

So You Will Remember

A Mother Writes to Her Children

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Rose Judy De Liema
Mission Viejo, California

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This booklet lovingly compiled for my dear parents. Your love for each other and your love for life itself are an inspiration to me and to all those who know you. We will never forget your terrible experiences in the war, yet at the same time, this booklet will help us to remember your wonderful childhood and the dozens of family members who died in the war. This booklet is and will remain a testimonial to your courage and strength. With love from your son, Rob.

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Introduction

During my visit to YAD VASHEM in Jerusalem in September, 1978, I learned the following sad facts. Dates documented by the Dutch Government when my family was murdered by the Germans.

My Mother, Judith (nicknamed Judy or Julia)
Ochen, Born December 13, 1883 in Greda (Moor
Grading, Holland. Murdered by the Germans in
Auschwitz (Poland) February 28, 1943

My Father, Moses (nicknamed Mozi) van Gelder
Born August 27, 1887 in Meppel (Gronine), Holland
Murdered by the Germans in Auschwitz (Poland)
February 28, 1943

This true life story has been written to honor the memory of my beloved parents, sisters, brother, most of my relatives and many, many friends, who were murdered by the nazi criminals. It is not my intention to create more hate against the Germans, but I want my children to remember forever and talk about it to as many people as possible. Maybe this will prevent a disaster like this ever to happen again.

"While suffering passes, having suffered never passes."
A.J. Herschel

Our secret weapon is memory.
Our answer is to remember.
Our strength is 3000 years.
A Jew who remembers is never alone."

Elie Wiesel

My Sister
Priscilla (Celia) van Gelder
Born January 1, 1904
Murdered by the Germans
in Auschwitz (Poland) on
February 1, 1943

My Brother
Harold van Gelder
Born July 14, 1906
Murdered by the Germans
in Auschwitz (Poland)
June 30, 1943

My Sister
Clara van Gelder
Born February 23, 1920
Murdered by the Germans in
Auschwitz (Poland) on
February 1, 1943

Priscilla van Gelder
and Rose Judy Deloria
Born June 8, 1921
Only author

My Family

During my visit to YAD VASHEM in Jerusalem in September, 1976, I learned the following sad facts. Dates documented by the Dutch Government when my family was murdered by the Germans:

My Mother, Judith (nicknamed Judy or Julie) Cohen. Born December 13, 1883 in Breda (Noord Brabant), Holland. Murdered by the Germans in Auschwitz (Poland) February 26, 1943

My Father, Moses (nicknamed Max) van Gelder Born August 27, 1887 in Meppel (Drenthe), Holland Murdered by the Germans in Auschwitz (Poland) February 26, 1943



My Sister
Rozetta (Zetta) van Gelder
Born January 1, 1924
Murdered by the Germans
in Auschwitz (Poland) on
February 1, 1943.

My Brother
Hartog van Gelder
Born July 14, 1926
Murdered by the Germans
somewhere in Middle
Europe, June 30, 1944.

My sister
Elizabeth (Bep) van Gelder
Born February 23, 1920
Murdered by the Germans in
Auschwitz (Poland) on
February 1, 1943.



Roosje van Gelder
now Rose Judy DeLiema
Born June 9, 1921
Only survivor

Finally, I am going to do it.

For years I have considered writing my life story. Not that I am so special, but the fact that I am still alive is a miracle. I will write as if I am telling it to my children, Max, Robert, Kathy and Sue. Even though I am writing in English, I might throw in some Dutch, because that is the way I speak. I am not going to use a dictionary, so if you ever decide to publish any of this, it is up to you to make all the corrections. One more thing, I am not writing this to try to build up hate in you against the Germans. I feel, this way, I can honor the memory of my beloved parents, sisters, and brother, and my many dear and close relatives and friends, and the millions and millions of other victims who were murdered by the Germans, only because they were Jewish.

As far as my own feelings against the Germans are concerned, this is not so easy to describe. One of the main reasons I moved to the USA is that I wanted to live as far away from them as possible. Whenever I read about an accident in Germany and it says there were 27 victims for instance, my first thought is, "Should I force myself to feel sad about it?" If there would be a disaster in Europe that would destroy all of Germany, I would not shed one tear.

Even though I speak German fluently, I can't stand the sound of that language. However, on the day we were liberated, some Russian Jewish soldiers brought three gestapo women in our camp. They told us they were at our mercy, and no matter what we would do to them, the Russians would not stop us. I am sure we all felt like killing them, but none of us even touched them. We could almost still feel the pain of them beating us, but could not lower ourselves to their level of cruelty. So I have to admit I do have a feeling of anguish and hate in my heart against all the Germans, but I could never beat or kill one, like they did to us.

I agree completely with the feelings expressed by Elie Wiesel, a witness and Nobel Prize winner:

One can die in Auschwitz.

We are all survivors, and since Holocaust there was,

I prefer not to have experienced it from afar.

Does that shock you?

With its full burden of distress, shame and horror,

the experience the survivor draws from it,

makes of him or her a privileged person.

My Childhood

It is so good to think back on how I grew up in such a happy, peace loving, good Jewish family. I still feel a warm glow inside of me, while I am writing this, as my thoughts go back to my early years in life.



*Opa Hartog Cohen.
Picture taken in
synagogue in Breda
around 1925. On March,
1932, he drowned in a
canal at age 82.*

My parents had an ideal marriage. There was never an argument, fight or disagreement. They were married on April 30, 1919. My mother was 35 and my father 32 years old. My mother came from a very religious family. Her father took part in the services in shul, whenever the cantor would be out of town. He and his family had an excellent reputation in the town of Breda, where they lived all their life. My grandfather even received an honorable citation from the Queen of Holland when he celebrated his 70th birthday. It was called "Ridder in de orde van Oranje Nassau" (in English, "Knight of the order of the House of Orange"). We were all so proud of him.

My father did not have a religious upbringing. He was born in a small town called Meppel. As a young boy he had to leave home to learn a trade. He became a very good tailor. My mother wanted a good Jewish home life, so she taught my father how to read Hebrew and all the laws and traditions of our faith. My father knew a little bit about it, but did not observe any rules. I will never forget how my mother told us, that on their first date, set up by mutual friends for a Saturday afternoon stroll, my father came to call for my mother. She said he was so neatly dressed, with gloves and a cane, the whole works. But then, all of a sudden, she discovered a cigarette in his hand. She was so shocked. Imagine, smoking on the Shabbat. All she could say was, "Sorry Sir, but if you have such principles, I do not want to walk with you. You better go that way, and I'll go this way." Now it was my poor father's turn to be shocked because he did not have any idea what she was referring to. But then my mother explained everything and my father never smoked on Shabbat again.

My mother was the stronger character of the two and my father loved her even more for that. My mother made all the decisions, but was not dominating at all. It was just an understanding between them. My father never had a care in the world. He was always optimistic and knew in advance that my mother would make all the right decisions. And it did not bother my mother at all that she had all the responsibility. She handled all the finances. Now, don't misunderstand me. There were no problems on how to invest money, because there was no money to invest. My mother did miracles with my father's small earnings.

We lived in a "eerste etage" (second story apartment) and one room was my father's "kleermakerij" (workroom). Some months of the year, work was very slow. But my mother always managed to give us enough to eat and kept all the kids and the house neat and clean.

My father always said, "Your mother knows how to make a quarter out of a dime." We had company everyday because all the friends and family knew that there was always somebody home, so they just came by. If my mother was not at home, they visited with my father in the "kleermakerij".



*My parents. In our living room at Oranjeplein 2,
The Hague (1941)*

There were four children in our family. My older sister, Bep, (full name, Elizabeth) was born February 23, 1920. Then I came June 9, 1921. My father told me that he was very disappointed that I was not a boy, but he loved me just the same. Then my sister, Rozetta, was born January 1, 1924. Another girl. But my father did not give up and July 14, 1926, my brother, Hartog, was born. You can imagine how happy we all were, but especially my father. They enjoyed each other so much and they were just like two friends. My father was always happy-go-lucky and had more fun going for walks with his son on Shabbat and showing off his pride and joy. Maybe that is the reason why I always hoped to get sons when I was expecting a baby.

We lived on a big square around a small park. Our address was Oranjeplein 2. I was always imagining that we owned that park and that my parents allowed other people to walk on the square. Can you imagine that I made that all up in my mind? But there are several reasons why I felt that way. My mother was so well known in the neighborhood and friendly to everybody. Most people called her Tante Judy. "The 'tuinman' (gardener), who took care of the park, got his daily cup of coffee from my mother. He often brought us pretty flowers from the garden. He knew all of us by our first name. When I would walk by him, he would sing to me, "Roosje, Roosje, Roosje, Rood Roosje op de Heide" (Rose, Rose, Rose, Red Rose in the Meadow). I used to blush as red as a rose and try to walk by him as fast as possible.

A policeman who came daily "op het Oranjeplein" on his bicycle, became good friends with my little brother. He also was a regular coffee guest. Whenever there were workmen digging up the street or something, my mother would go and serve them coffee. I can still hear my father say to her, "Judy, why don't you wait this time until some of the other neighbors bring them something to drink". But she went ahead anyway, because it made her feel good to be nice to people.



Zetta, Roosje (Rose), Bep, Hartog (1938)

Everyday a father and his son would go for walks "op het plein" (on the square). The son, who was about 30, suffered from fainting spells. Who was the first one to run outside with a pillow to put under his head when the poor guy fainted again? That's right. My mother. My father would say, "What if you would not help him? Would somebody else in the neighborhood not come outside? Why don't you give them a chance for once?" But my mother saw it as her duty and loved to help out.

She lived from one Shabbat to the next. First of all, she looked forward to resting a whole day. Secondly, she did not spend any money from Friday night sunset to Saturday night sunset. Friday nights at our home were so beautiful. All day long my mother was cooking to prepare everything for two days and it smelled so good in the house. My mother was a perfect cook. Before her marriage, she used to live with a rich Jewish family. All she did was prepare dinners, because they had help for all the other housework. But actually, the meals she prepared for us were a much bigger accomplishment, considering the little amount of money that was available. To me, it is still a miracle how she did it. Because everybody loved her, she always got special prices.

In those days, everything was always delivered to the door. Now, if you ever could have seen my mother buying fish from "Maarten, de visboer" (Maarten, the fish peddler), that was a comedy in itself. He would come by on Thursday. My mother would look in his little pushcart where he always had the most beautiful fish, fresh from Scheveningen which is located on the North Sea not far from The Hague, where we lived. Then the show started:

- Moeder: Ze zijn nog al klein, he Maarten?
(They are kind of small, aren't they, Maarten?)
- Maarten: Hoe kunt U dat zeggen, mevrouw van Gelder, probeert U my soms kwaad te maken?
(How can you say that, Mrs. van Gelder, are you trying to make me mad or something?)
- Moeder: Ik zou er niet aan denken om je kwaad te maken, maar zeg my maar eerst eens
hoeveel ze kosten, anders hoeven we niet langer te praten.
(I would not think of making you mad, but tell me first, how much are they, otherwise it is no use to talk.)

Then he would quote a price. No matter what he said, it was always too high. My mother would just look at him, put the cover over the fish and would say something like this: "je bent een beste brave man, maar je vis is te duur voor mij" (you are a good decent man, but your fish is too expensive for me.) Then she would slowly walk back to the house. Then he would call after her, "Don't go away so fast. How much are they worth to you?" Then came my mother's move. "Maarten, they are worth every cent you are asking, the only problem is "het is te duur voor mij" (it is too expensive for me). You know what you should do, take your fish to a more expensive neighborhood and sell it there. In the meantime, why don't you come upstairs and have a hot cup of coffee." While this was going on, my father would be peeking through the curtains from the kleermakerij to see how things were developing. So, mother and the visboer came in the house where he got his coffee. All the time my mother could not think of anything else but how to end up with the fish. But, she talked about other stuff, like the weather or something. While Maarten was drinking his coffee he would say, "Tell me, how much are you able to pay for the fish?" Then, my mother would honestly quote the price that her budget would allow, which was not much. Sometimes he would get mad, get up without saying a word and leave. My father would say to my mother, "Now what are you going to do without fish for shabbat and how could you make such a ridiculously low offer?" "That was easy", said my mother, "because that is all I can spend for fish this week. But, don't worry, he will be back." And sure enough, within five minutes Maarten rang the doorbell. My mother pulled the door open from upstairs and called, "Who is there?" even though she had seen him turn his pushcart at the corner of the street and come straight to our house. "Okay, Mevrouw van Gelder, bring me a bucket, so I can clean the fish for you. I know, I am almost giving it away to you for this price. But, I can't help it, I like you and I want you and your family to enjoy eating my fresh fish." Then, of all things, my mother would say, "Now listen, good man, if you cannot do it, don't do it. I don't want you to lose money because of me." Then, Maarten would just look at her with a big smile and kept cleaning the fish. He knew my mother would have gladly paid more, but this was all she could afford.

And this game, with some variation, was played just about every week. Actually, Maarten always kept some good fish aside for my mother as his last customer. He enjoyed the little visit and his cup of coffee. He felt good giving my mother a good deal and went on his way home satisfied after a full day's work. And my parents looked forward to "lekker gebakken vis" (delicious fried fish) after Shul on Shabbat. On Fridays, we could hardly wait to get home after school. During the week, we would play marbles or jump rope on the playground or on "het Oranjeplein" where we lived. But, Fridays were different. Sometimes, during the winter, we left school a half hour or so earlier than the other kids because we had to be home before Shabbat started. I always felt so good when the teacher would announce, "The Jewish children can go home now." About three or four children would leave and in the hallway we saw all the other Jewish kids. My sisters, brother and I would race home. We only lived three short blocks from school. (Later on we attended a school for Jewish children only where in the morning and afternoon they also taught Hebrew.) Anyway, we rushed home to get ready for Shabbat.

Our house was always neat and clean, but on Friday night there was really something special about it. It is hard to describe, but the smell was delicious. The soup had been "prutteling" (simmering) on the oilburner all day long. According to my mother, this was the only and best way to make soup. As soon as we would come into the kitchen, we would find our "balletje deeg" waiting for us. I am sure Max and Robert know how good that tastes. It was just a little sample of the dough my mother had made for the "boterkoek" or "fruittaart". We liked the dough so much, I used to ask my mother, "Why do you bother to bake it? Just serve it like that." When we happened to be home while she was making it, she would kind of throw the whole ball of dough against our face and say, "Hier, hap maar zo veel als je kan" (Here, go ahead and take a bite as big as you can.) But, even though we tried with our mouth wide open, we could not get hold of any dough because the ball was too big and round and mother did it real fast and at a moment we did not expect it. Now, all this might not sound very hygienic, but we had a lot of fun doing it. And the "boterkoek" ended up tasting even better.

Dinner on Friday night was the best of the whole week. Always soup, meat or chicken, vegetables, dessert and always the best pie; like appel taart (apple pie) or pruimen (plum), abrikozen (apricot) or aardbeien (strawberry), depending on the season. There was one dish we never had on Friday nights and that was potatoes. Not that we did not like them, because in Holland a meal does not seem complete without potatoes, and not because it is a Jewish law not to eat potatoes on Friday night. But, it was just out of habit that my mother followed that rule just like all the Cohen family from Breda who wanted to make Friday night meals even more different than our regular daily meals. And believe me, we did not miss these potatoes at all, because you know what we ate later, after dinner? Mother prepared six little plates with some candy, cookies, and nuts to nibble on while we drank several cups of good hot tea. Everybody sat around the table, so relaxed, and of course, no radio because we were not supposed to turn on electricity on the Sabbath. We would read a book or play some dominoes with my father. And my mother would read "het Jochimstalletje", a weekly Jewish newspaper published by Jochimstal. The name of the paper was "Nieuw Israelitis Weekblad", but "Jochimstalletje" for short.

Every so often mother would make remarks about the announcement of births and deaths in the paper, or about weddings, engagements and Bar-Mitzvahs. She would say, "Can you imagine Polaks' son already Bar-Mitzvah!" Then, my father would say, "Which Polak?" Mother, "From the Spinoza Straat." Father again, "I don't know them." Mother's answer, "You never know anybody." Then, there followed a long explanation of which Polak's son was Bar-Mitzvah. But, it was really amazing how many people my mother knew. When my parents would be walking together, always arm in arm, my mother would squeeze my father's arm as a signal for him to take off his hat for the people that passed them. My father usually did not know them from Adam, but my mother made up for that. She did not only know their names, but everything about them. And not out of curiosity, but so many people used my mother to tell all their problems and pleasures to. And she always had and made time to listen to them and quite often gave advice too.

But, let's go back to our Friday nights. Of course, we made Kiddush (blessing over the wine), sang "sjir hamangaloth" (a Hebrew song). It was the most relaxing, beautiful night of the week. Then, around 10 o'clock the non-Jewish neighbor, who lived downstairs, would come upstairs to turn off all the lights. We all went to bed looking forward to going to shul the next morning. When my younger sister and brother were still small, my mother would stay home and Beppie and I went to shul with my father. Of course, we were dressed in our best clothes which we kept especially for Shabbat. In our shul, the men sat downstairs and the women on both sides in the balcony. My sister and I would go to a section reserved for children. Several ladies were in charge. They showed us which page they were reading and made sure that we did not talk too much and too loud. When we walked home after shul and came around the corner of our street, we could see my mother sitting at the window looking for us. We ate a delicious lunch, usually the fish from Maarten. We sang the usual Shabbat prayers. After lunch, we had a long relaxing afternoon. When the weather was nice, we would go for walks or visit aunts and uncles. Beppie, my oldest sister, and I usually went together. We only differed 15 months in age. We got along great, but when we were around 13 or 14 years old my mother explained to us that it would be a good idea if both of us would find some other girlfriends and go a little bit more our own ways. At the time I did not understand it as well as I do now. But my sister and I followed my mother's advice and even now I still keep in touch with a few of our girlfriends from those years.

But to get back to the Shabbat, a popular place to go to was "het haagse bos" (forest of The Hague) or "het Scheveningse bos" (forest of Scheveningen). We were not allowed to play ball or jump rope or anything like that on the Shabbat. But, it was easy for us to accept that because we knew it was a day of rest, a day entirely different from the rest of the week. And you know, you kind of felt different too. You felt kind of careless and above all the problems of everyday. It was a good feeling. My younger sister, Zetta, went on the stroll with her own girlfriend because she was three years younger than I was and at that age that is quite a difference. My brother would go with my parents and later on with his own friends. Many times we all stayed home because of rain, snow or cold weather. But, that was fun too. We would play dominoes or all kinds of guessing games. Card games were not allowed on Shabbat.

We had an early dinner and then came a very sweet and beautiful time of the day. We would sit by the window together with the whole family waiting until we saw three stars in the sky. That was the sign that Shabbat had ended. But, in Holland, twilight lasts much longer than here in California. I still remember most of the songs my mother sang with us then. She also gave us all kinds of good advice while looking outside the window. For instance, across from our house was a business called "afbetalings magazijn Nederland" (a buy on credit department store). Now, in those days in Holland, that was really something terrible and to be ashamed of if you would buy anything on credit. The customers would go there often on Saturdays to make their weekly payments and it was always very busy towards the evening when it was getting darker. The customers themselves did not like other people to see them go in there because it was shameful. But, we happened to live across the street and we could see the people go in and out. So, many times mother would tell us, "Now listen real good to me. Be sure that you never buy 'op afbetaling' (on credit). If you cannot afford it, don't buy. Save the money first and then buy. It is too tempting to buy 'op afbetaling'. It is like a ship that never returns to the harbor. By the time you have almost paid off one thing, the salesman will talk you into buying something else again. "Dus, wees verstandig en begin er nooit aan" (So, be smart and never even start it.)

Then, we would always see a Jewish woman crossing the street. She was on her way to bring supper to her husband who was selling fruit and vegetables in an open-air market. Mother would always say, "Now you really should feel sorry for the woman. She could enjoy a beautiful Shabbat like we do, but for her everyday is the same. If she would only know what she is missing; nothing to look forward to. Maybe she and her husband make a little more money, but they don't have the peace of mind and the necessary rest every week."

Across from our house, at the corner, was a little fruit and vegetable store owned by Mevrouw and Mijnheer Bak and on the other side of the Afbetalings store was a bakery owned by Mevrouw and Mijnheer Lipman. Later, I will tell you more about them, but now I want to finish talking about Shabbat night. So, we were sitting at the window singing all kinds of songs and looking for the three stars. Of course we could have looked at the Jewish calendar for the exact time listing when Shabbat ended, but it was more fun to search for three stars. However, on a cloudy evening, we would have a problem finding them. As soon as they appeared, the activity started. My father made havdalah (a special prayer) and after that, the Shabbat was over. Mother started cleaning vegetables for the next day or did some mending. My father would light a pipe, turn on the radio and sometimes when he had rush work, did some hand sewing on slacks or suits. We kids would do our homework. Sometimes some lady friends of my mother came over to play cards with her. My father never played cards. He said that people usually end up having arguments when they play cards and he did not enjoy that. So, he would just sit back, smoke his pipe and read the paper.

Sundays were busy days at our house. You have heard of the bells ringing in the New Year? Well, at our house on Sunday morning our doorbell rang in the new week. I will explain to you why. My mother always tried to help everybody make a living. There was a Jewish widow who tried to make a living by selling tea and coffee (I mean, in packages, as leaves and beans.) She always came on Sundays. Then, there was a milkman, the baker, a man who collected dues for the shul, and another one from the "matze chewre". He collected all year, then when Passover came around, we had enough money saved to buy matzes and the special foods for that week. Then, a man came to collect money for "het begrafenis" fund, that would be saved if, God forbid, there was to be a funeral in the family. Then, the shoemaker stopped by to pick up shoes to be repaired that week. So, you see, there was a constant bell ringing.

We did not do much housecleaning on Sundays out of respect towards the non-Jewish people in the neighborhood. Just some dusting, but no "stofdoek uitslaan" (cleaning of dust towels outside.) We kids were always busy doing our homework and we also had a couple of hours of Hebrew school. The most fun time of the year was Passover. All the preparations took weeks. The house was cleaned from top to bottom and turned inside out. We had a huge trunk in the attic with all special dishes and pots and pans to be used during the Passover week. I will never forget how excited we always were to bring all the stuff down and wash it. And you know, everything really tasted different that week. It might have been our imagination, but it was really true. Everyday was a holiday that week. There were no money problems for my mother because she had saved all year for this week. All of us got new clothes. The seder was beautiful and the matzes delicious. Mother would bake no boterkoek, but some koek with almonds, sugar and lots of eggs. I remember helping her peel the almonds. The brown peel would come off if you put the almonds in hot water, then squeezed them. We had more fun when they flew all over the table. Then, we had to grind them in an "amandelmolentje" (almond mill), mix the stuff together and bake it on the plate lined with "owel" (edible bakers paper).

My father had two sisters in the Hague with their husbands and children, but we had many aunts and uncles because all the friends my parents had automatically became our aunts and uncles. All my mother's relatives lived in Breda and that is where we kids mostly went for our summer vacation. My parents never had a vacation. My mother went a couple of times a year for one or two days to Breda to visit her brothers and sister and they would come a few times a year to the Hague to visit us.

The big event my parents looked forward to every year was a dance given by a charitable organization of which they were members. One year this outing was almost spoiled by something great my father did. On their way to the dance hall, my mother and father passed one of the "grachten" (canals). It was dark and all of a sudden they heard loud screams for help. Somebody had fallen in the water. Luckily, my father was able to reach him and pull him out. My parents still went on to the party even though my father's suit was a little bit dirty and wet. They had a specially great time at the dance that evening knowing they had saved somebody's life. The next day, the man returned my father's coat which my mother had wrapped around the man to keep him warm and he was so thankful for saving his life.

Another big event every year was the "uitvoering" (demonstration from the Jewish Gymnastic Club). Most Jewish children were members of this club and that is the reason why I still love to do "gym", as we called it. I would also have loved to learn how to swim, but my mother told us we had to choose either one because it was too expensive for her to pay dues to both clubs. We all went to the gym and I especially loved it. All our family and friends went to the "uitvoering" to see us children perform. We sold admission tickets because you would receive a free ticket after selling 10. So, we always managed that my parents did not have to pay by selling 20 or more tickets. The evening was so much fun. We prepared all year for it. Can you imagine how proud all the parents were to see

their children perform? There was also lots of good food for sale those evenings. Like "broodjes half om" (half corned beef and liver worst sausage) and gebakjes (pastry). But, it was too much money for my mother to buy all this for us. But, as with everything else, she had a perfect solution for this problem. At home she prepared everything and brought it with her to eat that evening. That way, we did not feel left out and it was much more reasonable. Quite often our "broodjes" and "gebakjes" tasted better than the stuff they sold at the stands.



Jewish Gymnastic Club

Back row: 5th from left is Bep, Roosje is 9th

Front row: legs crossed, far right is Kitty van Praagh, a cousin

There was so much love in our family. You could feel the harmony and understanding. And I don't just make this up because so many of

my friends always told me how they almost envied me for having such a happy home life. Of course, we had our worries. First of all, my youngest sister, Zetta, was not very strong as a child growing up. The doctor said there was a strong possibility that she would get tuberculosis. We were especially concerned because my father's sister, whom my sister was named after, died from that illness as a young girl of 19 years old. And my father's older sister lost her daughter at the age of 21, also from tuberculosis. Thank God my sister never got the disease. Mainly because my mother saw to it that she would get special care. During the summer, Zetta stayed four to six weeks in the "kolonie." This is some kind of a summer camp for children who were not completely healthy. They got special food, rest and care and it was located in a beautiful forest. And during the winter we took her two or three times a week to a clinic for "hoogtezon" (sunlamp treatments) that helped her a lot. She completely outgrew the chance of developing tuberculosis.

In 1928, my mother had a rather serious operation and was in the hospital for more than four weeks. One of our many friends took care of our household for that time. Mother came out of it okay and that were all the set backs as far as illnesses were concerned. There are many more stories I could tell you about our family, for instance, how my mother usually bought live chickens. They were much more reasonable in price than bought at the kosher poultry store. Because we lived in an upper apartment she would ask Mr. Lipman, from the bakery across the street, to let them run in his "kippenhok" (chicken coop) for a while until the "shochet" (kosher butcher) came on Thursday to kill one. We always hoped that the chicken would be found kosher by the shochet. But, Mr. Lipman hoped for a straw in the chicken's throat or spots on the liver because if that was the case, the chicken would end up on the Sunday after-church dinner table of the Lipman's instead of on the Friday night shabbat table of the van Gelder family. When that happened, my mother accepted it in a very relaxed way and to her it was normal that such things could happen. But, not my father. It would really upset him and "versjteer" (spoil) his shabbat. Not only did we not have the chicken, but my mother would not allow Mr. Lipman to pay for it. But, my father could not see that a chicken would all of a sudden not be kosher because of a little straw or a few liverspots. But, rules were rules and mother always came up with something else to eat. Sometimes even better than the original menu, but the "treife" (non-kosher) chicken was the subject of discussion over the weekend.

Never have I seen my father go over his wallet to pay for anything. I don't think he even owned a wallet. I know one thing for sure, he never made back pockets in the suits he made for himself. Sal found that out after the war when Sal wore a suit my father had asked one of our non-Jewish friends to keep for him until after the war. Sal could not understand why there was no pocket for his wallet, but I did not think anything of it knowing my father so well. So often I had heard my father say to my mother, "Judy, give me some money for tobacco", or, "Give me some money for the movies." Those were his only luxuries. My mother did not care for the movies, but she loved to go to the theater or the opera. She did go there sometimes with one of her lady friends. We would get a full report the next day. How we loved to listen to her telling us every detail of the evening.

In addition to being a tailor, my father was also an official pall bearer with the Jewish community. This fact prolonged the life of my family by about one year. But, I will come back to this a little later. When my father first took this job we did not think he could keep it up. After his first funeral, (it happened to be a young girl) he was very upset. After he came home, my mother made him a cup of coffee while he told her all about it. And then we came home from school and we found both my parents sitting in the kitchen upset and crying as if they, God forbid, would have lost one of their own children. But, gradually he got used to it and for every funeral he got paid

about four guilders which helped a lot in my mother's budget. He also altered and repaired the uniforms of all the pall bearers, about 12 of them, so that was also some extra income. They all looked very dignified in long black double breasted coats and top hats. One man who was in charge went around on his bike to tell all the men to come at what time and at what address. In those days, the body was not moved to a funeral home. In order that my father did not forget he had to attend a funeral, we had a little sign to make him remember. A little cardboard arrow that we stuck in the kitchen mirror with the time and the place of the next funeral. And now that I think of it, the point of the arrow was always upwards; to the heavens maybe? We all had gotten used to the routine of this.

Our parents always impressed on us how very important it was to study and learn as much as possible. Mother used to say, "That is one thing nobody can ever take away from you." I found out how true that is. The Germans actually took everything away from me that I owned, but they could not steal my education. I could go on and tell you more about our family, but I am afraid I have to go on to the saddest part of my life which ended with the killing of practically my entire family.

The War

It all started in Germany in 1933. When the nazis came into power, many German Jews left Germany during those years. Those were mainly the richer people who were in big business concerns. They saw the writing on the wall and settled in Western Europe where they opened large offices and continued their businesses. They were still able to bring all their belongings with them. The name of one of the concerns was Michael-Sondheimer. They came from Berlin and Frankfurt. They settled in The Hague. I mention their name because later on you will see what an important part this company played in my life and how they influenced my future. Actually, if it was not for them, I would never have had a chance to come to the U.S.A.

After 1933, many more Jews left Germany, but they were the real refugees. They escaped from there without legal papers. They crossed the border at a great risk of being caught. However, once they made it across, they were safe. Holland received them all with open arms, of course. They did not have a penny, only the clothes they were wearing. Committees were formed and money collected to help them. All the Jewish families in Holland opened their homes to them. Even though our house was not big, a couple moved in with us. They were Robert Mayer and his wife Ilse. The Jewish Committee would pay for their food. They stayed for about six months and then they settled down in a small town where he worked as a butcher. They lived there for about 7 or 8 years until they were shipped to a concentration camp in Germany or Poland and neither survived. Many refugees went on to America and their fare was paid by the Jewish Committee. The terrible things that we heard about what the Germans did to the Jews in Germany since 1933 were almost unbelievable. But, we Dutch people were convinced that such cruelty could never happen in Holland. But, we found out the hard way that we were so wrong.

Our homelife went on pretty normal in those years. We kids loved to go to school and both my parents showed a great deal of interest in everything we did. Like I said before, we knew how important it was to learn as much as possible. In those days, there was a law in Holland that you had to attend school until you were 14 years old. But, my parents encouraged us to stay in school as long and as many years as we wanted. I went to the HBS (secondary school). I graduated in 1938. I learned three languages which is a must to get an office job in Holland and I learned shorthand and typing. Then, I had to find a job with a company which was closed on Shabbat and Jewish Holidays. We would never consider working on those days. My oldest sister, Bep, had a nice job managing a Jewish bakery store. She liked it very much. The owners were Jewish refugees from Poland. They baked delicious bread and pastry, the kind they sell here in Los Angeles in bakeries on Fairfax. They loved having Bep in the store because they did not speak Dutch very well and Bep was nice and friendly with all the customers.

I got a job with a company of German Jewish immigrants. They came to Holland before all the trouble started in Germany, so they were able to get all their money and belongings out. It consisted actually of several companies in the import-export, mining, financing and agricultural business where I worked more or less as the Girl-Friday. The main language used was German. They only had a few Dutch employees. All the bosses were very nice and I got to know them all very well. I ran all kinds of errands to the post office and the bank and rode my bike all over town. I remember one time I had to deliver mail to one of the big bosses who was sick. He lived in a beautiful, big home. When I got there, his son, about 14 years old, wanted to play ping-pong (table tennis) with me. I told him I had to go back to the office. He said, "Wait one minute, I'll ask my Dad." He came back and told

me his dad said it was okay to stay there the rest of the day. We had fun, played ping-pong and the maid fixed pancakes for us for lunch. At the end of 1939, a lot of the businesses were transferred to the U.S.A. As a result, most of the directors with their families also left Holland for America. One day, they called me in the office and asked me to go with them to America. I did not even have to think it over. I refused and thanked them very much for the offer. I would never consider moving away from home. (At that time, I did not even know Sal).

We moved to a very small office in The Hague with only five employees, most of them Dutch. Only one of the big bosses remained in Holland with us. His name was Dr. Carl Goldschmidt. He left Holland in April 1940, very reluctantly. He was very happy and satisfied living in Holland. But, his business partners, who were already in the U.S.A., insisted that he should leave Europe. I remember so well the last day he came to the office and said good bye to us. I have not seen him since. But, he still was a big influence in our life. But, that was much, much later. In the meantime, the war had started between England and France against Germany. They were fighting on the Maginot (France) line and the Siegfried (German) line. But, we still kept thinking it would never happen in Holland.

Then, I met Papa. We were engaged on January 27, 1940. On Shabbat, a big reception at our house and on Sunday there was a party at Papa's house. We received beautiful gifts. Our plans were to get married that same year. Papa's grandparents, Opa and Oma Bril were still alive and we wanted to have them at our wedding. Little did we know what disaster would hit us within a few months. In July 1939, we also had the beautiful Bar-Mitzvah of my brother, Hartog. All the family from Breda came over. My mother cooked for days to prepare everything.



Zus (Rosine) Peekel-DeLiema. Sal's sister. She and her husband Michael Peekel were murdered by the Germans in a concentration camp around 1943.

We made up songs about my brother which we sang at dinner. It sure was good that we could not look into the future. But, now for me it is worth so much to have all those wonderful memories about the Bar-Mitzvah and our engagement party. Papa and I started to buy linens, china, pots and pans. I was planning to have a kosher home, so we bought double sets of pans, dishes, etc. Papa worked for his dad's business. He traveled a lot in Holland. He sent me postcards from the different towns. Sometimes he was back in the Hague before the postcards reached me. In May 1940, he was traveling in the Eastern part of Holland. On May 9, 1940, it was the birthday of Papa's sister, Zus, who was married and lived in The Hague. We were planning to get together in the evening at her house to celebrate her birthday. I was to wait at the railroad station for papa and then we would go together to Zus. But, I waited and waited. The train had a delay of about two hours so it was too late by then to visit Zus and we went to papa's house. He told me that there were many priests on the train and everywhere military activity. Later on we found out that these priests were German soldiers who sneaked across the border disguised as priests. Anyway, Papa brought me home and none of us had any idea what was going to happen that night.

I shared a bedroom with my oldest sister, Bep. We lived in a corner house and our little bedroom was in the top corner looking over the city. All of a sudden, around 4 o'clock, we heard the

sounds of many airplanes flying over. Now, that by itself was not so strange because ever since the outbreak of the war between Germany against France and England there was mobilization in Holland. So, we thought at first it was exercises by the Dutch Air Force. But then at daybreak, we saw that they were German planes and thousands and thousand of parachutes were in the sky. German soldiers were dropped all over Holland. Bombs started to fall. We did not know how to react the first hours. Bombshelters had been built, but nobody even thought of entering them. We did not realize the danger of being out on the street. I remember that Bep and I walked over to Papa's house which was only a seven minute walk from our house. My mother-in-law opened the door half asleep and said, "What is going on? What are you doing here at this early hour?" It was about 5:30 in the morning and I said, "Don't you know that the Germans invaded Holland?" They had heard the planes all right, but thought it was exercises by the Dutch Air Force.

This was Friday, May 10, 1940. The Dutch tried to fight back, but it was hopeless. The bombings became worse by the hour. There was a constant noise of planes going over shooting and dropping bombs. All you could do

was hope and pray that they would not land on your house. For some reason, we tried to stay as close together as possible. We, the van Gelder family, packed an overnight case and we all slept at Papa's house. Not because it was safer, but it was a better feeling to be together. A lot of Jewish families tried to get across to England after the first outbreak of the war in Holland. They had to pay tremendous amounts of money to fishermen to bring them across in their boats. Only a few made it. Most of them drowned because their boats were shot at by the Germans. Also, a lot of Jewish families panicked and committed suicide.

Holland could only hold out for five days. The final blow came on Tuesday, May 14, 1940. The Germans bombed Rotterdam and completely destroyed it. Many civilians were killed and most of the city was destroyed by bombs and fire. Then, the German occupation began. The Queen and her family escaped to England right after the invasion of Holland. Queen Wilhelmina and her son-in-law, Prince Bernard, who was German born, remained in England. Princess Juliana and the children went on to Canada. After the five day battle and the destruction of Rotterdam, everybody in Holland felt desperate, sad, lost and afraid. The Jewish people especially knew they were trapped. Our only hope was help from England and the U.S.A., but nothing like that happened. On the contrary, within a couple of weeks the Germans also occupied Belgium and France.

We tried to live a normal life. And the most surprising thing was that in the first year of the occupation, there were a few changes. We almost thought that the stories we had heard about the Germans were exaggerated. But, this set-up was all part of the Germans' plan. After about a year, it all started. All kinds of orders against the Jews were announced. First of all, they took all the records and files from the Jewish Temples and organizations. That way they knew the names and addresses of most of the Jewish people in Holland. Then, all the Dutch people had to get an identification card with their picture. You had to carry that with you at all times. And they stamped a bit, fat "J" on the I.D.'s of the Jews.

Then, just about every week, there was a new restriction for us. I really don't remember in what order they came. But, I will try to write them all down. We had to turn in our radios; we had to wear a yellow star with the word, "JOOD", on all our clothing; we were not allowed on the street unless the star was visible; we were not allowed outside our own home after 8 o'clock at night; we were only allowed to do our shopping between 3 and 5 o'clock; we had to turn in all our gold jewelry. Jewish businesses were taken over by German and Dutch nationalists. We were not allowed to use public transportation like street cars and trains unless you requested a special permit from the Germans. Now, you might ask why did you follow those orders? Well, we did not exactly do what they ordered. A lot of our gentile friends kept valuables like gold and silver for us and gave it back after the war. A lot of stuff was buried in the ground. We tried to buy real old junky radios and turned those in and gave our own better sets to our gentile friends. But, a lot of Dutch gentiles were so afraid of the Germans that they did not want to risk anything that involved Jews. And I am sorry to say there were also a lot of Dutch nazis and they spied for the Germans.

I remember that once my mother's brother, Marc Cohen who lived in Breda, answered the doorbell. When he opened the door, nobody was there. He stepped in the street to see if somebody was around. Of course he was not wearing his star. So, when he was in the street to see who rang the doorbell, two nazis arrested him for not wearing his star. Of course, they had this all planned that way. They put him in prison, shipped him to a concentration camp and we never heard from him again. I learned from my cousin Jet Stofkooper-Cohen years later that her father, Marc died on October 14, 1942 while in a labor camp in Amersfoort, Holland. (Of all my relatives who were killed, his is the only gravestone existing). We now knew that you couldn't trust anybody anymore. Then, in the summer of 1942, all the Jewish youth, boys and girls between 18 and 25, had to report to be sent to labor camps in Poland. Many of our friends went. A lot of them tried to hide out with gentile farmers in the country, but then their parents and younger brothers and sisters were picked up by the Germans for punishment.



Now, the reason that my sister and I did not have to go then was because of my father's job as a pall bearer for the Jewish Community. That protected us for the time being. And you know, some of my friends looked at it as some kind of adventure. My father sewed backpacks for our friends and we helped them to get all their stuff ready. Little did we know that they would never use any of it. Their trains went straight to the death camps. But, who would imagine that the Germans' only goal was to destroy all the Jews in Europe? Then, they organized labor camps in Holland. For that they took middle aged family men. They really put them to work there and treated them fairly well. They were allowed to write to their wives and the reports were not bad. After they had that going for a couple of months, adding new men all the time, they gave this set up the final blow. One evening they picked up all the wives and children of these men and told them they would join their husbands and fathers. They put them in trains and if they ever met or not, I don't know. All the labor camps in Holland were discontinued and these men, their wives and children were transported directly to the gas chambers in Poland.

At that time, we did not know about the death camps. We were told in the newspapers that the Jews had to work in labor camps somewhere in Poland. Later, there were all kinds of rumors going around about the cruelty and the gas chambers in the camps. But, the reports were so horrible and inhumane that you just did not want to believe them. But, now I know that these rumors were all true. Now that I think back, I don't know where and how we found the courage to go on living. Of course, every day there was the danger of being bombed. Allied planes on their way over to targets in Germany were shot at by the Germans. If they were hit they would unload their bombs and jump out. A lot of those flyers would find hiding places in Holland and with the help of the underground, return to England. But, the sound of the motors of the Allied planes sounded like music in our ears. That gave us hope again. After Pearl Harbor, I know that everybody in the U.S.A. was sad and depressed. But, for us in Holland it was like a booster shot. Now that the United States entered the war and Russia joined the Allies against the Germans, the war would soon be over. However, soon was not fast enough for millions and millions of people.

From now on I will go into more detail about how Papa and I tried to survive those horrible years. And believe me, even though a lot of luck was involved, we also had to have a lot of will power, faith and courage to struggle through. I mentioned already before how well organized the Germans were in their deportation and destruction program of the Jews, especially in Holland. In Belgium and France it was much easier for the Jewish people to hide because the gestapo group that was in charge in those countries did not get hold of the record files of all the Jewish organizations. The Dutch Jewish leaders felt if they would cooperate with the Germans, they would treat the Jews better. So, a Jewish Council was founded under close supervision of the Gestapo. Orders had to be followed. The Jewish leaders of the council were mainly prominent Dutch Jews. I am sure they thought they were doing the right thing. But, now we know that the Jewish Council made it much easier for the Germans to complete their destruction program. Everybody that worked for the Jewish Council received a "sperr" (permit). With a sperr you had the chance of being in the last group of Jews to leave for Poland. So as long as there was an organization like the Jewish Council, everybody tried to get some kind of a job there. But, it was not easy to get in. The council tried to create as many jobs as possible in order to issue the maximum amount of sperrs. Every day counted. We actually lived from one day to the next, hoping the war would be over soon. In 1942, it was a miracle that our family of six was still together. Because of my father's sperr as a pall bearer, we were not deported yet. But, there was always the danger of bombs and being picked up on the street in "Razzias" (arrested at random off the street for no reason at all).

My oldest sister, Bep, was engaged. Her fiance, Mo Vecht, lived with his parents in a small town in a small town in the province of Gelderland. In the spring of 1942, he received his notice to report to a labor camp within three days. My sister requested and got a permit through the Jewish Council to take the train to go and visit him and to say good-bye. It was easier to find a hiding place in the country with some farmers, so before she left, my parents and I pleaded with her and begged her not to come back but to go into hiding with her fiance and his parents. But, she did not even consider it, afraid we would be punished. When she came back she still was convinced that she would see him again somewhere in a labor camp in Poland. After he worked together with his father in a Dutch labor camp for a few months, one evening they picked up his mother and they were all shipped to the gas chambers of the Polish concentration camps. This all happened in 1942. Of course, it was very hard for my father to make a living. There was not enough material to make new suits. He did a lot of repair work. He also made for each one of us a "rugzak" (backpack) with our names on it. Mother filled them with warm underwear, sweaters, etc. We never knew when it would be our turn to be picked up, so at least we were a little bit prepared. Not wanting to believe all the rumors, that they would steal everything from us and slaughter us all in the gas chambers. All the Jewish families had their "rugzakken" prepared. My sister, Bep, still had her job with the Jewish bakery. I think that the reason they still had a permit to remain open was that they had so many German customers who liked their bread. Of course, bread was rationed but my dear sister took care of all of us and our

friends so we were never short of bread coupons. I don't know exactly how she managed that, but I am sure she did not miss a chance to take more coupons from the German soldiers than she was supposed to.

The office I worked for had been discontinued. I already told you earlier that all the management had moved to the U.S.A. So, I did not earn any money. I looked for some way to help my parents to keep going. Some Jewish families who still could afford domestic help were only allowed to have Jewish girls working for them. So, I took a job as domestic help with a very nice family. Their name was Haagens. Five days a week and on Sunday morning. I ate lunch with them which also helped out with the expenses at home. My only way of transportation was on my bike. Jews were not allowed to use the streetcar. Twice a week I left my job early and peddled to the other end of town to take a course in English correspondence. This was arranged by the Jewish organization. Lessons were given by a Jewish teacher. Again, the reason for this was that if he could prove that he still had enough students, he could keep his "sperr" to remain in Holland. The people I cleaned house for were friends of Papa's grandparents and I was treated as one of the family. The money I made helped my parents a lot. One day after working there for about six months, I noticed a man whom I had never seen there before. He went with Mr. and Mrs. Haagens in a separate room and had photo equipment with him. Later that day, Mrs. Haagens told me that I should not come back the next day. She said, "Rose, I hope you understand that I cannot tell you any details. We are planning something I cannot talk about. The gentleman you saw today is helping us." I told her not to say anymore and wished her good luck. A couple of days later, I heard through the grapevine that the "gentleman" took them for a huge sum of money and jewels and turned the Haagens family over to the gestapo.

My younger sister, Rozetta, worked as a domestic help for one of Papa's cousins so that she also brought in some money. My mother found out about a factory which sent out work to be done at our home at night. They delivered cardboards, hairpins and curlers to our house. Then we all sat around the table and stuck six to 12 pins on each card. For so many dozens they would pay us some money. So that is what we did evening after evening after evening. And we talked and encouraged each other hoping that the war would soon be over. But, every day the news was getting worse. More Jewish people were picked up and arrested all the time. Jewish businesses were taken over by the Germans. One day that also happened to Opa De Liema's place. Some men walked in and told him that from that moment on they were in charge. If I remember correctly, one was German and the other Dutch. At that time, Papa also worked in Opa's business. They instructed Opa and Papa to cooperate and teach them the whole setup. You can imagine how terrible it was to see those thieves take over your business just like that.

Now Opa and Oma had plans to go into hiding and it seemed to be about time to do so. Sadly enough, most of the closest relatives were already gone. Oma's parents who had been in a rest home were arrested one night with thousands of other elderly people and transported to the gas chambers in Poland. Papa's sister and her husband were arrested after being underground for only a couple of weeks. Most of Opa's brothers were sent to a labor camp and I told you already what happened to all of them. Papa's youngest brother, Sieg, was in the Dutch East Indies and there was no contact with him. Papa's older brother, Lex, still had a "sperr" because of being married to Janny who is not Jewish. Janny's parents offered Opa and Oma a hiding place. Opa and Oma decided then one day to disappear and they remained in hiding until the end of the war. So, Papa was the only one still living at home. But Papa had to pretend towards the "verwalters" (the guys who stole Opa's business) that he was very upset about his parents disappearance. He told them, "I am sure my parents were picked up by the Germans during a 'razzia'. Maybe you might be able to find out where they were sent." But, they told him, "Sorry, we cannot interfere with the gestapo, but don't worry, they treat them real well in those labor camps."

My mother's second cousin had a job with the Jewish Council in the department "help to deporting Jews." He offered my brother a job there to ride a three wheel carriage bike. This was to help carry the backpacks for the Jewish people who were picked up by the Germans. Through that job my brother got a "sperr". Of course, there was no pay involved. But, really every day you could manage



Our wedding day, December 20, 1942, in my parent's house. My bouquet and the ribbon on the basket cover the yellow "Jood" stars we were forced to wear.

to stay in Holland longer might save your life in the long run. Not that life was pleasant in those days, but we never gave up and had faith and hope for the future. That by itself was truly a miracle. Things could not be worse. After I was through working for the Haagen family, I stayed home helping my mother around the house. Then, I got a job with the Jewish Council as a secretary, of course, also without pay, but I did get a "sperr". My boss was Mr. Blik. He also found for Papa some kind of a job, so he had a "sperr" too. He worked as a "Koerier". He had to deliver papers and messages between the different offices. Mr. Blik often had a chance to get the list of addresses of the Jewish families who would be picked up the next morning. Then, he would send out advance warnings to them and those who could, would disappear before the Dutch police, who were under orders from the Germans, would come to arrest them. Of course, Mr. Blik took a chance doing this, but everything, even just being alive, was dangerous in those days.

In November 1942, early one morning, they came to Papa's house to pick up Opa, Oma and Papa. Of course, Papa told them that his parents were picked up months ago during a "street razzia" and he had not heard from them since. They accepted that story because the "verwalters", who thought it was true, told them the same thing. They let Papa go free for the time being due to his "sperr". But the house was sealed and Papa had to get out and was only allowed to take his clothes. He moved in with us and slept in one of the small bedrooms up in the attic. We knew for sure now that things were closing in on us and we were running out of time quickly. Then Papa and I decided to get married. At least we would legally belong together and would be able to stay together



Our wedding took place at the synagogue in The Hague on the Nieuwe Molstraat.

Left to right: Max van Gelder, Judith van Gelder, Rose (Roosje van Gelder), Sal DeLiema, Uncle Jacob and Aunt Ester DeLiema (Sal's parents were already in hiding), Hartog van Gelder is standing to the side.

Luncheon after the wedding in our living room at Oranjeplein 2, The Hague. Sitting around the table, left to right: Hartog, Zetta, Aunt Esther, Uncle Jacob, Sal, Rose, My father and mother, Janny and Lex DeLiema.



Standing in back, left to right: Lou Walg, Dina Walg, Bep van Gelder, Leo Levie and channa Levie-de Beer.

Only Sal and Rose and Janny and Lex survived the war. All the others, within a couple of months, would be slaughtered by the Germans.

after arriving in Poland. We still did not want to believe the nightmare stories that started to leak through more and more about the slaughter in the concentration camps. I think it was mainly out of self protection that we did not want to believe the rumors, otherwise we would not have been able to face another day. On December 2, 1942, we got our marriage license. We walked about three hours back and forth to the license bureau because we were not allowed to use the street car. We set the temple wedding for December 20, 1942 and we were the last couple to be married by Rabbi Maarsen. The wedding took place in the small temple. The big temple was used by the Germans for storage of the furniture stolen from Jewish homes. The only Jewish guests at the temple were friends we made at the Jewish council. There were many of our non-Jewish friends. And they really took a chance showing their sympathy and friendship towards Jews. There were always spies around who were happy to make five guilders by reporting anti-Germans to the gestapo. I wore the same dark blue long silk dress that I had bought for our engagement, but I had to sew a big yellow star on it. Papa bought a beautiful bouquet of orchids for me, which I still have. A girlfriend of mine kept it for me during the rest of the war years. My parents, sisters and brother were at the wedding and Papa's oldest brother, Lex, and his wife, Janny. Of course, Papa's parents could not come because they were already underground. Do you know that my mother still managed to have a sit down luncheon after the wedding? Every time when I think about that I don't know how she ever managed to accomplish that. I don't mean only as far as getting the food together, but how she had the spirit to arrange any kind of celebration. That still amazed me. We were all so sad and depressed. I remember asking my mother not to cry during the wedding. I told her, "When you start crying I know that none of us will be able to control our feelings." Her tears would not have been tears of happiness. She kept her promise not to cry, but I could see her biting her lips constantly to keep her feelings under control.



Picture taken in our home. Hartog van Gelder and Michel Goudsmit.

Of course, we did not get a permit to rent an apartment. We were allowed to rent a room from a Jewish family, Herbert and Eva Voorzanger. Our wedding was on December 20, 1942. It was almost an hour walk to our new address. I knew the family very well because both of them used to belong to my gymnastic club. They had a darling little two year old daughter, Dora. The reason they were still allowed to live in Holland was that he worked for a company that sewed fur articles for the army. Sal and I did not have any furniture or brought any of our pots and pans because we could not set up housekeeping in that one room. What we did take with us were our backpacks because we knew it would only be a matter of time before they would come to pick us up. Everyday we went to the Jewish Council.

The experiences there are hard to describe and even harder to believe. Constant fear, desperation and sadness. But, we still kept going on. On January 4, 1943, when we came to the office, Mr. Blik told us that my home at Oranjeplein 2 was on the list of Jewish people to be picked up. Sal and I rushed over and the Dutch police were already there. They were not strict, in fact, they were fixing themselves some pancakes in the kitchen. They were not even watching what was going on in the rest of the house. I talked to my sisters and brother to see if they still would want to try to escape. But, they decided to go. And they almost had a feeling of relief that they would join all the other Jews who were already gone. The neighbors looked on when they saw my parents, sisters and brother leave trying to hide their emotions.

My family was brought to a gathering place where they saw many friends who had been picked up that same morning. After a few hours, my brother was released because of his sperr, but my father's sperr was of no value anymore now that most of the Jews had been deported already. Because I had just moved to another address, it was not my turn yet. Then, came the hardest moment of my life. I had to say good bye to my parents and sisters. We did not know for certain then that we would never see each other again, but subconsciously we did know. There was no other choice but to be brave and try to accept the horrible situation. Our house had been sealed and my brother moved in with some good friends who also worked for the Jewish Council. My parents and sisters were sent to a Dutch camp, "Westerbork", in the north eastern part of Holland; in fact, in Drente, not far from the town of Meppel where my father was born. They were allowed to receive food packages. So, Sal and I bought food stamps on the black market and mailed a package every day. They actually received that and they were not mistreated in this Dutch camp. It was not because the Germans who were in charge there were so

much better, but this was all part of their plan to trick as many Jews as possible to surrender to their orders and follow their instructions. That is why they allowed them to have contact with the outside. That way the impression was made that those camps were not so bad after all.

Mr. Blik and his family were a big moral help to us in those days. He even arranged for Sal to deliver some documents to Westerbork so Sal had a chance to see my parents. Just the day before he came, my sisters were sent to Poland, but my parents were still convinced that they would be reunited again after they too would be sent on to Poland. That is how their propaganda can poison your mind. But, maybe the rumors that had leaked through by then were so cruel that you would not allow your mind to believe them. My parents were deported to camps in Poland in February 1943. And after having been there myself, I know for sure that all of them were murdered in the gas chambers as soon as they arrived. At that time, they did not even have selections to pick out the younger people to work for them. Later in the war that changed because they ran out of manpower. Life was getting more miserable every day. There was no hope for the future and danger all around. I saw my brother every day. Papa and I kept trying to persuade him to go into hiding. We even found a place for him to work on a boat on one of the many canals. But, he did not consider that at all. He thought that by doing something against the German orders you would be severely punished if caught. And we had seen many examples of this while working for the Jewish Council. But, now I know that in the long run that did not make a bit of difference. After you were locked up in the cattle cars, you were all considered the inferior race that had to be destroyed.

It was April 10, 1943. At about 9 o'clock at night the doorbell rang. It was the police who came to pick up the family we rented the room from. The Germans had decided to pick up everybody that worked for that fur company. They had to seal the apartment so Papa and I had to come along too. We schlepped (carried) our backpacks and rolls of blankets to the nearest police station under close watch of the officers. It was heartbreaking to see how Eva had to wake up little Dora. It still hurts when I think about it; how we ended up in jail later that night and Eva could not stop crying when she saw her daughter, Doortje, asleep on the cot in the cell. She was such a beautiful little girl with blond hair and dark brown eyes. Eva and I tried to get some sleep too, but it was impossible. We talked all night and Eva kept saying, "Rose, I am sure you will get out tomorrow because you do not officially belong to this group of fur workers." I did not think I had a chance to get out at all. I figured the more Jews they had caught, the better. But, that is the most stupid part about the Germans. They don't reason anything out and follow instructions to the point. Much to my and Papa's luck, of course, early the next morning some of the leaders of the Jewish Council came to the prison to get instructions from the Germans.

In the meantime, Mr. Blik had heard that Papa and I were arrested and he had given our names to the delegates of the Jewish Council who demanded our release. Their first reason was that we did not belong to the fur workers and the second reason that our jobs at the Jewish Council were supposedly very important. The Germans accepted their demand and papa and I were released and stepped outside the jail and walked for over an hour to the office of the Jewish Council because we did not have a place to live anymore after the apartment of Herbert and Eva Voorzanger had been sealed and taken over by the Germans. We were very upset of course after spending a night like that and leaving the others in prison. On the other hand, thankful to Mr. Blik for his help and happy to see my brother again. One of the men at the Jewish Council offered us a room in his house which we gladly accepted. The fact that Sal and I were released gave everybody the impression that it would be a long time yet before they would dissolve the Jewish Council. We were wrong again. Two days after our release from jail, the last order appeared in the papers which would take care of all the Jews who, for some reason or another, were still officially living in Holland. The instruction was that on April 23, 1943, every Jewish person had to report to a concentration camp in Holland. The name of the camp was Vught. They gave permission to use public transportation to get there. So actually after that date, any Jewish person remaining in Holland was considered illegal and had to hide from the Germans. Only Jewish people from a mixed marriage were still allowed to remain in Holland.

We discussed in great length with my brother and some close friends what to do. Actually, it was not hard to make a decision because we did not have a hiding place. We started to pack more warm clothing, labeling everything with our name, planning just to go on April 23, 1943 to Vught. My brother was not even considering to hide out. He figured a young fellow like he was not afraid of some hard work. Even then we did not believe that they would kill everybody. A few days before April 23, the family we stayed with, Herman and Alinka Schepps, told us in secret that they were going into hiding. They had a connection who had arranged for them to remain with a gentile family until the end of the war. If we would like to, they would talk to them to try to find a place for us too. Sal and I decided that if they would come up with a hiding place for us, we would take the chance and try to hide until the end of the war. However, the possibility of finding a hiding place during the last couple of days before the deadline was very small. Sal and I were almost consoled with the fact of going. Then, Herman told us

they had found an address for us, but it would not be available until May 15, 1943. What to do now. We had to remain somewhere between April 23 and May 15. And don't forget, it was not just finding a family with an extra room and bed, but the people who would take us in their homes risked severe punishment by helping Jews. Then, a friend of ours, Max Blok, who also worked for the Jewish Council, helped us out. His wife, who was gentile, was sick in the hospital. So, he had enough room and as long as it was only for a few weeks, he was happy to help us out.

So, then on April 23, instead of going to the railroad station to go to the camp, we walked to the house of Max Blok. Without any suitcases or packages, of course. At night, the contact of Herman Schepps brought us some of our most necessary clothing. The same person would tell us within a couple of weeks where our permanent address would be. Before I said good bye to my brother, I told him about our plans. He wished us good luck and was happy that we were able and wanted to take the chance. But, he still did not want to consider it for himself. I kept in touch with my brother indirectly for a long time. A former office employee of Papa's business was the contact between us and Oom Lex and Opa and Oma, who were also in hiding. The girl's name was Vera. We could trust her 100 per cent. She sent food packages and clothing to my brother for us and kept him informed about us in a round about way. My brother worked in the Dutch camp for several months, but finally was sent to Poland and never returned. Once after the war I met somebody who remembered working with my brother, Hartog, in Poland. But, one day a lot of prisoners were just shot to death by the Germans and he thought that my brother was in that group. I suppose by now you understand my feelings about the Germans and I am sure never in my life will I forgive them or forget.

Now, I will go on and tell about our further experiences. Once we had chosen to hide, there was no backing out. From that day until the end of the war, we had to depend on other people to help us. We had no idea of course how long the war would last. We actually had to remain hidden in the daytime. We never came close to the windows. The first couple of weeks Max Blok was gone during the day so we had to be very quiet. We did not even flush the toilet, afraid that the neighbors might think that there were burglars in the apartment and would call the police. After a couple of weeks, we heard from our contact and were told that our steady hiding place would not be available for a long time. He finally told us that Herman and Alinka were hiding out there because the place they were supposed to go to on May 15, fell through and the contact had not been able to find another place for them. But, we could not stay with Max Blok very much longer because his wife would be coming home from the hospital and she did not know that he had let us move in with him. Not that she would have objected to it, but she was a very sick woman and Max Blok did not want to burden her with the responsibility. Our contact talked with the people where Herman and Alinka were staying and they agreed to let us move in too. So, we moved in with Jan and Nel. They were very honest and told us immediately that they only took us in their house to better themselves financially. We had to pay a large amount of money every week, but thank goodness that was no problem for us because Papa had accumulated enough cash to last for a while. In addition to that, Alinka and I did most of the housework and cooking. On Mondays, we washed all day scrubbing everything by hand. Nel gathered all the laundry from her in-laws and herself for us to do. How could we say no, we were at their mercy. Jan and Nel were very irresponsible people. They spent all the money we paid them on records and on going out for dining and drinking. This part of drinking always worried us because you never knew if and when he might talk about hiding Jews in his house. They had a cute little son, Jacky. He was about 2 years old. We played with him a lot. He called all four of us Pappie and Mammie and his own parents, Pappa and Mamma. That way, if he talked to strangers, he would not mention any names. He knew exactly that whenever the doorbell rang, we had to go in a separate little room. He would even tell us in a hushed voice to disappear. And he never mentioned us to whoever came to the house. After the visitors were gone, he knocked on our door to tell us to come out again. Everyday was just waiting and waiting and hoping for good war news. We had a map from the war front on the wall. With pins and different colors yarn we adjusted the positions of the fronts according to the news from England. Nobody was allowed to tune in to that station, but a lot of people did anyway. We were waiting for the Allied invasion. We heard from the German propaganda about their plans to invade England. I don't know how we would have ended up if that would have happened.

We passed the days by playing bridge. Sal and Herman played chess. Between the four of us we made, not solved, a big crossword puzzle. We never went outside. In the evening, when it was dark, we opened the windows and inhaled some fresh air. Vera came to see us usually once a month. Through her, we kept in touch with Opa and Oma and Janny and Lex. We never wrote any letters. That would have been too risky. The four of us remained there all through 1943. I will never forget New Year's Eve 1943-1944. Jan and Nel insisted that we should have some kind of celebration. You can imagine what kind of a mood we were in to celebrate. At our home we always had a special party on New Year's Eve because my youngest sister, Zetta, had her birthday on January 1st. And now we had to celebrate anyway even though we felt a continuance of pain and sadness in our hearts for all the sorrow of the past years. So there we were, baking oliebollen (some kind of a doughnut) and

appel beignets (apple puffs). At 12 o'clock Jan made a toast and this is what he said, "I want to make a toast to you four. Thanks to you, this has been the best year of my life and as far as I am concerned, this war may last for another couple of years." And we had to drink to that. But still, if it would not have been for Jan and Nel, I am sure that Papa and I would never have survived because they gave us the chance to hide. Some day in January 1944, we were told to find another hiding place because Nel was expecting another baby and there was no room for us anymore. And also, Jan's brother was working for the underground and the Germans had arrested some of his buddies. He was afraid the Germans might trail him and find out about us hiding in his brother's house. But, how do you find another place? In emergencies like that, Lex and Janny helped out. They were still allowed to live officially in Holland because of Janny being gentile. They took a big risk by doing it, but they were never afraid.

It was a frightening experience to be outside again after being locked up inside a house for over a year, not to mention the fear of being stopped by the S.S. or gestapo to show your I.D. I had a stolen I.D. It belonged to a girl named Willempje Versteeg. The underground organization had replaced her picture with mine. I remembered her address, birthdate, etc. so if they would stop me on the street, I had some I.D. to show them. But Sal had never been able to acquire one and so many people knew him in The Hague. It was especially dangerous for him to be outside. But we had no other choice. You can compare it to jumping from a tall building and just hoping and praying that you will land somewhere safely. We went on the street car and did not sit together. We took a peak hour and remained standing on the balcony. We tried to act casual, but were trembling inside. German soldiers were everywhere. But, we made it okay. It was good to see Janny and Lex. There was another cousin and her husband too. Her brother had just been arrested at their former hiding place where they had had a chance to escape at the last minute. So, they had to search for a permanent hiding place too. It was good to be together with some relatives, but we had to find a place as fast as possible. It was too dangerous to stay at Oom Lex's house because you never knew when the Germans would decide to pick up the Jews of a mixed marriage.

Somebody from an organization found a place for Sal and me. We went there but stayed only two weeks. The man was involved heavily in the black market. He was constantly fighting with his wife and used to come home at night, usually drunk, around ten or eleven o'clock. At that time, everybody had to be indoors by 8:00 P.M. So, back to Lex and Janny. The next day, I decided to go out by myself to find a place. I took a bike and rode to Mr. Bezemer; he used to be the principal of the grade school I attended. [This school was newly built in the early 1930's. This was a special school set up by the Jewish community in The Hague. All the students were Jewish and started at 8:30 a.m. with one hour of Hebrew lessons. Then we had our regular classes and three times a week we had one hour of Hebrew lessons from 4 to 5 p.m. There was also a big gymnastic hall for the "Joodse Gymnastiek Vereniging, 's Gravenhage (Jewish Gymnastic Club, The Hague). My sisters, brother and I were all members and went to the gym almost every evening.] He was happily surprised to see me. He was fully aware more than



H.B.S. Raamstraat 28, The Hague 1936-37. Secondary school at which Mem worked as a cleaning lady.

Back row, left to right: Emile van Renesse, Iwan van der Sluis, Schupper, ?, ?, Cohen, Michiel Worris, ?, ?

Second row, left to right: Teacher de Haas, Bob Poons, ?, David Wolf, ?, Henk van Gelder (not Jewish), ?, ?

Front row, left to right: Bep de Wilde, Leny Kok, Roosje van Gelder, Marietje Murenbeeld, Willy Worris, Selma van Praagh, Marietje Hye, Nelly Smit

In front, sitting on mats: Nelly Peereboom, Corry van Grol, Riek Helmig

anybody else what had happened to the Jewish people in Holland. His school was attended by Jewish children only and all of them had been deported or were in hiding. I told him I was desperately looking for a place to hide and did not know who to turn to. I mentioned that I had considered going to the principal of my high school for help and advice too, but had found out that he cooperated with the Germans and had joined the party, so he could not be trusted. He asked me the man's name. It was Mr. De Haas. Mr. Bezemer did not tell me that he was a close friend of Mr. De Haas. He promised me that he would do everything in his power to help me and to come back the following evening. When I came back the following night and walked into the room, Mr. De Haas was sitting there waiting for me. I thought I would die on the spot. He said, "How good to see you, Roosje. Mr. Bezemer told me that you need help. Get on your bike and I will bring you to a safe hiding place." I trembled all over and could hardly ride my bike. He was riding next to me. I was considering getting away from him through a back street, then he started talking while riding on. He said, "Mr. Bezemer told me that you were afraid to contact me because I collaborate with the Germans. I am very disappointed in you that you believe that of me. I thought you knew me better than that." "Well", I answered, "In my circumstances I cannot take any chances and I definitely heard that you belong to the party." "In my profession", he said, "There are certain things I have to do, but that does not mean that you cannot trust me." After I came back from Auschwitz, he was one of the many collaborators who was arrested by the Dutch government and put in prison for his actions during the war. Then, via a lawyer, he contacted me to testify that he had helped me during the war. Of course, I had to tell the truth that he had brought me to a safe hiding place. I still don't know if he had done it to help me or to clear his conscience. Anyway, he was an educator who acted as a coward during the war years. But, my testimony helped him to be released from jail and even to be reinstated as principal of the high school.

Let us go back to my bike ride with Mr. De Haas. He brought me to Mem Diependaal. She belonged to the cleaning crew of the high school of which Mr. De Haas was the principal. She looked very familiar to me because I might have seen her sometime while I was a student at that school. Mr. De Haas had told her that he would bring me over that evening. He introduced me to her and then left immediately. He wished me good luck, but did not want to be involved at all anymore. I thanked him for his help, but did not apologize for my thoughts about his reputation. I never heard from him again until after the war. Then, the tables were turned and my testimony helped him to get out of jail as I mentioned before.



*Mem Diependaal.
We hid in Mem's house from April to August 5, 1944. Mem died on April 30, 1992 at the age of 94.*

Now, I have to tell you about Mem. She is the bravest, most honest, most wonderful person I have ever met and ever will meet in my entire life. I immediately felt relaxed talking to her. She said, "When are you coming to live here with us?" I answered, "Whenever it is okay with you." "How about tomorrow," she replied, "because it is too dangerous for you where you are now." I pointed out to her that she should realize that by helping us she also took a chance of being caught by the Germans. She said, "I am not afraid. We are in this world to help each other. You are more than welcome in my home and it will make me happy to try to save you out of the claws of the Germans." Then, I asked her how much I should pay her weekly. She answered, "I don't know yet, it all depends how much we spend and then we will split the expenses." What an entirely different attitude than Jan and Nel. But, Mem is really one in a million. She raised her three children all alone after her husband left her. She supported the family by working as a cleaning woman.

Mem was born in Friesland, a northern province of Holland. The people there have their own language, entirely different from Dutch. They have a reputation of being very honest and brave and outspoken and Mem is a beautiful representative of the "friezen." She did not belong to any religious organization. She believes in God and life in the hereafter. "People don't die", she always told me, "but they go over into another kind of existence." She had weekly sessions with a small group of friends and contacted the spirits or souls of relatives and friends. She could also predict future happenings. Now, Sal and I are very skeptical about all that sort of things, but later on I will tell you some amazing things that Mem told us in advance that would happen and which

did come true. It was such a relief to go back to Sal and tell him how lucky I was to have found Mem. Mem, by the way, is the Fries word for mother and that is what she wanted us to call her. Sal and I went there the following day. It was a day in April 1944. Right away she made us feel so welcome. Her two sons were still living at home and her daughter was married. The oldest son, Ynze, was actually hiding from the Germans too. He had received a notice to report for work in Germany in a so-called forced labor project. The Germans picked up all the young men they could get in Europe because they ran out of manpower to keep the home front going. But, Ynze simply refused to go. The underground gave him a false I.D. from the food industry because those employees were excused from working in Germany. So, in case the Germans would stop him on the street, he would show that working permit. Ynze would go outside of the house only if he had to so we got to know him real well spending every day together for several months. The younger son happened to work for a factory which produced vital things for the industry, so he was legally excused from forced labor. The first day at Mem's we sat down together and made up a story we would tell the Germans in case we would get caught. This is what we decided upon to tell them. Sal and I had to be evacuated from the coast (all the beach resorts were taken over by the Germans to build a defense line along the North Sea.) I happened to run into Mem, who I knew from my school time. I asked her if she had a room for us and that is how we came to live with her. We never told her that we were Jewish, so she did not do anything against German orders. And we would stick to that story no matter what. I told Mem, "They might ask you if you checked our papers and then what are you going to say?" "Oh," said Mem, "I will think of something, I can handle them, don't you worry." She really had a chance to prove that later on.



This picture taken in August of 1949. Ynze de Boer (Mem's son) and family visiting us at home. Ynze is in the back, Rose to the right, Robert on her lap, Max next to Rob.

In the meantime, the war news was getting better for us. Of course, the Germans were talking about invading England. But, that is exactly all it was, talk and threats. But for us, the most hopeful news we heard over the B.B.C. from London was that the Allies were planning an invasion too and it could not happen soon enough as far as we were concerned. Things were really getting worse in Holland. Food was hard to get, even on food stamps. The Germans were losing in Russia. The worse the news from the Germans became, the more hopeful we were. Ynze tried to make a few bucks by making straw handbags on Mem's sewing machine and Sal helped him. I helped Mem around the house. They were such good people and we told her, "Mem, we are so relaxed in your home, even with all the bombing and danger around us." But she said, "Well, I am happy to hear that you feel that way, but I am sorry to tell you that you will not stay here until the end of the war." We were shocked. "How do you know, Mem, and what is going to happen?" we asked. She said, "I have the feeling and I know I am right. But what exactly will happen I don't know. But, don't worry too much because I also know for sure that both of you will survive the war." Papa and I looked at each other and Mem could tell what we were thinking. "I know you don't believe my prediction," she said, "But, just remember what I just told you." What gave me strength all the time that I was in camp was the fact that Mem had told me that Sal and I would survive the war. That might sound silly but I held on to anything that would give me hope, strength and willpower. Even though, many times, I did not believe that Sal and I would survive that hell. But then I thought of Mem, and that made me strong again. When we did finally return, Mem was not a bit surprised to see us. She was such a special person. Everyday a few neighbors came to listen with us to the B.B.C. All this was very dangerous and risky, but Mem did not know what fear was. We waited anxiously for the news we were hoping for. The invasion by the Allies. But, the whole month of May went by and it did not happen.

Because Papa did not get enough exercise, he had terrible backaches. We could not go to a doctor because you did not know who you could trust and also we never went outside. But, again Mem came with a solution. She said, "Now trust me. I will take the pain away from you. Just sit in your chair. Relax. I will not touch you, I will just stand behind your chair and relieve you of the pain." But, she asked me to leave the room because she said, "I know you will start laughing and then I cannot concentrate." So, I went to the other room. After about 10 minutes, they called me back in. Mem was a little tired and she was perspiring, but Sal's backache was completely gone. So, I don't know what kind of special powers Mem has, but these were facts that truly happened. And Sal said she never even touched him, but was making motions with her hands.

Then, finally on June 6, 1944, the invasion by the Allies had started. We almost crawled into the radio so not to miss any of the details. It was such a relief to hear all the good news. We thought only a few more weeks and the war would be over. We did not doubt for one second that the invasion would not be a success. For us, the most important fact was that they had landed. The Germans tried to stop them but, thank God, they did not succeed. The Germans also had their problems on the Russian fronts and also there was a lot of sabotage against the Germans going on in all of the occupied countries. Everybody was sick and tired of the Germans. There was hardly any food and the invasion was a booster shot for everybody. Now, with the end in sight, the people were more courageous. I started to help Mem with the shopping because even with food stamps, you had to wait in lines in order to get something. And I still had my false I.D. card in case they would stop me on the street. In the meantime, June and July went by and there were fierce battles going on in France. In the beginning of August, Mem decided to go to the country and try to buy some food for all of us direct from the farmers. Of course, this was not allowed by the Germans but that did not stop Mem. A few days before she left, she had received a letter from the gestapo but she did not tell us about it because she did not want us to worry. The letter was addressed to a Mrs. Simons and ordered her to report to a certain German office at such and such a date.

Mem knew this Mrs. Simons. About a year ago, she had allowed Mrs. Simons to use Mem's address as a correspondence address. If I recall correctly, Mrs. Simons' husband, who was Jewish, had been deported already to Poland. She was afraid to be arrested too even though she was not Jewish, but she owned a lot of paintings and jewelry. So, she used Mem's address for a while as a correspondence address, but never lived there. Then, when she went underground, she did not keep in touch with Mem anymore. So, when Mem received that letter, she thought the best thing to do was just tear it up and forget about it. But, the Germans did not forget about it. Mem was planning to come back in the late afternoon of August 5th. It was a Saturday. We had just finished listening to the B.B.C. It was a little after 1 o'clock. The doorbell rang real loud. Ynze pulled the cord to open the door and there they came, running up the stairs. All we heard was, "Gestapo, we are looking for Mrs. Simons." It was just like somebody was hitting us over the head with a hammer. We all reacted differently. Ynze stood there frozen. Sal tried to hide in the closet and I ran to the balcony in the back of the house pretending I was playing with the little rabbit we kept there. I stayed there a few minutes and millions of thoughts went through my mind. I think the same thing happens the minute before a person dies. I did not know what to do. I heard shouting and yelling inside, German and Dutch. Then, I went back into the house. When they saw me, one of them shouted at me. "Who are you and what are you doing here? Are you a neighbor or something?" For one second, it flashed through my mind to use his story because I could show my false I.D. and maybe they would not find out that I am Jewish. But then I saw Papa and Ynze handcuffed together and one of the Gestapo men had his gun pointed at them. I heard Papa mumble, "It's all over, it's all over." Then, I spoke up and I remember exactly what I said, "No, I am not a neighbor. I am his wife and what do you mean, Sal, by 'It's all over.' All we have to do is struggle through a few rough months and then it is all over for the Germans. You know they are losing the war." Those guys just looked at me and did not believe I had the guts to say all that. But, inside I had a sick feeling of fear and all of a sudden I had to go to the bathroom. One of the guys went with me and I had to leave the door wide open. Can you imagine how I felt. I said, "Close the door." He said, "No, I know your kind, you might commit suicide." "I would not give you that satisfaction," I told him. Then, he started a conversation while I was sitting there. He said, "You look so familiar to me. Did you ever belong to a nature reservation club some years ago?" I said, "No, but it is hard to believe that you ever belonged to an organization like that. How you can stand there with that skull on your helmet, humiliating me, is unbelievable." A few moments later he took me back to our room. They ordered us only to take our toothbrushes, soap and comb. In the meantime, they checked the whole apartment. They were so stupid though because they did not even find the radio hidden behind the drapes on the floor in the living room. Then, they took us down to their cars. All the time their guns were pointed at us and Sal and Ynze were handcuffed together.

One of the neighbors who just half an hour before had been over to our place to listen to the English radio peeked through his window and saw what was going on. He noticed too that one of the Gestapo men stayed behind in the apartment. He also knew that Mem was due home that afternoon so after they left with us, he went outside hoping to warn Mem before she went upstairs. He did succeed in talking to Mem when she appeared in the street, but could not persuade her not to go back to her apartment after he told her what had happened. She told him, "Just leave that up to me. I know how to handle those guys, but you can do one thing for me; get in touch with the company from which Ynze has a working permit. If the Germans inquire if Ynze is employed there, they should tell them 'yes'". So, Mem went up to the outside stairs of her apartment, pretending not to know what had happened. On top of that, she had two suitcases with wheat, beans and potatoes which she had bought in the country from the farmers. When the gestapo guy saw her come up the stairs, he yelled at her, "What are you doing here?" She answered, "I was just about to ask you that same question. Don't forget, this is my house." When he started talking about hiding Jews, etc., she interrupted him and said, "Instead of standing there talking nonsense, why don't you come down and help me carry these suitcases upstairs." He did not move to help, but

said, "What is in those suitcases?" "Food," she answered, "which I bought from the farmers." "You are not supposed to buy food like that; I am sure you know that," he replied. "Of course, I know that," said Mem, "but, if you Germans would not steal everything away and would give us enough to eat, I would not have to do that. But, we cannot just sit here and starve to death." So, by then he knew that Mem was not afraid of him at all. Then he started again, "You know you were hiding Jews?" She said, "I never ask anybody's religion. To me, people are people and that couple had been evacuated from the coast and had to live somewhere." He said, "They told you a made up story." Mem thought that for once this guy was telling the truth, but she said, "By the way, where are they?" "For now, in prison and we took your son, too," he answered. Mem said, "You better release him soon because he has to be at work next week and he only had a few days off." "If we let him go, we have to arrest you until we are done with our investigation," he answered. Then, Mem said, "There is nothing to investigate, but go ahead and take me. I have nothing to hide." But, he said as long as they had Ynze, Mem did not have to go yet, but they might be back for her in a couple of days. And that is how it happened. They released Ynze and came to arrest Mem. She spent a couple of days in prison and was then transported to a city more inland for investigation or rather interrogation. She was with a bunch of other prisoners. They first went by train and then by streetcar and that is where she had her chance to escape. When they reached their stop, the guards got off and screamed to the prisoners to follow them. Mem crawled under the bench hoping that the conductor and the other passengers would not squeal on her and luckily it worked. When the streetcar kept on going, she could see through the glass that the guards were counting the prisoners and only then discovered they were one short. At the next stop, Mem got off and hid in a cornfield. When it turned darker, she walked to the nearest farm and asked for shelter. The people were okay. Mem told them her situation. They found a place for her to hide until the war was over. It was in a castle where more people were hiding and Mem did the daily cooking.

The Germans never came back to pick up Ynze again. What a good feeling it was for Sal and I when we came back, that Ynze and Mem had been able to avoid punishment by the Germans. And not once did they blame us for the troubles they had had because of us. On the contrary, when we went back to Holland for a visit in 1967, and Max thanked Mem for having helped his parents during the war, her answer was, "That was my duty and I would do the same thing again whenever needed." Mem is just one in a million and it is a blessing to know such a beautiful person. As for Sal and me, our chances for survival were getting smaller day by day. First, we were locked up in prison. In those days, the prison was nicknamed, "Oranje Hotel." (Hotel Orange) Orange is the color of the royal family because they belong to the House of Orange. All the people kept as prisoners were pro-royalty and all the murderers, thieves and killers were running around working for the nationalists party, the S.S. and the gestapo. After a week in solitary confinement, a guard took me out of the cell and brought me to the entrance of the prison. I had to stand there facing the wall. I heard some noise behind me and out of the corner of my eyes I saw Sal and Ynze also facing the wall. After quite a while, we were transported in a military truck to the railroad station and from there by train to Arnhem for interrogation.

There was no chance for us to escape like Mem did. We had so many Gestapo guys all around us. The next day, German Gestapo guys questioned us separately. We all stuck to our evacuation story. Of course, they did not believe that Ynze did not know that we were Jewish, but luckily they could not prove that. So, Ynze was released and he went back to his home where he stayed until the end of the war. But, he and his brother had to keep house because as I mentioned before, Mem had to remain hidden until the war was over. After the interrogation, Sal and I with a lot of other prisoners, were transported to Camp Westerbork in the province of Drente in the northeastern part of Holland. Instead of going into detail about everything that happened to us after that I will quote a letter I sent a couple of years ago to Rabbi Silverman, whose father actually inspired me to write about our war experiences in great length, so people and especially Jewish people, will never forget.

Dear Rabbi Silverman,

Thank you for your letter. In answer to your request, I hereby will give a more detailed description of our wartime experiences and our relationship with the Frank family. Until a few years ago I felt kind of reluctant to talk about it. But a little over a year ago, after a Sabbath service, we had a short conversation with your parents. We talked about Europe and the war and then your father, may he rest in peace, urged us to let people know about our experiences, so it will never be forgotten. Also, the older I am getting, the more I feel that I, as one of the few survivors, owe it to the memory of my family and all the other victims, to talk about the cruel and almost unbelievable treatment by the Germans.

From my previous letter, you know that Sal and I were hidden from April 1943 to August 1944. Most of the Jewish people in Holland were afraid to go into hiding because the Germans threatened over and over again in the papers, that a Jew who would break any rule given by them, would be severely punished. Now we know that this was only true as long as you were in the Dutch transit concentration camps that there was a difference between the treatment of the so called "S" cases (Jews who had broken any rules) and the other Jewish people who had

just been picked up off the street or taken out of their homes by the Germans. As soon as you were stuffed into the cattle cars and passed the border, they had only one goal in mind for all the Jews, and that was to kill them all.

August 5, 1944. The Germans were informed about our hiding place and we were arrested, sent to jail and then to Westerbork, A Dutch transit camp. We were allowed to stay together during the day, but men and women had to sleep in separate barracks. We were put to work. Our job was to sort old flashlight batteries. We were sitting on top of a huge pile of them with several baskets and kept sorting them according to size and shape. Another group would open up the batteries to collect the black stuff inside, which the Germans used for some other purpose. That is where we met the Frank family, the other couple, their son Peter and the other gentleman, who all had been in hiding together in Amsterdam in what is now known as the Anne Frank House. We had long discussions about our experiences. But mainly we tried to encourage each other and hope that the war would soon be over. If we could only hold out long enough. While in hiding we always listened in secret to the English radio and we knew that the invasion had been a success. But every day we feared transportation to an extermination camp. That unlucky day came September 2, 1944. In fact, it was the last transport to leave this transit camp. We were locked in cattle cars for two days and nights. No words can describe the feeling of despair and misery. When they finally unlocked the doors and we stumbled out, I had the feeling I had arrived in hell. It was night, chimneys were burning with huge bright flames. Bright electric lights shining on us. Gestapo and S.S. with big German shepherd dogs all over the place. The S.S. beating everybody with sticks and guns. Then the selection started. Men and women were separated. The older women, mothers with children and sick people were pushed into trucks. They thought they were privileged to get a ride to the camp. But it turned out to be their last trip. They went straight to the gas chambers.

The Frank family made it through the first selection. Everything was taken away from us. We had to undress. One thing they did not take was our wedding ring. That you had to throw away in a corner of the barracks. They figured out everything to hurt you the most. A number was tattooed on your arm. Our hair was cut short, however, at the next selection it was shaved off completely. When we left the selection, all we owned was an old, second hand, poorly fitting dress and shoes from previous victims. We did not even have underwear. When we finally got to the bunk beds in the barracks, we were so exhausted, we almost fainted into deep sleep and many of us hoped never to wake up again. It was still pitch dark when we were awakened by screaming and beating. We had to line up outside to "appel" until sunrise. Then the German S.S. women came to count us and make sure that everybody was there. Of course, we were not known by name, just by our number, and the total of inmates had to be there. The same line-up every night before sunset and every morning before sunrise. There were Jews from many different countries in Auschwitz, but each nationality tried to stick together as much as possible. It was easier to communicate with each other, having the same background and speaking the same language. A group of about 10 Dutch girls became very close friends. I was one of them, also Mrs. Frank, Margot and Anne. We had to remain outside all day. We talked a lot, huddled close together against the wall of the barracks to keep each other warm with our bodies, taking turns who would stand in front, where it was much colder. We talked about our families, our experiences and tried to keep our hopes and morals high. We managed to get some underwear. Some girls found a way to get hold of some clothing from other prisoners and would exchange it with us for a slice of bread. We only received a little piece of bread every day but you had to save some of it for this exchange, because it was also important to try to keep your body warm. You never knew in advance what they were planning to do with us. Sometimes we had to carry big rocks and had to walk several miles. Three times they lined us up in front of the gas chambers and left us standing there for about an hour. Every time we thought for sure that would be the end. Then another time, they would force us to watch how a woman was punished for taking a potato from the



The town of Liebau where I worked in a labor camp from October 29, 1944 to the end of the war on May 7, 1945.

kitchen. They threw buckets of hot water over her. Then another time they would line us up for the so called "Entlausung" (in English, to de-lice us). They would take everything away again and you had to start all over again to try to get hold of some clothing.

Every week some kind of a camp nurse would go around to pick out the sick. This turned out to be fatal for Margot and Anne Frank. Anne showed some kind of a skin infection and was taken to the sick barracks. Her older sister, Margot, pretended then that she was not feeling too well either, because she did not want her sister to be alone in that so called hospital. They did not cure people there, but kept them together and if there were too many, they would send a group to the gas chambers. Mrs. Frank stayed with us. Then on October 29, 1944, there was another selection and I was sent to a labor camp. Mr. Frank told us after the war that he heard from other survivors, that when the Russians came closer to Auschwitz all women prisoners were transported to another concentration camp named Bergen Belsen. A typhus epidemic broke out, and most of the people died, including Margot and Anne. According to a book I read recently, Mrs. Frank died in Auschwitz.

I ended up in a labor camp in a little town named Liebau in upper Silezie, part of Poland, with about 200 other Jewish prisoners. We had to work in a factory where we made snowchains for military trucks. After a couple of months, they ran out of material. Then we were put to work in a field where we had to make a landing strip for airplanes. We had to make rock, by blowing up parts of a mountain with dynamite. Then carry those rocks to the field for a landing strip. The fact that I also speak German and French helped me a great deal during my imprisonment. It was very important to be able to understand the instructions given by the women soldiers who were our guards. I could also overhear their conversations. They became more and more discouraged about the outcome of the war, which made us feel better. I never let them notice that



Photo taken in September, 1967 in Amsterdam on a visit to Holland. Sal, Rose, Otto Frank.



Jean Buchard (Kino). A forced laborer from France who worked in the same factory as our group of Jewish prisoners.

I could understand them. And in the factory worked a Frenchman. He was not a Jewish prisoner, but forced to work in Germany. Somehow he found out that I spoke French, but he was not allowed to talk to us. There were always two guards over a group of 10 prisoners. He would go around bringing the material on the tables for us to make the snow chains. He would walk by us singing a song in French. But the words of the song would be something like this, "The Russians are closing in on Berlin," or "Things are going much better in the Ardennes." That way he kept us posted on what was happening in the world, because we never saw a newspaper or heard a radio. Or he would sing along and tell me where I could find a slice of bread that he had hidden for me in a corner somewhere in the factory. Until this day I have a regular correspondence with him and we visited with him in Paris on our trip to France in 1967. Finally, on May 7, 1945, the war was over and my husband and I found each other again in Holland on June 30, 1945.

While my husband was in Auschwitz, he became very close friends with Mr. Frank.

In fact, he still calls him Pappa Frank. They had long talks and gave each other moral support. In January 1945, Sal ended up in the hospital in Auschwitz. His weight was down to 90 pounds. Mr. Frank was also in that so-called hospital. On January 27, the Russians had the camp almost surrounded. The Germans decided to evacuate everybody, except the people in the hospital. They were planning to blow up that building with everybody in it. However, the Russians moved up so fast, that the Germans who had orders to blow up the hospital were afraid to be closed in and captured by the enemy and they fled. This saved the life of Sal and all the sick prisoners. And a few days later, the Russians found the bodies of all the evacuated prisoners, shot to death, in a mass grave a few miles outside Auschwitz. All through the years of hiding and suffering, we never lost faith in God. Human beings around us acted worse than animals. Being face to face with death every day, I was convinced there had to be a higher power and that death could only be better than the terrible hell we had to live through. However, I never gave up hope and I thank God everyday for saving us. We all had the same will power to survive, but some of us were just luckier than others.

Rabbi, I am sure that you have read and heard often about concentration camps. This is the first time I wrote in detail about our experiences and it makes me feel good to express my feelings to a person as important as you are. As a Rabbi, you reach so many people with your most interesting sermons. I hope that my letter will give you even more information to impress on Jews all over the world "never to forget."

Shalom,
Rose De Liema

In addition to this letter, I want to mention some more details about the way we found out that the war was finally over. But first let me describe the most horrible demoralizing day we lived through in Auschwitz. Actually, the name of the camp where the women were kept was Birkenau, within walking distance from the Auschwitz camp. If you recall at our arrival, our hair was only cut short and not shaven off completely. For what reason I don't know because all the other inmates were completely bald. Then, after a couple of weeks, they rounded us up one day for our first trip to the sauna for "de-licing." When we got there after a long walk, they (the guards) kept counting and counting us over and over again. I heard them screaming and yelling to each other that they were one short. Apparently they had miscounted when we left Birkenau gate, but they figured one had managed to escape on our way to the sauna. But she would still be on the camp grounds because there were gates and fences under high electric power all around us so it was really impossible to escape. The women guards were furious. We went through the sauna torture. All the rags we had managed to accumulate in exchange for a little bread, taken away. This time we got the full treatment. When we came out of the sauna we hardly recognized each other. We were completely bald and shaven all over our body. I am searching for a word to let you know how we felt, but it is impossible. I better keep on telling what happened next. We had to line up, stark naked. Gestapo guys with their vicious german shepherd dogs walked between us. The guys looking us over, ordering their dogs to jump at us and sniffing all over us. They were all outraged and determined to find that one woman who was missing. Then all of a sudden in one far corner, we noticed a huge pile of old, molded, stale bread. Despite the fact of the gestapo and the dogs, in a flash of a second I saw a bunch of us naked women run to the bread pile. A sight I will never forget as long as I live. Their naked bodies crawling over each other to grab and eat some of that bread. Thank God I could not make myself do that even though I was hurting from hunger pain. I was happy to have enough dignity and will power left to control my actions. And a lot of my Dutch girlfriends reacted the same way as I did. Not that I could not understand the other women's reaction when seeing that bread, but they reacted like a bunch of animals, following their instinct instead of their human feelings. Of course, we all took a beating for that from the gestapo with their "zweep" (whip) and the dogs barked louder and jumped up to us.

Finally, they gave us an old worn, torn dress and that was all against the cold winter weather in Poland. Then, we walked, or better dragged, ourselves back to Birkenau under special close watch by the guards. All we could look forward to was crawling on our bunkbeds and hoping not to wake up the next morning. But, that was even too much to wish for because when we got back in the camp, we had to line up again for "appel" countdown. And this time they were not one short. Then, the hollering and screaming really got louder, if at all possible. They demanded that the woman who had not gone to the sauna step forward. We, ourselves, did not know who had stayed behind and we would not have told them anyway. I looked around and everybody was bald, so it was hard to figure out who had not gone to the sauna because when we went we all had our hair cut short only and came back shaven. So, they kept us standing there for hours, but nobody admitted that she stayed behind. Then, they ordered us to kneel. We had to remain on our knees for about half an hour. Still, nobody spoke up. In the meantime, the gestapo gazed at each prisoner with their ugly penetrating hateful expression. And then, came the final blow. They ordered us to lift up our dresses; remember, we had no underwear whatsoever. They figured the woman might have seen us come back from the sauna bald and had managed to find somebody in the camp to shave her hair so she would not be caught; but, she might not have thought of shaving the rest of her

body. And that is exactly what had happened and how they caught her. But, can you imagine how we felt sitting there on our knees, shivering from cold, despair, hunger, holding up our rags for those beasts to look at us. I know you cannot imagine how we felt, but I still wanted to put this miserable, dark day in this manuscript. The woman they picked out was a Dutch woman and she was beaten so severely by them that she was numb for days and lost hearing in one ear for the rest of her life. It was a miracle they did not beat her to death. We did not blame her for trying to outsmart the Germans, but this time it had not worked out.

And now I want to tell you about the best days of my prison camp existence. One day in April, when we walked to work on the landing path, we saw the flags half mast and to our joy found out that the fuhrer had died. That was better for our moral than anything. But, we had to be careful not to show our happiness. Then, on May 5, 1945, we were working in the field and had to take a lunch break. I don't mean lunch for us, but for our guards. They fried eggs and toasted bread and all we could do was smell the delicious aroma and just drool. Usually, after 15 minutes they would tell us to continue working, but this time they just let us sit around for an hour. Then, they finally told us to line up and walk back to camp. We knew then there was something going on. On our way back, my French friend, "Kino", rode by on his bike, screaming real loud, "C'est la paix!" Could it really be true that peace had finally come? We were ordered to stay inside the barracks. They prepared our regular evening soup meal for us. Our camp leader had meant that to be our final meal forever. She had ordered some barrels of poison, which they used in one of the factories, to be brought to the camp to mix in our soup and be our actual "last supper." Thank God the men who had gotten these instructions to deliver the barrels, did not follow her orders. Thanks to these fellows, we survived. They were not German, of course, but they were the Dutch and French fellows who used to work with us in the same factories. Then, the guards took off, taking a few Jewish women with them to protect them against the Russians.

We then assembled and realized for the first time we were free. Some Russian commanders arrived. We all sang our national anthems, but it was hard to sing and cry at the same time. We were happy, but so tired and exhausted and could not believe that it was all over. Our Dutch and French friends came in the camp. We ate our first delicious dish, as much as we wanted "Griesmeel pap" (some kind of cereal). We were warned not to overeat, which might be fatal after being so starved for such a long time. Then, our friends stole a horse for us, butchered it and that was our first meal that we ate. I still remember that Sunday. We had the meat on our plate and in walks a farmer from around Liebau. He asked us if we by chance had seen a horse wandering around because his horse was lost since yesterday. None of us said a word, but invited him to join us for a good meal. "No thanks," he said, "but, I better keep on going to search for my horse." You might feel sorry for him or for his horse, but we sure did not. After a couple of weeks, we left the camp to walk back to Holland.

Papa returned to Holland on June 9, 1945, which is my birthday. He hoped to find me there, but I was still back in Silezie, a small town named Bunzlau. I was with a bunch of other girls who thought it was much better to try to walk back to Holland instead of waiting for help from the Red Cross. We did not realize that all the roads and trains were damaged and destroyed by bombs. And in that little town of Bunzlau the Russians stopped everybody and we had to stay there until they had the railroads cleared and cars available to send us on to our destinations. Papa was helped by the Red Cross and they furnished American military planes to return ex-prisoners to their different countries. Luckily, Papa found his parents back at the house of his brother, Lex. Needless to say how sad Papa was that I was not there. He did not know if I was still alive. Everyday he went to the Red Cross to see if my name appeared on the list of survivors. But, the communications in those first weeks after the end of the war were not too good. Finally, after our little group struggled for more than four weeks by walking, waiting and using trains, we finally reached the Dutch border in the southern part of Limburg. I will mention now our experiences on the trip. Don't forget, we did not have one penny in our pocket and were hungry every moment of the day and night. How did we get food and lodging? We just demanded it from the Germans. By then, they were scared to death and they figured by being good to the ex-prisoners, the Russians might not steal everything away from them. So, we just told them that the instructions came from the Russians to give us food and lodging. All we showed them was a piece of paper with some Russian words scribbled on it. One of the girls in our group came up with that idea. All it said on the paper was that we were given permission to use the roads from one town to the next, but the Germans could not read Russian. They were impressed by our commanding attitude. And we used that same piece of paper to get bread from the baker and meat from the butcher. When it came to payment, we gave them our signature on the bill and told them that the Russian Kommandantur would pay the bill. They believed it but, of course, they never did get paid. It worked just perfect and that is how we managed to eat and sleep without spending a penny. Of course, we had to find some way to handle it because we actually did not have one cent among us. We slept mostly in farmhouses. In one of the places we slept we had a chance to weigh ourselves. I was the heaviest in the group. My weight was 96 pounds. But, it was amazing how fast we regained our strength and to know that the war was over gave us moral strength. Of course, there was another danger now, that of being raped by the Russian soldiers.

Thank God, we succeeded in avoiding them. The Dutch and French men who worked in the same labor camp (one of them was my friend, Kino) gave us all the protection we needed. We tried to stick together as much as possible while walking from one village to the next. We had one close call in a small village named Lomnitz. We had found a farmhouse to sleep. The French and Dutch fellows slept in one room and we six girls in another. Late that night a Russian military truck broke down on the road across from the farmhouse where we stayed. They told the farmer that they needed lodging and were told there was no room. They came in anyway, broke into our room and grabbed one of our girls right away. We all screamed and yelled and that alarmed their commander who came running upstairs. Lucky for us he was a well-educated, decent man. He saw how scared we all were. When we saw that we could trust him, all of us girls just clung to him. He screamed at the soldiers and told them to leave the farm immediately and sleep in the woods. He motioned to us girls to go back to sleep and sat up all night in our room to protect us. The Dutch and French fellows had heard our screaming in their room, but could not come to help us. One of the soldiers had posted himself outside our door with a big shotgun while the others broke in to our room. I hate to think what would have happened if it would not have been for that civilized commander. He and his soldiers left real early the next morning, taking all the cows and horses from the farmer with them. We did not feel a bit sorry for that German farmer. Soon, we were on our way to the next village. He had given us lodging not because he wanted to be good to the Jews, but expected good treatment by the Russians for helping us. But, this time it did not work out at all.*

We finally reached Leipzig where American troops took care of us. What a difference that was. We could communicate with them. They transported us in military trucks. My girlfriend, Rosie, and I spoke English so we sat in front next to the chauffeur or driver. They asked us to keep talking to them so they would stay awake because they did not sleep for 36 hours. Well, we had plenty to talk about and it was hard for them to believe the inhumane treatment by the nazis. I wish I would have asked this American soldier his name because I was so grateful to him and he gave me such a feeling of security. All he did was watch the road and listen to me and I kept on talking and talking. I could see my girlfriend doing the same in the other truck. There was one small funny thing wrong in the arrangement which Rosie and I laughed about later on. My driver kept offering me cigarettes and I don't smoke, but love to eat candy and Rosie's driver kept offering her candy and she was dying for an American cigarette. We finally reached a point somewhere in Germany and were put on trains. These were also cattle cars, but this time we were treated with tender care. We were given plenty of food. The sliding doors remained open and we were all on our way home. I should really say on our way back because none of us really knew if we had a home or anybody to go back to. We finally reached the Dutch border. We were checked thoroughly. Not our luggage because none of us had any luggage. But, we had all kinds of people on the train; ex-prisoners of war, forced labor groups and survivors of concentration camps, but also spies who had collaborated with the Germans and now tried to sneak back into Holland. For us six girls, there was no problem because the number tattooed on our arm told the whole story. After getting our temporary I.D., we went different ways to find if and where some of our relatives might be living. I hitchhiked together with Rosie. Her destination was Rotterdam and mine The Hague, in the same general direction. In a way, we were afraid to find out for sure who had not survived. On the other hand, we were anxious to finish our long journey. Rosie and I had planned to stay together if neither of our husbands would have survived. We knew from our own experiences that none of my other relatives had had a chance of survival. We said we would try to get a job as stewardesses. That way, we did not have to commit suicide, but had a good chance of being killed in an airplane accident because we did not want to look forward to a long life without any relatives. You must realize we made these decisions right after the liberation. Rosie and I differed at one point though. She was convinced that her husband had survived and I was certain my husband could not have survived all the suffering, starvation and humiliation.

When we reached Rotterdam we went to gentile friends of Rosie. They were happy to see her. They gave us clean clothes and food. They had not heard of any of Rosie's family who might have survived. This was a terrible shock to both of us and especially to Rosie to find out for certain that none of her relatives, including her husband, had survived. You see, Rosie had been in hiding together with her husband, her parents and her brother-in-law and his wife until they were captured in August 1944. So, she always had some hope that some of them had a chance of survival. But, think of Pappa Frank. He was the only one who survived all of the people that were hidden in "het Achterhuis" in Amsterdam. Rosie and I were very upset and depressed. My plan had been to go on and hitchhike by myself to The Hague, but suddenly I was afraid to face up to the fact that I might be all alone too. So, I decided to stay with Rosie for another day and continue the next day. But, things turned out differently. We learned from Rosie's friends that one of our ex-campmates and close friends, Lydia Birnbaum-Hausdorf, had returned to Rotterdam weeks before we did because she had repatriated with the assistance of the Red Cross. She was staying with her brother, Dr. Hausdorf, in Rotterdam. It was Saturday, June 30, 1945. Rosie and I were anxious to see Lydia so we walked over to visit her. Her sister-in-law answered the door. She told us Lydia was

*Please see "Narrative of the Return from Liebau - Eastern Europe" by Jean Buchard (Kino) on page 37.

taking a nap, but invited us right in when she heard we were camp friends of Lydia. After talking to Dr. Hausdorf and Mrs. Hausdorf for a while, Lydia came down. We were overjoyed to see each other and we were all talking, laughing and crying at the same time. We finally sat down. Mrs. Hausdorf served us something to eat and then just as a part of the general conversation, Lydia said to me, "Rose, aren't you lucky that Sal made it too?" I could not believe my ears. "What do you mean," I said. Then Lydia replied, "Don't you know that Sal is alive? I thought you just came from The Hague for the weekend to visit Rosie." By then, I did not hear a thing anymore. I nearly fainted and could not think straight and kept saying, "What am I supposed to do now. Please help me." They first calmed me down and Lydia told me how she knew about Sal being alive and she even showed me a post card written by Sal. While we were in the camp, we had told each other our contact addresses in Holland. We did not write them down. First of all, that would have been dangerous and secondly, none of us had pencil or paper. So, we all memorized the information. When Lydia returned to Holland, she wrote, as promised, to our contacts in Rotterdam and The Hague. That is how Rosie's friends knew about Lydia being back. And Sal had answered Lydia's card. I could hardly believe it when I saw Sal's handwriting.

Mrs. Hausdorf prepared a package for me with bread and butter and they all brought me to the main road to hitchhike a military truck. That was the only means of transportation. There was no telephone communication either. I said good bye to Lydia and Rosie with a sick feeling of sadness in my heart; Rosie without any relatives at all; Lydia without her husband. But, she at least had her brother and family and most important her children had been safely hidden and survived the war. Once in the truck, I realized that within an hour I would be back with Sal and his parents. On the card to Lydia, he wrote that he was living with his parents at Spui 227 and anxiously waiting my return. I told all the hitchhikers in the truck my experiences and I was not only happy, but also nervous, excited, sad and wondering. I don't think there is a word in any language to express my emotions. Finally, the truck stopped across the street from Spui 227. I thanked the driver and I remember distinctly which thought crossed my mind; "Be real careful now crossing the street because it would really be a shame to be hit by a car at the last second." Sal had not been feeling so good and was running a temperature and had just gotten out of bed for a while and was sitting in front of the window looking at the traffic going by. All of a sudden, he saw a truck stop across the street. As soon as he saw me, he jumped out and ran down the stairs followed by his parents. When I reached the door, I surely did not have to ring the bell. The three of them hugged me and kissed me and touched me. It was just unbelievable. We laughed, but mostly cried. But, my father-in-law broke the tension by asking, "Ro, waar is je bagage?" (Rose, where is your luggage?) and he was serious. "Well", I told him, "this is it", pointing at myself. "But, then I always travel light."

It was like a dream having Sal back. And he looked so good to me even though he had been sick for a couple of days. We talked all evening and night and kept looking and staring at each other. The following morning, my father-in-law went on his bike to tell Lex and Janny that I had returned and they came over the same day. It was so good to be among relatives again. The following days we walked many, many miles because that was the only way of getting any place. But, I was an experienced walker after my trip through Germany. First, we went to Mem. Sal had looked her up already as soon as he was back. She was happy to see him, but not surprised. She was convinced he would survive. When Sal told her that I had not come back yet, she told him, "Don't you worry, she will be back soon." When we both saw her she was very happy and thankful that she had succeeded in saving our lives. But, she told me not to have any hope of survival for the rest of my family. She was right again. From all of my relatives, my family, my father's three brothers, two sisters with many children and grandchildren and my mother's two brothers and two sisters with their families, I was the only one who returned. I never counted exactly how many relatives I lost because I would never refer to that number anyway. It always bothers me when people refer to "the six million victims." How can anybody comprehend what that means. As far as that goes, nobody who has never been in a concentration camp can really feel and understand the torturing that went on. To do that to "one" person is a crime. And it was done day in and day out by the Germans to the majority of European Jews. Still, Sal and I went everyday to look for familiar names on the Red Cross list of survivors, but always in vain. A few cousins of mine survived because they were lucky to remain hidden and one succeeded to escape to Switzerland during the war.

Sal's parents were so good for us. My mother-in-law did not know what to do to satisfy our hunger and it was not easy to buy enough food. Everyday people came to visit us. A Jewish Center was set up with names and addresses of the few Jewish survivors of the camps and the few hundred who had succeeded to remain hidden all through the war. We had many of our ex-campmates visiting us. A regular visitor was Mr. Frank, the father of Anne Frank. Sal had been together with him all the time in Auschwitz and always called him Pappa Frank. He told us that somebody had found Anne's Diary in "het achterhuis" and had given it to him after his return. He was considering publishing it. You know how well known this book is by now and a film has been made about it. We lived with Papa's parents because it was not possible to rent a house. After a couple of weeks, Papa started to go to work again. It was not easy to pick up the pieces and try to build up the wholesale business again which

had been totally destroyed by the Germans. But, he received the fullest cooperation from all the manufacturers. But, merchandise was still scarce and rationed. Together, with his father, they were able to make a good living again. In November, we had the most wonderful news. I was expecting. We were all so happy and looking forward to July of 1946 when the baby was due. A few weeks after we had returned, I received a letter from the U.S.A. It came from one of my former bosses, Dr. Carl Goldschmidt from New York. He had seen our names on the list of survivors and wrote us how happy he was to learn that we had survived the war. He also told us that a big package had been mailed to us with food and clothing. You can imagine how we appreciated that so we wrote him back immediately to thank him and we started to correspond regularly. In one of his letters, he mentioned that if we ever would consider settling in the United States, he would be more than happy to help us to set up the documents in the U.S.A. But, we had to make the first step. In those days, there was a quota, only a certain amount of people each year were allowed to immigrate. So, we had to apply for a number. Papa and I talked it over. I was very much interested to go to America. I had nightmares very often and jumped up every time I heard the doorbell. While walking on the street, I kept searching for familiar faces. Even though I knew how fortunate I was to have Papa back, I remained very restless. So, Papa and I decided to apply for a number and then make up our minds the day we would receive the letter from the American Consulate that it was our turn. This we knew would take a couple of years anyway. One of Dr. Goldschmidt's associates, Dr. Wachtel, issued the sponsorship papers for us.

So, on July 13, 1946, Max was born. Indescribable how happy and thankful we all were. We still lived with Papa's parents and my mother-in-law was such a big help to me. How they loved that baby. Then, in October 1946, Papa reopened his retail store in the Appelstraat. Above this store was a very nice modern apartment, so we moved there. We had a girl to run the store and another girl to clean the house. So, I could spend all my time with Max, which I loved, of course. But, I had too much time to think about everything and could not relax. Quite often Mem came to visit me and it was always good to talk to her. Papa and I were often together of course with Opa and Oma and Papa's brothers and families. Then, in November, 1947, the doctor told me I was expecting my second baby in July, 1948. Sadly enough, my mother-in-law died in February 1948, after an operation.

Around that time we received "the letter" from the American Consulate. So, we had to make up our minds. Well, the rest I don't have to tell you. With the help of Dr. Goldschmidt all our papers were prepared. In the meantime, Robert was born on July 21, 1948. I was so happy he was a boy again because I always wanted to have sons. Papa and I were so proud and happy with our two sons and Max loved his little brother. On September 2, 1950, exactly six years to the date that we had been shipped to Auschwitz, we sailed to the U.S.A. aboard "de Diemerdijk" through the Panama Canal direct to Los Angeles. The only reason we went to Los Angeles was that we had some ex-campmates who lived there and with whom we kept in touch. We have never regretted our decision to come to the United States. As far as I am concerned, America is the greatest country in the world. We were able to put you both through college and we have a very pleasant job with Bank of America. The rest I don't have to write about because you know it yourselves.

Max and Robert, you both have made our lives meaningful and worthwhile. All the struggles and suffering were worth it. And you made it complete by choosing such darling wonderful wives as Sue and Kathy, whom we both love as if they would be our own daughters. I want to finish by stating some of the rules I always tried to live by and which you are already familiar with, but always good to be reminded of:

"Practice your willpower."

"It takes more courage to say 'no' than to go along with the crowd."

"Things could always be worse; when the chips are down, keep your chin up."

"Be thankful everyday that you are healthy and free."

"Above all, have love and 'gezelligheid' (coziness) in your home."

Love,
Moeder

Note:

At this printing in December of 1996, Rose is 75 years old and Sal is 82. They are celebrating their 54th wedding anniversary and are comfortably retired and living in Mission Viejo, California. Max and his wife Sue have three children: Ben, Michelle and Marcie; Rob and his wife Kathy have three children: Julie, Jonathan and David. Rose and Sal's life since the war has brought them great joy and comfort, yet the day does not go by that they are not reminded in some way of the holocaust they endured and survived. Rose continues to speak in schools about her experiences and leaves a considerable impression on all those she touches with her story. Sal is less vocal but often accompanies her on her school visits. There is no stronger love in all the world than that of Rose and Sal. It has been my privilege to compile this booklet as a small token of my love and respect for my parents.

Rob DeLiema

Author's note:

When I wrote this manuscript in 1975 it was intended mainly for my children, and I wrote in detail about my childhood in Holland, but not so much about all that happened during the war years. This version is edited with much of that detail, plus more detail is given in the pages to follow.

Over the years, I have spoken to dozens of high school classes whose assignment it was to read my manuscript and then prepare questions for me to answer. It is amazing to see the expression of almost disbelief when I tell them firsthand how the Germans treated, or rather mistreated, us in the camps. This makes me think of what happened to my husband while he was in Auschwitz. It was ice cold and he and a group of other prisoners were digging in the snow. They were hungry and they were freezing in their thin prison outfits. The German guard was bundled up in a furcoat and hat and watched them. He hit them when he thought they weren't moving fast enough. Suddenly, he started talking to them. He said, "I really don't understand why you Jews try to survive. Not that you will have a slight chance of surviving. But if one of you would, nobody in the world will ever believe you when you tell them what we Germans did to you. They will think you made up a story."

I am often asked how I was able to survive the camp. I can tell you that luck had a lot to do with it. We had willpower, but I can guarantee you that millions of other prisoners had just as much willpower. But most of the transports went directly to the gas chambers, and many were shot to death. By the time we were captured in August, 1944, the Germans were running out of manpower, and they used any able-bodied person to work for them in factories. Our group tried to sabotage them while doing our work. We had to assemble snowchains to be used by military trucks. We were instructed to assemble them evenly, like five hooks on one side and also five hooks on the opposite side. What we did, however, was to put six on one side and four on the other so that the chain would not fit well and wiggle around on the tires. But we took a chance doing that; if the women guards would have caught us, we would have been severely punished or even shot to death, depending on the mood of the guard. So there again, luck plays a big part.

What also helped was that Sal and I had made an agreement while being transported to Auschwitz in the cattle cars. We agreed to never volunteer for anything. This promise saved Sal's life. One day, a German Gestapo guard asked, or rather yelled at a group of prisoners standing hungry and freezing in the cold, that he needed a bunch of volunteers to work in the bakery. Can you imagine how tempting that was? As you can imagine, many raised their hands to volunteer. The idea to be around warm bread and be able to nibble all day was unimaginable. Sal almost raised his hand, too, but then decided not to because of our promise to each other. The Gestapo took the volunteers away, and Sal found out later, that they were marched straight into the gas chambers. Here again, destiny played a big part in our survival chances.

Very often I hear people make the following remark: "Why did the Jews follow all the orders given by the Germans and did not resist more, but walked, like a bunch of sheep to the gas chambers?" First of all, the Germans never mentioned anything about gas chambers, but told lies about needing people to work in labor camps, so that they could use the Germans to fight the war. Then, not everybody had the money to hide or found people to be willing to help. I remember my mother saying: "We don't have the money to go into hiding, and as long as they let us be together in some labor camp, we will be able to survive with God's help, our willpower and our strength." Who would ever believe that their only goal was to murder as many Jews as possible.

Many times there were razzias (unexpected roundups) especially in large cities. Many Jews resisted arrest and were shot on the spot. Then there were Jews who were lucky enough to have sufficient money and found a hiding place. This was still not a guarantee that they would survive the war, but at least they had a chance to go against German orders. Even when the Jews arrived in the camps, the Germans still tried to tell lies with their big sign at the entrance "Arbeit macht Frei" (work will give you freedom), and "Reinheit ist deine Gesundheit" (cleanliness is your health). Most transports went straight to the gas chambers. If you were lucky and belonged to the minority not killed right away, you had a very small chance to survive the hell. No food, beatings, severe cold, fear, starvation and death all around you and believe me, no such a thing as work to make you free. You could not keep clean. All you had were old worn out shoes, fitting or not, and a rag of a dress from previous prisoners. No underwear, soap, towels, toothbrush ... nothing. I know it is hard to believe, and a miracle that anyone could survive an ordeal like that. Once every couple of days, they brought us to a hall where there were cold water faucets. We rinsed ourselves a little bit with some water. Not too much water because you had nothing to dry your hands or face with. Most of us had lice and we just hoped that we wouldn't get an infection since German guards would notice it, write your number down and at the next selection you'd be sent to the gas chambers. There was nothing you could do to prevent lice; again, you had to be lucky. After morning "appell" (line up), which started before sunrise and lasted sometimes for hours, we were so cold that we all huddled

together against the walls of the barracks, taking turns for who would stand right next to the wall; the others would lean against you. Sometimes we were used to shovel snow from one place to another, or to carry rocks back and forth for no reason at all. They did everything to try and kill you both physically and mentally. But still, our group kept our spirits up to support each other, and we told ourselves that the war could be over any day. We never gave up hope. Sometimes we even sang a song from the Dutch underground ... not to show that we were so happy, but to show the German guards that could not get us down. The words were in Dutch, so they could not understand us; it went something like this:

Wij laten de moed niet zakken (We never let our courage down)

Wij houden het hoofd omhoog (We keep our heads up high)

Al hebben ze ons te pakken (Even though they have caught us)

Al zijn ze nog zo uitgekookt (Even though they think they can outsmart us)

Houdt moed, Nederlands vrouwen, houdt moed, houdt moed

(Keep courage, Dutch women, keep courage, keep courage)

The outhouse was designed to be used by more than 100 women. It consisted of 3 or 4 rows of long wide planks, with holes drilled into them. You had to crawl like an animal on top of the planks to relieve yourself. You were lucky when you weren't splashed by somebody else, since holes were on both sides. No toilet paper or water faucets. They only turned on the faucets when they felt like it. Often you just tore a piece of cloth from your dirty old dress to try and wipe yourself. One time somebody asked me why the campsite was always so clean. The answer was that if you were lucky to find some scrap of paper or cloth or cup or can you would pick it up to use it for something later. No wonder the grounds were "clean."

We tried to stay in the barrack with the outhouse for as long as possible because it was warmer than outside in the snow. Often the guards came to kick us out, but we did not move right away. They had cans attached at the bottom of long sticks, which they dipped into the holes, scooped up human waste and threw it over us while beating and kicking us. At the same time, their German shepherd dogs were barking and jumping at us. While I am writing this, I ask myself how I ever survived that hell. But I am convinced that your brain does not function the same way in such a situation as it would in a normal way of life. Maybe that is for your own protection: being able to blank out what is happening to you at certain moments, and still clinging to the hope that somehow you'll survive. I know that I got strength from my anger against the Germans and that I would never give up. But, at the same time, I admit that there's a lot of luck involved. I am thankful that I have the strength to write and talk about my experiences. If survivors remain silent we would be doing the Germans a big favor, and that is the last thing in the world that I would want to do. I also feel that I owe it to all the victims to keep on talking about it, to honor their memory and not let the world forget. Sadly enough, there is still a lot of prejudice in the world, but for me, that is all the more reason to keep talking about it.

We all just tried to survive each single day, and were afraid of what could happen tomorrow. Death was all around you. For no reason at all they would hang some prisoners, and left the dead bodies on display hanging on the gallows in order to scare and depress the prisoners. Many women committed suicide by touching the barbed wire fences which were under high electric voltage, and those bodies were also left on display for several days.



Rose DeLiema holding her hand-made "Remember" rug. The photos in the background show, left to right, Rose's parents, brother and sisters, Sal's parents, Bar Mitzvah photographs of Rob and Max, a statuette of Tevje from "Fiddler on the Roof."

Narrative of the Return from Liebau - Eastern Europe”

by Jean Buchard (Kino). Translated from the French by Rose DeLiema

Started on Monday, May 21, 1945 at 5:35 A.M. We are with 12 people. We have two small pull wagons to transport our belongings and what we had to eat. On Monday afternoon we met Bernard Prunier who was also on his way back to France. He is with a Russian woman who will become his wife.

We eat breakfast at Schmiedeberg and arrive in the evening in Lomnitz, about 30 km from Liebau. We are on a farm. Bloeme Emden arrives with her feet in bad shape and Bernard Daniel takes her to a Russian army hospital where they cared for her feet.

We rested Tuesday in Lomnitz. The evening of this day we are having problems with Russian soldiers. Wednesday we departed. We passed Hichberg and slept in Reibnitz. On Thursday morning we left early. We eat breakfast in Spiller and sleep in Ober Neuland. That evening the Russians force us to sleep in a very old, dirty house. As soon as the Russians leave, we also leave this house real fast. But the soldiers find us again and force us again to return. The result is that we slept in a cellar on coal dust.

On Saturday we walk all day long and arrive 4 km from Bunzlau at a place called Alt-Jaschwitz. Sunday we arrive in Bunzlau. This is quite an important town for us. The Russians had changed this town to assemble and concentrate all foreigners. We occupied the first and second stories in an apartment above the pork butcher. The small shop was at the bottom floor of the house. On the other side of the street was a pharmacy. If I remember right, our apartment consisted of two large rooms and a kitchen. The men slept in one room and the girls in the other. The most important problem is the food. The Russians give us old bread a few times.

We started looking in different backyards and found a certain plant growing all around. This plant was rhubarb. The girls cooked it about everyday. In France we make jelly from the end of the stem. Twice we went to some kind of open air theater in Bunzlau. We still are having problems with the Russian soldiers. In general, each girl walks on the street with one of us men. This is for their protection and personal peace of mind. I remember real well that one time the Russians wanted cigarettes and Roosje and I were body checked (our pockets searched).

In Bunzlau we visited a house where a Russian General was buried who was killed in 1814 or 1815. To enter that house you had to give your name. One time we saw a parade of a Russian regiment from the window of our apartment with music and all. I remember a musician who played a huge drum, which was not on a wagon, but on a luggage carrier of a bicycle. We were not allowed to leave Bunzlau without the permission of the Russians and every day we waited for means of transportation to return to our countries. During May and June, Germany was a country where millions of people were walking to return to their home towns. Finally on Sunday, June 17, 1945, we left Bunzlau at 11 A.M. by train heading towards the West. We rode on flat cars and the train travelled at only 10 to 15 km per hour with many stops. We can easily jump off one car and jump back on another as it passes by. We did everything with a great deal of pleasure because we were heading home. One time the Russians stole our engine. They called that “organisieren” which meant to take without permission! Another time we found some cans with green peas. “Petit pois” in French. We figured out the number of spoons of this delicacy each of us had coming. We ate our little green peas while the train rolled on, spoon in one hand, can of peas in the other. We passed it on to our neighbor after finishing our share.

We arrived at Kohlfurst on June 17, Hogerswerde on June 18, Ruhland on June 19 and Riesa on June 22, 1945. We left Riesa on foot to go to some barracks about 12 km away. That same day I went by myself on a truck to Leipzig where I joined the group again. On June 24, I left Leipzig with Bernard Daniel going in the direction of France. We were in cattle cars. Your group took the following cattle car.

We passed Zuit, Gera, Jena, Nimar, Erfurt, Kassel, Bielefeld, Hamm, Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg, Krefeld, and Helenabrunn where I found your group again. Then Bernard and I left again to finally reach Paris on June 29. I think you arrived in Holland on June 28.

It took us 37 days. We ate what we could find. We slept where we could sleep. We had hardly anything to wear. But we got along very well. We were young and we were returning home.

The End - Fin - Fertig.

*By Rob DeLiema
December, 1994
Mission Viejo, California*

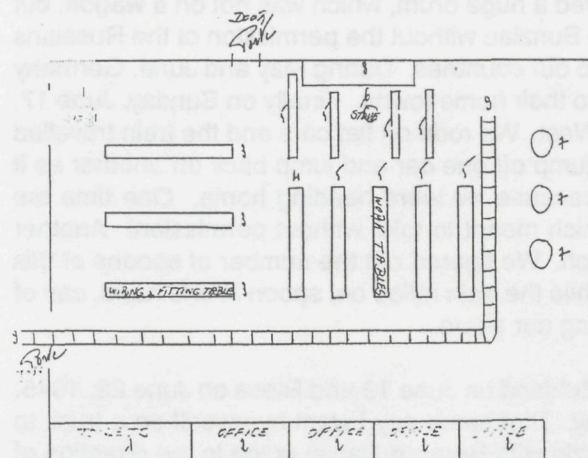
The decision to go was not an easy one for my parents. The memories of the camp had, of course, never left them so it was not a question of bringing back bad memories. It was more a question of actually facing that evil place again, of walking around the killing grounds, of seeing their barracks, the barbed wire fences, the guard towers, and of once again actually seeing the place where the Germans had carried out their Final Solution. My parents have always done everything together in their lives and this was something they decided they would again face together. My mother's manuscript about her childhood in Holland and of her camp experiences has been read by thousands of adults and students around the world. It has been placed in the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, at the Holocaust Museum in Washington and at Yad Vashem in Israel. We knew that she could handle this trip, but it was my father we were most worried about. His understandable reluctance and emotional inability to relate the horrors of Auschwitz to strangers led us to believe that he would instantly reject such an unimaginable trip.

Yet it was for the love of his wife, and for that love alone, that he agreed to go. No matter how deep his personal agony, he would not let her go alone. As they were in hiding together and as they were captured together, once again, together, they would face the evil that had changed their lives forever.

Upon arrival in Amsterdam, they were greeted by Jon Blair, and from that moment through the next seven days they were treated like royalty. No expense was spared to help get my parents through this ordeal. First class hotel accommodations, excellent meals and a sincere caring for the needs of my parents were Blair's highest priorities. The filming at Westerbork was extremely difficult; it had been the last time they had seen their families prior to transport to Auschwitz and the memories quickly focused. My father said that Auschwitz has changed very little; the crematoria are gone (blown up by the Germans a couple of months prior to liberation), but the barracks and the fencing are still there along with a memorial museum. He felt strong anti-Semitic feelings from the Polish guides on duty who interrupted his interview with questions about what he was telling the film crew. He could see the hate in their eyes. In his words, nothing had really changed.

Their experiences during that week are not for me to write about; that's something my mother can do much better at a later date. The documentary, Anne Frank Remembered, will tell the story best. My parents' quiet courage has always amazed me. My brother and I grew up with stories about the camps; we were told all the horrific details. We witnessed my mother's nightmares, heard the stories of life in Holland prior to the war, the incredible drama of being hidden by a wonderful Christian woman, and the unbelievable horrors they both endured in the camps. Yet I had never actually witnessed this courage until last week. They didn't have to make this trip; in fact, at first I discouraged them from going. My dad could never handle the emotional upheaval, yet my mother did not want to go alone. However, after a lengthy conversation with Jon Blair on the phone, and his obvious concern for my parents' well-being, I somehow knew they would go.

These are the signatures of Rose's group who walked back to Holland.



Kino's hand drawn map of the factory in Liebau.

*Kino wrote to Rose on
May 21, 1995 ...*

A thought today about the anniversary date of our departure from Liebau. As a matter of fact, it is fifty years ago today, that at 5:30 a.m. we left with 12 persons and two small pull wagons. How time flies!

A hug from,
Kino

They wanted to participate in this legacy of a young girl who was killed merely because she was Jewish, of a young girl who represented the innocence of so many who were slaughtered, and, incredibly, in the legacy of a young girl they actually knew. They would go back to face the horror because the end result would be tangible evidence to again help people to never forget. They would overcome their revulsion of Auschwitz to help produce a lasting testimonial to the evil that was 50 years ago. They would do it for their children, for their grandchildren and for generations to follow. In their own quiet way, they would show us all that courage can win out over evil and that two people, together, can indeed make a difference.

We are all so proud of you.

Note: The documentary, Anne Frank Remembered, received an Oscar in March, 1996, for best documentary.

EPILOGUE

*Journal of Rose De Liema of trip
to Westerbork - Auschwitz of December 2, 1994*

Almost unbelievable that we are on our way to Europe. Robert picked us up at 1:30 P.M. Easy drive to the airport. We travel Business Class so we were allowed to go aboard first. Seats are very roomy. They all are very helpful. We are moving now (4:25 P.M.). They gave us a blue package with toothbrush, toothpaste, a pair of socks, a set of earplugs and an eye mask, all for us to keep. Now, we are over the Pacific Ocean and the view is beautiful. The sunset is out of this world; so pretty. There is some turbulence so we had to put our seatbelts back on. Each seat has its own little video screen so you can choose which program you want to watch. We just had dinner.

The flight went okay. We did not sleep too much because there was a lot of turbulence. To me, it felt like a constant earthquake. We just had breakfast. They announced that we will land within half an hour. Landing and arrival was easy. Just walked thru customs. We did not see Jon Blair right away. I went to Information to page Jon and a few minutes later he went to Information to page us. Not that he was not on time, but he had arranged to get permission to come inside where the luggage arrived and we went thru so fast that we missed seeing each other. He drove us to Hotel Pulitzer and we saw a lot of Amsterdam doing that. Because we talked so much, we missed the off ramp of the freeway. At one point, he asked a young couple how to get to the "Westertoren," because Jon told us that once he would be there he would know his way to the hotel. But, interesting enough, they told us, "Oh, I suppose you want to go the Anne Frank Huis?" and then they explained how to get there. The Hotel Pulitzer is on the same Prinsengracht (one block away) from the Anne Frank Huis. We checked in under the music of Sint Nicolaas songs. The Pulitzer is right along the canal and a large orchestre played while Sinterklaas and a whole bunch of Zwarte Pieten (helpers) accompanied them. Then, they marched on while playing all kinds of Sinterklaas songs. I told Jon it was a nice surprise to have made arrangements for a marching band, but it was just too much to welcome us that way! Our room is pretty with a view on the canal. We went to bed early to catch up on our sleep. Room service brought us a big plate with all kinds of fresh fruit, compliments of Jon Blair. We ate most of that for our dinner because we were too tired and not hungry enough to go downstairs for dinner. Later, Yvonne Sellins called. She is the assistant producer. Tomorrow, Sunday 12-4- 1994, Yvonne and Jon Blair will meet us here (they all stay in Hotel Pulitzer) at 5 o'clock to look at the pictures and documents we brought as they had requested.

Sunday, 12-4-1994

We ate breakfast downstairs in the hotel, which by the way is not included in the price of the room, and cost fl. 32.00. It was very good. (Should be for the price.) Jannie and Sieg (Sal's brother and his wife) came around eleven. First, we talked in our room, then walked in the neighborhood. Then, Sieg picked up his car. Then, we drove around Amsterdam for a while and the four of us ate lunch together somewhere. They dropped us off about 2 o'clock at the hotel and went back home. Now, Sal is taking a nap. Today, the weather is rainy and breezy. Yesterday, when we arrived, the sky was blue and the sun bright. Last night, we slept from 7 at night to 7 in the morning to catch up on jet lag. During the night, I kept hearing the bells of the "Westertoren." I think they chime every 15 minutes. I remember that Anne Frank writes about that often in her diary. The hiding place is one block away from the Pulitzer Hotel, along the canal.

The first night it was very hot in our room because the heat control could not be turned down. (What do you expect for fl.525.00 for a room.) They fixed it the next day and replaced a light bulb which did not work either. We met Yvonne Sellins when she stopped by for a few minutes and also Jon Blair came by to pick up some pictures we brought along for him from Pappa Frank that the four of us had taken in 1967 in Amsterdam, when Sal and I and Max and Robert made a trip to Europe for the occasion of our 25th wedding anniversary. We went to bed early. Got a call from Ro Dessaur, with good wishes, and Arjeh called too with possible plans to go to Breda, Wednesday, but nothing definite yet. We first have to see how we are and feel when we come back from Westerbork. There is also a safe in this room. You have to use six figures, so guess which I used so I could not forget? This is right. The number on my arm (25170), plus a 0 in front. How handy!

Monday, 12-5-1994

We slept good. We only take hand luggage to Westerbork. Our big suitcases stay here in storage until tomorrow night when we return. We had a big breakfast and now we will try to go for a walk if it does not start raining. Many sightseeing boats came by and just now we saw a very pretty one with big letters painted on it, saying "Anne Frank". Unreal for us to see that. Suddenly, we saw a whole bunch of kindergarten age children with their

teachers across from our window on the other side of the canal standing along the water. They started to sing Sinterklaas songs and, yes, there came the boat with Sinterklaas and two "Zwarte Pieten." The kids are all excited. Some of them started to cry because they were afraid. And I was afraid that one of the kids would fall in the water, but thank goodness, that did not happen. The "Zwarte Pieten" (black helpers) started to throw Pepernoten (some kind of small cookie, which is traditional to get from Sinterklaas.) Then, Sinterklaas and his helpers came ashore and walked back with the kids and teachers to their school in one of the side streets. It was fun to watch and I sang along with all the songs which I all still remember. Then, we went for a walk which is an experience in itself because you have to watch each step you take for all the doggie and big dog droppings everywhere and uneven bricks and holes and junk everywhere. And don't forget the busy traffic from all the cars, motorcycles, bicycles and weird looking people. They sure don't follow traffic rules or stop for pedestrians. Maybe some of them do, but you cannot count on it. We stopped by at the Anne Frank house, but Dineke Stam, whom we wanted to visit was not there that day. We will try again some time this week. I am sitting at the window, looking at all the things going on outside. Sinterklaas just came back from the school with his helpers and went back on the boat to visit another place. Pappa is reading the Dutch paper which gave mostly sport news. He read that it is not snowing in Poland yet, so may we are lucky.

Monday, 12-5-1994

After sleeping pretty good, we went down for breakfast. We noticed four ladies at another table who spoke Dutch and I write (Hebrew), and we expected right away that they were, just like us, invited by Jon Blair to take part in the film; which turned out to be correct, we found out later. We went back to our room and prepared our two carry-on bags which we were planning to take along to Westerbork. The two big suitcases were supposed to remain in storage here in the Pulitzer Hotel until we returned from Westerbork. However, they labeled them wrong and they made the trip to Westerbork back and forth in the car with all the other luggage. You see, Sal and I were the only two who would return to Amsterdam from Westerbork because all the others drove on to Bergen Belsen. But, we had mentioned ahead of time that under no circumstances we would travel in Germany. We had to check out of our room (#211) at 2 o'clock and the film crew would pick us up at 3 o'clock. A lot was going on in the lobby. They were making pictures of models which was fun to watch. The crew came at 3 and we were introduced to all of them. Sure enough, the four people we had seen at breakfast were two mothers and their daughters from Israel. Rachel van Amerongen-Frankfoorder (81, and a survivor who used to live in Holland) and her daughter, Mirjam. And Hannelore Pick-Gossler (a survivor, about 65, used to live in Germany and later Holland) and her daughter, Ruthie, now the mother of eight children in Israel. Ruthie and Hannelore are strict orthodox and will get kosher food all during the trip, pre-ordered and taken along on the trip by Jon Blair. We talked a lot during the auto trip to Motel Assen where we will stay overnight. Rachel van Amerongen knows very many people whom we know also. Among others, Annie van Tijn, Bloeme Evers-Emden, Bep Nof, Dora Cune (who was her cousin, but passed away in the meantime).

The trip was pleasant, weather is good and the countryside pretty. Motel Assen is a v.d. Valk Motel. Clean, beautiful and pretty. When we checked in, they gave us a very nice letter from Henny en Jan Ooms and they are planning to come over in the morning, in Camp Westerbork, at the museum. Jon Blair invited all of us for dinner in the restaurant. We were with nine people. Two employees from the Anne Frank house, Rian Verhoeven and Greo Belgers; Rachel, Mirjam, Hannelore, Ruthie; Sal and Rose (that's me) and Jon Blair. On the table, at each seat, was a big "chocolate letter" made in the shape of each personal initial. The food was excellent. (I took baked salmon.) We talked so much and, of course, mainly about our camp experiences with the result that none of us were able to sleep good that night.

Tuesday, 12-6-1994

We were asked to come down for breakfast at 7 o'clock. The film crew left for Westerbork at 7:30 and we followed at about 8. It is only a 15 minutes drive to Westerbork. For me, the sight of the camp was not emotional at all, thank goodness. There are no barracks left and there are many trees and everywhere beautiful, green grass. We went to the meeting hall where they served us coffee. Henny and Jan Ooms were there already, to our pleasant surprise. They gave us a large bag with all kinds of candy and "speculaas" from Sinterklaas and a beautiful, long poem which we appreciate so much. Then, Jon Blair and the film crew drove us around in the car. Jon asked us questions and they were filming us while we were driving. Then, we walked over the camp grounds, answering more questions while they were filming. About 11:30, we went back to the meeting hall where the Ooms joined us for the lunch. They served us "Krentenbollen" and different rolls, with cheese, etc.. Then, we left after saying good bye to Jan and Henny Ooms. We all drove to Groningen, a town more up north, where they had to exchange one of the rented cars for another bigger one. Sal and I were the only two who returned to Amsterdam and our lady-driver was Rian Verhoeven from the Anne Frank House. She is a very good driver and we went over

the "afsluitdijk" which was the first time for Pappa and I. This dyke was built in the late 1930's to enclose the Zuiderzee from the North Sea. They now call it "Ysselmeer" and the other side, the "Wadden Zee." The weather was so beautiful. Of course, we did not feel the cold wind in the car, but the sky was blue with white clouds around and bright sunlight. We talked and thought a lot about Mem because she came from Friesland where the afsluitdijk starts. So, we kept saying that this part of the trip, which was not planned in advance, was in Mem's honor. Knowing Mem, maybe she did have something to do with it. All the others went in the newly rented car to Hannover (Bergen-Belsen). When Rachel and Mirjam said good bye to us, they said, "So long, until we see you in Auschwitz!!" Unbelievable and unreal. Hannelore and Ruthie are not going to Auschwitz with the film crew because Hannelore was together with Anne and Margot towards the end of the war in Bergen Belsen, where they just happened to meet each other. They knew each other from Amsterdam, where Hannelore went to the same school as Anne. Hannelore and her daughter will return to Israel after Bergen Belsen, via Switzerland, where they will visit a couple of days with friends. After we were back in Hotel Pulitzer in Amsterdam, we ate a little from the speculaas and went to bed early and slept very good because we were very tired after a very long day. We now have a room with a view on the garden. A little smaller than the other and more quiet. But, I did enjoy the room in the front very much, looking at all the activity outside. I looked up the price of the room inside the cabinet and I thought I saw a price of 134. Then I said to Sal, "Oh, at least this room is not as expensive as the first one." (As if we had to pay for it.) But, then, I looked again and saw that I had misread it. 134 was the room number, but the price is also fl.525; not including breakfast either.

Wednesday, 12-7-1994

Today is Pearl Harbor Day, which happened 53 years ago. After breakfast, Dineke Stam, from the Anne Frank House, got in touch with us. She had been away for a couple of days to London and that is why we did not meet with her sooner. We walked to the Anne Frank House in the next block and spent all morning with her. We gave her a lot of documents and pictures which they had asked us to bring along. Dineke sent a fax from us to Max and Robert. In the afternoon, we called Sue and Max. Dineke Stam and Rian Verhoeven invited us to get together in the afternoon, but they understood that we needed to rest before our trip to Poland tomorrow. We prepared our carry-on luggage and put our big luggage in storage at the Pulitzer until Saturday when we return here. Jannie and Sieg called and they are planning to come to Schiphol on Sunday, before we leave to the good old U.S.A. Rene and Ida called and so did Leny. There is just no possibility for us to go to Breda to visit the cemetery, but everybody understands. We went to bed early that Wednesday night and Yvonne Sellins called us to see how we were doing and hoped to see us the next day at Krakau Airport. We also had an interesting conversation with Anja Bak, who works at the reception desk in the hotel.

Thursday, 12-8-1994

We had asked for a quarter to six wake-up call. We ate a small breakfast in the room. Close to 7 o'clock, Rian Verhoeven came to the hotel with a taxi which took us to Schiphol. She helped us to check in. After saying good-bye to her, we left for Warsaw, with K.L.M. (First Class), where we had to switch to a plane to Krakow with Lot Airline (not First Class, and a very small plane compared to K.L.M.) In Warsaw, everything was very confusing and disorganized. The people there were not helpful at all and hardly any spoke English, or they did not want to speak it. We sure missed having Jon Blair and his crew helping us. After a delay of about an hour or more due to "operational problems" we took off. The flight to Krakau took only 50 minutes, thank goodness, because we did not feel very relaxed with all those unfriendly people around us. Because we only had our handluggage and had gone thru custom in Warsaw, we just walked thru the arrival section. That arrival hall is very small and there I saw across from us a lady wearing a big, black hat and I was just sure it had to be Yvonne. So, I called her name real loud and sure enough, it was Yvonne with the rest of the group who had just arrived from Hannover. We hugged each other, like we had known each other for years and had not seen each other for a long time. That is how happy we were to be in each others company again, in that strange and unfriendly country. We drove in a red, rented Peugeot with Yvonne Sellins (asst. producer) and the film equipment and the rest of the party drove in two other cars. The landscape was very depressing. It was about an hour drive to Katowitch. Now, we are in the Hotel Orbis. Very pretty inside, like an American hotel, but outside is far from the same as America. We sat around in the lobby and later had dinner with Rachel and her daughter, Miriam, in the hotel. We ate beef stroganoff and they had duck and we all had ice cream for dessert. We don't have to pay for dinner. All we have to do is give our room number and Jon Blair pays the bill. But, Pappa wanted to leave a tip for the waiter, so he put two five dollar bills on the table. Jon Blair happened to stop by and asked, "What are those bills for?" When Pappa told him, he said that was far too much and gave one \$5.00 bill back to Pappa. The value of the szloty was 20,000.00 for \$1.00. Now, we are back in the room and Pappa is already asleep and I go pretty soon. The roughest part of the trip will be tomorrow and we will try the best we can and keep thinking about Sunday when we are flying home again.

Friday, 12-9-1994

It is 8 o'clock at night and we are so thankful that this day is almost over. However, everything was much easier than we thought it would be. We drove again with Yvonne in the red car which was all covered with ice during the night from the frost. In front of us, the big, red van with the film crew and behind us the white van with Rachel, her daughter, Miriam, and some fellows of the film crew. Jon Blair had arranged for a young man, Cezaory Mironiuk, to accompany us. He is also connected with the film industry and lives in Warshaw where he joined us. He speaks very good English. You really need a person like that because, like I said before, the people here in Poland are very nasty to say the least. Maybe it is a feeling of jealousy against Western Europeans and when they find out that we are there to make a film in memory of a Jewish girl, their natural anti-semitic feeling makes them even more hateful and mean. The trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau took longer than they expected because the main road was closed for some reason or another. We first went to Birkenau and stopped next to the railroad track where we arrived 50 years ago, in September 1944. The camp and all the barracks look exactly the same as then. Jon walked with us and then he interviewed me. The weather was not too cold and Jon is so considerate and relaxed. (I told him he should be a psychiatrist.) So, it is not hard to answer his questions. But, of course, it is still not easy to picture yourself how it was 50 years ago when you arrived there under the most horrible, unbelievable circumstances. However, I did not get emotional and did not cry. I was thankful to be there, and in that way, honor the memory of my parents, sisters and brother and most of my family and friends. And also, to let future generations know how beastly the Germans treated all of us, only because we were Jews. This reminds me what a Gestapo guard once said to Sal and some other prisoners, and I quote, "I will never understand why you people even try to survive. First of all, you don't have much of a chance. But, in the second place, nobody will ever really believe what we did to you here in the camps. So, why don't you just give up?"

I wore my "Grandmother's Bunch" sweater, with the names of all of you, and that kept me warm, inside and outside. Then, we went to the Auschwitz part of the camp. At the entrance is a little restaurant where we had some hot coffee. While we were there, it started to rain. Then, we went to the barracks there which are also just like they were 50 years ago. Jon interviewed Sal there while the film crew was recording it. Pappa did great. There was also a Polish woman guide listening to the interview. I don't think she liked what she was hearing. After it was over, she asked Pappa, what he had said about the crematorium, but we just ignored her because she looked so mean. It would be interesting to know what those guides tell all the tourists who come to Auschwitz. We felt 10 pounds lighter from the relief that the interviews were over. We went back to the little restaurant where we ate something. We met a group of Buddhist monks who went on a peace march. They started in Auschwitz, fasted for 6 days and only drank water. They will keep walking until August, while visiting several countries, also Israel. There were also a whole bunch of students from Denmark with their teachers. In the meantime, Rachel and Mirjam arrived, who were picked up later in the morning in Katowitch by somebody else from the crew. Jon took them and the film crew to one of the buildings at the entrance of Auschwitz and filmed and interviewed Rachel there. Afterwards, we drove all the way to Krakau and are now in the Grand Hotel. It was about 7 o'clock at night when we came back, but we still got together for dinner because the worse part was behind us and Rachel and Mirjam are leaving tomorrow early for Israel. The hotel is beautiful in old style. We went to a special place for dinner, across the square. The dining room decorated with harness and fencing equipment. We had champagne and wine. Pappa and I ordered hors d'oeuvre of smoked salmon, mushroom soup and veal cutlet. We were with ten people and the bill came to more than 5,000,000.00 zloty's. We walked back to the hotel at about 11:30 P.M. It took only five minutes, but the street was already slippery because the moist on the streets was already frozen.

Saturday, 12-10-94

We slept good and got up at 8 o'clock. Showered real careful as we did every day because all the bath tubs here are very high so you have to be very careful to get in and out. Then, we went down for breakfast and back to our room for a while. It was easy to pack because we only had our carry-on luggage with us. We went down to the lobby where Jon, Yvonne and the film crew were busy loading the 680 Kilo film equipment in two trucks. We took off for the airport. Sal and I in a cab and all the others in the big van. I did not expect the driver to talk to us at all, but this one spoke very good English. He used to live in New Jersey for three years. His nickname is Jumbo and he told us that he worked as a driver and guide for Steven Spielberg while he was in Poland to make "Schindler's List." He showed us a photo album with photos of Steven Spielberg and his film crew; and nice farewell and thank you notes from all of them. Jumbo knew also why we were there because he had driven Rachel and Miriam early in the morning to the airport, to return to Israel. It looked very foggy outside and Pappa started to worry that the planes would not be able to take off. And he was right. We were stuck in the airport in Krakau. Also, a gendarme at the airport made trouble for us because our driver of the big van had not turned on his lights while it was so foggy. Thru Jumbo, Jon explained to the policeman that he took the responsibility for that and would pay for the ticket. But, the gendarme wanted to arrest the driver for the oversight. Jon said, "Okay, then you have

to take me to jail." Lucky for us, Jumbo was able to straighten it out, most likely with money. Then, Jon said that we had to get out of there as fast as possible which is not so easy with all the film equipment. Jon had to make all the different arrangements while we were standing and sitting and waiting around. The result was that at about 4 o'clock, all 10 of us went in a van and the equipment in another truck and they drove us thru heavy fog to the railroad station back in Krakau. There, we ended up waiting for the next train because we just missed the previous one. We are now riding in the train to Warshaw where we will sleep in a hotel; and, how, and when, and by which airline we will continue, will be arranged in Warshaw. I had to use the bathroom in the Krakau railroad station. I first had to pay the lady 5000 zloties and then she gave me three little strips of toilet paper and she told me if I wanted more I had to give her 5000 zloties more, to use in a very dirty bathroom. We will be glad to get out of this town. Everybody looks angry and depressed and are so unfriendly. Well, let's face it, there is nothing to be happy about when you live there. When we came in our reserved, First Class compartment, a lady was sitting there who refused to get out. She had a huge piece of luggage standing right in the middle and we could hardly step over it. Between Yvonne and I, we pushed it out of the compartment and finally a woman controller came and told the woman to get out. She was trying to sit in First Class and had paid for Third Class. We could not understand what she was yelling to us in Polish, but it did not sound very nice. The train is shaky and that is why my handwriting is hard to read. Jon, Yvonne and Sal are half asleep and I will try now to take a nap also.

We arrived in Warshaw, where Cezaory was waiting for us. Jon had gotten in touch with him from Krakau to tell him that we needed his help again. Pappa and I went in a waiting room while the crew made arrangements with the help of some electric vans to unload all the film equipment. The guy who drove us to the railroad platform wanted to know what kind of group we were. He could not speak English, pointed at all the stuff, and asked, "Musico?" And one of the crew said, "Yes, we are a rock and roll group and he is the 'lead singer'," pointing at Pappa. We all are in a good, optimistic mood and tried to make the best of a bad situation. Yvonne checked us all in to a beautiful hotel in Warshaw. We got room #2020, overlooking the whole city. Cezaro had driven us earlier from the railroad station to the Forum Hotel (part of the Orbis chain to which the hotels in Krakau and Katowitch also belonged) and we were surprised to see what a beautiful city Warshaw is. Many boulevards which look like the Champs Elysee in Paris. One of the beautiful buildings is the Palace of Culture, built by Stalin in 1930.

We called Robert and left a message that we were delayed and we also called Jannie and Sieg. They expected us to be in Amsterdam Saturday night, but we were still in Warshaw due to the fog. We were too tired to go for dinner. We slept pretty good. Yvonne told us that we will fly back to Amsterdam by KLM and might arrive in time to make our connecting flight at 2:55 P.M. We sure hope so! We will meet in the lobby at 9:40 to leave for the Warsaw Airport, which is a 15 minute drive from here.

Sunday, 12-11-1994

We slept pretty good; looking forward to going home together tomorrow. We showered, ate some speculaas in the room for breakfast because we will get so much to eat on the plane. We went to the lobby around 9:30 and the film crew was already loading the film equipment in a van. Yvonne, Sal and I went in a taxi to the airport. The plane is supposed to leave at 11:40 for Amsterdam with K.L.M., which it did. Jon even ordered kosher for us on that short flight. When we arrived in A'dam, Dineke Stam and Sandy Mitchell (who came to Holland for that weekend from London), met us with our big luggage which we had left at the Pulitzer on purpose when we left for Poland. Dineke also brought the videos from A.D.L. and NewsWeek interview which Max had taped. She had transferred them to videotapes which they can use in Europe. They stayed with us all the time until we were checked in and through customs. We had to answer all kinds of questions, like, who packed the luggage that the girls brought us; why, and for what purpose did we go to Poland; how long did we know Jon Blair, etc., etc. They took all that conversation on video and after checking with the person in charge of the customs office, we got the okay to continue our flight to the U.S.A. We had a stewardess from K.L.M. who helped us with our luggage to get to the plane of Northwestern. I saw that her name was Irene Overtoom-Visser. On the walk to the plane, I told her that we have such good memories of a lady with the name of Visser (it was Mem's maidenname), but I told her that she came from Friesland (a province in The Netherlands). "Oh," she said, "I also come from Friesland." But, by that time, we had to say good bye to her because we had to board the plane. Now, we are on our way and I will write more later. In the meantime, it is 4 o'clock and one more hour and we will be in St. Paul - Minneapolis. It is a smooth flight and good service. We are in First Class again, so we received two more flight bags with socks, etc. and two discs with modern and traditional music. It is very comfortable to fly First Class/Business Class. They show movies, like "Home Alone" and "Forrest Gump", or something. Again, you can watch it on your own video, attached to your seat. Jannie and Sieg had plans to come to Schiphol (Amsterdam), to say good bye, but we called them last night from Warshaw to tell them about the delay. Even though we are going back with our

scheduled flight to the U.S.A. we will not have much time at the airport in Amsterdam, after arriving there from Warshaw at about 2 P.M., and departure will be at 2:55. It was better that they did not come because we had to check in our big luggage which Dineke Stam and Sandy Mitchell had brought to Schiphol from the Pulitzer Hotel. Dineke also returned copies of the articles which I had collected over the years about Anne Frank and family, and the pictures which I brought along from our family. After arriving at St. Paul International Airport, they drove us, in a limousine no less, with a few other elderly people; to the domestic airport. All went very smooth and easy with the help of many employees. We still had to wait a long time before take off. They told us for some technical reasons. Anyway, we are flying now and are looking forward to being home tonight. It is a long day. At the big St. Paul Airport, is a large McDonald's store. When we saw it, Sal and I had the same thought, that it was the first McDonald's we saw in a foreign country, not realizing that we were already back in the good old U.S.A. It had been what you could call, "the longest day" because we started out early in the morning in Warshaw and we will arrive at John Wayne Airport around 10 o'clock P.M.. That is about 14 hours, plus the 9 hours time difference which means that we had been flying, changing planes and trying to get some sleep in between for about 23 hours. We arrived, dead tired, at 10 o'clock at John Wayne, but so happy to see Max and Robert who were waiting for us at the airport.

12-21-1994

In the meantime, it is 12-21-1994, and it took more than a week to try to get back to normal again. Mainly, at night, our thoughts go back to last week and it is very hard to relax and sleep. But, it is going better every day. Looking back, we have a feeling of accomplishment and we are thankful that we had the mental and physical strength to do it. Last night, the children and grandchildren came over to celebrate our 52nd Wedding Anniversary. What a blessing, that, in the second part of our life, we have so much to be thankful for.

This letter written by Jon Blair on the plane from Warsaw to Amsterdam, December 11, 1994

Dear Rose and Sal,

As we prepare to say farewell, I want to tell you how very much I appreciate everything you have been prepared to do to help me make this film. What a journey! I feel that in many senses this may have been one of the most difficult experiences for you both since your emigration to the United States. And yet you dealt with the traumatic events of your past with patience, with humour, and always willing to answer just one more question. It has been a pleasure, not only to work with you, but to get to know you both just a little. I would like to wish you both many more happy years together to enjoy the fruits of your retirement. You remain an example to all us younger ones in the way you affectionately relate to each other and that we should all be so lucky to be like you.

As I said before, I very much hope that you will keep me in mind in the years to come and that you will let me know from time to time how you are getting on and in particular, your reflection on this journey, with the benefit of looking back on its impact on you both in a few months time.

With fond best wishes,

Jon Blair

A Child of the Holocaust

by Michelle De Liema

A teenage girl walking in the field,
saw some strangers coming.
Dark and scary men with a crooked cross
on their head.

Why were they coming,
Why were they there?
They knew she was Jewish,
and started to stare.

"Come here little girl
Run if you dare!
We will catch you,
We will grab your long hair."

"You are a Jew,
That is bad!
You are not as good as me,
We will chain you,
We will beat you,
We will never set you free!"

"You have taken the others,
Now it's my turn to go,
To join with my family,
Why do you hate us so?"
"Do we scare you,
Do we frighten you,
Are you so insecure,
That you hate,
And you kill,
Because you are not sure."

"You are weak,
You are sad,
You look up to ONE face,
Look at yourself,
Are you in the human race?"

They took her away,
To a hard labor camp.
Where they worked her,
And beat her,
In the cold and the damp.

She was weak and got sick,
But her heart still was strong,
The pain of those memories,
Stays with her all day long.

She lost her whole family,
And cries some of the time,
But she's willing to tell us,
Of her life in those times.

I have heard her story told,
So many times I cry,
I think I know what happened,
But I'll never understand why.

Michelle De Liema
Oma's Granddaughter
Grade 5 - Congregation Eilat
Mission Viejo
First Prize Winner

