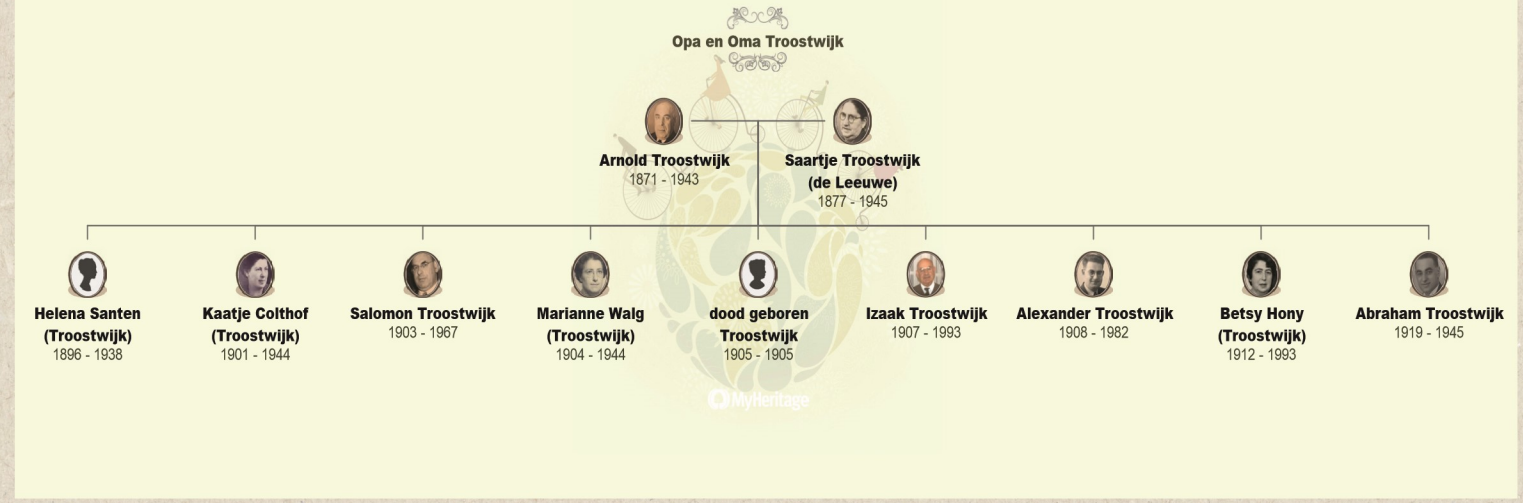
9) Deportatie Datum 11 Mei 43 van: naar:

10) Na de bevrijding teruggekeerd op:
Nieuw adres:

*) Doorhalen wat niet van toepassing is.

Red Cross archive card of my Grandfather Arnold

The grave of my Grandmother Saartje at the Jewish cemetery in Diemen. With a memorial stone for my Grandfather Arnold


Opa en Oma Troostwijk
Arnold Troostwijk
1871 - 1943
Saartje Troostwijk
(de Leeuwe)
1877 - 1945
Helena Santen
(Troostwijk)
1896 - 1938
Kaatje Colthof
(Troostwijk)
1901 - 1944
Salomon Troostwijk
1903 - 1967
Marianne Walg
(Troostwijk)
1904 - 1944
dood geboren
Troostwijk
1905 - 1905
Izaak Troostwijk
1907 - 1993
Alexander Troostwijk
1908 - 1982
Betsy Hony
(Troostwijk)
1912 - 1993
Abraham Troostwijk
1919 - 1945
MyHeritage

Aunt Kaatje Troostwijk and Uncle Jacques Colthof

Kaatje was the oldest of the Troostwijk children. On 23 July 1929 she wed Zadok Colthof. That was his official name, but in the family, Zadok was known as Jacques. They didn't have any children. Jacques had a business called Ventershuis dealing in collectibles, toys and office supplies, at 20 Assenstraat in Deventer. The business later moved to 21 Brink, Deventer's central marketplace. That building now has some *Stolpersteine* (commemorative "Stumbling blocks") in front of it honoring my grandfather, grandmother and aunt Kaatje.

My cousin Arie has fond memories of uncle Jacques and aunt Kaaatje, and writes: "Before the war I often went to stay with my uncle Jacques and aunt Kaatje in Deventer. I liked going to their house because they were remarkably hospitable. Their warehouse was located in a huge shopping complex on the Brink, in the heart of the city. It was a wholesale business in fancy goods under the name K. Colthof-Troostwijk. They lived over the store. Friday was market day in Deventer, when the stallholders and vendors would come from all over to purchase their wares. They also had a branch in Apeldoorn, run by my father's youngest brother, Bram Troostwijk. During the war Kaatje and Jacques tried to flee to Switzerland, but were detained in Belgium. They were accompanied in their flight by Marianne Walg-Troostwijk and her children, Sari and Max."

Letters from Brussels

Kaatje, Jacques and Marianne, and her children Sari and Max, had planned to flee to Switzerland. They were detained in Brussels. Four postcards from Brussels were saved, addressed to my parents and uncle Sam, who had already managed to reach Switzerland. The first postcard is dated 17 March 1943, and is addressed to my father, since Uncle Sam had not yet arrived in Switzerland. The last postcard is dated 6 January 1944. So Kaatje, Jacques, Marianne and her children knew that my parents, Uncle Sam and Aunt

Erna had succeeded in fleeing to Switzerland. The contents of the postcards reveal that they'd received news from the Netherlands and were aware of what was happening to the family.

They mention Aunt Nel, meaning my grandmother Saartje. My grandfather was arrested in 1943 and my grandmother was probably in the hospital. They also mention Bram's wife Annie, who was pregnant with baby Ivor. Bram and Annie were probably already trying to flee, causing them great worry.

The family gives a false address. You won't find a "Rue Gallisch" in Brussels. It's a wry joke, since "gallisch" means they're fed up. The address they give is 21 Brink, their old address in Deventer.

On the postcard dated 10 November 1943, they write that they've had mail. It's surprising enough that the post is still functioning, but especially that the postcards from Switzerland have reached them at their safehouse. Just how that was managed, we probably won't ever know. The card implies they need money for their escape to Switzerland. M. Bakker stands for Maurits Bakker, meaning money. They refer to Oma Saartje again, and express the hope they'll all see each other again. They're still worried about Bram and Annie, whom they haven't heard from at all. Bram and Annie have in fact been arrested. Kaatje and Jacques also mention Aunt Risjes. "Risjes" stands for anti-Semitic. By that they mean that a certain person has been arrested and imprisoned by the Germans.

The postcard dated 25 December 1943 again indicates they've received mail. They announce they aren't going anywhere, and will therefore not be using the Dutch-Paris route. We'll probably never know the real reason. In the postcards they mention children being sick, but it could also be for lack of money, or simply fear of leaving. It's clear they are still receiving news about the other members of the family. We don't know exactly how that news is reaching them, but it's most probably through the postcards from Switzerland. Kaatje, Marianne and Jacques are aware of Betsy's situation, in any case. They also know about the birth of Ivor.

The last postcard, from 6 January 1944, is signed only by Jacques. The invalids are getting better, but they're waiting for funds. The hope of the weather improving and of wanting to visit Aunt Nel probably means hoping the war will end soon so that they'll be able to see Oma Saartje.

Arie's memoir says they were betrayed and arrested sometime between January and the end of March. The Dutch-Paris route courier had stopped by again on his return trip to ask them to come with him during that period. He didn't find Jacques, Kaatje, Marianne or her children Sari and Max; they were no longer at that address.

From Arie's story:

"During his visit to the Dutch Ambassador in Switzerland, my father mentioned that he had family in Brussels and that he had promised that once we were safe in Switzerland, he would send someone from the "Dutch-Paris" underground organization to fetch them. He had been told of that resource by Jean Weidner. Apparently Dutch couriers traveled regularly between Switzerland and the Netherlands, in order to bring secret messages from London via the Dutch embassy in Bern to occupied Holland.

"A courier going to the Netherlands via Brussels was going to visit the family and tell them we had arrived in Switzerland safe and sound, and that, after finishing his mission in the Netherlands, he would pick them up on the return trip and accompany them to Switzerland. The family refused; they were scared, and felt safe in Brussels. By the time the courier returned, intending to ask them again to come with him, they had been betrayed and arrested. Around April 1944, after a stay in an infamous transit camp in Belgium, they were deported to a concentration camp in Poland. Aunt Kaatje, Aunt Marianne, my cousins, 14-year-old Max and 6-year-old Sari, never returned. Jacques Colthof was the only survivor. After the Russians liberated him, he returned to the Netherlands via Odessa. He told us that they were first held in the Kazerne Dossin barracks in Mechelen, then put on transport XXIV, which left Mechelen on 4 April 1944 on its way to the extermination camp Auschwitz."

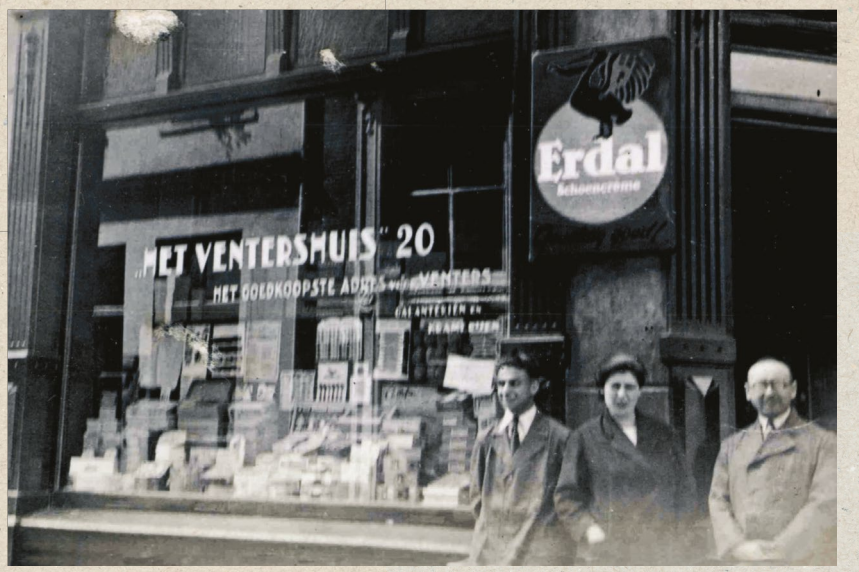
Kazerne Dossin

Kazerne Dossin, located in Mechelen, was repurposed in 1942 as a transit camp for Jews,

Roma and Sinti, similar to Vught and Westerbork in the Netherlands, and Drancy in France. The barracks' central location (halfway between Antwerp and Brussels, where most of the Jewish population lived), the adjacent railway and its enclosed structure made it the ideal location for a deportation hub. Between July 1942 and September 1944, 25,274 Jews and 354 Roma and Sinti were rounded up there and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and some smaller camps. Two-thirds of the deported were gassed immediately upon arrival.

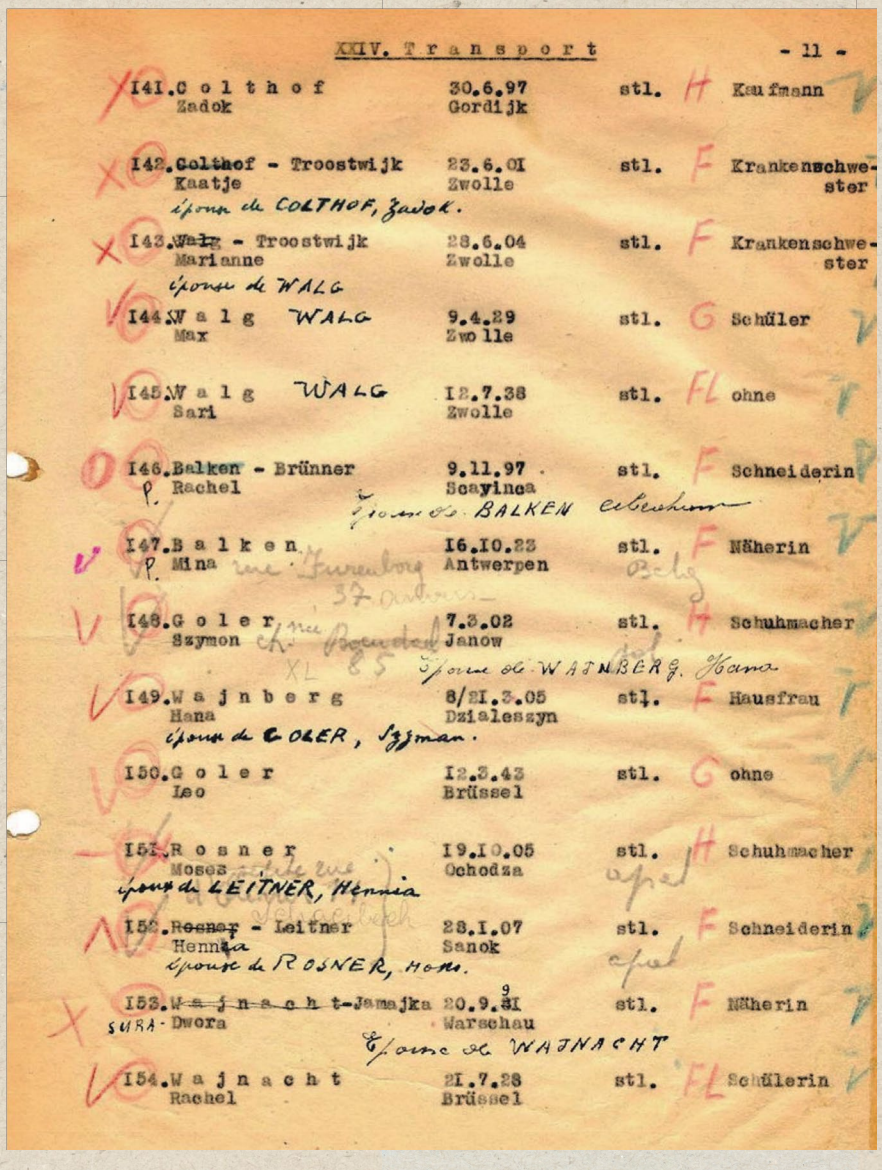
Kaatje survived for two months in Auschwitz, only to be murdered on 30 June 1944, her husband's birthday. She was 43 years old. Marianne was killed immediately upon arrival on 7 April 1944, with her children Max and Sari.

On 27 January 1945, Auschwitz was liberated by the Russians. The survivors embarked on a lengthy journey. Jacques was one of them. On 31 May 1945, he arrived in Tilburg, and sent a postcard to Isaak, Hilda and their child. Ten days earlier he'd been in Odessa, where after a long journey through Poland and Russia, he had boarded a ship. He writes: "To my great joy I can inform you that yesterday I arrived back in Holland, and that I have made it, after many trials and tribulations. I boarded a ship in Odessa on May 21st, and after a safe journey, arrived yesterday in Tilburg. To my indescribable joy I was met here by Sam, and will in a few days see Sander again, and Betsy too. I hope that I will see you soon too, because you are the only ones I have left. Tragically, I have had to leave Kaatje and Marianne and the children behind. It's all so dreadful and I don't know how I'll go on. I've been living in a daze, on 27 January we were freed by the Russians, then had to cross half of Russia to reach Odessa. I was in Auschwitz, and I never saw Kaat or Mar again. Please come here soon if you can. How are Hilda and her child, what's its name. Well, best regards, until we meet again, Jacques."



The hawker's house in Deventer with f.l.t.r. Uncle Max, Aunt Kaatje and Uncle Jacques Colthof

Opening of the new shop in Deventer on the Brink. F.l.t.r.: Uncle Sam, Grandpa Arnold,, my mother, my father, Aunt Kaatje,Uncle Jacques, Aunt Annie, Uncle Bram and Grandma Saartje. Lying in the foreground my sister Sarie



XXIV. Transport - 11 -

I41.	Colthof Zadok	30.6.97 Gordijk	stl.	H	Kaufmann
I42.	Colthof - Troostwijk Kaatje épouse de COLTHOF, Zadok.	23.6.01 Zwolle	stl.	F	Krankenschwester
I43.	~~Walg~~ - Troostwijk Marianne épouse de WALG	28.6.04 Zwolle	stl.	F	Krankenschwester
I44.	Walg WALG Max	9.4.29 Zwolle	stl.	G	Schüler
I45.	Walg WALG Sari	12.7.38 Zwolle	stl.	FL	ohne
I46.	Balken - Brünner P. Rachel épouse de BALKEN	9.11.97 Scayinca	stl.	F	Schneiderin
I47.	Balken P. Mina	16.10.23 Antwerpen	stl.	F	Näherin
I48.	Goler Szymon	7.3.02 Janow	stl.	H	Schuhmacher
I49.	Wajnberg Hana épouse de GOLER, Szyman.	8/21.3.05 Dzialeszyn	stl.	F	Hausfrau
I50.	Goler Leo	12.3.43 Brüssel	stl.	G	ohne
I51.	Rosner Moses époux de LEITNER, Hennia	19.10.05 Ochodza	stl.	H	Schuhmacher
I52.	~~Rosner~~ - Leitner Hennia épouse de ROSNER, Moïs.	28.1.07 Sanok	stl.	F	Schneiderin
I53.	~~Wajnacht~~-Jamajka SURA - Dwora	20.9.~~31~~ 9 Warschau épouse de WAJNACHT	stl.	F	Näherin
I54.	Wajnacht Rachel	21.7.28 Brüssel	stl.	FL	Schülerin

Transport list of transportation XXIV from Barracks Dossin: Mechelen, Belgium

K. COLTHOF-TROOSTWIJK
BRINK 24 - DEVENTER
Giro 5606 - Telef. 3017
MOLENSTRAAT 12 - APELDOORN

NOTA

		Zegel f	0 10
23/2	2		.24
	2		.16
13/3			.88
27/2	1		.65
		f	1.93

K. Colthof-Troostwijk
BRINK 24 - DEVENTER - TELEF. 3017 - GIRO 5606
APELDOORN MOLENSTRAAT 12
Galanterieën, Garen en Band, Borstelwerk, Speelgoederen enz.

No. .... dagen zicht

Ontvangen van Joodsche Gemeente Deventer

DE SOMMA VAN Een Gld. 93 Ct.

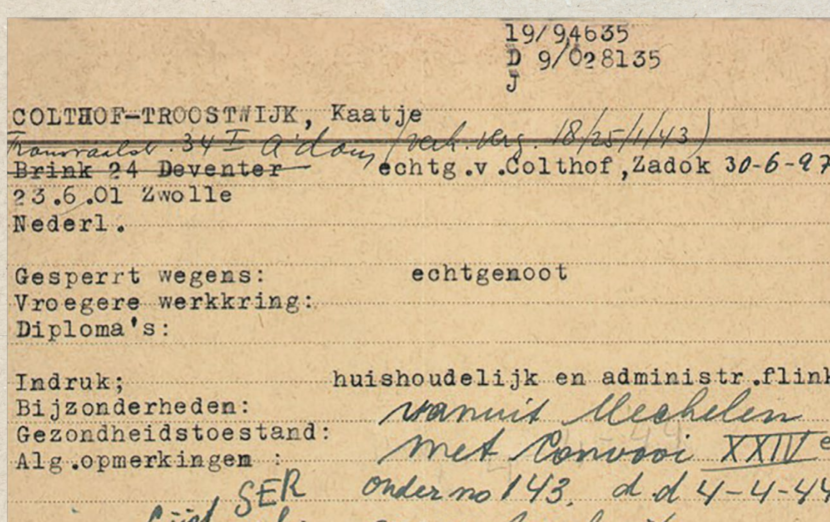
voor geleverd, volgens nevenstaande Nota.

DEVENTER, 13 Mei 194.

K. COLTHOF-TROOSTWIJK
BRINK 24 DEVENTER

Zegge f 1.93

Invoice for the Jewish community in Deventer for deliveries by K. Colthof-Troostwijk



19/94635
D 9/028135
J

COLTHOF-TROOSTWIJK, Kaatje
~~Brink 24 Deventer~~ echtg.v.Colthof,Zadok 30-6-97
23.6.01 Zwolle
Nederl.

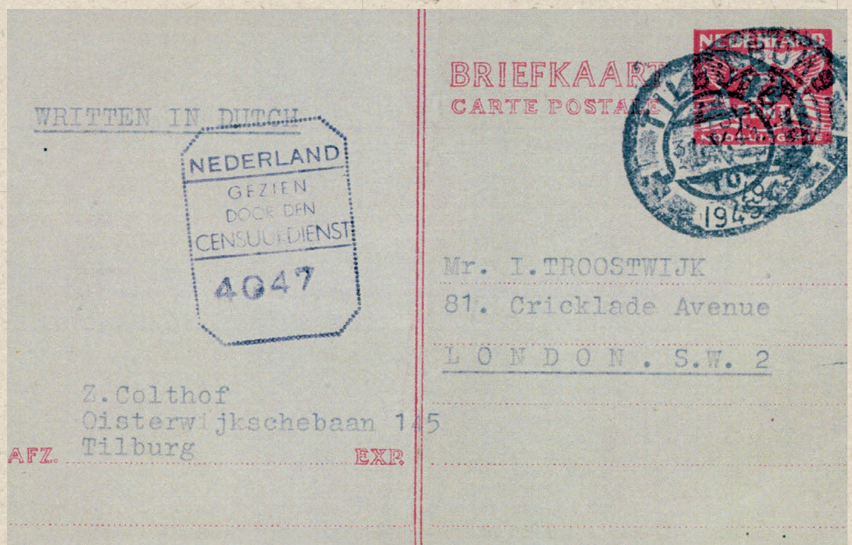
Gesperrt wegens: echtgenoot
Vroegere werkkring:
Diploma's:

Indruk; huishoudelijk en administr.flink
Bijzonderheden: vanuit Mechelen
Gezondheidstoestand: met Convooi XXIVe
Alg.opmerkingen : onder no 143. d.d 4-4-44
naar Auschwitz.
Lettre T. suite 1.

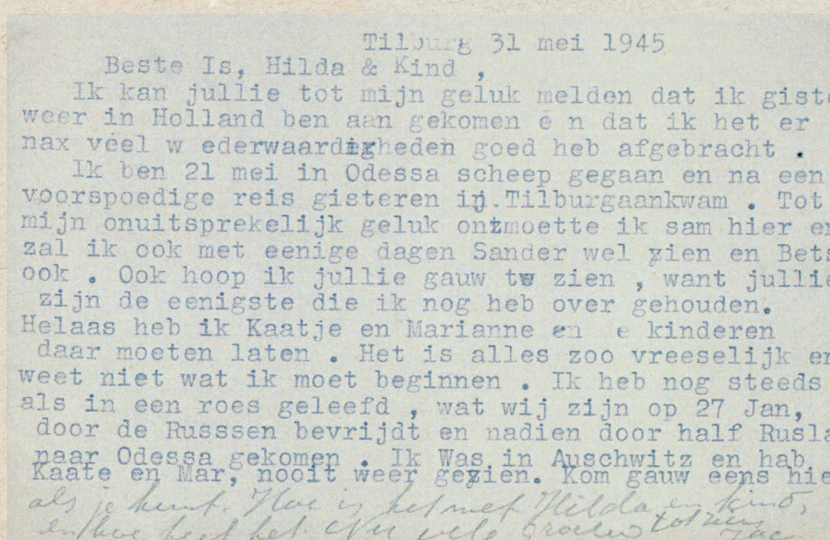
Lijst SER Brussel. R 1009

219

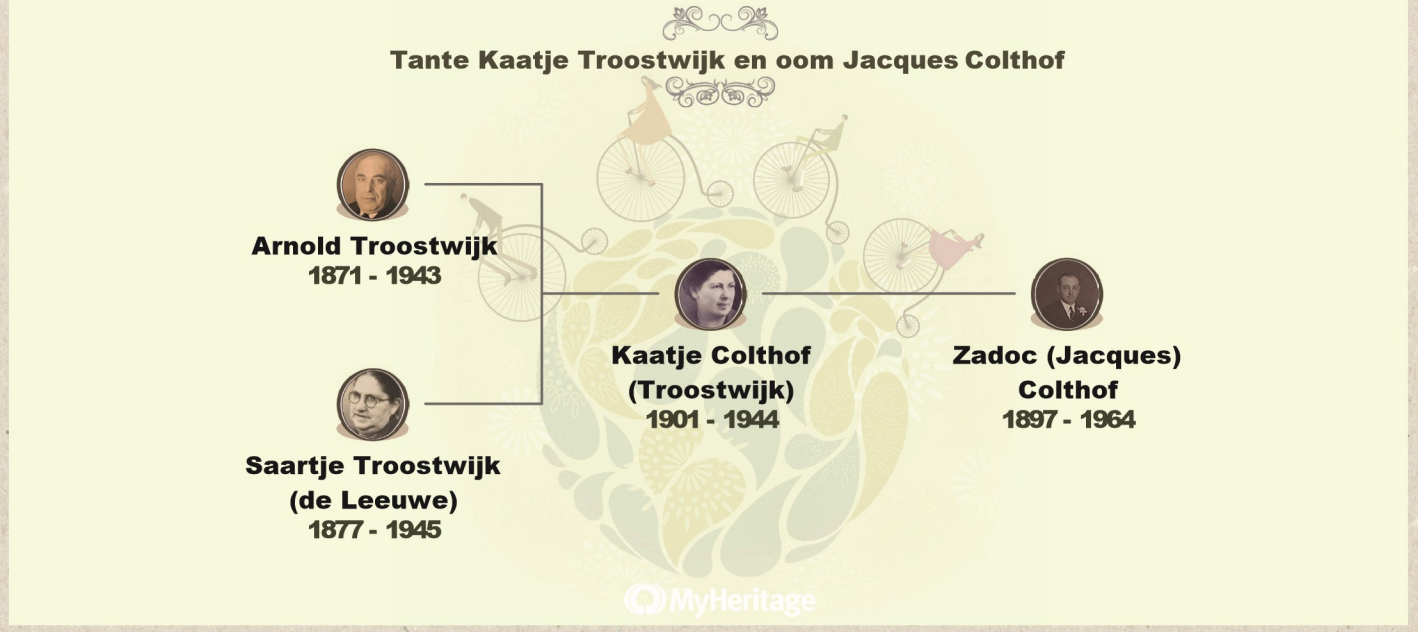
Jewish counsel Card from Aunt Kaatje about her transportation to Auschwitz



Postcard from JacquesColthof 3 May 1945 to Uncle Ies in London, about his return to Tilburg and his liberation from Auschwitz



Tilburg 31 mei 1945
Beste Is, Hilda & Kind ,
Ik kan jullie tot mijn geluk melden dat ik giste
weer in Holland ben aan gekomen e n dat ik het er
nax veel w ederwaardigheden goed heb afgebracht .
Ik ben 21 mei in Odessa scheep gegaan en na een
voorspoedige reis gisteren ij.Tilburgaankwam . Tot
mijn onuitsprekelijk geluk ontmoette ik sam hier en
zal ik ook met eenige dagen Sander wel zien en Bets
ook . Ook hoop ik jullie gauw te zien , want jullie
zijn de eenigste die ik nog heb over gehouden.
Helaas heb ik Kaatje en Marianne en e kinderen
daar moeten laten . Het is alles zoo vreeselijk en
weet niet wat ik moet beginnen . Ik heb nog steeds
als in een roes geleefd , wat wij zijn op 27 Jan,
door de Russsen bevrijdt en nadien door half Rusla
naar Odessa gekomen . Ik Was in Auschwitz en hab
Kaate en Mar, nooit weer gezien. Kom gauw eens hie
als je kunt. Hoe is het met Hilda en kind,
en hoe heet het. Veel vele groeten tot ziens
Jac


Tante Kaatje Troostwijk en oom Jacques Colthof
Arnold Troostwijk
1871 - 1943
Saartje Troostwijk
(de Leeuwe)
1877 - 1945
Kaatje Colthof
(Troostwijk)
1901 - 1944
Zadoc (Jacques)
Colthof
1897 - 1964
MyHeritage

Uncle Sam Troostwijk and Aunt Erna Vohs

Salomon Isaac (Sam) Troostwijk was Opa Arnold and Oma Saartje Troostwijk's second child. In December 1928 he married Henriette (Erna) Vohs. Henriette came from Tetz, a small town located between Aachen and the Limburg Dutch-German border. She had two older brothers, and her parents owned a butcher shop.

Uncle Sam and Aunt Erna lived in 's-Hertogenbosch, where he dealt in automobile parts and accessories. In those days, cars were always delivered bare bones. Customers had to purchase their own accessories, such as rear lights, indicators, mirrors and headlamps, which were then fitted and installed by the garage. It was quite an added expense. The business was located at 9 Kolperstraat, across from the central market. Since there were only few cars on the road at the time, it wasn't a very big business. Sam and Erna were good friends with the Spieros in Den Bosch, a well-known Jewish family with eight children. Aunt Erna and Uncle Sam were very fond of them, especially since they were probably the ones who taught Aunt Erna to speak Dutch. The head of the family, Simon Spiero, otherwise known as "Ome Sjimme", was a music teacher, composer and conductor of a brass band. He also had a music shop that was later run by his daughter Gientje. Erna and Sam's only child, my cousin Arie, learned to play the violin at the young age of five.

Uncle Sam was accredited in 1930 as a machinery and metals broker authorized to run auctions. He was often on the road in pursuit of assignments. Most of his clients were conservators and banks, because of the many bankruptcies and liquidations taking place at the time.

In order to win big jobs, he often had to be in Amsterdam, the financial center. Uncle Sam was prescient enough to see that in the long run, in order to get name recognition, he'd have to have an office in Amsterdam. As the business grew more successful, in 1937 the family moved to a ground-floor garden apartment at 61Deurloostraat. Uncle Sam had in the meantime opened an office on the Keizersgracht.

Name recognition achieved, Uncle Sam soon gained a great reputation, so that he often won choice commissions.

That made him a formidable competitor of the old guard, such as De Vlaming and Backer in Amsterdam, or Rotterdam's Hendrik van Essen firm. There was also a certain Otto van Leersum, an NSB (Nazi party) member —the man who betrayed Uncle Sam to the Germans.

Arie attended the public Dintelschool, four blocks from their home. The school had many Jewish students from the Rivierenbuurt. Arie had a great many friends, especially boys from the neighborhood. He had a busy schedule. On Tuesdays, violin lessons from Mr. Fürth, a violinist in the Concertgebouw orchestra; Thursdays after school and Sunday mornings were spent at the Jewish school for religious instruction. In spite of these obligations, he had a great time.

At the start of the war Uncle Sam and Aunt Erna moved in with relatives in Deventer; Arie continued his schooling there for a while. In late 1940 they returned to Amsterdam so that Uncle Sam could go back to work.

Uncle Sam had a job at the Jewish Council and a *Sperre* (document of dispensation). That meant you wouldn't be rounded up and put on transport. In the end it became clear to him that it wouldn't help, and he and his family, like my parents, fled to Switzerland via the underground escape route known as the Dutch-Paris line. After a flight of 72 days they arrived safely in Switzerland. In Clarens sur Montreux in Hotel Beau Site, which had been set up as an internment camp, Uncle Sam, Aunt Erna and Arie were reunited with my parents, Sarie and Jacques. Shortly after their arrival, Uncle Sam wrote a postcard to Sam Blom (with whom he had worked together in the Jewish council) in Amsterdam to report that they had arrived safely in Switzerland. Sam Blom was the father-in-law of Paul Veerman, who was again one of the members of the Dutch-Paris underground movement. The postcard said, "For us the war is over."

Alice, Arie and Mirjam's daughter gave me another wartime postcard, sent by Arie to his parents on 4 August 1944 from Arosa.

He writes:

"Dear Mama and Papa,

"How are you, I'm getting plenty to eat here. Mama, you'd have loved it here, beautiful forests, tame squirrels that come and eat out of your hand when you call 'Händli'. It's terrible weather here today and we're staying indoors. Now, a kiss and greetings from Arnold."

Arie had probably landed in the "work camp" Arosa-Prätschli. A man by the name of P. Kerdel, a wealthy entrepreneur from Rotterdam, lived in Arosa with his wife. In April 1942 he had proposed draining a small swamp there during the summer months. Some ten or twenty men could be accommodated there. Kerdel received permission to initiate a rotation system, allowing a number of young men to stay in Arosa to recuperate. He also opened his home in Arosa to children from refugee hostels to give them a vacation. It gave many of them a chance to get back on their feet.

Aunt Erna and Uncle Sam at a festive family accassion

בר מצוה

van onzen oudsten Zoon

SALOMON IZAK

op Zaterdag 22 Januari 1916 (י״ן שבט תרע״ו). 4880

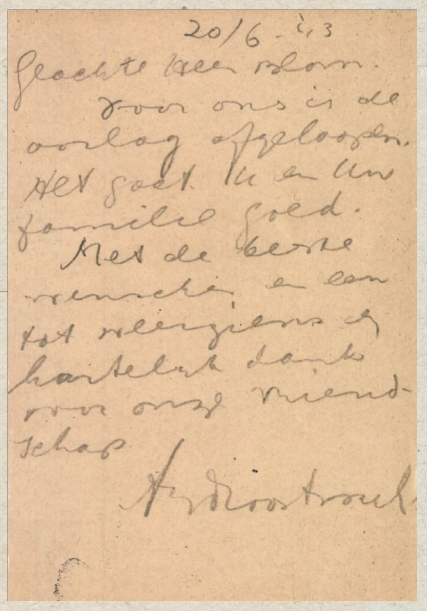
ARNOLD S. TROOSTWIJK.
SAARTJE TROOSTWIJK—
DE LEEUWE.

Zwolle, Nieuwstraat 16.

פרשת יתרו (שכיעי) וכל העם ראים.

Uncle Sam's Bar Mitsvah advertisement

Cousin Marcus Walg on accordion with cousin Ariew Troostwijk during Marcus stay with Uncle Sam and Aunt Erna in the Deurlostraat in Amsterdam



Postcard from Uncle Sam to Mr Blom From Switserland "For us the war is Over"

Amersfoort on the occasion of the Wedding of Arie and Mirjam f.l.t.r. My father, Aunt Hilda, me, Uncle Ies and my mother

Oom Sam Troostwijk en tante Erna Vohs

Salomon Troostwijk
1903 - 1967

Erna Henriette Troostwijk (Vohs)
1904 - 1987

Arnold Troostwijk
1929 - 2020

Marianne Troostwijk (Kerkut)
1931 - 2020

Alice Subia (Troostwijk)
1956

Michael John Subia
1952

Aunt Marianne Troostwijk and Uncle Jacob Walg

Marianne was the third Troostwijk sibling, after Sam. Marianne married Jacob Marcus Walg, from Bergen op Zoom. In 1924 Jacob had opened a shop selling knitwear and fancy goods. The business was located at 5 Bagijnestraat in Zwolle. In March 1938 it changed to "an exclusively wholesale dealership in dry goods, fancy goods, knitwear, etc. in the widest sense." On grounds of the so-called "Order to remove Jews from the business world," the firm was liquidated in December 1941 and closed in August 1942.

I realize I don't write "Aunt Marianne" but do write "Uncle Sam." That's because I never knew Marianne, whereas Uncle Sam was a real uncle to me. Jacob and Marianne had two children: Marcus (Max) and Saartje. Arie and Max were close friends. Arie's daughter Alice told me that after the war Arie often grieved over the fact that his friend and cousin was murdered.

Arie, in his story about Max, writes:

"Around August-September of 1941, my cousin, Max Walg, came from Zwolle to live with us. Max was 13 and came to attend the Jewish HBS school in Amsterdam since the Zwolle public school was now barred to him. He played the accordion, I played the violin, we used to play music together and would sometimes perform when we had company!

"We got along very well. There was another reason why Maxi came to live with us in Amsterdam. His father, Jacques Walg, from Zwolle, had a shop and warehouse annex in fancy goods, like his brother-in-law, Jacques Colthof from Deventer. He too was no longer allowed to operate, since Jews were now forbidden from doing business with non-Jews. One day he was asked to go to Amsterdam to discuss the sale of his business. The appointment was for him to go to the Café-Restaurant de Poort van Cleve on the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal. He went there alone to negotiate, and when he arrived, he was apprehended and taken to the prison camp Amersfoort. We never heard from him again."

I received detailed information from Eddy van der Pluijm about the situation in Camp Amersfoort.

Polizeiliches Durchgangslager Amersfoort

The administrative paperwork of the period when Jacob Walg was in Camp Amersfoort is lost, so it is impossible to ascertain when he was brought to the *Polizeiliches Durchgangslager Amersfoort (Police Transit Camp Amersfoort)*, colloquially better known as Camp Amersfoort. According to one of the pieces in the appendix, it may have been 6 May 1942. Supposedly, according to the card-index files of Westerbork, Jacob Marcus Walg was detained in Camp Amersfoort in Block 3A, no.613. Upon his arrival at Camp Amersfoort, Jacob would have had to hand over his belongings. In their stead he was given the camp uniform, wooden clogs and corresponding camp number. Jacob's camp number was 613. So from that moment on he was no longer Jacob Marcus Walg, but *Häftling* (Prisoner) 613. The prisoners were addressed by their number, so losing their personal identity. Similarly, if they had to present themselves to the camp commander, they had to use that number.

The prisoners went through registration in the *Schreibstube* (writing room) located in the SS-guards' section of the camp. From there they were taken through the gate into the prison camp proper. Next they were led into the *Bekleidungskammer* (Changing Room) where they received their clothing and clogs. The clogs were often too small and the clothing, if you could even call it that, didn't always fit either. After the Bekleidungskammer they were led to the barber, and from there into the showers. Only then were the prisoners allowed to go to their assigned barracks (*Block)*, where they had to find a spot for themselves as best they could. The prime spot was the top tier of the bunkbeds. The reason isn't hard to guess.

Prisoners were permitted once a month to write a letter home and to receive one letter from home in return. They were also permitted to receive a money order of no more than 20 guilders. The postal order was first recorded by the camp administration and then changed into camp cash. The prisoners could use that money to buy extra food, such as foul-tasting "flour-cakes". The prisoners also had to pay for things that were lost (i.e. stolen) like their mug, spoon and such. If a prisoner had a toothache, he was taken to the dentist, who naturally had to get paid. That too had to be taken care of by the money

orders from home. Any sum a prisoner spent had to be signed for, so that everything was accounted for. If a prisoner was put on transport or freed, his belongings were returned to him. All of this was carefully noted and recorded.

The prisoners of Camp Amersfoort were assigned to various work commandos. It could be to the forest commando, where the prisoners had to clear trees under orders of the *Kleinholzkommando,* the straw-braiding commando, the potato-peeling commando, or one of the many other work crews. Doing nothing was never in the cards, for in that case the prisoners would wind up in the marching-commando. Those prisoners had to trot in circles around the *Appelplatz* (roll call place) for hours.

"On 16 July 1942 Jacob Walg was put on transport. Via Westerbork, where an unknown number of extra prisoners were crammed on board the transport, the train continued on to Auschwitz, arriving there on 17 July. In Auschwitz Jacob was selected for forced labor, and registered as Häftling no. 48482. He was killed there on 31 January 1943.

"His wife, Marianne Walg-Troostwijk, went into hiding with her daughter Sari (my cousin); my cousin Max Walg joined them after finishing his first year of high school. In Brussels, a year later, around November 1943, they were betrayed and deported, via a Belgian camp and then Westerbork, to Auschwitz. There they were murdered."

Actually, Arie must be wrong about the date, seeing that another postcard arrived from Brussels in early January 1944. Arie writes further about the anxiety the family was experiencing:

"On Friday 18 June 1943, a number of our relatives who had been in hiding were suddenly at our door. They couldn't bear the fear anymore, since the rest of the family in hiding had been betrayed. They were Jacques and Kaatje Colthof, and Marianne Walg and her children, Max and Sari. They came to us in the Retiefstraat seeking counsel — should they find a safer hiding place? Or flee the country, like Sander (my father's nickname), to Switzerland, but taking all its risks into account? The only help we could offer was the address of Ome Ko Wesselius in Tilburg. The family, after spending the night with us, traveled to Tilburg via his connections, and were temporarily hidden there for a few weeks."

Saartje Debora Walg was only 5 years old when on 7 April 1944 she was murdered together with her brother and mother. The children were transported with their mother and Aunt Kaatje and Uncle Jacques from Mechelen via Westerbork to Auschwitz. It does make you terribly sad to write that down, and to be confronted with what happened to your close relatives. But to continue.

Chuppa (marriage) Jacob Walg with Aunt Marianne Troostwijk
21 December 1926

Marianne Walg-Troostwijk

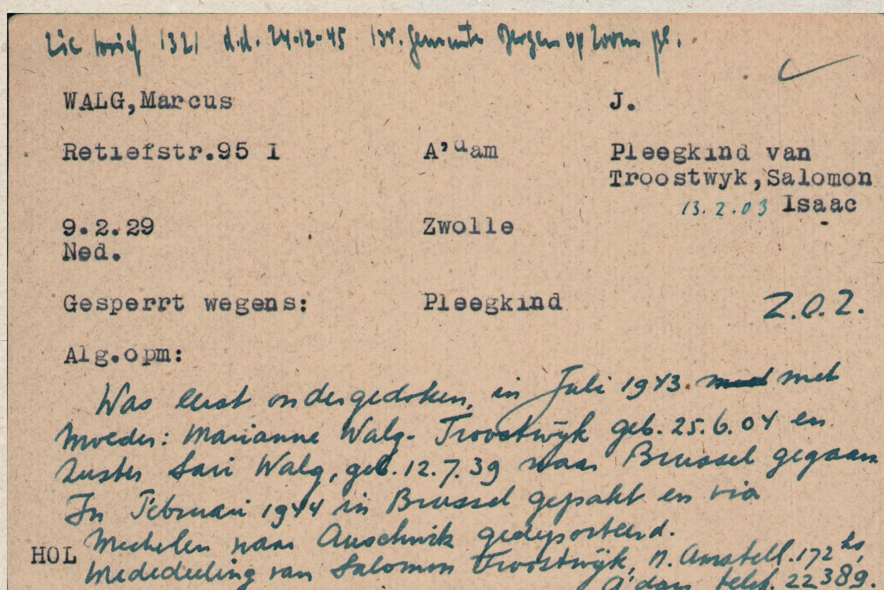
Sari Walg with Nolly Hony. Only surviving photo of Sari Walg

Sjabbat, 4 Adar 5702 (21 Febr. 1942), hoopt onze eenige Zoon, 2573

MARCUS ARNOLD

Barmitswah te worden.
J. M. WALG.
M. WALG—TROOSTWIJK.
Zwolle, Voorstraat 24.

Bar mitzvah Marcus Walg in the middle of the war



Zie brief 1321 d.d. 24-12-45 [illegible]

WALG, Marcus J.

Retiefstr. 95 I A'dam Pleegkind van Troostwyk, Salomon Isaac 13.2.03

9.2.29 Zwolle
Ned.

Gesperrt wegens: Pleegkind Z.O.Z.

Alg. opm:
Was eerst ondergedoken, in Juli 1943 ~~med~~ met moeder: Marianne Walg-Troostwijk geb. 25.6.04 en zuster Sari Walg, geb. 12.7.39 naar Brussel gegaan. In Februari 1944 in Brussel gepakt en via Mechelen naar Auschwitz gedeporteerd.
Mededeling van Salomon Troostwijk, N. Amstell. 172 hs, A'dam telef. 22389.

HOL

Jewish counsel card by Marcus Walg with Uncle Sam's caption after the war.
Marcus was foster child with his Uncle Sam and Aunt Erna.

Tante Marianne Troostwijk en oom Jacob Walg

Arnold Troostwijk
1871 - 1943

Saartje Troostwijk (de Leeuwe)
1877 - 1945

Marianne Walg (Troostwijk)
1904 - 1944

Jacob Walg
1901 - 1943

Marcus Walg
1929 - 1944

Saarte Debora Walg
1938 - 1944

Uncle Ies (Izaak) Troostwijk and Aunt Hilda Norden

Now, fortunately, some more positive news. My Uncle Ies (Izaak) had married Aunt Hilda (Norden) in 1933 and moved to England.

Cousin John writes about his father:

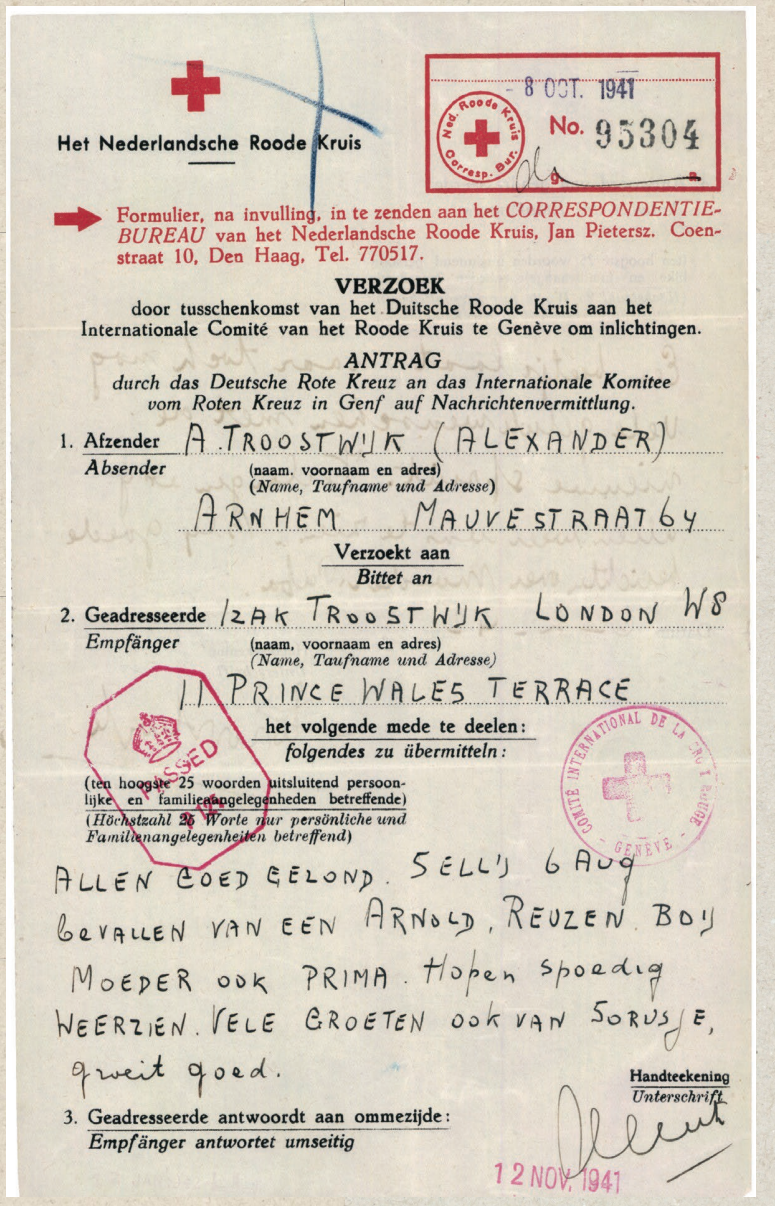
"My father got to know my mother Hilda when she was on holiday with her girlfriend Hetty. They were in Scheveningen, where they happened to meet my father. That was around 1925-1926; they were married in London on 1 October 1933. Shortly thereafter, my father set up an import-export business, Treximport (Troostwijk export-import). His business took him around the world, visiting clients in Africa, India, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Many of the people he met stayed with him over forty years. When the Second World War began, he was in London, and in 1939 he enlisted with the Allied forces. He was assigned to the supply corps of the Royal Netherlands Navy, and spent the entire war as a supply officer. In 1945 he was asked to continue as purchasing officer for the Royal Marines, a job he did for another 25 years. He was promoted to commander and was awarded the Oranje-Nassau Military Cross.

"In the 1920s my father had worked for Nijkerk in Amsterdam. Many years later, in the 1960s, my father was asked to come work for that firm again. Sem Nijkerk and my father were good friends, and used to go fishing together in Scotland. When I graduated from school I was sent to Amsterdam and spent a year working at Nijkerk. Sem Nijker's son Freddy became a good friend of Arie and Mirjam."

In 1943 Izaak and Hilda had a set of twins: John and Allen. They needed an emergency C-section at six months. Because of the war, the hospital had only one incubator. Allen died, two days old; John, the baby in the incubator, survived. John married an English girl, Adrienne (Lawson), and they had two daughters and a son. They now have four grandchildren. John:

"My Dutch family has always had a special place in my heart. I've inherited that from my father. He was very close to his Dutch family, especially Sam, Lex and Betsy. During the war he remained in touch with Sam and Lex. Since he was in the navy, he could send them money and care packages. I still have many letters that were sent via the

Red Cross. After the war the relationship remained close. When I was about five years old I was put on a plane to visit your parents. My father accompanied me as far as the aircraft steps, and your father picked me up at Schiphol."



Het Nederlandsche Roode Kruis

8 OCT. 1941 — Ned. Roode Kruis Corresp. Bur. — No. 95304

Formulier, na invulling, in te zenden aan het *CORRESPONDENTIE-BUREAU* van het Nederlandsche Roode Kruis, Jan Pietersz. Coenstraat 10, Den Haag, Tel. 770517.

VERZOEK
door tusschenkomst van het Duitsche Roode Kruis aan het Internationale Comité van het Roode Kruis te Genève om inlichtingen.

ANTRAG
durch das Deutsche Rote Kreuz an das Internationale Komitee vom Roten Kreuz in Genf auf Nachrichtenvermittlung.

1. **Afzender** / *Absender* (naam. voornaam en adres) / (*Name, Taufname und Adresse*)
A. TROOSTWIJK (ALEXANDER)
ARNHEM MAUVESTRAAT 64

Verzoekt aan / *Bittet an*

2. **Geadresseerde** / *Empfänger* (naam, voornaam en adres) / (*Name, Taufname und Adresse*)
IZAK TROOSTWIJK LONDON W8
11 PRINCE WALES TERRACE

het volgende mede te deelen: / *folgendes zu übermitteln:*

(ten hoogste 25 woorden uitsluitend persoonlijke en familieaangelegenheden betreffende) / (*Höchstzahl 25 Worte nur persönliche und Familienangelegenheiten betreffend*)

PASSED

COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX ROUGE GENEVE

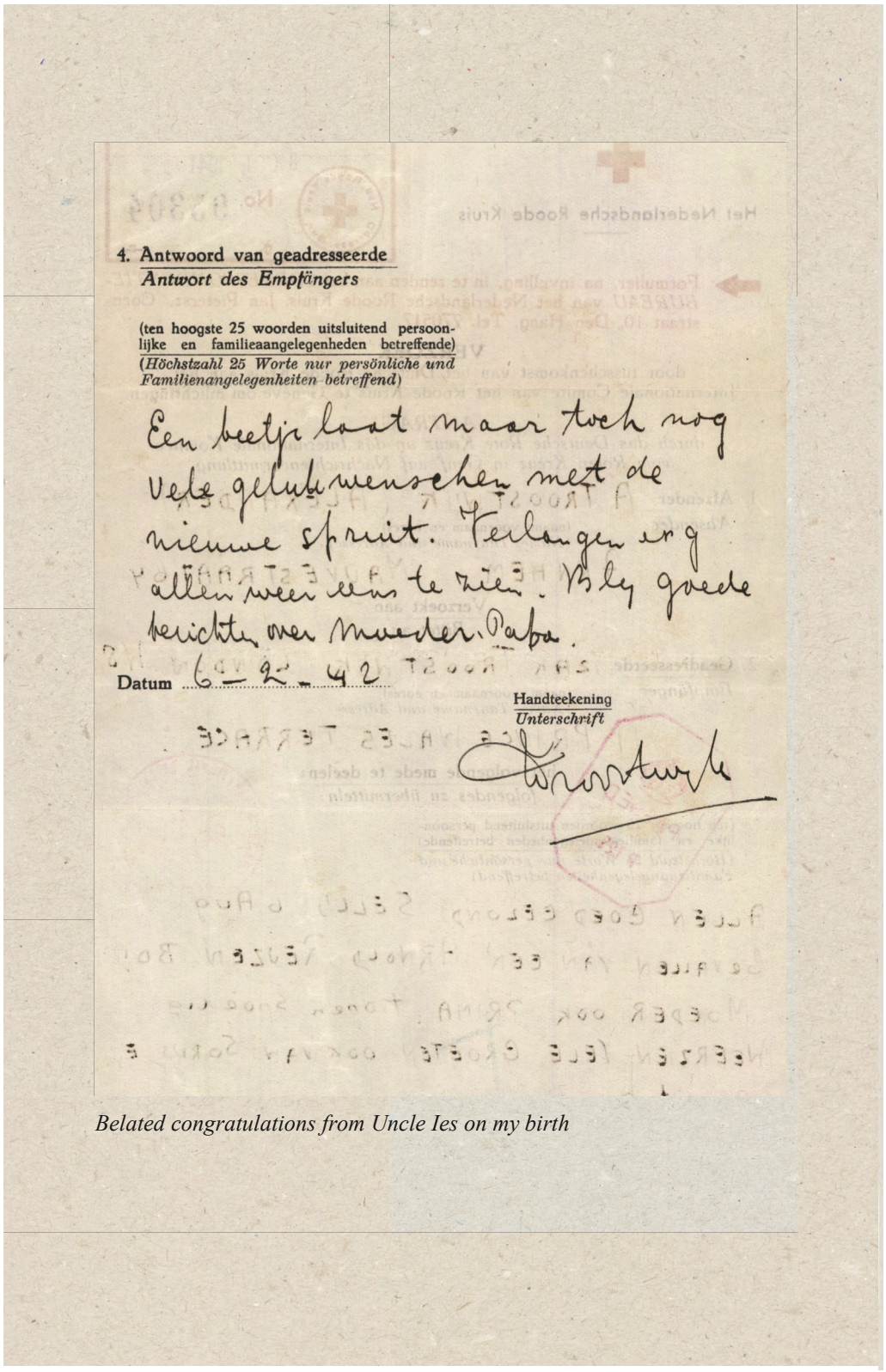
ALLEN GOED GELOND. SELLY 6 AUG
BEVALLEN VAN EEN ARNOLD, REUZEN BOY
MOEDER OOK PRIMA. HOPEN SPOEDIG
WEERZIEN. VELE GROETEN OOK VAN SORUSJE,
GROEIT GOED.

3. **Geadresseerde antwoordt aan ommezijde:** / *Empfänger antwortet umseitig*

Handteekening / *Unterschrift*

12 NOV. 1941

Telegram via the Red Cross from my father to Uncle Ies, about my birth, Says hello from sorusje (sorus=worries)



4. Antwoord van geadresseerde
Antwort des Empfängers

(ten hoogste 25 woorden uitsluitend persoonlijke en familieaangelegenheden betreffende)
(*Höchstzahl 25 Worte nur persönliche und Familienangelegenheiten betreffend*)

Een beetje laat maar toch nog
Veel gelukwenschen met de
nieuwe spruit. Verlangen erg
allen weer eens te zien. Bly goede
berichten over moeder. Papa.

Datum 6-12-42

Handteekening
Unterschrift

Belated congratulations from Uncle Ies on my birth

Telegrams:
Blanketing, London

Telephone:
~~Chancery 8866, Ext.~~
Clerkenwell 5212.

POSTAL & TELEGRAPH CENSORSHIP DEPARTMENT
(Ministry of Information)
~~23-27, Brooke Street, Holborn,~~
~~London, E.C.1.~~
Union House,
26, St Martins-le-Grand,
E.C.I.

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
23799/295.

29th May 1943.

Ivor Troost Van Wilk Esq.,
42. St George Court,
Gloucester Road,
Kensington,
London S.W.7.

Sir,

The attention of the Director of Postal & Telegraph Censorship has been drawn to a letter addressed to you by "Lex", Clarens, dated 21st April 1943, extract from which reads as follows:-

Translation.

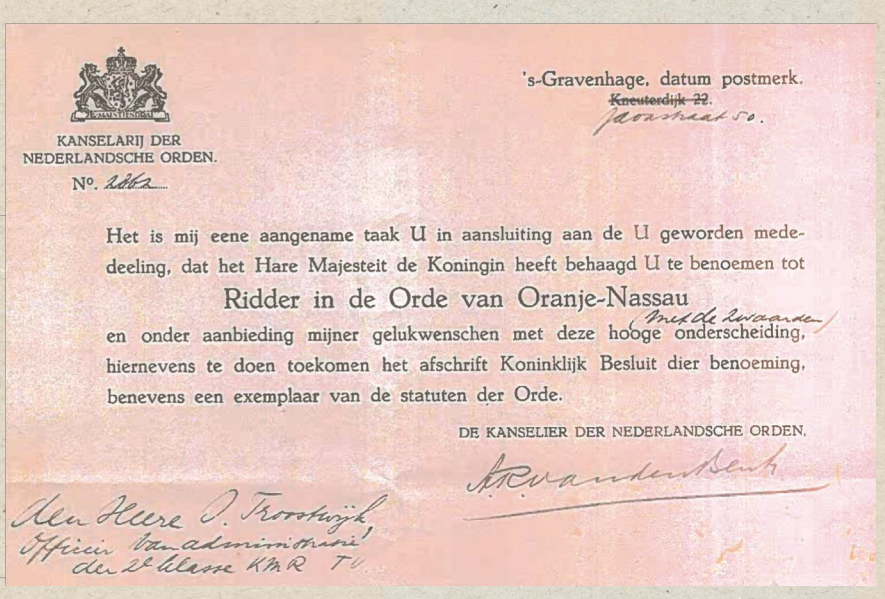
"Have your agreement that you will send me money monthly "very pleased about this, Although the legation is very "difficult about this, they will pay out only 20%. We are "still in contact about this, as I am not to be put off "Via America is alright through private Bank (Particuliere " Bank) see what you can do. Make a note of all you spend "on my behalf and you can rest assured that I will pay you "back. I am not penniless, by any means, but can not use it" "

In view of the possible bearing of the Defence Finance Regulations upon this communication, I am to request that you will be good enough to explain the matter to which it refers.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

DEPUTY FINANCIAL ADVISER.

Intercepted letter from my father from Switserland in which he asks Uncle Ies to trnsfer money to Switserland April 1943



KANSELARIJ DER
NEDERLANDSCHE ORDEN.
No. 2862

's-Gravenhage, datum postmerk.
~~Kneuterdijk 22.~~
Jacobsstraat 50.

Het is mij eene aangename taak U in aansluiting aan de U geworden mededeeling, dat het Hare Majesteit de Koningin heeft behaagd U te benoemen tot

Ridder in de Orde van Oranje-Nassau

met de Zwaarden
en onder aanbieding mijner gelukwenschen met deze hooge onderscheiding, hiernevens te doen toekomen het afschrift Koninklijk Besluit dier benoeming, benevens een exemplaar van de statuten der Orde.

DE KANSELIER DER NEDERLANDSCHE ORDEN.

A.R. van den Bergh

Aan Heere J. Troostwijk,
Officier van administratie
der 2e klasse KNR Te

Uncle Ies Knight in the Order of Orange Nassau

Oom Izaak Troostwijk en tante Hilda Norden

Izaak Troostwijk
1907 - 1993

Hilda Hanna Troostwijk (Norden)
1903 - 1985

John Alexander Troostwijk
1943

Adrianne Rochelle Troostwijk (Lawson)
1944

Rachel Daniela Troostwijk
1971

Louise Sarah Rahmanou (Troostwijk)
1974

Philip Rahmanou
1971

David Salomon Troostwijk
1979

Lucinda Troostwijk (Cohen)
1978

Aunt Betsy Troostwijk and Uncle Max Hony

Betsy was my grandparents' seventh child. She married Max Hony in 1936. Max was born in Bad Laasphe in Sauerland (Germany) and was a kosher butcher by trade. In 1933, when the Third Reich began, he left his hometown. The mood in 1933 was already very anti-Semitic. Max was caught by supporters of the Nazi regime, tarred and feathered, and driven around the village in a cart with a sign around his neck because he had a Gentile girlfriend. For Max that was the signal that he should move to the Netherlands. He became a stateless person.

Max was taken in by a cousin in Borne, and then wound up in Zwolle, via Almelo. In the Jewish weekly *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* he found a job posting for a "shomer" (supervisor) at a kosher butcher. After he was hired and had passed the exam with flying colors, Max went to work at the kosher butcher Marcus at 22 Diezerstraat, Zwolle. By marrying Max, Betsy too lost her citizenship and became stateless, which meant that she had to report to the police in Zwolle on a regular basis.

Sometime around 1938, Max's parents, Siegfried and Minna Hony-Katten, left Germany and with father-in-law Arnold's help, came to live in Zwolle at 46 Thorbeckegracht. Before mother Minny could leave for Zwolle, however, she spent four weeks in the Gronau jail. She had tried to smuggle fifty marks out of Germany.

Son Arnold (Nolly Hony) was born on 3 august 1939. The family first lived in the Roggestraat, and later at 34 Luttekestraat in Zwolle. They operated a kosher delicatessen at both of these locations. The increasing pressure by the Nazis on the Jews convinced Max Hony that going into hiding was the only way they would survive.

Upon consultation with the parents, the Hony family decided to look for a hiding place. Max's parents didn't want to go into hiding themselves. They thought that if they were deported to Poland, there was a chance they would see their daughter again, who had stayed behind in Germany. In the fall of 1942 they were snared in a round-up and transported from Zwolle to Westerbork. Not long afterward, on the 27th of November, they were killed in Auschwitz.

When the Hony-Troostwijks went into hiding, the Luttekestraat business was forced to

close. Their first hiding place was at their neighbors', the Rigter family, who had a flower shop in Luttekestraat. They hid in the cellar there for more than a year. Then, for reasons of safety, they moved to the Bloemdalstraat, hidden by the Fransen family. From there they eventually had to find another address. By then it was September 1944, and the family had to split up. Son Nolly was hidden in the children's home Jeugdvreugd in Wezep. Wim Schulte Nordhot, whose father had a drugstore in the Luttekestraat, took Nolly there on the back of his bike. After a while Nolly was moved to a new hiding place in Rijnsburg. There he ended up staying with a family of Protestant farmers, whose father was in the Resistance. He remained there until the end of the war.

His father and mother had to move in February 1944 from their hiding place in Zwolle and found shelter with Kees and Mieke Hoekstra-Geesink, who lived in villa "Toppunt" on the Bosweg in Hattem. They stayed there until the first of January 1945. Max and Betsy stayed in a bedroom that had a deep closet with an alcove. They would hide in there when there was a house search. Their false-I.D. names were Piet and Jo de Jong.

According to letters exchanged between Mieke Hoekstra and her parents from mid-September until the end of April 1945, hiding Jews in Villa Toppunt was quite perilous. There were frequent razzias and house searches. There were also German troops billeted close by. The letters also show that besides the constant danger, food and energy supplies were very low at this time. There was no electricity and no gas. Cooking was done on a wood stove. The only light was from acetylene gas lamps. To find food, they had to pull out all the stops.

Otto and Bep Voorhoeve

Since the Hoekstras' maid had become friendly with someone from the *Grüne Polizei*, Max and Betsy Hony were forced to leave that address. They were taken in by Otto and Bep Voorhoeve-de Beus. The Voorhoeves had rented a house in 1940 in Hattem: Villa Windekind, on the Oranjelaan. Their Christian faith, and anti-Jewish measures their Jewish friends were being subjected to, led Voorhoeve and his wife to help people in hiding. Thus Villa Windekind became an important safe-house and temporary refuge for

people trying to escape the Nazis. Bep Voorhoeve, in her wartime memoir, later wrote that, in spite of all the danger involved in providing shelter, it was their Christian duty to do so. She quoted from 1 John 3:18: "Let us love, not in words or in speech, but in deed and in truth."

On Boxing Day 1944, Bep Voorhoeve and two of her three children, Toon and Bert, attended a Christmas celebration. There she met Mrs. Hoekstra, who told her she needed to find a hiding place for a Jewish man. It turned out to be Max and Betsy, who was now pregnant. Max and Betsy moved into Windekind on New Year's Day 1945. Just as at the Hoekstras', Windekind was subjected to frequent house searches, and there was little in the way of provisions or amenities. The very next day, January 2, 1945, there was a razzia, but they were not discovered.

On 7 February the baby was born. Bep Voorhoeve assisted the doctor with the delivery. The baby's given names were Winston Franklin Cornelis, after, respectively, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt; 'Cornelis' was in honor of Kees Hoekstra. After Liberation, Max and Betsy did not know the whereabouts of their son Nolly. On 22 May 1945, one of Betsy's brothers (possibly my father; it's not entirely clear which one) found Nolly and arranged for him to be reunited with his parents. As was more often the case with Jewish children, the reunion of Arnold (Nolly) and his parents did not go smoothly. He did not recognize his parents, and missed his foster parents greatly.

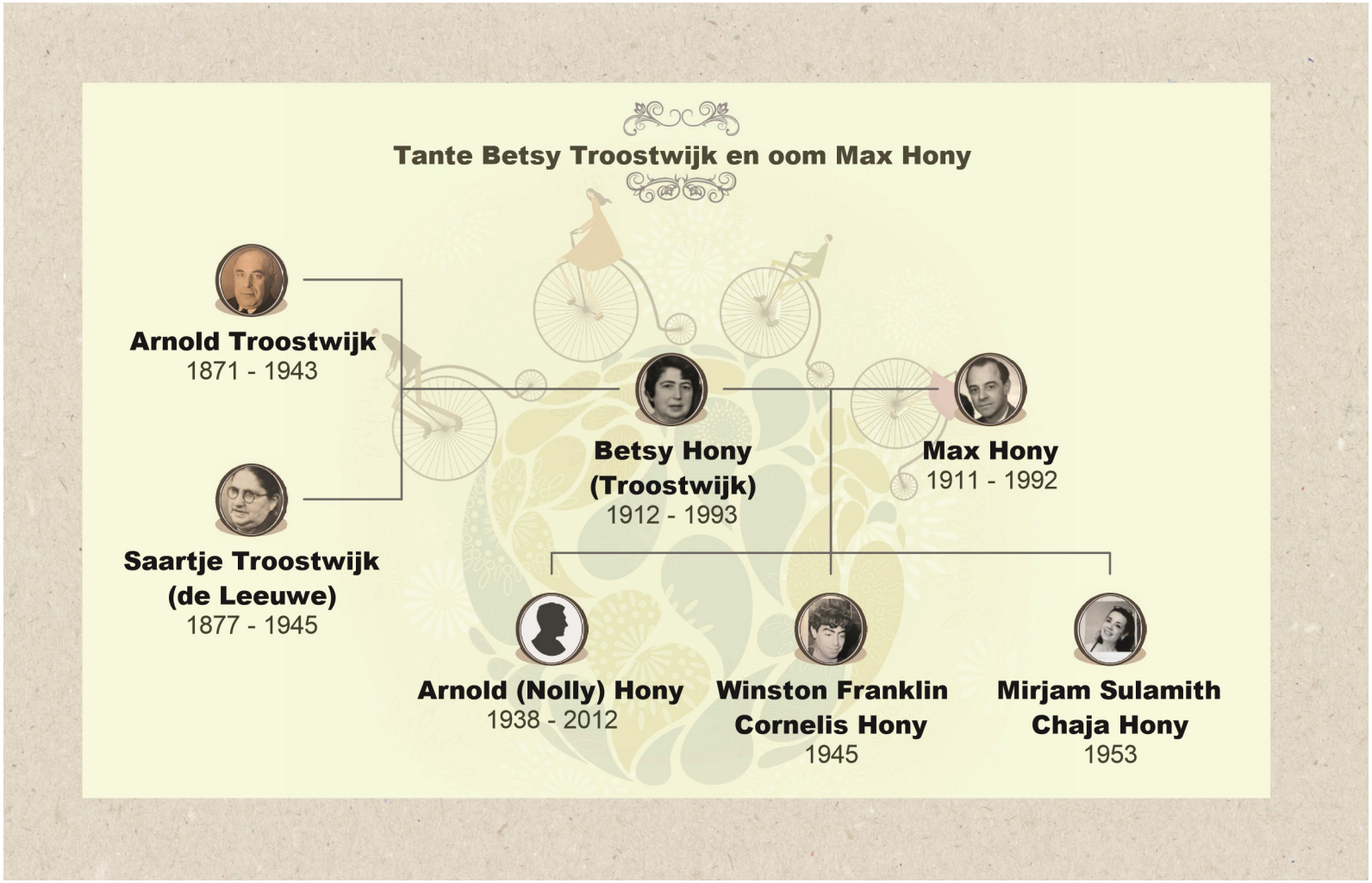
After Winston, Max and Betsy had another child, Mirjam. The Jewish community was decimated after the wary. Because of that, the prospects for a kosher deli in Zwolle to thrive were so slim that Max Hony decided instead to take over the wholesale fancy goods business (at 24 Voorstraat) of his brother-in-law Jacob Walg, who had perished in Auschwitz with his entire family. Max Hony and his wife Betsy are both buried in Zwolle's Jewish cemetery. The story of my aunt Betsy and her family is given at some length here, but that's a good thing, since as far as the war and all its possible outcomes goes, theirs had a happy ending.

Aunt Betsy and Max Honey behind the counter in their pr-war kosehe Comestible shop

Aunt Betsy with Nolly and Frank circa 1950

Het gezin Hony. Van links naar rechts: Max Hony, Arnold, Frank, Mirjam en Betsy Hony-Troostwijk.
(Foto collectie F.W.C. Hony)

Family Hony after the birth of daughter Mirjam 1953


Tante Betsy Troostwijk en oom Max Hony
Arnold Troostwijk
1871 - 1943
Saartje Troostwijk
(de Leeuwe)
1877 - 1945
Betsy Hony
(Troostwijk)
1912 - 1993
Max Hony
1911 - 1992
Arnold (Nolly) Hony
1938 - 2012
Winston Franklin
Cornelis Hony
1945
Mirjam Sulamith
Chaja Hony
1953

Uncle Abraham Troostwijk and Aunt Annie Samuel

Abraham (Bram) Troostwijk was my father's youngest brother. On 9 April 1941, he married Annie Samuel. Bram wrote a letter to Deventer's Jewish community for permission to hold the marriage in its synagogue:

"To the Netherlands Jewish community of Deventer

Dear Sirs,

Herewith I give you notice of my intended marriage to Miss A. Samuel of Deventer, for which I should like to make use of your synagogue, so that our union may be blessed. We hope to marry on this coming Wednesday 9 April.

Looking forwarded with interest to your reply, I undersign with the highest regards,

A. Troostwijk, 36 Broerenstraat, Arnhem."

Bram had a household goods businesses in Arnhem and Deventer, and he and Annie had two children: Greetje Kaatje and Ivor Arnold. Arie writes the following about Bram and Annie: "Bram and Annie Troostwijk were forced to move to Amsterdam [by the Germans]. They decided to send Greetje into hiding. At just a year old, she was picked up in her baby carriage in front of Amsterdam's main post office by her foster mother and father. Bram and Annie themselves were in hiding somewhere in the environs of de Bilt. They were betrayed, sent to Westerbork, and then wound up in various concentration camps." Bram, Annie and Greetje had arrived in Westerbork at the end of 1942. They remained there for ten days before managing to get themselves out again. That's when they'd decided to send Greetje into hiding separately. At the end of 1943 they started heading south. They were detained at the train station of Den Bosch. Bram and Annie, heavily pregnant, were locked up in the Den Bosch prison. Ivor Arnold was born on 13 November in the women's prison. Ivor's story came to light only in 2016. Before that, his existence was known only because a prison official named Aaltje Stavast had recorded his name in the population register. That meant that he became a citizen of Den Bosch and was counted amongst the city's war casualties. Quite soon after Ivor's birth the

family was transported via Westerbork to Auschwitz and the baby was killed there on 28 January 1944. Bram died just before the end of the war, on 28 March 1945.

During a visit by Greet, Guya and me to the Den Bosch Town Hall, we were told that Bram had been imprisoned there and that he, his wife and son had been sent to Westerbork. Arie writes about Bram: “Bram Troostwijk died of exhaustion during a prison transport forced march.” The only thing that remains of Ivor Arnold Troostwijk is a photograph. A photo of a newborn baby. Distressing, but a vivid reminder of what happened during the war.

Greet: Unknown Child 33

Baby Greetje, meanwhile, was moved from one hiding address to another. Every time the resistance thought a certain address was getting too dangerous, a new hiding place had to be found. The first address was at Mrs. Scholten-Hoefman’s in Blaricum. Next, Greetje was taken in by Karin le Noble in IJsselstein, where she was one of a group of hidden children. Karin’s husband worked for the SS, and betrayed them all. Karin le Noble wound up in Ravensbrück concentration camp, and all the hidden children, including Greetje, were sent to Westerbork. The last transport from Westerbork departed on 13 September 1944. The 279 deported Jews included the 51 remaining children of Westerbork’s orphanage, aged from zero and eleven. Their parents had sent their children into hiding, but they were discovered and betrayed anyway. Most of their true identities were unknown. In Westerbork they wore a tag around their necks saying *Unbekanntes Kind;* on the list of transportees they were recorded as *Gruppe Unbekannte Kinder [Unknown Children Group].* Greetje was Unknown Child No. 33. Historians were long convinced that the train’s destination was Auschwitz. But the last train from Westerbork actually went to Bergen-Belsen. From there the children were transported to Theresienstadt, which was liberated in May 1945.

In the Nineties, the journalist Daphne Meijer began investigating this story. She tracked down the children, and reconstructed their experiences. For the children themselves, it was also often a revelation. Most of them were too young at the time to remember anything, and the older ones did not know what to do with their memories. After the war, little to no attention was paid to the fact that the children had been

traumatized. In the early days after the war, there was neither the time nor the inclination for it, and besides, many of their parents were dead or missing. Also, that's when the legal tussles over the children began among the foster parents, Jewish relatives and the Jewish community. Thanks to Daphne Meijer's investigation, the Unknown Children were reunited in April 2000 at a special gathering. It made all sorts of nebulous childhood memories fall into place.

After Liberation

Immediately after Liberation, on 8 May 1945, the Commission for War Orphans (OPK)was set up. The commission took care of the children whose parents had not returned, like Greetje. The OPK received a great deal of criticism. It was too concerned with the interests of the (Christian) foster parents. In about a third of the cases, the foster parents were awarded custody.

The majority of the orphans were given to Jewish foster parents or Jewish orphanages. After the war my father tracked down Greetje, and did everything he could to get her to come live with us. Bram and Annie had made arrangements with Kaatje Colthof-Troostwijk, however, that if anything should happen to them, Kaatje would take care of Greet. The arrangement had been put in writing. But Kaatje too had been killed, and Jacques Colthof demanded that Greetje be given to him. My father filed a lawsuit, but lost on the basis of the written arrangement. In 1945 Greet was temporarily placed in the Berg-Institution in Laren, an organization for Jewish children whose parents were unable to care for them. To illustrate what the situation was like right after the war, I have included parts of the dossier. These extracts tell the story.

On 27 May 1945, foster mother Annie Scholten writes a letter to the Committee for Finding Missing Jewish Citizens in Amsterdam:

"I took care of a young Jewish girl named Greet Kaatje Troostwijk. To my great distress I had to find other foster parents for her when I was threatened with being reported to the *Ortskommandatur*. In the end Greetje was sent to the Le Noble family in

IJsselstein. But there Greetje was caught, together with a Jewish boy, Loekie Kaas, and Mrs. Le Noble, in June 1944. And sent on to Westerbork on about 24 June 1944. I was informed that she was still there at the beginning of September. I don't know under what name. Mrs. Le Noble did not know her real name, but the Jewish Council in Westerbork would have known it, since her and her parent's christening papers were delivered there. I then heard that she would be classified as an unknown child, without a surname. It was thought that that would provide an exemption from deportation. I also heard that people thought she and Loekie were brother and sister, and that she may have gone under the last name of Kaas.

"I should very much like to know if she is still in Westerbork, or if she was deported. In any case, could you please inform me what I should do to get her back. If she is still in Westerbork and I could go and fetch her, I would gladly do that, because we all loved her very much. I would love to take care of her again. If her parents do come back, I would of course return their child to them with love.

"If they don't come back, I should like to keep looking after Greetje as if she were my own child. Will you help me find her again? I'll do everything I can to that end." Later someone has written in pencil: *Transfer date BB 13-9-44. Unknown child no. 33.*

Letter written on tissue paper to Mrs. Scholten-Hoefman, 6 Smedenweg, Blaricum, 18 June 1945:

"Dear Madam,

To our great pleasure we are able to inform you that there is a Gretchen Le Noble on the list of survivors from Theresienstadt. No date of birth. In all likelihood this child is the same as your wartime foster child Greetje Kaatje Troostwijk born 26-9-1942.

We have no further details, but as soon as we know more, we will let you know. From your letter we gathered that in case the parents don't return you wish to take guardianship of this child. You will have to submit a petition for that."

Annie Scholten filled in a form "for information on minors" which states that Greetje arrived in Westerbork on 26 [May] June 1944: "Still there on 5 September. Last legal address 115 II Waalstraat. Arrested in IJsselstein with Loekie Kaas in June 1944."

There's a handwritten note inside: "Note: her false identification card has a different birth date, namely 13 September 1942."

29-6-1945 Berg-Institute, Laren

"URGENT, transfer: Alexander Troostwijk is going to come this afternoon, he is with the Netherlands military and has to leave again tonight. In the interests of the child, Mr. Troostwijk wants her removed from the Berg Institute as soon as possible, and sent to stay for a month with the original foster parents Scholten-Hoefman in Blaricum."

Reaction of the Berg-Institute:

"It is probably better for this child, who has been in several concentration camps, not to be transferred unnecessarily. Alexander now lives in Brussels, and I object to sending the child out of the country before the guardianship has been settled. The former foster parents will be granted an authorization to visit her."

Letter from the Berg-Institute in Laren to the OPK (War Foster Children Committee), 24 September 1945: "Taken into our home on the 26th of June. Greetje arrived here in a very pitiful state as a result of her incarceration in a concentration camp. During the three months she has been here, she has been repeatedly sick. Over the last few weeks she has improved considerably, she is starting to gain weight and looking healthier. She is small and slight for her age, she is developmentally delayed, her speech is poor for a three-year-old, her playing lacks imagination, she has screaming and crying fits, frequent at first but less so recently. The girl will need much time and attention physically as well as mentally for the foreseeable future."

The court case

From the lawsuit dossier:

"Thanks to Alexander Troostwijk's search efforts, Greetje was found and her identity confirmed. He found her in the Berg Institute in Laren. He then kept her with him for a few weeks. After that she was sent to a maternal uncle. Then to Zadok [Colthof], to which the family, in anticipation of the guardianship question, had no objection. Now

they are objecting, since Zadok is only related by marriage whereas both claimants are uncles and blood relatives of the child. Since the death of his wife Kaatje, the family bond with Zadok has broken off. The two uncles are both eager to have the little girl live with them. If Zadok were to become the guardian, then it's almost a given that the claimants were lose every link and every contact with the child.

"On her father's side she still has three uncles (Salomon, Alexander and Isaac) and an aunt (Betsy); on her mother's side two aunts, Rosette and Helena Samuel. Zadok was married to Kaatje Troostwijk (23-06-1901 in Zwolle), who was deported. Löwenhardt was appointed the trustee of Greetje's parents' estate.

"Parents: the father was a good businessman, had administrative talent. Financially he was very well off. Besides his work, he liked to write. He wrote several plays. The mother was the daughter of a cattle dealer, financially sound. She had great taste, their home was warm and inviting. The marriage was a good one. The parents handed Greetje over to Mrs. Scholten-Hoefman, 6a Smedenweg, Blaricum, when she was six months old. They themselves went into hiding in Utrecht, and were exposed as a consequence of a reprisal action. They were held eight months in the prison in Den Bosch, where their son was born. They were sent on to Germany with that child. Nothing more is known of them.

"Greetje did not stay long at Mrs. Scholten's, since that address was too dangerous and she was under threat of the *Ortskommandatur*. She handed over the child to someone whose address is unknown to us, and from there Greetje landed at Mrs. Le Noble's in IJsselstein. She was apprehended in July 1944. The child was sent to Theresienstadt, Mrs. Le Noble to Germany. Both came back. Greetje is in a very neglected state. Thanks to the assistance of Mrs. Scholten and the sleuthing of her uncles, S.I. and A. Troostwijk, the child registered in the name Le Noble was found. For her health it was deemed best for her to temporarily stay at the Berg Institute in Laren. There she recovered considerably, was crying less, was fattened up a bit and began to show more interest in her surroundings. In February 1946 she was temporarily taken in by her uncle Alexander Troostwijk in Arnhem. Until 1 May 1946. The child's physical as well as mental development improved considerably during those months. At the beginning of May she went to stay with her aunt Mrs. Van Kleef-Samuel in Amsterdam for two weeks. There

Zadok picked her up, with the consent of the Troostwijk family in Arnhem and the Van Kleefs themselves. She sings often, is cheerful, no longer anxious."

"Zadok returned from Auschwitz. He has remarried, taking as his bride Emma Lievensdag, the widow of Josef de Lange (died in Mauthausen). Zadok is a businessman with a fancy goods concern in Deventer. He has always regretted not having any children because he loves them. He had promised that if Greetje's parents did not return, he would take care of her. The child will have an excellent foster parent in him, he is a calm, pleasant person. The foster mother is a maternal, kindly woman who is giving Greetje excellent care. They are well situated and wish to take on the child's entire upbringing. The whole family, with the exception of Mr. S.I. Troostwijk of Amsterdam, is agreed that Greetje should remain with Zadok. The child is very happy there. But if Uncle A. Troostwijk of Arnhem wishes to have custody, then Zadok could be supervising guardian.

"The maternal family is of the opinion that Zadok and Löwenhardt should be guardian and supervisory guardian. The investigator has a negative opinion of the Troostwijk family in Amsterdam: she should not go there because she would not receive as loving and sensible an upbringing there. Mrs. Troostwijk is of German origin and gives a cool impression. She is not a warm-hearted type, pays too much attention to her own appearance and wants. Seems egoistic and hard, and rather over-sentimental."

"Alexander Troostwijk and his wife Sara Hiegentlich of Arnhem declare in a report to the Court that in 1942 they left for Switzerland via Antwerp and Paris, having left their youngest child behind in hiding (Arnold, born 6 August 1941). The other children are Saartje (1936) and Jacques (1938). Greetje's parents were to have gone with them, but Greetje was only 10 days old and the mother did not dare to attempt the journey. From Switzerland we still sent for them via a trusted courier but they did not dare to do it that time either. They then went into hiding and were caught just 4 days later. Since Greetje was registered as Le Noble, people weren't sure she was Jewish, and presumably did not dare get rid of her. We would very much like to have custody of the child, writes Sara.

The investigator writes that they seem a nice family and they are well regarded. No objection to giving them custody."

"Zadok writes to the War Foster Children's Committee in December 1947 that he has no intention of estranging the child from the Troostwijk family. If she were to live with the Troostwijks, she would have parents who are constantly traveling and leaving her in the care of a maid, he writes. If she were to go live with her other uncle, she would have as only companion "a young person of 18 years of age".

The Amsterdam judge issues a ruling on 17 October 1947. Then there is an appeal. On 29 December 1947, Julius Löwenhardt gets involved with a letter to the War Foster Children's Committee 29:

"Uncle Salomon Isaac Troostwijk was never interested in the child; when she was in Amsterdam for two weeks he never came to see her. Colthof has supported the entire Troostwijk family financially and now wants his money back.

"There is no other explanation for the custody request; it is to hurt him. The most important thing is: Zadok and Emma love the child madly, and the child loves them. I am convinced that this arrangement would also have been the parents' wishes because I know what their relationship was. I have managed to collect a nice little nest egg for Greetje and would strongly object if for example Mr. Alexander Troostwijk, who cannot even manage his own finances, had access to it."

From a letter from Zadok about the financial arrangements:

"Greetje was hidden by Mr. Scholten, town clerk of Zaandam, who was evacuated to Blaricum. In December 1942, Abraham Troostwijk was sent to Westerbork with his wife and children, and released again 12 days later. Then on German orders they were evacuated to Amsterdam. Therefore in May 1943, everybody, Zadok and Greetje's parents, and Abraham Troostwijk, went into hiding in Utrecht, where Zadok paid for the costs of hiding them. Zadok paid for Salomon Troostwijk's escape to Switzerland. There are no receipts, but proof enough. Of the 4,300 guilders Zadok spent, Salomon now wants

to settle up with only1,500 guilders. And now all of a sudden he says I am a stranger. Strange attitude on the part of Alexander, because he was a good friend until recently. Alexander is now hiding behind his brother Salomon."

Alexander is brought into the picture: "Calm, well-bred person, the wife is a real, warm mother, musical, description of their home." *(Report in favor of the custody application)*

Greet immediately after the war

Greetje and her foster parents were not related by blood. Greet Troostwijk was seven years old when her foster parents told her that they weren't her real parents. Greet says: "I remember there was friction in the family, because my foster parents weren't my blood relatives. It even became a court case. The members of my family would have liked to raise me, but the judge decided that I should stay with my foster parents. My foster father had promised my parents before the war that he would look after me, but my uncle also wanted to raise me."

There was yet another foster child living with them: Rosie Colthof, the daughter of Zadok's brother Joshua. In 1963 Greet went to the University of Amsterdam. Until that time she had had no contact with her real family. She started writing articles for the Jewish community paper, signing her articles with the name Greet Troostwijk. That's how one of her uncles found her. Her foster mother then gave her a choice: if Greet wanted to have contact with her own family, her foster mother would disinherit her. Greet told her, "Do what you have to do." That is what happened. I still remember that on a visit to my uncle and aunt in Amsterdam, they were all acting rather mysterious. It turned out that it was to be the first time Greet would visit and become acquainted with her family.

Above all, what Greet missed was a mother: "I had five mothers, but in reality not truly one. My own mother had barely a chance to enjoy my existence because I was hidden when I was a baby. I had two mothers when I was in hiding: Oma Scholten in Laren, and Karin le Noble in IJsselstein. Mrs. Adriaansz took care of me in Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt, and she really remembered me. After that I had my foster mothers, but never a real mother."

Karin le Noble had visited Greet in 1945 at the Berg Institute. “When I saw her, I cried, ‘Mama, mama.’ I didn’t know better, I thought she was my mother.”

Of the five women, only Karin le Noble and Mary Adriaansz were able to answer all her questions. “Of all the women who could tell me something about myself as a young child, I suddenly heard from Mary Adriaansz that I suffered from eczema in the camp and that I cried constantly because it was so itchy. Later I heard from stories about my real mother that she also suffered from eczema as a child. After all these years, something clicks, but I can’t tell what it all means.” Karin le Noble, who remarried after the war and moved to Sweden, looked up Greet on her return to the Netherlands in the late seventies. Until Greet and her husband, Rob Coopman, left for Israel in 1998, Greet visited her often.

Robert Vinselvelius Fijou

The children who had been together on the last transport continued to have a special bond. They felt a family-like attachment, as if they were brothers and sisters. One Thursday in 2001 in Israel, the phone rings. Rob answers it. It is Hans van den Broeke, chairman of the 51 Unknown Children Foundation. Here I’ll reproduce the conversation as Rob related it to me.

“Hello Rob, this is Hans. Do you have a minute?”

“Of course, Hans, I always have time for you. You probably want to talk with Greet, seeing that she’s a member of the ’51 club’.”

“No, Rob, don’t bother, it’s you I want to speak with. I want to convey warm greetings from your stepsister Kitty Viejou from Naarden.”

“How nice, how do you know each other?”

“I don’t know her, but have spoken with her over the phone.”

“How come?”

“It’s quite a long story, so sit down and I’ll tell you the whole thing. At the launch of Daphne Meijer’s book *Unknown Children of Westerbork*, a charming lady of around eighty suddenly appeared out of nowhere asking where she could find a child called Robert Vinselvelius Fijou. Her name was Bep van den Bergh, and she had come because she had read about the launch of Daphne Meijer’s book. In 1944 she had belonged to the

so-called “Barneveld group”. Her instructions, as a nurse, was to look after the children of that specific transport (departing Westerbork on 13 September 1944). She remembered two of the children very clearly: a girl, Rita, and another rather (in her words) “wise” four-year-old boy with dark blond hair who called himself Robert Vinselvelius Fijou. Bep expected that Robert would also be at the party.”

“How did you find me?”

“We went looking through old newspapers for appeals for missing children. Finally we found an advertisement from 1945 from the Viejou family in Naarden, looking for Robert. Next we searched various official archives, found an address in Naarden where a family of that name used to live until 1956. Via that contact we found Kitty Viejou, your stepsister.”

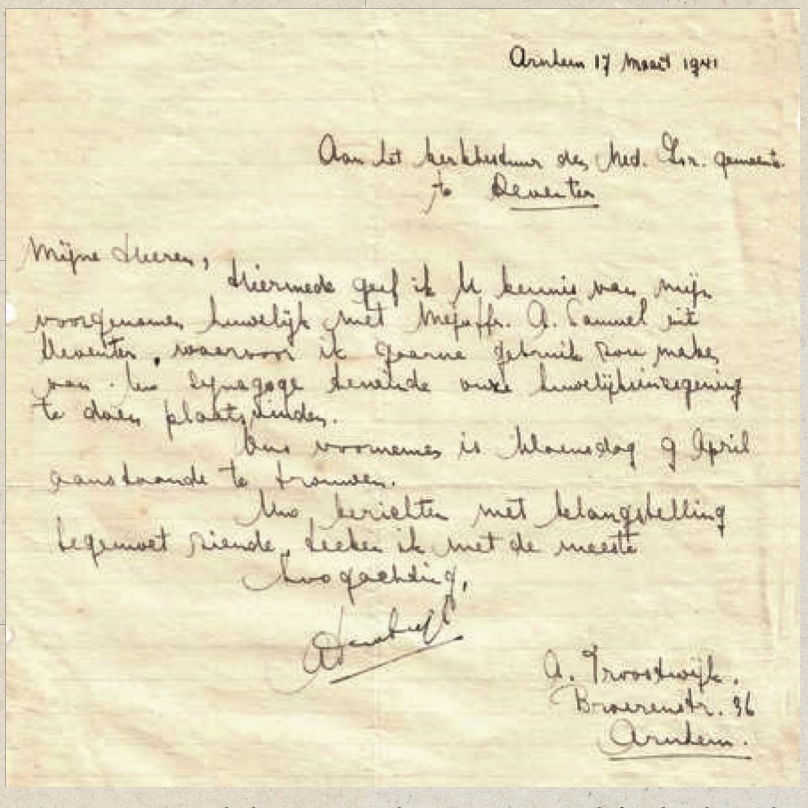
“Kitty Viejou is indeed my stepsister. My own parents had been deported to Sobibor in May 1943, and I was placed with the Viejou family in Naarden by the Dutch resistance. In July 1944 a neighbor gave me away, and I was put on a transport to Westerbork. My false name was Robert Viejou. That’s right!”

“But what about ‘Vinselvelius”, where did that come from?”

“My foster mother claimed to be of Swedish nobility. Her maiden name was Schrewelius, she had four daughters and she’d always wanted a son to have her name, together with her husband’s name. That’s how I came to be Robert Schrewelius Viejou.”

“Dear Rob, do you know what this means?

“Absolutely. From this day forward, 24 May 2001, I too am a member of the ’51 Unknown Children’. Greet and I, who have been married these 36 years, were both on the same train transport to Bergen-Belsen/Theresienstadt, without being aware of that fact. And since all former children on that specific transport share a family bond as if they are brothers and sisters, the conclusion is that 56 years after World War Two, Greet found her brother and I found my little sister.”



Arnhem 17 Maart 1941

Aan het kerkbestuur der Ned. Isr. gemeente
te Deventer

Mijne Heeren,

Hiermede geef ik U kennis van mijn voorgenomen huwelijk met Mejuffr. A. Samuel uit Deventer, waarvoor ik gaarne gebruik zou maken van de synagoge benevens ook huwelijksinzegening te doen plaats vinden.

Ons voornemen is Woensdag 9 April aanstaande te trouwen.

Met hartelijke met belangstelling tegemoet ziende, teeken ik met de meeste hoogachting,

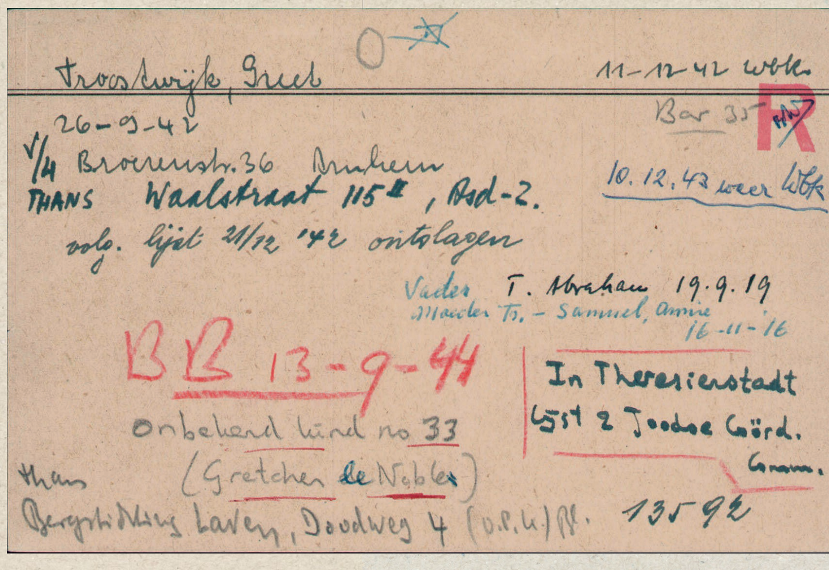
A. Troostwijk.
Broerenstr. 36
Arnhem.

Reservation shul in Deventer by Bram Troostwijk for the chuppah
On April 9, 1941

Bram Troostwijk
en
Anny Troostwijk—
Samuel,
geven met groote blijdschap kennis van de geboorte van hun dochter 6538
Greet Kaatje.
Arnhem, 26 Sept.
Broerenstraat 36.
Tijd. Diaconessenhuis.

Birth announcement of Greet
September 16 1942

Ivor Arnold Troostwijk
November 13 1943



Troostwijk, Greet 0→✗ 11-12-42 Wbk.

26-9-42 Bar 35 HN R

1/4 Broerenstr. 36 Arnhem

THANS Waalstraat 115II, Asd-Z. 10.12.43 weer Wbk.

volg. lijst 21/12 '42 ontslagen

Vader T. Abraham 19.9.19

Moeder Tr. - Samuel, Annie 16-11-16

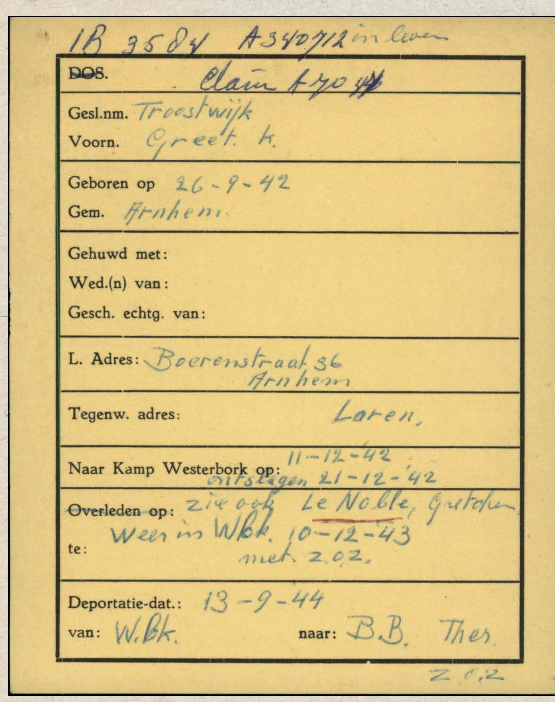
BB 13-9-44 In Theresienstadt

Onbekend kind no 33 Lijst 2 Joodse Gërd.

thans (Gretchen de Nobler) Gram.

Bergstichting Laren, Doodweg 4 (O.P.K.) N. 13592

Card Westerbork Greet one of the unknown childern in Theresienstadt!



1B 3584 A340712 in leven

DOS. claim A 70 44

Gesl.nm. Troostwijk

Voorn. Greet. K.

Geboren op 26-9-42

Gem. Arnhem

Gehuwd met:

Wed.(n) van:

Gesch. echtg. van:

L. Adres: Boerenstraat 36 Arnhem

Tegenw. adres: Laren.

Naar Kamp Westerbork op: 11-12-42 ontslagen 21-12-42

Overleden op: zie ook Le Noble, Gretchen

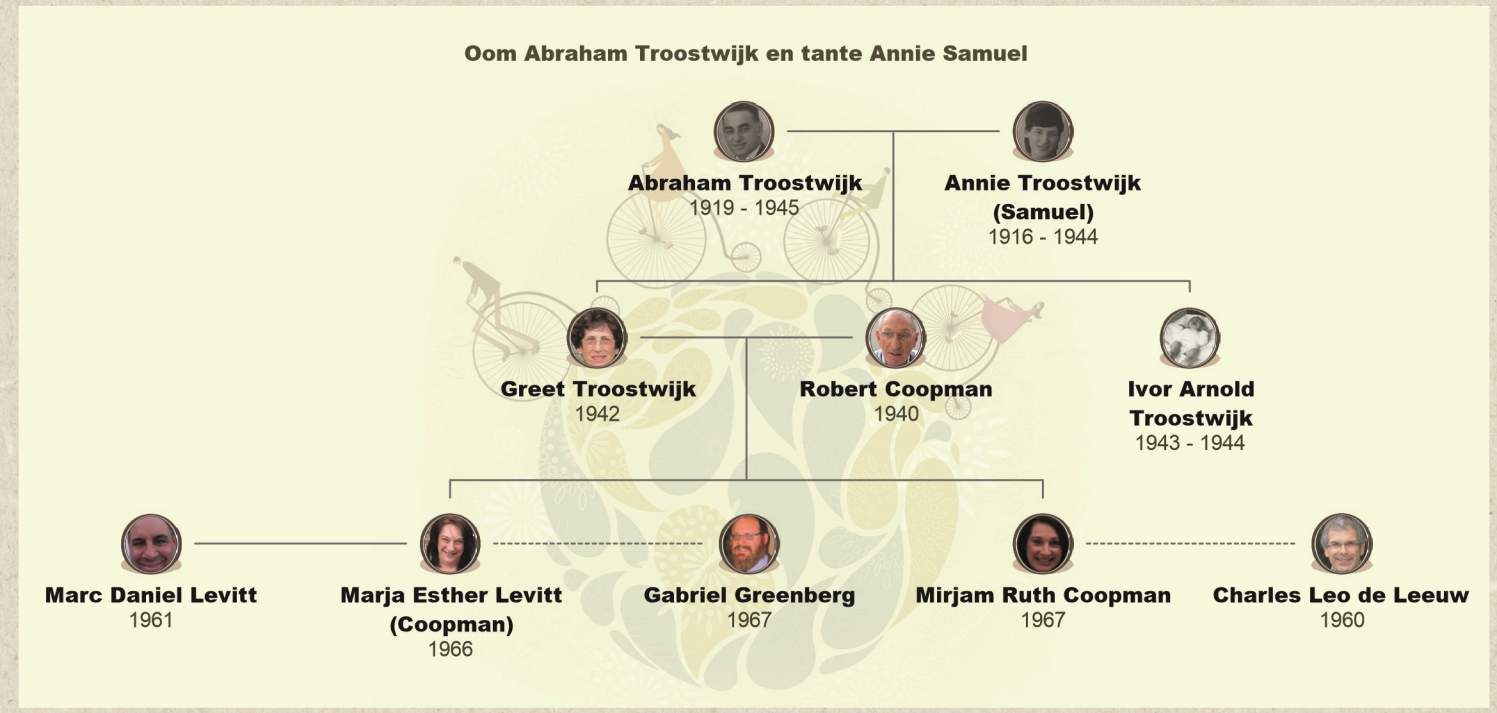
te: Weer in Wbk. 10-12-43 met. Z.O.Z.

Deportatie-dat.: 13-9-44

van: W.Bk. naar: B.B. Ther.

Z.O.Z.

Red Cross card from Greet, again in Westerbork!!!


Oom Abraham Troostwijk en tante Annie Samuel
Abraham Troostwijk
1919 - 1945
Annie Troostwijk
(Samuel)
1916 - 1944
Greet Troostwijk
1942
Robert Coopman
1940
Ivor Arnold
Troostwijk
1943 - 1944
Marc Daniel Levitt
1961
Marja Esther Levitt
(Coopman)
1966
Gabriel Greenberg
1967
Mirjam Ruth Coopman
1967
Charles Leo de Leeuw
1960

Opa and Oma Hiegentlich

My mother's family was much smaller than my father's. Her father, Jacob Salomon Hiegentlich, was the son of Israel Hiegentlich and Sara Lezer. Israel Hiegentlich had butcher shop at 2-4 Singelstraat in Assen. Jacob had a younger brother, Coenraad. Coenraad was a butcher too, and ran a pension-restaurant at 2 Singelstraat, where Jewish traveling salesmen could stop for a meal and a night's stay. Coenraad later moved to Amsterdam, where he ran a hotel. The family lived in Assen. Jacob and his brother helped their father in the business, which Jacob later took over. On 15 July 1920, Jacob married Frederika Frietje Godschalk. They had three children: my mother, Sara Melia, Jacob Israel, and Iwan.

Jacob Salomon was taken to Camp Westerbork between 3 and 5 October 1942. He stayed there almost three weeks before being deported to Auschwitz on 23 October. There he was murdered on 26 October 1942. It's puzzling that his wife, my grandmother Frederika Frietje Godschalk, wasn't on that transport. She was probably already in poor health. Not much is known about my grandmother. That may be because she was not murdered. My grandmother passed away at the age of 60 on 31 January 1943 in Camp Westerbork and buried in Assen's Jewish cemetery, something I did not know until just recently. When Guya and I were on our way to Schiermonnikoog this year, we stopped in Assen and found the grave, and also discovered the Stolpersteine on the pavement of Singelstraat where the butcher shop once stood.

The Stolpersteine stones were laid for my grandfather, grandmother and my mother's brothers, Jacob and Iwan. The butcher shop remained registered in father Israel's name until it was shut in 1942, even though he had passed away before the war.

As I write this, we are in the midst of the Corona-crisis. The restrictions we are living under now are somewhat reminiscent of the time of the occupation. Today we have only a virus; back then our family had the 'germans'. (I write 'germans' but without the capital G.) I think it's difficult for us to conceive of the stress people lived under back then. We are scared about falling ill. Those folks were sent to a certain death. I suppose my

mother's name isn't recorded at the Jewish Monument because she survived the war. Her brothers and sister-in-law Johanna Hiegentlich-van Brink had no such luck.

Grandpa Jacob and Grandma Frieda

My mother with her father and brothers in the 1920s

Advertisement for the butcher shop

Reopening of my Grandfather's butcher shop in Assen

Stolpersteine for my Grandfather and Grandmother (not Murdered) and Jacob and Iwan Hiegentlich Singelstraat 2 Assen

Opa en oma Hiegentlich

Jacob Salomon Hiegentlich
1875 - 1942

Frederika Frietje Hiegentlich (Godschalk)
1882 - 1943

Sara Melia Troostwijk (Hiegentlich)
1910 - 1994

Jacob Hiegentlich
1915 - 1943

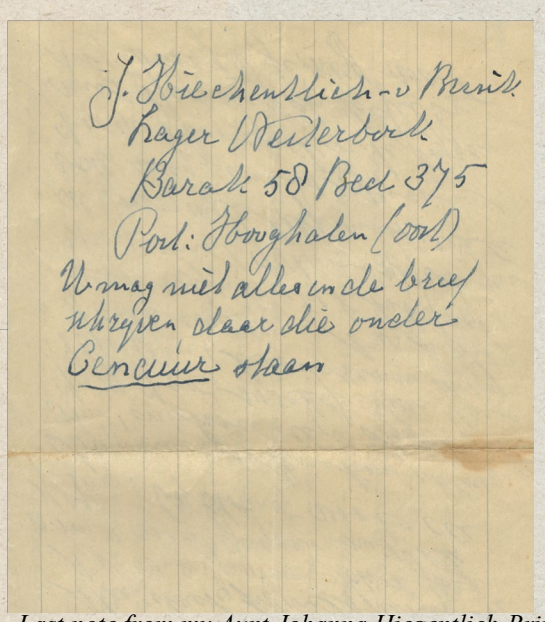
Iwan Hiegentlich
1916 - 1942

Uncle Jacob Hiegentlich and Aunt Johanna van Brink

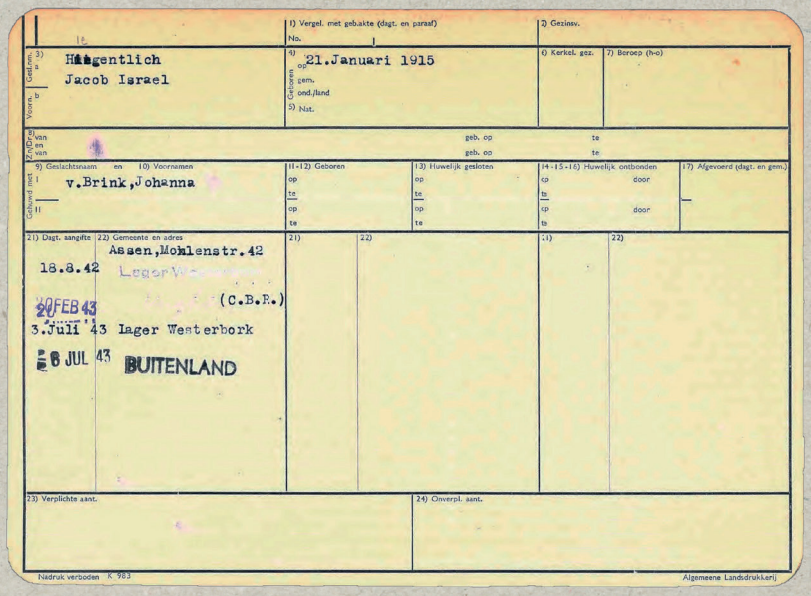
My mother's brother Jacob was married to Johanna van Brink, the daughter of Emanuel van Brink and Cera Kellerman. Jacob and Johanna didn't have any children. Until the summer of 1942 they were registered at the address 12 Kerkstraat in Arnhem, across from the synagogue. From 28 July 1942 they lived in Assen, on 42 Molenstraat. Jacob was one of the many people who were sent to Camp Westerbork. He was probably sent to a work camp in early August 1942, as were many of his contemporaries from Assen. From there he landed in Camp Westerbork on 3 October. His wife Johanna was also registered there on the same day. She was assigned to a spot in Barrack 58. She must have been seized during the Assen roundup of the night of 2-3 October. Her father had passed away in 1940; her mother survived the war. Two of Johanna's brothers and a sister were also murdered. Jacob slept in two different barracks, Number 84 and Number 58. On 20 February 1943 he was sent to Camp Vught, to work as a forced laborer in the "outside commando" Moerdijk. Jacob was part of the *Eisenbahnbaugruppe.* In Westerbork he had probably been on the crew working on the train tracks from Hooghalen station to the camp, and was deemed experienced. The construction of a railway line in Vught was canceled; the *Eisenbahngruppe* joined the outside commando Moerdijk to build anti-tank walls. A few months later, on 3 July 1943, the couple returned to Westerbork, where they wound up in Barrack 62.

On 6 July 1943, three days later, Jacob and Johanna were ordered to board a train to Sobibor concentration camp in Poland. After a journey of three days, upon arriving in Sobibor on July 9 they were immediately gassed. Jacob was 28, Johanna 30 years old.

My mother with her brothers

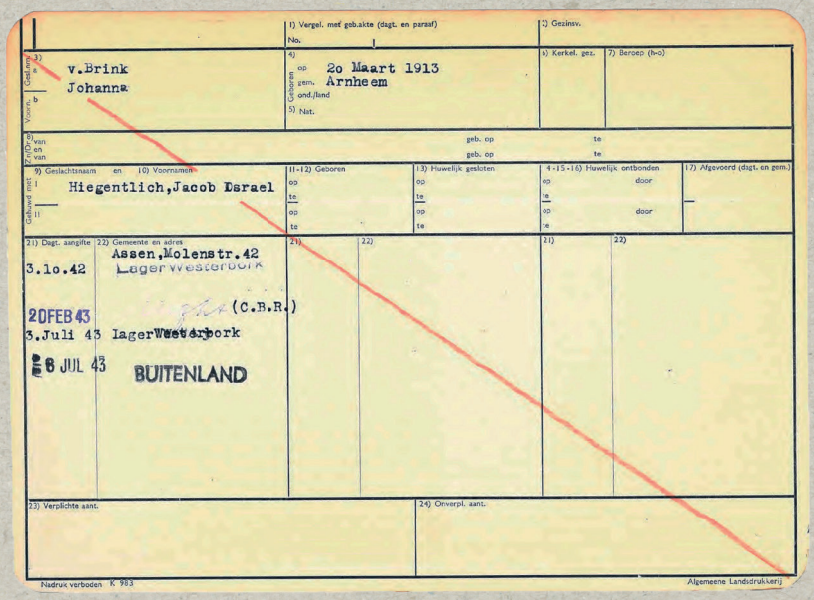

J. Hiegentlich-v Brink
Lager Westerbork
Barak 58 Bed 375
Port: Hooghalen (ovl)
U mag niet alles in de brief
schrijven daar die onder
Censuur staan

Last note from my Aunt Johanna Hiegentlich-Brink
from Barak 58, bed 375
Westerbork



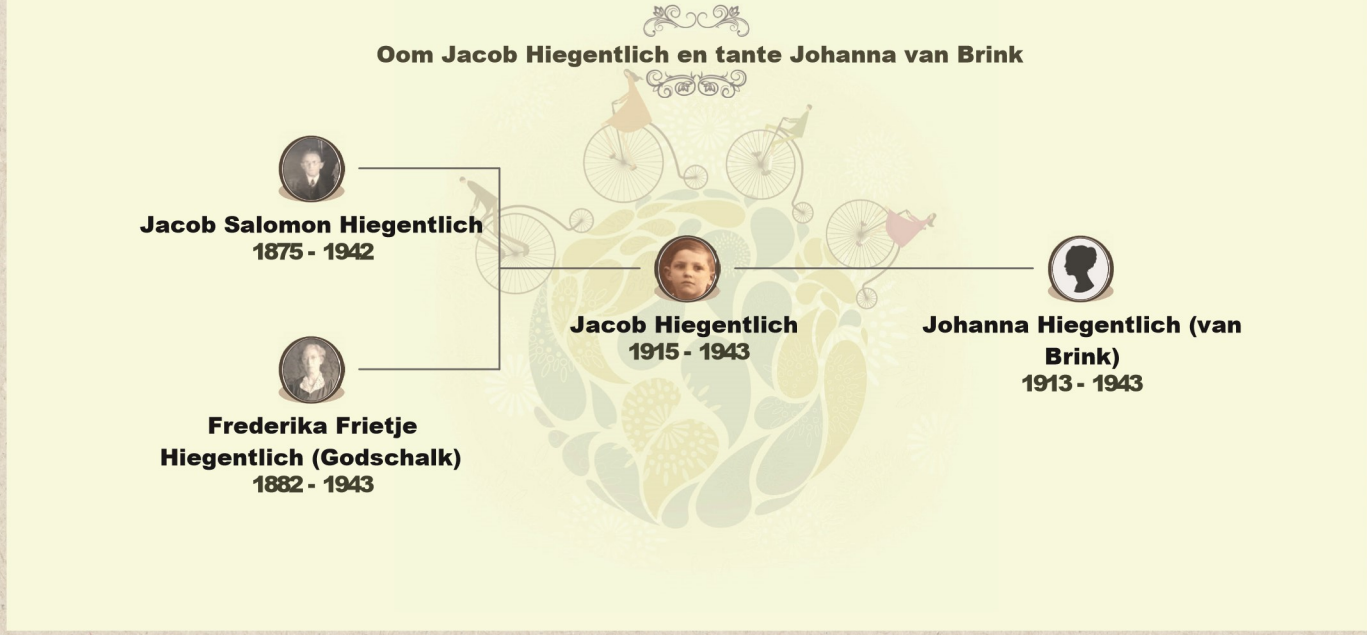
1) Vergel. met geb.akte (dgt. en paraaf) No.
2) Gezinsv.
3) Geslachtsnaam: Hiegentlich
Voorn.: Jacob Israel
4) Geboren op 21.Januari 1915 gem. ond./land
5) Nat.
6) Kerkel. gez.
7) Beroep (h-o)
8) Zn/Dr van en van
geb. op te
geb. op te
9) Geslachtsnaam en 10) Voornamen: v.Brink, Johanna
11-12) Geboren op te op te
13) Huwelijk gesloten op te op te
14-15-16) Huwelijk ontbonden op door te op door te
17) Afgevoerd (dgt. en gem.)
21) Dagt. aangifte: 18.8.42
22) Gemeente en adres: Assen, Mohlenstr. 42 Lager W... (C.B.R.)
20FEB43
3.Juli 43 lager Westerbork
6 JUL 43 BUITENLAND
23) Verplichte aant.
24) Onverpl. aant.
Nadruk verboden K 983
Algemeene Landsdrukkerij

Red cross card of my uncle Jacob Israel Hiegentlich murdered 5 days after transport



1) Vergel. met geb.akte (dgt. en paraaf) No.
2) Gezinsv.
3) Geslachtsnaam: v.Brink
Voorn.: Johanna
4) Geboren op 20 Maart 1913 gem. Arnheem ond./land
5) Nat.
6) Kerkel. gez.
7) Beroep (h-o)
8) Zn/Dr van en van
geb. op te
geb. op te
9) Geslachtsnaam en 10) Voornamen: Hiegentlich, Jacob Israel
11-12) Geboren op te op te
13) Huwelijk gesloten op te op te
14-15-16) Huwelijk ontbonden op door te op door te
17) Afgevoerd (dgt. en gem.)
21) Dagt. aangifte: 3.10.42
22) Gemeente en adres: Assen, Molenstr. 42 Lager Westerbork (C.B.R.)
20FEB43
3.Juli 43 lager Westerbork
6 JUL 43 BUITENLAND
23) Verplichte aant.
24) Onverpl. aant.
Nadruk verboden K 983
Algemeene Landsdrukkerij

Red cross card of my aunt Johanna Hiegentlich-van Brink murdered 5 days after transport


Oom Jacob Hiegentlich en tante Johanna van Brink
Jacob Salomon Hiegentlich
1875 - 1942
Frederika Frietje
Hiegentlich (Godschalk)
1882 - 1943
Jacob Hiegentlich
1915 - 1943
Johanna Hiegentlich (van
Brink)
1913 - 1943

Uncle Iwan Hiegentlich

Iwan Hiegentlich was a radio operator in Assen. As a Jew, he was fired at the beginning of the Occupation. He tried to escape to the unoccupied sector of France, arranging to meet someone in the Kerkstraat, clutching a violin under his arm by way of identification. In June 1942 the mayor of Assen issued a wanted person notice for the "Jew Hiegentlich", unemployed and residing at 2 Singelstraat, Assen. Iwan Hiegentlich had left his parents' home on 7 June 1942 by bike, and had not returned home. The description read: "Approx. 1.70 m tall, slender form, pale skin, blond hair, rather flattened nose, jug ears; dressed in a belted grey tweed coat, green-grey suit without vest, greenish silk shirt, thick brown-grey wool necktie, brown shoes; he was carrying a brown briefcase with new leather handles. Acts very nervous."

From the *Algemeen Politieblad* (General Police Bulletin) No. 25 of 25 June 1954, P. 754, Item 1072: "On 8 June 1942 Iwan Hiegentlich sent back from The Hague the bicycle and a violin he had taken with him to his parents. On 9 June 1942 he sent back from Eindhoven the identity papers in his possession, monies and Star of David."

The escape to France succeeded, but he was apparently apprehended there. He was put on transport [to the East] from Camp Drancy in France. There is one last sign of life of Iwan in the form of a letter from Camp Drancy.

I have donated the original letter to the Jewish Cultural Quarter for the Holocaust Museum.

"Drancy, 29 October 1942

"Dear family and friends,

I have to write in French, but fortunately you can write back in Dutch. Once a week with international coupons, please. I don't know if I'm staying here, but it is good here compared with Dijon.

I am in good health and I hope that my dear mother has recovered her health.

Don't worry about me, I'm alive and will remain alive, just as you will! Don't worry, anyway, if you don't receive any more letters from me.

Now I have underwear and clothing for winter. And since Red Cross packages take so long to get here, you had better not send me anything by that route.

I received the two care packages on 28 September and thank you for their contents, Lex and Selly too.

I am here with 45 other Dutch people and many other Jews. I work in the kitchen for five hours almost every day. I don't have anything to tell you about this place.

I hope to see you again in a few months. I sleep very well and remain optimistic.

You mustn't give up hope, promise me that.

The guards here are French.

And something else important, you should think: no news, good news!

How is Jaap, and is Lex still in his own home?

Has Jacqie recovered yet?

Greetings to everyone I know.

It isn't easy now, I know that, but it can't be helped.

I'll stop now and you'll have to write to me for at least six weeks (once a week)

Your son, Iwan"

The website *Shoa Drenthe* states that Iwan died on 9 November 1942 on the way to Sobibor, during the transport from Camp Drancy. The Jewish Monument states that he died in Auschwitz. Other sources simply mention Poland. Iwan died on the way to either Auschwitz or Sobibor. What's certain is that there was a transport on 6 November 1942 headed for Auschwitz.

Drancy

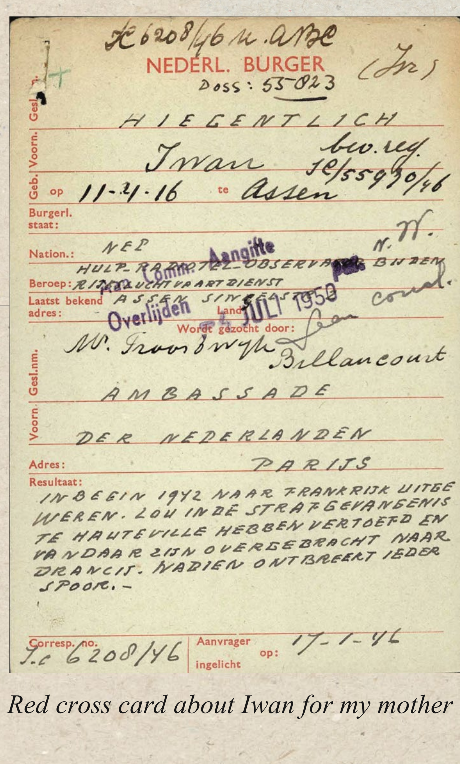
In the Second World War, Drancy, where Iwan wound up, was an internment and transit camp in the city of Drancy, north of Paris. Drancy, like Westerbork, was considered the gateway to the hell awaiting the prisoners after being put on transport. The buildings were originally designed as a social housing project for 700 people. After France's capitulation, the Vichy regime converted the half-built complex to an internment camp in 1941. It was primarily meant for Jews, but homosexuals and others considered

undesirable were also imprisoned there. Initially the French police of the Vichy regime were in charge there, but the SS took over from them on 1 July 1943.

Alois Brunner became the camp commandant, and the camp became a transit camp. Nearly 65,000 Jews were deported on 67 transport trains. Of those, a small number went to Sobibor. For most of them, Auschwitz-Birkenau was the final destination.

Upon arrival in Drancy, people had to surrender everything: identity papers, food coupons, money, jewelry. They slept on planks or on the ground, there were no blankets and very little to eat. Visitors were not permitted. The interned weren't allowed any care packages; the food provisioning was organized by the *Préfecture de la Seine.* In the beginning many of the prisoners died of starvation. In addition, too many souls were crowded into cramped spaces. The hygienic conditions were abominable: they were allowed out just once a day and there were just twenty water spigots for 5000 people. There was no escaping lice and other vermin. Thanks to the Amelot Committee, consisting of a number of Jewish organizations (dissolved in 1943), beds and blankets were delivered to the camp. Iwan most probably received a care package via that organization. When the camp was liberated by the Allies on 17 August 1944, some 2000 survivors remained. The building complex still exists and is occupied. You can find inscriptions by former prisoners on many of the walls. A monument commemorating the Drancy concentration camp and its internees was built across from the complex.

Uncle Iwan as radio operator



NEDERL. BURGER (Jr)
DOSS: 55 823

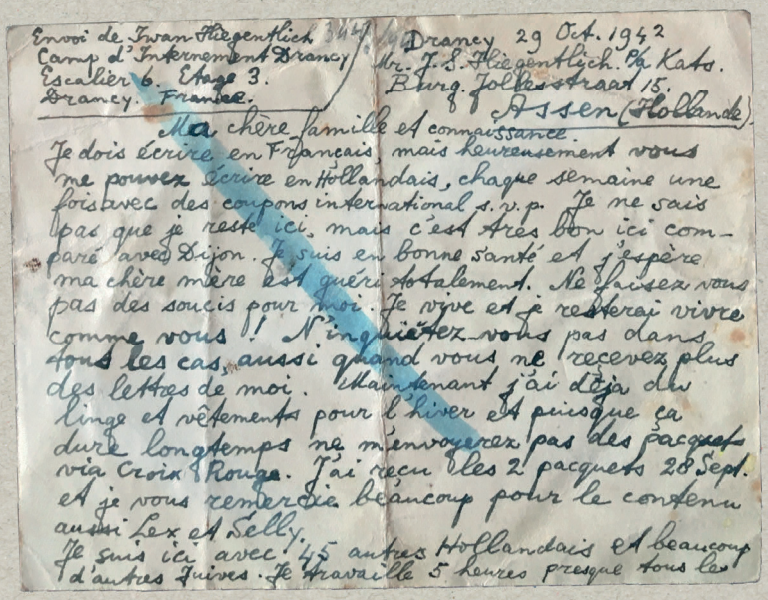
Gesl.: HIEGENTLICH
Voorn.: Iwan bw. reg. JC/55990/46
Geb. op 11-4-16 te Assen
Burgerl. staat:
Nation.: NED N. W.
Beroep: HULP-RADIOTEL-OBSERVATOR BIJ DEN RIJKSLUCHTVAARTDIENST
Laatst bekend adres: ASSEN SINGELSTR
Land:
Aangifte Overlijden ... 4 JULI 1950

Wordt gezocht door:
Gesl.nm.: Billancourt
Voorn.: AMBASSADE DER NEDERLANDEN
Adres: PARIJS

Resultaat:
IN BEGIN 1942 NAAR FRANKRIJK UITGEWEKEN. ZOU IN DE STRAFGEVANGENIS TE HAUTEVILLE HEBBEN VERTOEFD EN VANDAAR ZIJN OVERGEBRACHT NAAR DRANCIJ. NADIEN ONTBREEKT IEDER SPOOR.-

Corresp. no.: J.C 6208/46
Aanvrager ingelicht op: 17-1-46

Red cross card about Iwan for my mother

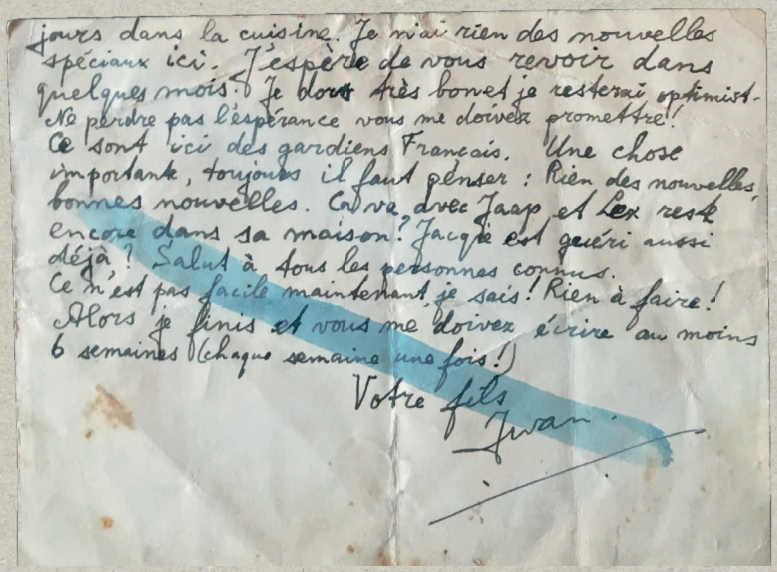


Envoi de Iwan Hiegentlich
Camp d'Internement Drancy
Escalier 6. Etage 3.
Drancy. France.

Drancy 29 Oct. 1942
Mr. I. S. Hiegentlich. Pk Kats.
Burg. Folkersstraat 15.
Assen (Hollande)

Ma chère famille et connaissance.
Je dois écrire en Français, mais heureusement vous me pouvez écrire en Hollandais, chaque semaine une fois avec des coupons international s.v.p. Je ne sais pas que je reste ici, mais c'est très bon ici comparé avec Dijon. Je suis en bonne santé et j'espère ma chère mère est guéri totalement. Ne faisez vous pas des soucis pour moi. Je vive et je resterai vivre comme vous! N'inquiétez-vous pas dans tous les cas, aussi quand vous ne recevez plus des lettres de moi. Maintenant j'ai déjà du linge et vêtements pour l'hiver et puisque ça durée longtemps ne m'envoyez pas des pacquets via Croix Rouge. J'ai reçu les 2 pacquets 20 Sept. et je vous remercie beaucoup pour le contenu aussi Lex et Selly.
Je suis ici avec 45 autres Hollandais et beaucoup d'autres Juives. Je travaille 5 heures presque tous les

Last letter in French from Uncle Iwan from camp Drancy, France
October 29, 1942



jours dans la cuisine. Je n'ai rien des nouvelles spéciaux ici. J'espère de vous revoir dans quelques mois. Je dois très bonet je resterai optimist. Ne perdre pas l'espérance vous me doivez promettre!
Ce sont ici des gardiens Français. Une chose importante, toujours il faut penser: Rien des nouvelles, bonnes nouvelles. Ca va avec Jaap et Lex rest encore dans sa maison? Jacqie est guéri aussi déjà? Salut à tous les personnes connus.
Ce n'est pas facile maintenant je sais! Rien à faire!
Alors je finis et vous me doivez écrire au moins 6 semaines (chaque semaine une fois!)

Votre fils
Iwan.

Addressing Iwan's letter to my grandfather

Oom Iwan Hiegentlich

Jacob Salomon Hiegentlich
1875 - 1942

Iwan Hiegentlich
1916 - 1942

Frederika Frietje Hiegentlich (Godschalk)
1882 - 1943

My parents, Lex Troostwijk and Sara Hiegentlich

My father, Alexander (Lex) Troostwijk, was my grandparents' sixth child. He attended high school in Zwolle. My mother, Sara Melia Hiegentlich, went to the home economics school in Assen. She acted in amateur theatrics, evident from photographs of performances from the thirties. My parents met around 1931. There are holiday snapshots of Valkenburg and the three-border triangle. The marriage took place on 2 June 1933, soon followed by three children: Saartje Frieda (nicknamed Sari), Jacques Arnold, and me, the youngest of the family. The remarkable thing about our family — especially when compared with the other stories — is that all five of us survived the war. That is thanks to the difficult but wise decisions my parents made.

On 9 October 1942, my parents, Sari and Jacques fled to Switzerland. I was just one year old at the time. The journey to Switzerland took over two months. They arrived safely on 16 December, my mother's birthday. But my parents had left me behind in the Netherlands, because it was too dangerous to take a baby along. Even though it was an incredibly difficult decision, in hindsight it turned out to have been the sensible thing to do. My parents were forced to make such difficult choices, but they did wind up working out well. We also had plenty of luck: my parents, Sari and Jacques on their escape to Switzerland, and me as an infant, hidden with the family Doets for the entire duration of the war. Never betrayed. Reunited with my parents and siblings again after the war quite simply. Don't tell me there was nothing to it!

How did my parents, sister and brother manage to get to Switzerland? In an interview in the *Arnhemse Courant* in 1985, my mother explained that a few days before they left my father had been at the Arnhem train station and had witnessed people being herded onto a train on their way to work camps as part of a major razzia. He had also been warned by a sympathetic Gestapo officer that he and my mother were on the list for deportation. Shortly afterward he came home with the news that he had found an escape route to Switzerland via the underground. It isn't clear whether they made the first part of their flight, from Arnhem to Paris, via the Dutch-Paris underground. They managed to contact that organization once they were in Paris, in any case.

Contacting the Dutch-Paris

Dutch-Paris was an underground network of the Dutch, Belgian and French resistance, set up by Jean Weidner, a Dutch textile merchant who in 1941 had fled from Paris to Lyon, when Lyon was still in the unoccupied part of France. The main aim of Dutch-Paris was to help people flee, Jewish refugees as well as airmen who had been shot down. Via the Dutch-Paris escape route, people could get away via Switzerland and Spain. Dutch-Paris also smuggled documents, and played a very important role for the French Resistance. Switzerland was the flight route's initial destination. Weidner had been an avid mountaineer from an early age, which meant he was familiar with the mountain route into Switzerland and was able to arrange hiding addresses in the area where he grew up. At the end of 1942, in order to facilitate arranging Swiss entry and exit passes, he opened another fabric shop in Annecy. Later the flight route was extended via Toulouse to Spain, with local guides shepherding the refugees through the Pyrenees. Uncle Sam, Aunt Erna and son Arie managed to flee to Switzerland in the summer of 1943. In his account of the war, Arie explains how they contacted the Dutch-Paris underground. Uncle Sam was working in the financial department of the Jewish Council. Amsterdam was no longer safe, writes Arie, and the Jewish Council's so-called *Sperr-stempel* (exemption stamp) wasn't worth very much anymore either. The *Sperr-stempel* meant exemption from deportation "until further notice", so it didn't provide any real guarantee. Via Sam Blom, a colleague at the Jewish Council, the family was introduced to a certain Paul Veerman. Paul was Sam Blom's future son-in-law, and worked for the Dutch-Paris organization in Lyon and Annecy. He was an important liaison in the smuggling of documents. In 1943 Paul was recruited by the Netherlands military attaché in Bern to manage communications between Switzerland, Belgium and Spain.

The Interview

When my mother told us she had been interviewed by the *Arnhemse Courant*, it struck

me as strange at first, mainly because my parents never spoke about the war. Now it's a valuable document, giving details about their escape. Therefore I will quote it here in full:

Flight to freedom

"The worst thing was that we had to leave Arnold — our youngest, one year old — behind. Because babies weren't allowed to come. A woman we had never met came to pick him up from our home at night. I had dressed him neatly and put him down in his little crib. He was crying; Lex, my husband, wasn't home yet. So the woman waited for him. So that Lex could hug his son goodbye. Then she left with our baby. I can still see her walking down the street and turning the corner. That's a picture you never forget. Still, my husband and I had decided to flee to free Switzerland with Sari, aged six, and Jacques, ages four. We hoped that should anything happen to us, at least little Arnold would be spared the violence of war. The day after our youngest child was picked up, we left early in the morning. I left with the children. And Lex on his own. It was 9 October 1942. My mother was dying, and I knew I would never see her again. A few days earlier, during a razzia, Lex had seen people being herded onto a train at Arnhem railway station. To be deported to work camps. "Selma," he said to me, "I'll never submit to those Germans." A little later he came home with the announcement that he had managed to arrange an escape route for them to Switzerland.

"The day of our departure from Arnhem, we took off our stars. We had made Sari and Jacques wear their best shoes and clothes. We also took some clean underwear and toiletries. And some gold coins and scrap gold that we had left over from the wholesale specialties business Lex and I ran in Arnhem's Broerenstraat.

The last chance

"Lex said goodbye to us that morning. We hugged, put on a brave face and hoped… He was to travel the first leg by himself. So as to minimize the risks. My husband, you see, was the most Jewish looking of all of us. At the train station we were met by a young man who settled Jacques, Sari and me into a train compartment. He traveled with us as far as Eindhoven, but sat elsewhere in the train. The children were scared, but it was as if the rhythm of the wheels were chanting, "The last chance, the last chance…" Arrived in

Eindhoven, we were helped on to the bus to Valkenswaard. With the instruction that when we got there, we were to find a path behind the church. There we were met by two other men. They took us on the back of their bikes to Achelsekruis, a village close to the Belgian border. It was one a.m. by the time they left us in a little café. There, to our relief, Lex rejoined us. Sari, poor child, was so anxious and upset that she kept throwing up. There was no sleep for us that night. We tried to comfort the children, and I kept having to think of little Arnold. Early the next morning, around six o'clock, two Belgian smugglers came to pick us up. They helped us cross the border. Whenever we heard dogs barking, we'd have to throw ourselves flat on the ground. For the children's sake we made kind of a game of it…

"And so we finally reached a freight train, in which we rode to Antwerp. There we were hidden for five days with some folks while awaiting false identity papers. Once we had those documents, we continued our journey by rail. Our destination was Paris. At the Gare du Nord, two men were waiting for us, they took us to a café and then on to a small hotel near Les Halles. They were to pick us up again the next day. But we never saw them again…

German soldiers

"Bye-bye flight route. Free Switzerland seemed farther away than ever. Distraught and with no place to go, we were stuck in Paris. In the daytime we wandered the streets and at night we sought refuge in the little hotel, which was teeming with German soldiers going in and out with girls they'd picked up in the street. We forbade our children from opening their mouths, for fear of giving ourselves away. We managed to stay alive by selling the scrap gold and gold coins we'd brought from home to Jewish middlemen. Whenever we had dinner somewhere, I'd secretly stash bread in my handbag. So that the children would have something to eat the next morning.

"Through a chance connection Lex met a few Dutch people who finally managed to help us obtain a new flight route to Switzerland. We'd been stuck in Paris for six fearful weeks, the last of which we spent in a Dutch lady's small apartment somewhere in the seventh arrondissement. Lex was growing more and more afraid, and I was so depressed that I couldn't even feel fear anymore. Besides, missing my baby was weighing ever

heavier on me. When we no longer believed in anything anymore, we were suddenly able to continue our journey. The four of us were taken at night to a passenger train in a railyard, where we found a hiding place in the locomotive cab.

"It was the depth of winter by then. In the cab we had to stand in puddles of water, and the sides were covered in ice. We reached Clermont Ferrand in a state of exhaustion. And then we continued on, but this time among the passengers, to Lyon. We started feeling a bit better. Switzerland was truly getting closer and closer. The instructions we'd received in Paris were that once in Lyon, we should contact a pastor from The Hague who ran a fabric store: he directed us how to get to Annecy. Once we got there, the Swiss border was only thirty kilometers away. It *had* to work. The following day, suppressing our excitement, we boarded the train again. This time bound for Annecy. The children had been extremely good all those weeks. They were well aware of what was at stake. They did constantly ask where their little brother was now, and what he might be doing. Their questions broke my heart. I didn't know. I didn't even know if he was still alive…

"And then it happened. At a certain point the French gendarmes climbed into the train to control the passports. They were asking the passengers at random for their passes. Which we did not possess. Quietly we hoped they would just skip us. But then Sari let a piece of fruit slip from her hand. She began to cry. "Mama, I couldn't help it," she said. Everyone in the train looked around. The gendarmes too…

"In Annecy we were taken from the train. You could practically see Switzerland in the distance. This is it, I thought. It's lucky that Arnold was left behind. Maybe he'd be the only one of us who would survive the war. On the platform Lex caught the gendarme who was leading us away by the arm. "Please don't hand us over to the Germans," he pleaded.

"And his plea was heard. For suddenly a more senior police officer stepped forward. *"Allez vite!"* was the only thing he said. Still shaking from head to toe, we reached our new hiding place address. A small farm. After so many weeks of hardships and deprivations, we could finally relax and recover from all the emotion. At that farm we met up with two other Dutch women with their two children. Together with them we were to cover the last thirty kilometers to freedom on foot.

"But it took another sixteen days in all before two peasant youths came to fetch us. They led us through the border area in the night. And finally we were almost at the Swiss border, which consisted of a little bridge blocked by barbed wire. We had to duck underneath that little bridge. And cross a swiftly running stream. You had to be careful not to slip on the slippery stones on the bottom. The children cried silently. They were exhausted… Once we had crossed to the other side, we had to climb up the muddy embankment. Suddenly Jacques cried out in alarm, "Oh Mama, a soldier…!" But it was music to ears. *"Haben Sie kein angst. Sie sind in die Schweiz."* ("Don't worry. You are in Switzerland.") It was 16 December, the day I turned 32. Never could I have had a better birthday present…

Free Holland

"We stayed in a hotel camp in Switzerland for two and a half years. At Beau Site. Together with 130 — mainly Jewish — other refugees from the Netherlands. There we made the acquaintance of Max Tailleur, and on Queen's Day he conducted us in singing 'When the lights go on in free Holland again'.

"Lex and I mainly worked in the kitchen and laundry. Besides that I sewed baby clothes and blankets for the Red Cross. Lex left Switzerland before us. He joined the American army and so ended up in Brussels. Since he had joined the military, he was not allowed back into Switzerland. In January '45, Sari, Jacques and I followed him to Brussels, and we lived there for a while. Lex — who passed away three years ago — kept making forays into the by-now-liberated parts of the Netherlands. That's how he found himself in Arnhem with the British. Our house was still standing, he told us when he got back to Brussels. But nobody knew where our Arnold was.

"After our country was liberated in May '45, we all returned to Arnhem. We didn't dare to have any hope. Until we heard that Arnold had been evacuated to a village on the outskirts of Edam. He had grown into a sturdy little boy. 'But I'm not going with that soldier. I'm staying with my mommy,' he told us. 'And my name isn't Arnold, I'm Petertje.' We had survived and our family was reunited. Our family had called us adventurers [daredevils] when we'd decided to flee to freedom in October 1942. Everyone had warned us about the risks…

"My ailing mother had died three months after we left Arnhem. I never saw my father and my two brothers again. They were gassed."

Persecution of the Jews in Arnhem

It's remarkable that my parents decided to flee so early on in the war. That they did so was thanks to the warning my father received, and the roundup he witnessed in October 1942. The persecution of Arnhem's Jews was to follow the same pattern as in the rest of the Netherlands.

The Germans' goal was to make the Netherlands *Judenrein* (Free of Jews). That October 1942 roundup my father had seen was only a foretaste of what was to come. The Jewish community of Arnhem, in existence for hundreds of years, had to be eliminated too. First the Jews' lives were restricted, and then made impossible. Access to the zoo and the Open-Air Museum on the Schelmseweg was forbidden, as was playing soccer at *Vitesse* and other clubs, swimming, cinema, museums and restaurants, going for a walk in a park—in Sonsbeek for instance—, or staying in hotels. The Germans put up 470 placards and 35 wooden boards around the city inscribed with the words "Forbidden to Jews". Working for non-Jews was forbidden, as was the use of public transport (the right to own a bicycle or a car had long been taken away). Jews were no longer allowed any contact with non-Jews, they could not go the Arnhem or German authorities to lodge complaints or ask for advice. Instead, the Jewish Council of Amsterdam, Arnhem Division, was set up to deal with Jewish matters. Starting on 3 May 1942, it became compulsory to wear the yellow star. On the second and third of October 1942, the Jewish men who had been sent to work camps in Gelderland were deported to Westerbork, followed by the deportation of their families in November and December.

In the night of 17-18 November 1942, a big razzia took place in Gelderland, in which hundreds of people were rounded up and sent to Westerbork. In the winter of 1942 it was the turn of the elderly to be transported to Westerbork, and from there on to the east. On 29 March 1943, the Jews who still remained Arnhem had to pick up their travel

passes for a trip to Camp Vught. The "decree" was announced in the *Arnhemsche Courant.* On the same page there was a warning against hiding Jews or "Jew-favoring," i.e. doing them favors. The names of persons who had been sent to concentration camps for such a "transgression" were listed in the article. The piece ended with the announcement that "in a growing number of cases, penalties were waived, where persons who had been hiding Jews voluntarily turned them in." The last group of Jews left Arnhem for Camp Vught on 8 April 1943, most of them employees of the Jewish Council and a few stateless (i.e. German Jews) people.

About fifteen hundred Arnhem residents died in the camps. Some of them had lived in the city for generations; others had arrived only recently. In 2019 a monument to Arnhem's Jews was erected on the Kippenmarkt/Jonas Daniel Meijerplaats. My mother knew at the time of their flight to Switzerland that her mother was terminally ill and that she would never see her again. My grandmother died on 30 January 1943 in the hospital in Assen, more than a month and a half after their arrival in Switzerland. Finally, the interview also reveals that my parents knew that if they were caught, they would be killed.

How stressful that must have been during their two-month-long flight. Like Jacob Walg and Jacques Colthof, my parents had had a wholesale business in dry goods, fancy goods, knitwear, etc. before the war, in the Broerenstraat in Arnhem. I was able to find some information about those businesses at the NIOD (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation).

It is notable that my parents' business is registered in my mother's name. Moreover, the way it refers to my mother speaks volumes. It doesn't say Mrs. Troostwijk-Hiegentlich, but "the Jewess". There's also a mention of the fact that my mother has long since been *abtransportiert* (deported). The documents name people I know from after the war. During the war, the Germans shut down Jewish-owned businesses through confiscation and liquidation. That is what happened to my parents' concern. Small Jewish businesses were liquidated. Large or economically significant Jewish companies had to be "reassigned", that is to say, taken over by non-Jews.

Declaration from Switzerland

The day after their arrival in Switzerland on 16 December 1942, my parents wrote an affidavit:

"We left Holland on 9 October for Paris. We left Holland in order not to be deported by the Germans. In mid-September 1942 the German-supervised medical examination commission determined whether one was fit for work duty. Since I was working for the Jewish Council of Arnhem, I gathered that my family too would be sent to Poland. A friendly Gestapo officer further confirmed my suspicions. We therefore traveled to France via Antwerp. We stayed in Paris until the end of November 1942, then left Paris because we no longer felt safe there since we did not have any papers. We then went, via Lyon, to Annecy, arriving there on 20 November. On our trip from Lyon to Annecy, however, we were arrested by the French gendarmes because we did not have valid papers. Later however, after pleading with them, a high-ranking police functionary let us go. We left Annecy on 16 December 1942, and crossed the Swiss border the same day at Landecy, where we were stopped by a soldier, who then brought us to the military authorities."

There are questions about their means of subsistence. My father declares that in Holland he has funds in the neighborhood of 100,000 guilders, which he can obtain with the help of a notary in Basel, Dr. Luessy. The necessary preparations have already been set in motion. Another question is if he knows anyone in Switzerland. He mentions two names: A. Kalimann, Ahornstrasse 26, Basel, and R. Simn, who has entered Switzerland legally. Next to "Travel Papers", it says" "Two fake passes." The document is signed by my father and mother.

Life in Beau Site

The Dutch government had rented three hotels to house Dutch refugees. They were located above the Lake of Geneva: Mont Pellerin, Chamby, and Hotel Beau Site. That is

where my parents, Jacques and Sari wound up, and were reunited with Uncle Sam, Aunt Erna and Arie. The hotel-camp was supervised by a Swiss *Lagerleider*, his wife and a Swiss secretary. The refugees had to clean and maintain the common areas, such as the dining room, corridors and staircases, as well as their own rooms. There were also kitchen and server crews, people to do the laundry and a technical service. A new work schedule was drawn up every month. There was also a doctor on site, Dr. Meerschwam, who was assisted by Aunt Erna. There was a rollcall every morning to make sure that everyone was still accounted for. The refugees had limited freedom of movement. They were not allowed to leave the hotel camp from 10 p.m. to eight a.m., and were not supposed to stray beyond a radius of ten kilometers. Men under a certain age had to report to a Swiss work camp; my father too was deployed to several work camps. He was allowed a weekend at Beau Site every so often .

The allies landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944 and began their advance through France. In September Brussels was liberated. My father joined the U.S. army and wound up in Brussels with them. In January 1945 my mother and the children joined him there. While the Germans were still holding the line at Arnhem's Schelmseweg, my father in his army uniform had already started looking for me.

"He finally found out my hiding address through an ad in *Het Parool*. He arranged with my foster parents to pick me up. Naturally, I didn't want to go with this stranger. I thought the Doetses were my parents. Their daughter, Ans, and son, Kees, were also suddenly deprived of their little brother. Pappa and Mamma Doets had another baby in 1945, which to some extent made up for my departure. I was reunited with my own parents, brother and sister in Brussels. I was cajoled by a beautiful, real wooden toy boat with big white sails.

Sari

I can't really remember my sister Sari, except from the photographs. Above my parents' living-room fireplace hung a big portrait of my sister, painted from a photo by Jacques Rotgans. On 4 April 1947, so not even two years after liberation, Saartje, aged eleven, died of appendicitis and peritonitis, as a result of a serious misdiagnosis by our then-family doctor. A terrible blow, especially for my mother, who had already had to contend

with having to give me up during the war, and upon surviving the war, lost another child. Saartje died on the first night of Passover. That was the reason my parents never celebrated the first day of Passover, as a kind of protest against God. I don't remember ever hearing the war mentioned in our family, not even in the time right after the war when I was reunited with them in Brussels and we lived there for a while. Apparently, surviving and then getting on with life was the important thing.

I did hear about members of the family who "hadn't come back". That's how the murdered relatives were referred to. As for my sister, I only really knew her for two years. Sari's death had a great impact on our family with particular repercussions for my mother. During the war, my parents had lived with no news about me or my lot for over three years, only to lose their only daughter after the war. My mother was never really able to get over it. She was always very anxious, and suffered greatly from her nerves, especially at an older age.

From Brussels we moved back to Arnhem. My foster parents had moved into our former home in the Mauvestraat, and we wound up on Rembrandtlaan. After the war my parents opened another business, similar to the one they'd had before the war, but this time in Mariënburgstraat. The concern then moved to 57 Rijnstraat, but it was no longer very successful. Next my parents opened a USA-shop. At first it sold American army surplus goods, later in military and rain gear, oilskins, duffle coats, blue jeans and the like, and later also camping gear. I helped in the store from a young age, standing behind the cash register when I was just a little kid. I remember that my father always bought too much inventory, and then my mother would complain she'd have to find a way to sell it all.

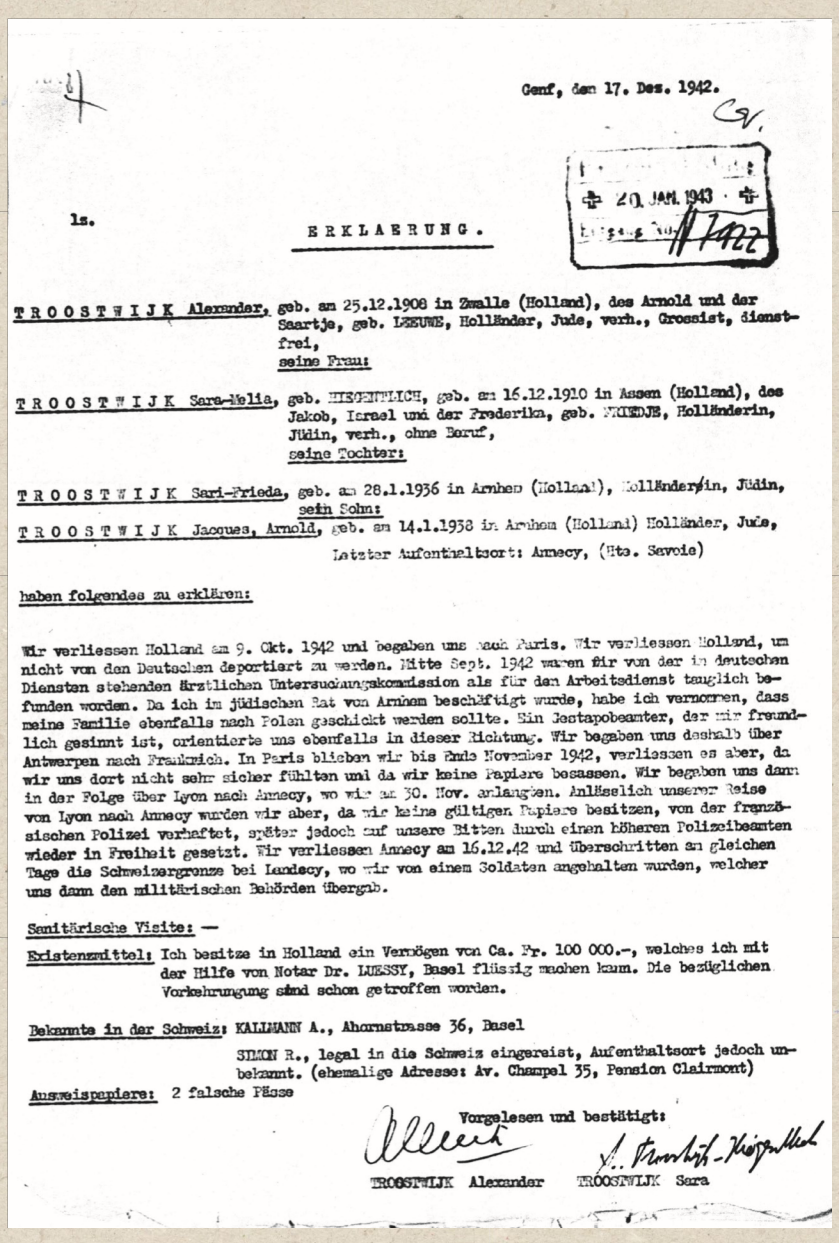
Weddfing photo of my parents with Arie as groomsman

Ondertrouwd:
SELLY HIEGENTLICH
en
ALEX TROOSTWIJK
Huwelijksinzegening Zondag 4 Juni nam. half 2 in huize „Stern", Assen.
Receptie van half 3 tot half 5.
Assen, Singelstraat 2.
Zwolle, Thorbeckegracht 46.

Announvement of my parents choepa 4 juni 1933 reception at home

My parents

The bridge between France and
Switserland last wet feet to safety



Genf, den 17. Dez. 1942.

CV.

20. JAN. 1943

ls.

ERKLAERUNG.

TROOSTWIJK Alexander, geb. am 25.12.1908 in Zwolle (Holland), des Arnold und der Saartje, geb. LEEUWE, Holländer, Jude, verh., Grossist, dienstfrei,
seine Frau:

TROOSTWIJK Sara-Melia, geb. HISCHTLICH, geb. am 16.12.1910 in Assen (Holland), des Jakob, Israel und der Frederika, geb. WIJNDJE, Holländerin, Jüdin, verh., ohne Beruf,
seine Tochter:

TROOSTWIJK Sari-Frieda, geb. am 28.1.1936 in Arnhem (Holland), Holländerin, Jüdin,
sein Sohn:
TROOSTWIJK Jacques, Arnold, geb. am 14.1.1938 in Arnhem (Holland) Holländer, Jude,
Letzter Aufenthaltsort: Annecy, (Hte. Savoie)

haben folgendes zu erklären:

Wir verliessen Holland am 9. Okt. 1942 und begaben uns nach Paris. Wir verliessen Holland, um nicht von den Deutschen deportiert zu werden. Mitte Sept. 1942 waren wir von der in deutschen Diensten stehenden ärztlichen Untersuchungskommission als für den Arbeitsdienst tauglich befunden worden. Da ich im jüdischen Rat von Arnhem beschäftigt wurde, habe ich vernommen, dass meine Familie ebenfalls nach Polen geschickt werden sollte. Ein Gestapobeamter, der mir freundlich gesinnt ist, orientierte uns ebenfalls in dieser Richtung. Wir begaben uns deshalb über Antwerpen nach Frankreich. In Paris blieben wir bis Ende November 1942, verliessen es aber, da wir uns dort nicht sehr sicher fühlten und da wir keine Papiere besassen. Wir begaben uns dann in der Folge über Lyon nach Annecy, wo wir am 30. Nov. anlangten. Anlässlich unserer Reise von Lyon nach Annecy wurden wir aber, da wir keine gültigen Papiere besitzen, von der französischen Polizei verhaftet, später jedoch auf unsere Bitten durch einen höheren Polizeibeamten wieder in Freiheit gesetzt. Wir verliessen Annecy am 16.12.42 und überschritten an gleichen Tage die Schweizergrenze bei Landecy, wo wir von einem Soldaten angehalten wurden, welcher uns dann den militärischen Behörden übergab.

Sanitärische Visite: —

Existenzmittel: Ich besitze in Holland ein Vermögen von Ca. Fr. 100 000.-, welches ich mit der Hilfe von Notar Dr. LUESSY, Basel flüssig machen kann. Die bezüglichen Vorkehrungung sind schon getroffen worden.

Bekannte in der Schweiz: KALLMANN A., Ahornstrasse 36, Basel

SIMON R., legal in die Schweiz eingereist, Aufenthaltsort jedoch unbekannt. (ehemalige Adresse: Av. Champel 35, Pension Clairmont)

Ausweispapiere: 2 falsche Pässe

Vorgelesen und bestätigt:

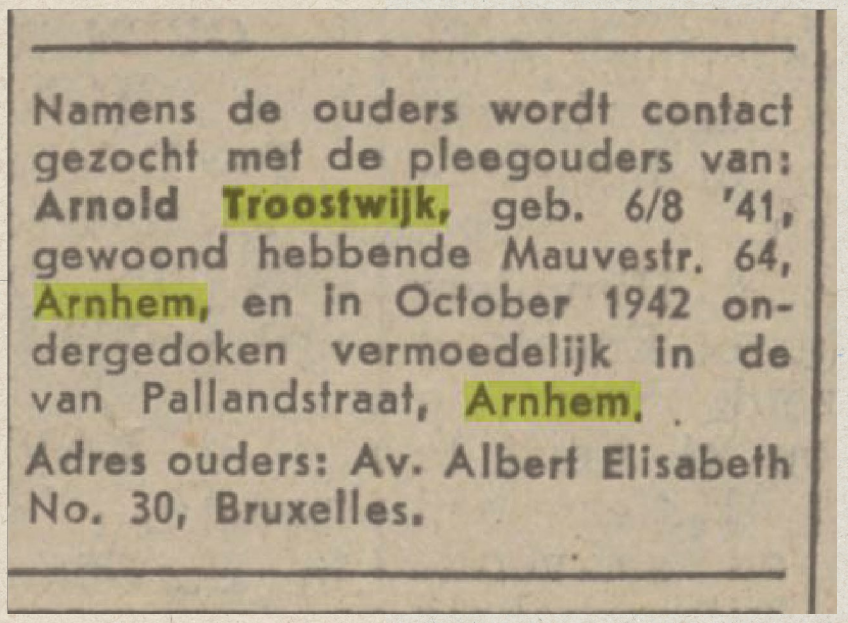
TROOSTWIJK Alexander TROOSTWIJK Sara

Declaration after arrival in Switserland

In Switserland my mother in the foreground in white, my father in the back standing in white. Aunt Erna next to my mother

Jacques left on sled and Sarienext to him sitting with snowball

My parents relaxing on the slats in Switserland



Namens de ouders wordt contact gezocht met de pleegouders van: Arnold Troostwijk, geb. 6/8 '41, gewoond hebbende Mauvestr. 64, Arnhem, en in October 1942 ondergedoken vermoedelijk in de van Pallandstraat, Arnhem.

Adres ouders: Av. Albert Elisabeth No. 30, Bruxelles.

Advertisement in het Parool, looking for Arnold Troostwijk

*Walking wi*th my mother and brother in Brussels

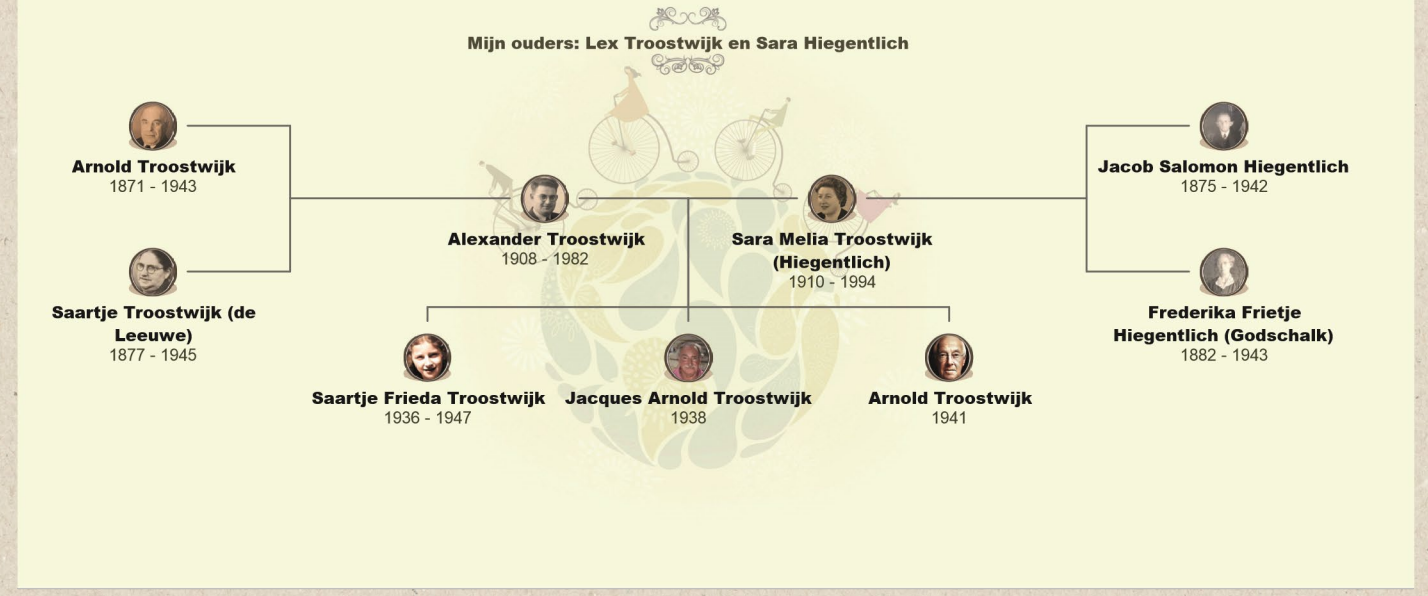
Reunited with family in Brussels. My mother on the left, my father as a soldier and Jacques Colthof on the right

My father as a soldier in Brussels

With Sari and Jacques and the botter with sail I was bribed with

On the ruins in Arnhem. F.l.t.r.my mother, Uncle Ies, my father, Uncle Max Aunt Betsy and aunt Hilda

Reconstruction with new shop in Arnhem


Mijn ouders: Lex Troostwijk en Sara Hiegentlich
Arnold Troostwijk
1871 - 1943
Saartje Troostwijk (de Leeuwe)
1877 - 1945
Alexander Troostwijk
1908 - 1982
Sara Melia Troostwijk (Hiegentlich)
1910 - 1994
Jacob Salomon Hiegentlich
1875 - 1942
Frederika Frietje Hiegentlich (Godschalk)
1882 - 1943
Saartje Frieda Troostwijk
1936 - 1947
Jacques Arnold Troostwijk
1938
Arnold Troostwijk
1941

The Doets Family

A year-old baby couldn't be brought along on the flight to Switzerland, since a baby might cry at inopportune times. Right before my parents and siblings were supposed to leave, I was fetched by a stranger, who for safety's sake couldn't tell them who she was. An almost inhuman decision for my parents, to have to give away their baby just like that, anonymously. But they had no choice. The stranger was Mrs. Visser, who lived in the Voermanstraat in Arnhem. She subsequently delivered me to Jannetje Doets. Jannetje and her husband Jan took me into their family, with all the attendant dangers. They had a girl of their own, Ans, and a boy, Kees. I was supposed to be the son of an ailing cousin of theirs; the cousin remained indisposed for the duration of the war. Unlike many of the children who shared my lot, I was lucky. I stayed with the Doets family as their own little boy for the duration of the war. When Arnhem was evacuated in 1944 during the Battle of Arnhem, we relocated via Apeldoorn to Middelie, where "Oom Jan's" sister lived. There, on that farm, I had plenty to eat, while in the West of the Netherlands people were starving. I ended the war a plump little thing, and on their return my family called me "Bulletje". During the war, my name was Petertje van Schaik.

I kept in touch with the Doets family after the war, even after Jan's death in 1984. Describing what I remember of the war is difficult for me, naturally, since I wasn't even four years old when the war ended in May 1945. So practically everything there is to tell about that time has to come from other people's stories, as well as what I was able to dig up since. My parents told me almost nothing about the war. Or maybe I didn't bother to retain what they told me, because as a child you just live your life, and history isn't important to you yet. There are two important documents I used to reconstruct what happened: the interview my mother gave [cited above], and my foster sister Ans's letter describing my stay with her family [cited below]. Guya organized a surprise party in the De Waag restaurant in The Hague for my fiftieth birthday, and invited my foster family to it. At that party, Ans gave me this reminiscence.

A short reminiscence on your fiftieth birthday.

About the three years we shared

"I still remember very clearly the night in 1942 when I found my mother standing in the bathroom with the cutest little boy, not even a year old: her sick cousin's baby.

"The cousin remained sick, and Petertje just became a second little brother to us, a delightful, compatible kid in our family. Our ages were well spaced: you were four years younger than Kees, who in turn was four years younger than me.

"In September '44 we had to evacuate. We were on foot, my father and mother pushing loaded-up bicycles on wooden tires, you with your inseparable limbless teddy bear under your arm, on our way to Apeldoorn.

"Fortunately we were soon picked up by a baker from Apeldoorn, who lifted us kids into his baker's cart, riding under the open flap. We found ourselves in a 25-kilometer-long procession of evacuees, most of them on foot and all heavily laden, as well as people on bicycles and a whole gamut of improvised vehicles carrying old folk or young children, from wheelbarrows to antique carriages lifted from the Open-Air Museum.

"We stayed with several different families in Apeldoorn before being allowed on a Red Cross transport to North Holland, at our own risk. From Purmerend we arrived in Middelie, where Aunt Trien, my foster father's sister, and Uncle Maarten welcomed us with open arms to their farm and butcher shop annex. They had two daughters of ten and seven respectively, [another[Ans and Klazien. As kids, for whom the war (happily) remained largely in the background, we had a great time. On and around the farm there was always something going on. Only, the two Ans-es hated doing the chores we were constantly saddled with: making the milk curdle in a large vat, slashing through it every half hour with a batten — the first step in cheese making. You weren't expected to help, but you always wanted to join in. 'Ik zim het zo graag' *['I real wanna']*, that is, "I really want to," was a constant refrain. ('Magge koe af?' *['Kinne geddup?' 'Can I get up?'*, when you wanted to be excused from the table after dinner] is an expression we still use.) You were full of fun, even back then, best friends with everyone, especially my grandfather and grandmother, who lived close by. In short, you were fully integrated into family life in Middelie. In early March '45, the family grew to include yet one more little Doets: Rik Jan.

"In May '45 your father visited us for the first time. I could still draw you a picture of the gorgeous yellow and black checked dress he brought for me. What a gift that was, back then! It was the first time I was confronted with the fact you didn't belong to us, but to another father and mother. I still remember how bizarre that seemed to me then.

"Actually, you too thought your father was a funny kind of interloper. But then you did wind up disappearing from our family. Petertje suddenly became Arnold. We returned to Arnhem, in your parents' house in Mauvestraat. Your parents weren't interested in returning to the Netherlands at first, but they too ended up settling in Arnhem once more. We didn't have much contact in the following years, yet you always kept in touch with my parents, and later, when you had left home, even strengthened the connection. As a result, we would occasionally see each other again. Herman and I both greatly appreciate the fact that in these past years our bond with you and Guya has only grown tighter. We hope it will always remain so!"

21 September 1991, Ans Matthijsen-Doets

"P.S. Forgive me for any historical errors! Actually, I wasn't sure if you had come to us in the autumn. Tonight your mother told me that it was at the beginning of October 1942."

I also have a postcard from the Doetses on the occasion of our marriage. What it says is telling: it's about my father's mental fortitude, how much the Doetses loved me, and my own anguish at the separation, young as I was.

To the Groom, but also to the Bride

"Forced by strange and violent circumstances, you became (incognito)
Our child from one day to the other. That's how it went back then.
It wasn't exactly a page taken out of *Sensible Parenthood*.
And what did you know anyway. You ate your bread and porridge with us.
But it was puzzling to your too-young brain.
And your rather helpless expression clearly said, "It's not right.''

But sleep and distractions and games, with this other family
Reconciled you to being 'Petertje'.
Three long years you were our child in every respect,
One year at Aunt Trien's, but most of the time in the Sweelincklaan.
And then… (never count on parents, for they'll let you down)
You were kicked out, just like that, from one day to the next!
We older kids had been prepared for this, but you thought it very strange.
'I want to stay with Daddy,' you said, feeling dispossessed and bereft.
But your real father said (a man, who is capable of such a thing):
'It only goes to show, blood is thicker than water.'
Since then you often visited us, to our delight.
Please forgive our graceless place in the guest book.
We'd have preferred to shake your hand in person at the wedding feast,
But because we're traveling, we cannot be there.
Guya and Arnold, congratulations! We wish you all the best.
See you soon in Gouda, and greetings from all the Doetses."

My relationship with my foster has grown much closer over the years. Ever since my mother passed away, on 19 August 1994, I no longer have a chance to hear directly from my own parents about my time as a hidden child.

Yad Vashem Honor

The application to have my foster parents honored at Yad Vashem was my way of expressing my gratitude to them. With the help of letters from Ans and from Mrs. Ge Linde, a neighbor of my foster parents' at Alteveer during the war, I sent in a Yad Vashem request on 16 June 1995 for Jan and Jannetje Doets-de Waal.

The following letter was also part of the request:

Heino, 25 June 1995

“Dear Arnold and Guya,

“After all the festivities of these past weeks, which took up all our time on top of our other ongoing responsibilities, let me climb for a moment into the WP in order to pass on some genealogical information, before I leave for the convent in Huissen tomorrow for a week’s painting retreat. We have very fond memories, by the way, of the second of June. Even though it was obvious my mother didn’t really understand the reason for the event, I definitely noticed her brighten whenever she saw one of her loved ones. The funny thing is that her reactions the next day were much clearer than I thought I’d seen on the evening in question. In any case, I think a get-together on her birthday makes sense as long as she’s still able to recognize everyone. The by-product, the fact that the others are also thrilled at the opportunity to see one another, is another reason.

“But now to the business at hand:

“I don't know exactly when you came to us in ’42. I only remember that it was evening. My father and mother went to pick you up. We were then living at 80 Sweelincklaan. We were evacuated on 19 September ’44. We found shelter for two days at the home of a childless couple. She was a teacher. They were totally unprepared for having children at their home. After that we were housed with a family with children, somewhere in the neighborhood of Het Loo. A week later we had a chance to join a Red Cross transport to Purmerend. From that time on we stayed with Aunt Trien Doets and Uncle Maarten Laan, residing at 87 Dorpstraat in Middelie. And with my grandparents Klaas Doets and Jansje Roelofs, who lived close by.

“In mid-Augusts we returned to Arnhem, you went back to your parents, and my family moved into your former house at 64 Mauvestraat, Arnhem. A lot of redundant information, I suppose, but I’ve tried to find out as much as I could from those who once had something to do with you. If you’d like to know more, you’ll let me know. It remains to be seen if I’d have any more information to give you, no matter how dearly I should like to. What a blessing, that children can simply accept, without need for explanation, the arrival of a new ‘little brother’!

“Warmest regards, from Herman too, and love from your Ans.”

In the end it took just short of three years for my foster parents to receive the Yad Vashem honor. Israel does a thorough background investigation.

The presentation took place on Wednesday 8 April 1998/12 Nissan 5758, at 3 p.m. at De Sonnenberg *[a care home - HV]*, in Oosterbeek. The location was chosen so that my foster mother would not have to travel far from home. Since she had been mentally declining, I had arranged for the distinction to be presented not by the Israeli ambassador, as is normally the case, but by Iddo Moed, press and cultural attaché to the Israeli embassy. Since Iddo speaks Dutch fluently, I hoped it would make it easier for my foster mother to understand the proceedings.

The certificate begins with:

"*I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. —* [Isaiah 56:5] On this day, Jan Doets (posthumous) and his spouse Jannetje Doets-de Waal are honored as Righteous Among the Nations."

The official text of the distinction:

"The Troostwijk family decided in 1942 to escape to Switzerland, but before undertaking the dangerous journey, decided to place their 11-month-old son Arnold with a local foster family. Jan and Jannetje Doets, who were also living in Arnhem (Gelderland) at the time, were prepared to take in the baby, and came to fetch him one night – anonymously. The Doetses had two children of their own, Ans, nine years old, and Kees, five. From that day forward, Arnold was called Petertje, and was presented as the child of a sick cousin. The child soon got used to his new family, and was very well cared for. After the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944, the Doetses themselves were forced to evacuate, and they fled north with their children, including Arnold.

"After sheltering at various addresses, they spent the last seven months of the war with relatives in Purmerend *[should be Middelie — AT]*. In May 1945, Arnold's father, on his return to the Netherlands, placed an advertisement in the newspaper to find his son. Jan and Jannetje responded to the notice, and returned the child to his parents. The Doets family and Arnold's parents then lived together in the same house for a short while. *[I don't think that's correct, my parents were living in Brussels at the time — AT]*

The Doets's home had been destroyed. After the war, Arnold kept in touch with the Doetses, even after Jan's death in 1984. On 29 June1997, Jan Doets and his wife Jannetje Doets-de Waal were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations."

The Yad Vashem award made me see my foster parents in a new light. I remember my foster mother as a tall, slim, kind-hearted woman. I can illustrate that with the following. I did not visit my foster parents very regularly. Usually I'd be with one or more of my children, as a proud tomcat, as it were, showing off his young. But no matter how incidental or unexpected my visit, the door of 64 Mauvestraat was always opened with a wide smile, and my foster mother would always exclaim, "How nice of you to come!." Never a reproach to the effect of 'It's been so long since I've seen you'. That made it always a joy to visit them, and it was always hard to tear myself away. I can't, alas, tell you what she was like when I was hidden there, simply because I just can't remember. My foster mother did say I was a very sweet baby.

In the newspaper article about my foster father in the Appendix, he is referred to as "de heer Doets" *[the gentleman Doets – an old-fashioned form of address - HV].* That makes it sound a bit formal. I think my foster father would agree. He didn't like any unnecessary hoo-ha.

The gathering for the Yad Vashem award took place forty-three years after the war. As I write this, it is 28 January 2020, exactly 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz. Yesterday, during the ceremony at the Auschwitz Monument, Prime Minister Rutte apologized for the fact that during the war the government looked away as Jews were singled out, and for the authorities' cooperation in the persecution of the Jews.

We had sent out a limited number of invitations to the Yad Vashem ceremony. It was primarily a family occasion, consisting of our family, my brother and his children, and the Doetses. The cousins, Klazien and Ans Laan , were also present with their spouses. The high point was the presentation of the declaration and the medal. The other speeches stressed the close connection between the Doets and Troostwijk families. Kees Doets, Herman Matthijsen (husband of Ans) and Joke (Kees's girlfriend) provided the musical portion.

Our daughter Hester, ten years old at the time, opened the ceremony with the poem *Every person has a name.*

Every person has name, given by God
By his father and mother
Every person has a name.
For their figure and their laugh and their clothing
Every person has a name, given by the mountains
And by their walls.
Every person has a name,
Given by the stars and by their neighbors

Every person has a name, for their sins
And their desires.
Every person has a name
Given by their haters and by their loved ones
Every person has a name for their feast days
And for their work days
Every person has a name
For the seasons. And for their blindness
Every person has a name
Given by the sea. And their death.

I then made a speech in which I tried to express my gratitude:

"Dear Mama Doets, dear family, Mr. Moed and representatives of the Israeli Embassy, Rabbi Soetendorp, Mrs. Tromp, and all who are here from the Sonnenberg Home. I stand here with a feeling of sadness, gladness and gratitude.

SADNESS

"Because there was a dark period in our lives, in which certain kinds of people, and even little children, had to go into hiding. Six million Jews died in the extermination camps. The older one gets, the more one realizes what luck one has had. You come into a

new family as an innocent baby. You're so comfortable there that no one realizes from seeing you that you actually have two sets of parents. Parents who are so important to your development. And especially during your earliest formative years. Here I notice that I am never sad for long. That is probably because I've always had so much luck. Not only did strangers take me under their wing in the first place; no, Oom Jan and Mama Doets continued to take care of me for the duration of the war. I stayed with one and the same family the whole time. Many of my peers never enjoyed such calm, and were forced to move from hiding place to hiding place. What is there to be sad about, then? The only thing that makes me unhappy is that it has taken 53 long years to find, with this award, a concrete way of expressing my thanks. Thanks that are so well deserved.

"Because hiding Jewish compatriots or other 'criminals' meant risking your own life. Fortunately, others, not only Uncle Jan and Mama Doets, also ignored the Germans' orders. In my view, this distinction for bravery and humaneness, therefore, comes late, and I am sorry about that. The heroes of my story are thanked too late. It's my own fault, of course. But I think it behooves me to explain how it happened. First of all, it stands to reason. You're a baby, and you hardly even realize you're alive. You do eat and cry, of course. But the fact that you're alive is a normal phenomenon. You never think about it. But after the war, you grow up. You begin to realize what happened. Of course I was told I was hidden. But it was all behind us then, and everything had turned out for the best. Moreover, in the years right after the war, people didn't like to talk about what happened. It's only since the seventies that there has been so much attention, in documentaries and films, on the wartime persecutions. I don't mean to use that as an excuse. I just want to explain why it's only now that we are gathered here to express our thanks. By 'we' I mean, naturally, myself, Guya, Ruben, Gabriel and Hester. The last three would not have been here, in this form, without me. The concrete proof that when you save a human life, you save mankind. But to go back a bit: why has it taken 53 years? The Yad Vashem award was started in the sixties. I always thought I would have to have a very detailed story in order to nominate someone for a Righteous Among the Nations distinction. I only knew that one fine night Papa and Mama Doets came to fetch me. I thought I would also have to provide the names of those who'd arranged it and made the connection. Once both of my biological parents were dead, I realized they couldn't provide me with any

further details of how I came to be hidden. On the occasion of my fiftieth birthday, Ans wrote what she knew about my stay with her family, and in Middelie. I also met Mrs. Linde at one of Mama Doets's birthday gatherings. She told me that she sometimes used to look after me when the Doetses went to do their shopping. That provided me with proof of my time as a hidden child from someone who was still alive.

"The process of the application took several more years. If you ask me, in this case at least, it's not better late than never. Not for Jan and Jannie Doets. Not for the brave people who saved my life, anyway. It does apply to the children and grandchildren. I think that for you, it's a good thing that this gathering is making us pause to consider what your parents and grandparents did for me in those difficult and dark war years. That thought already makes me less sad, and I think I can now turn to my gladness.

GLADNESS

"Gladness may be shorter than the previous section, but gladness is definitely much better. My gladness is, naturally, the fact that we are now gathered together for the Yad Vashem ceremony. I am glad that Papa and Mama Doets have today received the State of Israel's highest honor, accorded the title of Righteous Among the Nations. The names of Jan and Jannie Doets will be inscribed on the Wall of Honor at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

"Another aspect of gladness is the fact that thanks to the war, I am part of two families. Of course I am a Troostwijk, and spent the years of my youth on the Rembrandtlaan in Arnhem. I only visited the Mauvestraat occasionally. I'd just drop in, usually without warning. No matter how long it had been since they'd seen me or hadn't heard from me, I was always warmly greeted and made to feel very welcome. That's to be expected, I believe, of children returning home. There was also gladness more recently, at Jannie's birthday celebrations My family and I simply felt we were part of the Doets family, and we would pick up again as if we'd been speaking just the day before. That brings me to the last part: gratitude.

GRATEFUL

"We Jews have a prayer that expresses our gratitude for having been granted a certain experience. Usually it involves some exceptional event. That is what I am feeling right now. It's directly connected to my thankfulness for having been rescued. It's also because I am a happy and a lucky man. So as far as I am concerned, it was well worth it. I am very thankful for my relationship with Ans and Herman, with Kees and Rik Jan and Noor. Maybe we aren't biologically related. But in my view that's the only difference. And although the gratitude hasn't changed over time, perhaps I can make it more tangible now than I could before.

For Jannie, Mama Doets, I have, besides the Yad Vashem honor, another memento of this day, in the form of a certificate from the Jewish National Fund, for trees in the Anne Frank park. Trees that will be planted in Israel. They are crucial to improving the soil as well as the fertility of the land. For my sister and Herman, brothers and Noor, I have brought the book *Edith's Story.* Edith van Hessen is a cousin of my father-in-law, Paul van Hessen. He is not able to join us because he has bronchitis. But fortunately, Mother is. Edith tells her own story of being a hidden child. Edith was a teenager. She wrote this for his children and grandchildren. As a baby, I did not experience the period as intensely as Edith. Reading *Edith's Story* is, I think, well worth it. It describes the life of a child in hiding. I never really thought of the effect it must have had on Ans and Kees, to have their little brother abandon them so suddenly. I hadn't realized it before. I will bear it in mind from this day on. For Papa and Mama Doets I have also brought a tree certificate as a memento of this day. The same goes for the family in Middelie, whom I have perhaps neglected most of all. I've only visited Alkmaar once. Maybe I can now make amends to Ans and Klazien. And of course I can't forget Mrs. Linde. You have played an important role in arranging this honor. I'm so glad you could be here. The same goes for my brother Jacques and his son Ronald. I would like to thank De Sonnenberg for its hospitality. And give Mrs. Tromp a tree certificate too. Of course I should also thank the musicians from our own ranks, for their melodious accompaniment today.

"Finally, I'd like to thank the Embassy for their help and assistance. And Awraham Soetendorp, who in my view was here as a friend, and only spoke as a rabbi."

Everyone was given a baby photo of me, with the inscription: *"Who saves a human life, saves all mankind."*

After the Yad Vashem ceremony, I Ans Laan, the daughter of the Middelie branch of the family, forwarded this letter to me:

"Dear Family,

"Herewith the promised photo of the farm (also on behalf of Ans). To the right of the farmhouse, the pear tree we children used to climb, and the little ditch we used to skim for frogspawn. And Father would carry us to the ditch with our skates already buckled under our boots, so that we could skate off right away. And a mother who was always —in every aspect — there for us. *[This mother was my foster father's sister.]* As you can see, this photo means a lot to me. In short: a happy childhood there. And perhaps, Arnold, this photo will bring up more memories for you too.

" '8 April 1998'. A very special, beautiful, moving day. Thanks again for including us.

"With warm regards, also on behalf of Jan,

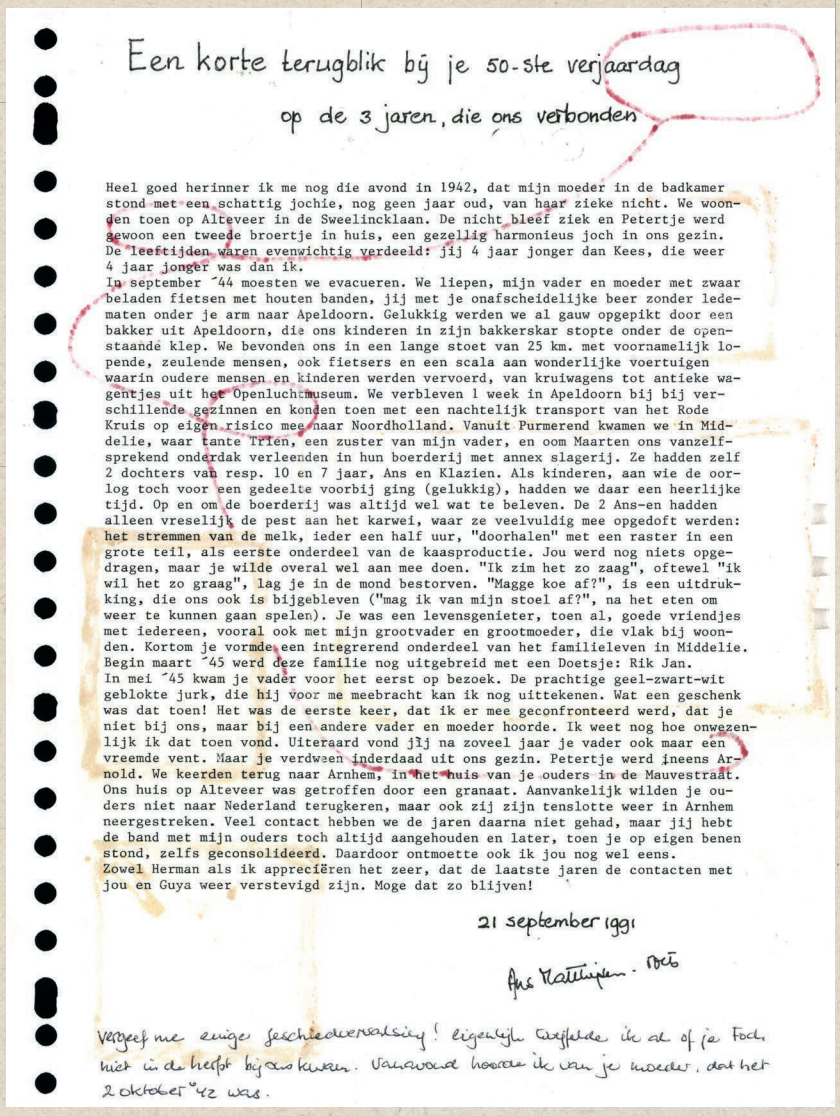
"Klaziena de Kroon-Laan

"P.S. The tree certificate had the invoice stuck to it *[mistake on behalf of the JNF]*"

My foster mother with Kees

My foster father Jan Doets

The story of Ans on the occasion of my 50th birthday



Een korte terugblik bij je 50-ste verjaardag

op de 3 jaren, die ons verbonden

Heel goed herinner ik me nog die avond in 1942, dat mijn moeder in de badkamer stond met een schattig jochie, nog geen jaar oud, van haar zieke nicht. We woonden toen op Alteveer in de Sweelincklaan. De nicht bleef ziek en Petertje werd gewoon een tweede broertje in huis, een gezellig harmonieus joch in ons gezin. De leeftijden waren evenwichtig verdeeld: jij 4 jaar jonger dan Kees, die weer 4 jaar jonger was dan ik.
In september '44 moesten we evacueren. We liepen, mijn vader en moeder met zwaar beladen fietsen met houten banden, jij met je onafscheidelijke beer zonder ledematen onder je arm naar Apeldoorn. Gelukkig werden we al gauw opgepikt door een bakker uit Apeldoorn, die ons kinderen in zijn bakkerskar stopte onder de openstaande klep. We bevonden ons in een lange stoet van 25 km. met voornamelijk lopende, zeulende mensen, ook fietsers en een scala aan wonderlijke voertuigen waarin oudere mensen en kinderen werden vervoerd, van kruiwagens tot antieke wagentjes uit het Openluchtmuseum. We verbleven 1 week in Apeldoorn bij bij verschillende gezinnen en konden toen met een nachtelijk transport van het Rode Kruis op eigen risico mee naar Noordholland. Vanuit Purmerend kwamen we in Middelie, waar tante Trien, een zuster van mijn vader, en oom Maarten ons vanzelfsprekend onderdak verleenden in hun boerderij met annex slagerij. Ze hadden zelf 2 dochters van resp. 10 en 7 jaar, Ans en Klazien. Als kinderen, aan wie de oorlog toch voor een gedeelte voorbij ging (gelukkig), hadden we daar een heerlijke tijd. Op en om de boerderij was altijd wel wat te beleven. De 2 Ans-en hadden alleen vreselijk de pest aan het karwei, waar ze veelvuldig mee opgedoft werden: het stremmen van de melk, ieder een half uur, "doorhalen" met een raster in een grote teil, als eerste onderdeel van de kaasproductie. Jou werd nog niets opgedragen, maar je wilde overal wel aan mee doen. "Ik zim het zo zaag", oftewel "ik wil het zo graag", lag je in de mond bestorven. "Magge koe af?", is een uitdrukking, die ons ook is bijgebleven ("mag ik van mijn stoel af?", na het eten om weer te kunnen gaan spelen). Je was een levensgenieter, toen al, goede vriendjes met iedereen, vooral ook met mijn grootvader en grootmoeder, die vlak bij woonden. Kortom je vormde een integrerend onderdeel van het familieleven in Middelie.
Begin maart '45 werd deze familie nog uitgebreid met een Doetsje: Rik Jan.
In mei '45 kwam je vader voor het eerst op bezoek. De prachtige geel-zwart-wit geblokte jurk, die hij voor me meebracht kan ik nog uittekenen. Wat een geschenk was dat toen! Het was de eerste keer, dat ik er mee geconfronteerd werd, dat je niet bij ons, maar bij een andere vader en moeder hoorde. Ik weet nog hoe onwezenlijk ik dat toen vond. Uiteraard vond jij na zoveel jaar je vader ook maar een vreemde vent. Maar je verdween inderdaad uit ons gezin. Petertje werd ineens Arnold. We keerden terug naar Arnhem, in het huis van je ouders in de Mauvestraat. Ons huis op Alteveer was getroffen door een granaat. Aanvankelijk wilden je ouders niet naar Nederland terugkeren, maar ook zij zijn tenslotte weer in Arnhem neergestreken. Veel contact hebben we de jaren daarna niet gehad, maar jij hebt de band met mijn ouders toch altijd aangehouden en later, toen je op eigen benen stond, zelfs geconsolideerd. Daardoor ontmoette ook ik jou nog wel eens.
Zowel Herman als ik appreciëren het zeer, dat de laatste jaren de contacten met jou en Guya weer verstevigd zijn. Moge dat zo blijven!

21 september 1991

Ans Kattenberg - Roos

Vergeef me enige geschiedvervalsing! Eigenlijk twijfelde ik al of je Foch niet in de herfst bij ons kwam. Vanavond hoorde ik van je moeder, dat het 2 oktober '42 was.

The story of Ans in tekst on the occasion of my 50th birthday

The farm in Middelie province of North Holland our address after September 1944

Trien Laan-Doets and Maarten Laan , our shelter in Middelie

With my inseparable bear without arms

ונתתי להם בביתי ובחומתי יד ושם טוב מבנים ומבנות
שם עולם אתן-לו אשר לא יכרת :

"Ik geef hun een eeuwige naam,
die niet uitgeroeid zal worden"
(Jesaja 56 : 5)

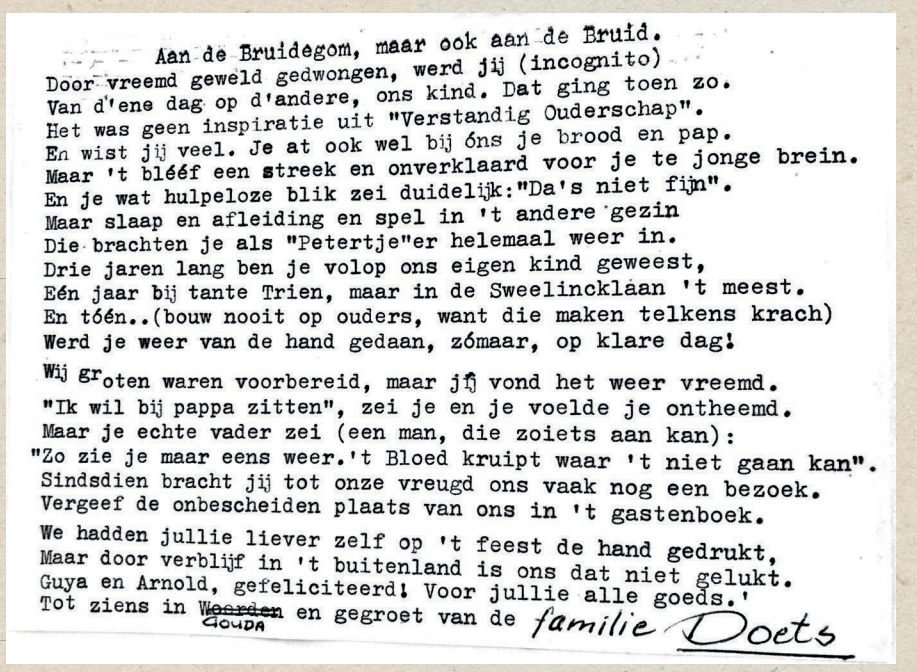
Vandaag worden geëerd als
"Rechtvaardigen onder de Volkeren"

Jan Doets (postuum)
en zijn echtgenote Jannetje Doets-de Waal

Yad Vashem award form y foster parents Jan and Jannetje Doets-de Waal

The ceremony of the Yad Vashem award to my foster mother Jannetje Doets-de Waal

Dinner after the ceremony, with Kees Doets, my foster mother and Mrs Linde

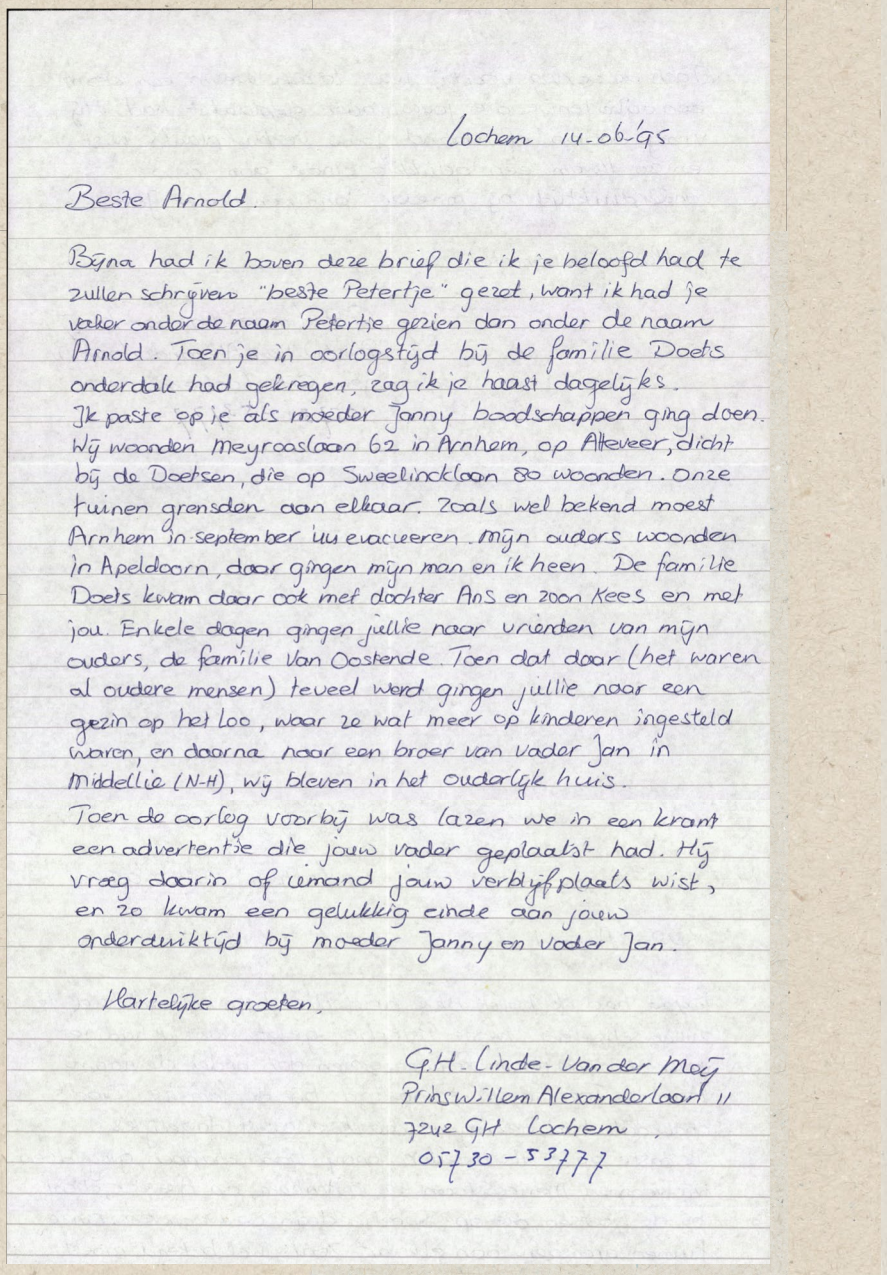


Aan de Bruidegom, maar ook aan de Bruid.
Door vreemd geweld gedwongen, werd jij (incognito)
Van d'ene dag op d'andere, ons kind. Dat ging toen zo.
Het was geen inspiratie uit "Verstandig Ouderschap".
En wist jij veel. Je at ook wel bij óns je brood en pap.
Maar 't bléef een streek en onverklaard voor je te jonge brein.
En je wat hulpeloze blik zei duidelijk:"Da's niet fijn".
Maar slaap en afleiding en spel in 't andere gezin
Die brachten je als "Petertje"er helemaal weer in.
Drie jaren lang ben je volop ons eigen kind geweest,
Eén jaar bij tante Trien, maar in de Sweelincklaan 't meest.
En tóén..(bouw nooit op ouders, want die maken telkens krach)
Werd je weer van de hand gedaan, zómaar, op klare dag!

Wij groten waren voorbereid, maar jij vond het weer vreemd.
"Ik wil bij pappa zitten", zei je en je voelde je ontheemd.
Maar je echte vader zei (een man, die zoiets aan kan):
"Zo zie je maar eens weer.'t Bloed kruipt waar 't niet gaan kan".
Sindsdien bracht jij tot onze vreugd ons vaak nog een bezoek.
Vergeef de onbescheiden plaats van ons in 't gastenboek.

We hadden jullie liever zelf op 't feest de hand gedrukt,
Maar door verblijf in 't buitenland is ons dat niet gelukt.
Guya en Arnold, gefeliciteerd! Voor jullie alle goeds.'
Tot ziens in ~~Woerden~~ Gouda en gegroet van de familie Doets

Congratulations from my foster parents on the occasion of our wedding June 14 1970



Lochem 14-06-95

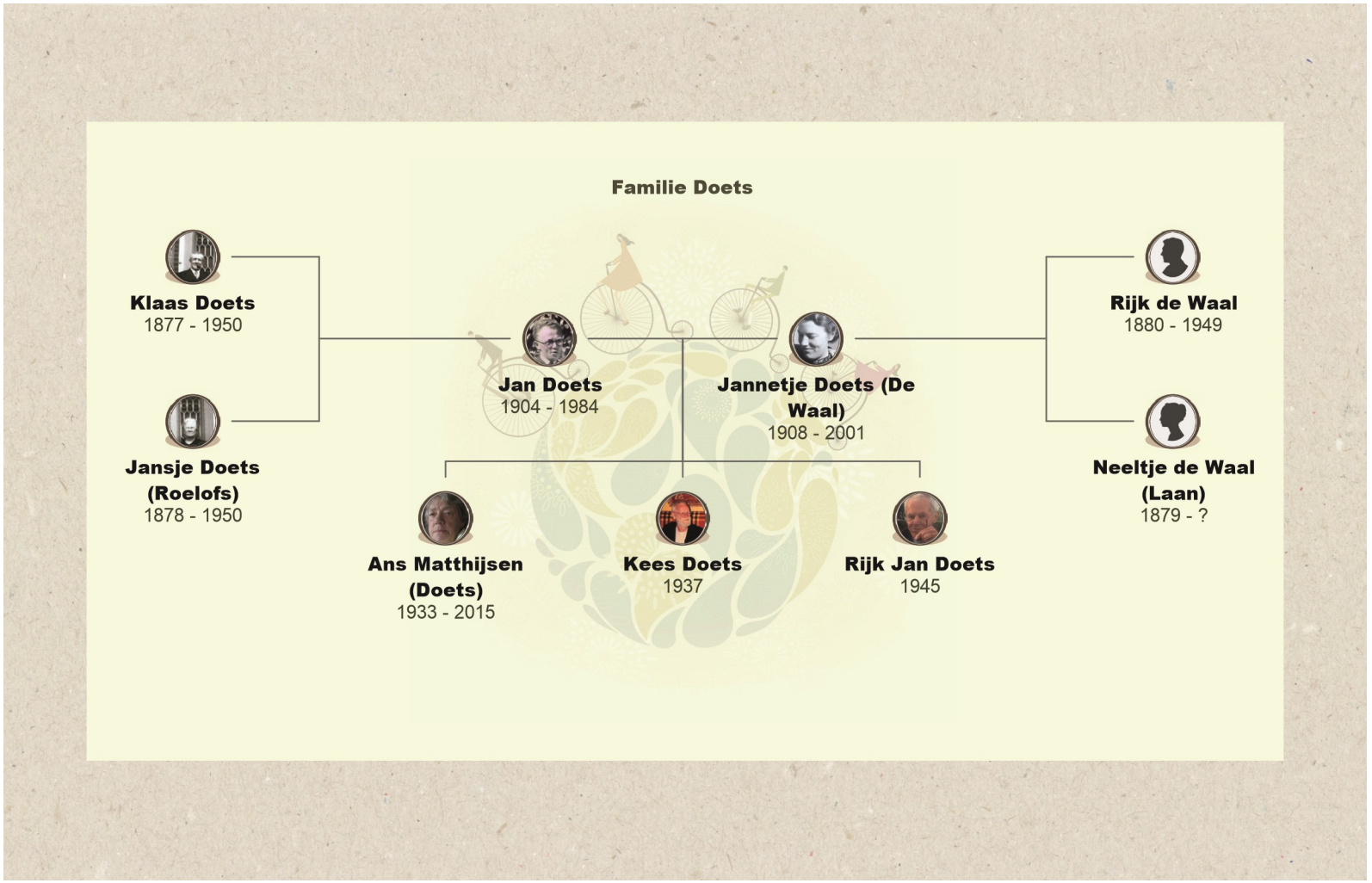
Beste Arnold.

Bijna had ik boven deze brief die ik je beloofd had te zullen schrijven "beste Petertje" gezet, want ik had je vaker onder de naam Petertje gezien dan onder de naam Arnold. Toen je in oorlogstijd bij de familie Doets onderdak had gekregen, zag ik je haast dagelijks. Ik paste op je als moeder Janny boodschappen ging doen. Wij woonden Meyroslaan 62 in Arnhem, op Alkeveer, dicht bij de Doetsen, die op Sweelinckloan 80 woonden. Onze tuinen grensden aan elkaar. Zoals wel bekend moest Arnhem in september ineevacueeren. mijn ouders woonden in Apeldoorn, daar gingen mijn man en ik heen. De familie Doets kwam daar ook met dochter Ans en zoon Kees en met jou. Enkele dagen gingen jullie naar vrienden van mijn ouders, de familie Van Oostende. Toen dat daar (het waren al oudere mensen) teveel werd gingen jullie naar een gezin op het Loo, waar ze wat meer op kinderen ingesteld waren, en daarna naar een broer van vader Jan in Middellie (N-H), wij bleven in het ouderlijk huis.
Toen de oorlog voorbij was lazen we in een krant een advertentie die jouw vader geplaatst had. Hij vroeg daarin of iemand jouw verblijfplaats wist, en zo kwam een gelukkig einde aan jouw onderduiktijd bij moeder Janny en vader Jan.

Hartelijke groeten,

G.H. Linde-Van der Meij
Prinswillem Alexanderlaan 11
7242 GH Lochem
05730-53777

Letter from Mrs Linde, one of the pieces of evidence, that I went into hiding


Familie Doets
Klaas Doets
1877 - 1950
Jansje Doets
(Roelofs)
1878 - 1950
Jan Doets
1904 - 1984
Jannetje Doets (De
Waal)
1908 - 2001
Rijk de Waal
1880 - 1949
Neeltje de Waal
(Laan)
1879 - ?
Ans Matthijsen
(Doets)
1933 - 2015
Kees Doets
1937
Rijk Jan Doets
1945

GOUDLIJSTER II

I'll continue with my own story. When I was twenty, I left Arnhem; first for my military service, and then to Rotterdam. In spite of my carefree childhood, I never regretted leaving Arnhem. Once you've been in the west, Arnhem does seem rather provincial.

On the advice of a neighbor with whom I used to stay in Rotterdam when I had a girlfriend in Den Haag, I enrolled in what was then called the Economic College in 1963. This was after my military service, where I made it to sergeant in the artillery. In those days you had to serve two years. The last year of my service I was stationed in Schaarsbergen, near Arnhem. Every day around 3 o'clock I'd hop on my motorbike and ride out the gate to my parents' house, where I studied the syllabus for my degree in economics.

In Rotterdam I joined the Rotterdam Student Corps. Even at that time there were hazing incidents. Our pledge period was cut short after we had to jump out of a window and landed on bales of straw filled with manure. A rather innocent mishap. I passed my first-year exam straightaway, and began in 1963 as a second-year student. In spite of my quick start, it still took a long time to finish my studies: I didn't get my degree until October 1970. That was partly because I spent a year in Amsterdam working for Uncle Sam and Cousin Arie, and one summer my father fell ill and I had to take over for him in the family business.

After the war, Uncle Sam and Arie had built a very big machinery brokerage firm, the Troostwijk Group. They ran auctions, made fire insurance appraisals, and damage assessment. They also had a real estate department. Uncle Sam wanted another Troostwijk in the firm besides Arie, and invited me to come work with them in the Amsterdam office. I had just passed my Bachelor's in Economics, in early 1967. I halted my studies in Rotterdam, thinking I would finish my degree at the University of Amsterdam. At the time I worked there, the Troostwijk Group had an office on the Rokin in Amsterdam, above the jeweler Bonebakker. I stayed at Arie and Mirjam's for the first few weeks; later I rented an attic room in the Parnassusweg. From my room you could cross the flat roof to the neighboring buildings. My landlady was an elderly lady who in

my recollection never wore anything but a housecoat. For my training I was attached to an appraiser who drew up reports on the value of various companies' inventories. I remember a company with large presses that transformed a sheet of metal into a car door with the push of a button. For a theoretical economist, appraising all those machines was something you'd have to learn in practice. I never got that far, however. Uncle Sam had a heart attack, and after spending several weeks in bed, died of cardiac arrest on 21 October 1967. Arie consequently had to run the business by himself, and there wasn't much room for training me. I was given to understand that it made more sense for me to continue my studies in Rotterdam. This was the best outcome for me too, since I had already realized that the economics course in Amsterdam didn't exactly line up with my Rotterdam degree. So that was the end of my Troostwijk Group adventure. It also seemed to me best to build a future on my own abilities, rather than always being a protégé of the family. The Troostwijk Group acquired great renown after the war.

Ruben and Gabriel both pursued their studies in Rotterdam, and both joined the Corps. Ruben at first wanted to study in Amsterdam, which I wasn't too happy about. But apparently his friends from The Hague and Wassenaar all chose Rotterdam. Without my having to stick my nose in, in the end Ruben too decided on Rotterdam (the "cradle of economics").

Guya

In 1968, Lex, a fellow student I used to play bridge with, took me home for Friday Shabbat, and there I met his sister. It was love at first sight. Guya and I were bridge partners that first night against her parents. I met her on 4 October (World Animal Day), and, driving her home in a snowstorm after my father's 60th birthday party (on 25 December 1968), asked her to marry me. Oh, and she said yes! So within the space of three months, that was an important milestone in my life. A few months after getting engaged, we had a chuppah [wedding] in The Hague's Portuguese Synagogue. We were married by Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, who had also been a hidden child. A fellow-victim, therefore.

I received my degree at the end of the summer of 1970, and on 1 October went to work at Esso in The Hague as a marketing trainee. After we got married, Guya and I

moved into a single-family home in Gouda, which we loved. I had heard about the house from a colleague at Mees & Zonen Insurance. As a student I had had a number of jobs to help pay for my studies. First at an architectural firm, through an introduction from my uncle in England. And later at Mees, during a reorganization. I also worked as a chauffeur for an old insurance society director, driving him around in a Rover 2000. As an impoverished student, I'd sometimes take it out for a drive by myself.

Our eldest son Ruben was born in Gouda. We didn't think it was very safe to drive on the motorway with a baby on board, so we moved to The Hague the following year. Guya was working at the Israeli Embassy in The Hague; I worked at Esso. Gabriel and Hester were born in The Hague, in a lovely townhouse. I worked until 1988 at Esso in different positions, first in marketing, later in accounting. I was treasurer, and was responsible for investing Esso's pension fund. After my time at Esso, I became director of the pension fund De Eendragt, the former Van Gelderpapier pension fund. Van Gelderpapier had gone bankrupt in 1981. At De Eendragt I looked after the pensions of 15 paper factories that had survived the bankruptcy.

I have sat on many boards, including 17 years on the board of The Hague's Liberal Jewish Community. I also oversaw the construction of the Glass Hall that was built next to the Snoge [Synagogue] in The Hague. Another trustee function was with Levi Lassen, which meant that on top of my normal job, I had rather a lot on my plate. In 2003 I began having some Ménière's disease symptoms, which led to my decision to retire in the summer of 2004. I was 63. The building of the Glass Hall had taken seven years. Some had been lean years. But the end result was a fantastic edifice, of which I am very proud. I remained a board member and chairman of the Levi Lassen Foundation, until my 15-year term was up. Levi Lassen is a charitable institution that donates to Jewish causes, but also supports non-Jewish activities in The Hague and its environs. Thanks to its donations, the foundation has had an important impact on the resurgence of Jewish life in the Netherlands, as well as supporting a considerable number of projects in Israel.

In 1990 our family moved from the Oostduinlaan to 7 Van Soutelandlaan, but the top floor was soon vacated after the children flew the coop. All three of our children have Jewish spouses or partners. They all live near us in Amsterdam and Amstelveen. We have

been blessed with six wonderful grandchildren. There should really have been more: our daughter Hester's and husband Danny's first baby died at the end of three months in Leiden's University hospital. After two unsuccessful open-heart surgeries, it was determined he could not be saved. His stay in the hospital was a time of hope and fear. His death and funeral had a great impact on our family. As a family, through intensive outreach to Hester and Danny, we tried to cope with this unimaginable sorrow, but the wound will never heal completely. To make matters worse, in December 2012 Hester gave birth to a little girl. A stillborn baby of twenty weeks.

Four years ago we moved from The Hague to Amsterdam because, as I used to complain, we were driving to Amsterdam at least eight days a week.

Meanwhile I have given up most of my board responsibilities. In spite of my 79 years, I am still working for an Israeli firm, and spend my free time on my racing bike and the golf course. In Amsterdam we have a Jewish cycling club that once-a-year tours Israel to raise money for the Alyn Children's Hospital in Jerusalem. I also play in a bridge foursome with a group of friends every Tuesday evening. Our son Gabriel is also part of the group. I have a breakfast club on Friday mornings, to review the week, before the Sabbath. I try to exercise twice a week to stay in shape, especially when I have to prepare for our annual five-day bike trip through the Negev or Galilee for the Alyn Hospital.

Together again at the table

At the beginning of my story I mentioned *Together at the table*, an exhibition at the City Archive of Amsterdam, put on by the De Terugkeer [The Return] Foundation, with which I happened to become involved. Jan Teeuwissen (the director of *Beelden aan Zee* [*Sculptures by the Sea* Museum]) and Lex Krater, of the foundation mentioned above, paid me a visit to ask if I could help to raise funds for this project. When I told them I myself had been reunited with my family after the war, someone called me after the meeting to ask if I would like to participate in the project, and to be interviewed about my experiences.

I have written down my experiences separately for *Together at the table.*

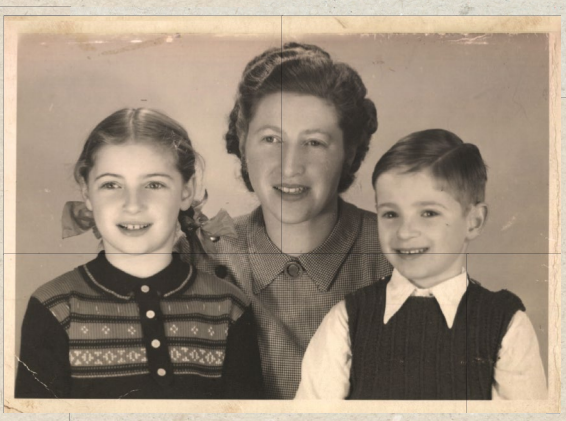
I want to stress that I always felt I was a lucky child. I owe that lucky break to my parents' courageous decision to hand me over to strangers to hide me, which allowed me to survive World War Two. It wasn't until much later that I came to realize how difficult that must have been for them, and what it meant for me. The luck can further be attributed to Jan and Jannetje Doets and their children, who took me in with such great love and kindness, as if I were their own child. In my experience, life, on the whole, has been good. Of course we have also known sad times, such as losing our parents, close family members and friends. Death is a part of life, something we experience daily, now that we are older. Meanwhile I have been happily married to Guya for fifty years. Together we have raised a wonderful family, children and grandchildren. It's a close and warm bond.

And then I can't help thinking of the words of our Jewish neighbor in The Hague:

"He didn't manage to keep us down."

Sari and Jacques in Brussel

Together with Sari in Brussels with inseparable tram



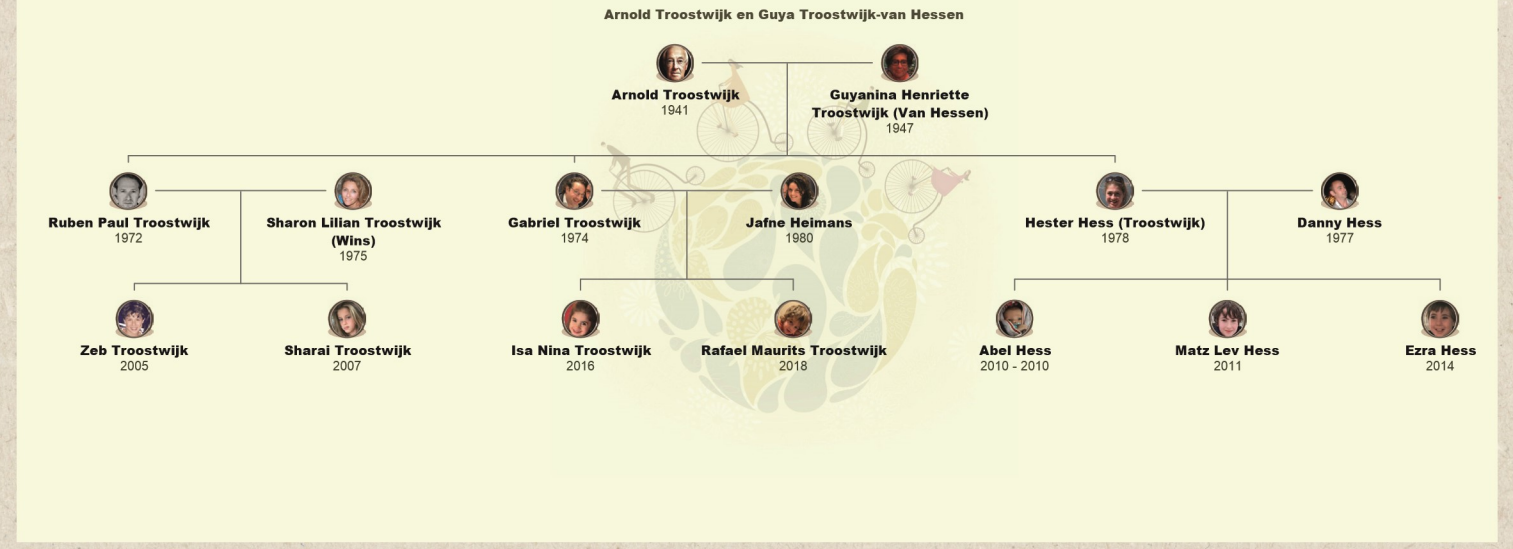
My mother with Sari and Jacques after the war

My bar mitzvah suit, 1954

בר מצוה
van onze zoon 0555
JACQUES
op שבת ק׳ פ׳ בשלח
13 Sjewat 5711 - 20 Jan. '51
A. Troostwijk.
S. M. Troostwijk-Hiegentlich
Arnhem
Rembrandtlaan 31
Receptie van 2—5 uur in
de Culturele zaal der Israël.
Gemeente, Pastoorstr. 17 a.

Bar mitzvah from Jacques, 1951

Our family in the early eighties


Arnold Troostwijk en Guya Troostwijk-van Hessen
Arnold Troostwijk
1941
Guyanina Henriette Troostwijk (Van Hessen)
1947
Ruben Paul Troostwijk
1972
Sharon Lilian Troostwijk (Wins)
1975
Gabriel Troostwijk
1974
Jafne Heimans
1980
Hester Hess (Troostwijk)
1978
Danny Hess
1977
Zeb Troostwijk
2005
Sharai Troostwijk
2007
Isa Nina Troostwijk
2016
Rafael Maurits Troostwijk
2018
Abel Hess
2010 - 2010
Matz Lev Hess
2011
Ezra Hess
2014

A word of thanks

I started *Goudlijster* under the guidance of Esther Göbel, whom I met when she interviewed me for the *Together again at the table* exhibition. Esther inspired me to try to find out as much as I could about my family. I have finally succeeded in doing so.

Once I had put my story down on paper, Inge van Schaik came to my assistance as editor. She made the whole thing readable, and thanks to her, the process was expedited. Hans Schogt, a cousin-in-law of Guya's, took on the final corrections.

Our youngest son Gabriel set up the website www.goudlijster.nl . We decided on a website because the family trees of my own family and the Doetses are too big to reproduce in a book. The story of my cousin Arie about his family's flight to Switzerland, and Uncle Sam's account on the Jewish persecution in the Netherlands, are also reproduced on the website. I intend to use the site to archive the photographs and documents I've used, so that they won't get lost, and can be referred to by others.

Hester Velmans, Guya's cousin, who also edited *Edith's Story*, has translated the book into English. The translation is also on the website. That way my family in England, and other English-speaking friends, can read it too.

Besides thanks and appreciation to all who helped me, I would like to thank Guya, Ruben, Gabriel and Hester, for being the stimulus that made this project happen.

APPENDIX

Interview with Jan Doets

Retirement: farewell, Hesselbergh School.

MAVO-Principal J. Doets: “I like having a discussion”

As of 1 August, Arnhem’s schools are losing a familiar face. Mr. J. Doets, principal of the Hesselbergh School in Arnhem, is retiring. He has been a force in ULO [middle school] education since 1934. What does a ULO teacher, a MAVO instructor in today’s parlance, look like, exactly? “To me, those are the most energetic teachers in the educational system,” avers Mr. Doets. Much has changed in these past few years for the ULO, says Mr. Doets. “The push to modernize came from within, however. Around 1960, people started asking themselves: Are we doing it right? A number of experimental schools, such as the Reyenga ULO in Oosterbeek, worked out the new methods, and then imparted them to us.” Mr. Doets has always enjoyed his job. Especially the interaction with students and others. “I like best being the moderator, to initiate the discussion. The good thing about that is that you can show people they can think differently about certain subjects than they usually do.

“With kids, that also works very well. You have to let them discover things for themselves. The inquiry, that’s what it’s about. So I understand their resistance. They have an aversion to the established order, it isn’t relevant to them.”

Our conversation with Mr. Doets smoothly turns to his extracurricular activities: his work for the Humanist Alliance.

“After the war, when school was finished, a little group of us left Arnhem for [the region of] de Peel, where the DUW camps were located. We would talk to the unemployed workers there, and gain their trust so that we could help solve their problems. Helping people is also what we do at the Home for Veterans, although I think ‘home for veterans’ is a misnomer. It should be a place where everyone is welcome. The pastor or minister too.”

Mr. Doets also likes talking to his students. This past academic year he instated a fixed time when students could come and talk to him. “Anyone who likes can come and talk to me. Then we’ll consider the issue from many angles.” In his experience, the students have changed greatly over the course of thirty years . “I think television has a big influence. Immediately after the war, they were more enthusiastic. It was noticeable at school assemblies. Later on, you started getting the sense that people were too embarrassed to participate.” On Thursday Mr. Doets will be honored at his last school assembly. After that, he can rest on his laurels.

Sources and Literature

YouTube

• *Een behoorlijke kille* by Frits van Echten and Marcel Möring: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3JstVfiCas

• A conversation between granddaughter and grandfather. Sharai talks to Opa Arnold about his family history.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVjQTUfq_Sg

• Memorial to Ivor:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1Q-KJkV9fA

• Midwife behind bars: Greet tells about her brother Ivor

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaDPWlPM1Us

Websites and Archives

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• **https://www.sjoa-drenthe.nl**

• **https://www.4en5mei.nl**

•**http://www.theatergroepdekern.nl/archief_kom_vanavond_met_verhalen.html**

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• Camp Drancy:

https://www.tracesofwar.nl/sights/4644/Concentratiekamp-Drancy.html

• City Archive Amsterdam

• Jewish Monument Arnhem

• Exhibition *Together again at the table*

https://www.deterugkeer.nl/arnold-troostwijk

• www.goudlijster.nl

On this website you can consult the complete documents:

1. The Troostwijk and Doets family trees
2. Arie's story: *Our flight to FREEDOM in 72 days*
3. Report by S.I. Troostwijk (Uncle Sam):
   Report on the treatment of Jews during the German occupation of the Netherlands
   The website also serves as digital archive for various documents

Further Reading

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• *The Troostwijk Group 1930-2000, A Long Story in Short*

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• Bep Voorhoeve-de Beus: *War Years at Villa Windekind*