

**MOBILIZATION, FIVE DAY WAR, FIVE YEAR  
GERMAN OCCUPATION and  
FREEDOM AT LAST.**

In the meantime, there were a lot of other things happening in our family. For example, my brother Kees who was studying engineering (designing bridges, commercial and public buildings) was forced to leave and work in Germany. He had been hiding for a long time already and felt like a hunted deer, as he at times expressed it. He did not want to add more danger to our home with all the other “onderduikers” and/or resistance fighters. It was very hard for all of us to let him go in the spring of 1943. In the fall the factory he worked in was destroyed by England's Air Force. His life was saved but his belongings were all burned. Mom started sending him small parcels with whatever we had to spare; bigger parcels never reached him. He was transferred to another factory and that one was bombed as well that winter. Again he wrote that “everything was fine and he had no need of anything.” This meant he had lost everything again. We had made these previous arrangements that he would write the opposite way as things really were. He knew that he was in for hard times if he told the truth and the censored letters would not be sent on to us. We were so thankful that God had spared his life again. Many times we heard the familiar droning noise of Allied planes on their way to Germany's heartland of war factories. And we knew what everyone was thinking in our home; “it is raining fire bombs on the German factories again who are producing war-materials.” Prayer for safety was the only answer for us here and not only for Kees but also for many others who were in danger of death. Yet we were convinced that this was one way to break Hitler's oppression.

In March of 1944 the factory Kees worked in was once more destroyed. This time he could not cope with it any longer, knowing that some day he would not get away from it alive. He also knew that escaping could mean death as well but he had no other way out then taking the risk. In the night he went to the railway station and hid himself in a tool-drawer under one of the rail cars heading for Holland. He was not dressed for the cold winter weather; both of his feet were frozen by the time he arrived at the station in Amsterdam. Then came another test. He could not stand on his feet and crawl out of the tool drawer to a passenger car. It was night and soon he heard voices from a cleaning crew and hid in one of the washrooms. It is hard to believe but God protected him again as they skipped the washroom he was hiding in! When all was quiet, he left his hiding place and looked around outside. There was a high barbwire fence all around the station eight feet high. In great pain he went over it tearing his clothes in the process. Since it was still dark he could see

the lights of cars on a highway. It must have been intensely painful to walk on frozen feet and not well dressed in the bitter cold weather but there was no other choice. Again God miraculously helped him. The right person picked him up risking his own life in doing so and brought him to Delft, the nearest city to Schipluiden. Miracle upon miracle brought him home; there was not even one ausweis inspection along the way! From there, Kees contacted one of his acquaintances who brought him to our Pastor in Schipluiden. He was able to let my brother Klaas in the bank know and he came to tell the good news that Kees was alive. We had not heard from him for a long time. Klaas came in the afternoon and when he said that he had news from Kees, I thought for a moment that we had lost him as we heard so often from others. My heart skipped but then I heard that he was coming home. My emotions were hardly controllable. This was all God's doing! As soon as it was dark, one of my brothers picked him up by bike. This was just before eight o'clock which was curfew time. We were stunned, happy and thankful all at the same time. We were also worried about his very painful feet which bothered him for a long time.

Being home again meant other problems for him and our extended family. For one year and two months Kees' hiding place was used by Jan Bommel. Now the "upper room" was to be shared, bed and all. The next thing which needed to be done was to make another hiding place ( a false wall in a clothes closet.) Hein, our deserted German soldier, was staying in the area above the "boenhoek" where all the boys were sleeping who were working on the farm. He was our "hired man" and he had more freedom than Kees and Jan because he had a false "ausweis." But it also meant that when German soldiers unexpectedly arrived on the farm, he had to show his "ausweis" which was a falsified identification document that everyone who was exempt from working in Germany had to carry. These were very tense times for us all. God must have had His angels around our home all those years.

I am still thankful that many of us did not know half of the things that were going on these years, nor what was hidden on the farm. I am proud of my dad for all he has done and grateful that he never told us that stenguns, ammunition and even a milk truck was hidden under a straw stack. It would have been such an added worry and much more danger for us all. Our farm was located one km from the highway with many trees around the house, stable and barns. It really was an ideal place for "underground" activities. But when soldiers surrounded our farm, I, being the door keeper, had to be very slow in opening the door for them to give all who had to hide time to do so. In the cow stable where cows were standing with their front feet, they had dug a hole in the ground, supported by poles and planks and

filled with lots of straw and a ladder to go down. There was a flashlight and a battery powered radio to pick up news from across the sea in England and something to eat and drink. Four cows and one calf, standing on lots of straw, were covering that hiding place. Dad was always there to close the door where the calf was standing on the end where the entrance was. Then he started scraping the manure behind the cows while he was listening for the soldiers to enter the building, praying that they would not find them. They would also go upstairs to poke with forks in the hay whether anyone was hiding there and they did the same thing in the haystack outside. In the living room they would feel how many chairs were still warm from people sitting on them. They also counted the cups that had been used.

At one time, we hid an American pilot who was part of the crew that had come down not far from our farm. They were all rescued by the men of the underground and hidden from place to place. The aim was to move them along the escape route to cross the English Channel and get back home to continue fighting the war. Although he stayed only a few weeks at our place, it was a nervous situation on top of the other things going on. The younger children did not know who he was; he could not speak Dutch of course. We told them that he was deaf and dumb like Mina Moerman and her husband. We felt bad to make use of these so called “white lies” but we knew no other way to protect him, ourselves and others. One Pastor in our town, Dr. Jan De Koning, had hidden for a short time one of these pilots as well and was arrested when they found out that the family had provided a hiding place for the pilot. He was deported to a concentration camp in Germany and died because of harsh and cruel treatments such as severe beatings and starvation. As long as my parents lived they had contact with this member of the plane's crew. He even visited them once after I had left home. We also sent him our wedding announcements and so did my other brothers and sisters. He wrote a letter when my dad, brother Klaas and mom passed away. His name and address was: Mel Edwardson 4827 Galimor Road Charlotte, North Carolina 28211, USA.

In Dec. 1944 two German soldiers came to live on our farm for 9 weeks. We did not have to feed them, only their 2 horses. This of course meant that we had to be more careful yet and yes, we were more tense as well. On Sunday evening mom invited them inside to sing with us some Christmas songs and have hot chocolate with us. One soldier, whose name was Willy, was moved to tears when we were singing our Christmas songs. He knew many of them and sang in his own language. He must have been homesick for his wife and new baby which he had not seen yet and his other loved ones back home. It was a moving experience for

us to see them in their needs and hear them sing these familiar songs. It became so clear that these men were forced to serve; they too would have loved to be home with their family. There was no hatred in our hearts for them and all the more I wondered why this cruel war was going on and how difficult and complicated life had become for many people. After the singing they left for their sleeping quarters and we locked the doors behind them. Now it was time to call Kees, Jan, and Hein from their hiding places to have their evening treat. During the New Year of 1944, we heard via the British radio, that their battalion tried to cross the Strait of Calais to land in England, but did not succeed. They all drowned; our two men included. The Germans had a battle song which ran like this: “Wir fahren gegen Engeland i.e., We are marching against England.” (Return to the Hiding Place, Hans Poley, P. 68) I found it very hard to cope with it all. I felt heart broken. War is a terrible time for all, friends and so called enemies alike. Our real enemies were those who had betrayed Holland. We could not trust our own people during that time. In 1943 my Jan had become more and more involved in the underground movement, which meant more restless nights for me.

The German army also had set up a V1 and V2 battery, as they were called, just one km away from our farm. They really were the forerunners of the satellites as we know them. The one traveled low and the other extremely high. It would be difficult to shoot them down once they arrived at the English coast. They made a lot of noise especially when one exploded before reaching their target. Once a plane was coming over very low and was fired at by anti aircraft guns. They dropped all their bombs around us before hitting the ground. They were called “ketting bommen” (chain bombs). The first craters were only 1 km away from our home. It was night when it happened and we rolled or slid down the stairway so fast because we didn't know what this was all about and stayed up at at least one hour. No one dared to go outside to check what had happened; to be outside during curfew time could mean flying bullets. In the morning we found out that many of our neighbor's cows were injured and 13 of them were killed. This was the biggest scare as far as bombs were concerned. On a Saturday afternoon in August, 1944 we heard shooting again and a plane was obviously in trouble. It was hit and landed in my dad's wheat field. We all needed lots of wisdom; “Were we to go there and help the crew if any was still alive?” Even if dad would go down there alone to check what damage had been done to the crop he could get in big trouble to say the least. German soldiers soon arrived on our farm going into the field. Dad did not go there until the next morning and we never found out what happened to the crew.

Some of the worst times in these years were when Jan went out during the night on some dangerous mission. He did have permission from my parents to go upstairs to say good bye to me. Sleep did not come for hours sometimes but was replaced with prayer. This was a must and we did not want it any other way. The nights that he was out he needed my prayers more then ever.

Excitement, fear and doubt had become part of our lives during these years. My brother Kees went every evening into the hiding place below the cows to listen to the news from England. Ordinarily it became the conversation for the rest of the evening. Sometimes it brought hope, other times uncertainty and discouragement or more fear. Yet we knew that in the midst of it all, God was on the throne and fully in control of everything in spite of what we thought or feared. For example, I remember that my dad during those terrible dark days was still singing while milking the cows!

There was another mission we had and that was feeding as many people as we possibly could. There were many people who walked our long lane each day for food. First we sold each one liter milk, but the last winter, which was called “the winter of hunger,” too many came. We gave each person one cup to drink; 100 people a day was normal. We had to deliver each day a certain amount of milk but dad took the risk of keeping more milk home then was allowed. The eastern part of Holland was freed in the fall of 1944. The western part with the big cities of Amsterdam, De Hague and Rotterdam had hardly anything to eat. In April, 1945 we heard that the German army was making plans to move to their homeland. What good news that was! We could hardly believe it. Next we heard that planes were dropping food in western Holland. Bread and crackers were in abundance in many locations. Sometimes there were fights for food but plane loads kept coming and distribution was quickly organized. The German army's leaving did not mean everything was safe yet. Many underground workers were killed during the last days. My dear husband to be, could have been one of them. That nothing was discovered on our farm was a miracle. When cars, trucks and guns etc. came out of hiding God showed how good and merciful He was to us.

May 5, 1945 was the day that our freedom became a reality at last. On that unforgettable day we all ran to the main road, as we had heard that Canadian soldiers would come by with their motorcycles, jeeps, tanks and trucks. Every one who could walk went to meet as many as we were able. The soldiers could not move for hours for all the people who took this beautiful opportunity to thank them. I have hugged many too and have often wished that I could find one Canadian

soldier I hugged on that road from Maasland to Schipluiden. I would even now go and thank him for risking their lives for us. During the five years that Dad brought the message on Nov.11 Remembrance Days in Cherhill, Alberta we spoke to many veterans. All had served in the eastern part of Holland. Nobody can fully understand how it feels when peace and quiet returns after years of fear and uncertainty. War is such a time of contrasts. I felt this many times. We had nights of fear, yet in the morning we went about our duties as if it had not been there. Once when I was going home, I saw a man on the side of the road who had died of hunger and I went home to a good dinner. And when Jan had gone on one of his mission trips at night and I did not sleep for hours, I just acted as if all was normal. The same happened to Jan. He too had to act as if nothing bothered him even though he often only had one or two hours of sleep. This happened twice a week these last two years of the war. This was all in the past now and we could live a normal life again with no more white lies or acting. It was a wonderful feeling not to be overly alert which had felt to me as always standing on my toes. We had received many blessings during the war. Our lives were all spared and we had enough to eat and even to spare for others. Hein, our deserted soldier was so grateful that he could be with us for those years. He kept contact with mom and dad as long as they lived and several of our families visited him in Groningen. As soon as we had a bike ready for him, he drove home to his family and the bakery about 300 km away on the German border. His business was on Dutch soil and his house on German soil so as a German citizen he had been drafted into the war. Many Dutch people were his regular customers so he could not fight against his homeland where he made his living. His wife only lived two more years after he came home. Jan Bommel went home the next day after we were free. His girlfriend came to pick him up. They too stayed friends until they died. Mom's brother and his family went home on June 20 because only then could they enter on account of the inundation. Yet, their farm home was far from cleaned up but they wanted to be in their own home before their sixth child was to be born. That happened on June 25, my dad's birthday, and they called her Corrie. I went to help my Aunt many times, for a day, until everything was livable again. German soldiers from the anti-aircraft battery nearby had used their home for immoral partying. It was a terrible mess. Uncle Klaas began to milk his cows at the neighbors until the land finally had dried off enough to have them home again.

I have thanked God many times for the freedom we have and the many blessings we receive. Even now when I wake up I thank Him for peace and our freedom. I should end this part with a quote from the book I mentioned above. (Be sure to read it all, sometimes!) The quote is about the struggle concerning lying among us

as Christians. Some said that we could not get away from it. Others who were equally strong Christians, like Karl's father, could not bring themselves to lie no matter what. "The Ten Boom's home vehement discussions went on at times about this. Some considered the Lord's decree, You shall not lie, an absolute command; trusting the Lord who had guided them to offer shelter to the hunted and to take care of any situation that would result from their obedience to His command. Yet, a Jewish man hiding there argued, "You want to live by the book, the Bible, but don't you see that this way you just live by words from that book? The way your sister uses these words they may even kill. That is not what the Almighty - blessed be His name - wants. That is not serving God. Read your book woman. You'll find stories, many stories, in which the Almighty blesses lies. But those lies helped His cause. Read what Samuel says, or Moses, before the King of Egypt, or Rahab. You'll read there about two Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, blessed be their memory. They deceived the King. They lied to him and thus saved Hebrew babies. And what do you read? The Almighty blessed these midwives. See what I mean?"