

Drama in Loenen

(Written by Elly Velthuis)

A bombardment on Loenen

The whole week of the battle of Arnhem we slept on mattresses in the front- and backroom; mummy, her sister Jos, eight children and a person in hiding. Above was too dangerous and with each other you were less frightened. Daddy had died some months earlier because of stomach cancer. He was not able to witness the liberation. He loved to sing the song 'Als op het Leidseplein de lichtjes weer eens branden gaan'. I still cannot cross the Leidseplein (1) and not weep.' Elly Velthuis was sixteen years old, then the command came that all the people of Arnhem had to leave their city. We were free to go where ever we wanted to go, but we had to go. Not too far away of course, because we were going back soon, for sure? We had good neighbours opposite. Each day I walked to the HBS (2) with Gerard Daniëls; we where in the same class. 'Go along with us', said his parents, 'we have family in Loenen which manages a hotel'. After much consideration we decided to go along with them. As much as possible was packed in sheets, with four knots, and in such way that we could hang everything on the steers of our wrecked bicycles. That mondaymorning a drizzling rain fell. The mood was fine, the whole Apeldoornseweg (3) was full of evacuees. At last free of the shooting and the tension of the complete week before. Every morning careful the curtains open: have we been liberated? No, again Germans were walking by; it lasted so long. Still, we did not grumble at all. Even my little sister Miekje of the age of four, walked the whole way; her little baby buggie was fully packed. She was so happy.

We were young, the elderly had more worries

Hotel Boschoord, the station coffee bar of Loenen (Library of Gelderland)

Elly Velthuis has excellent memories on her first evacuation weeks. The two families received a warm welcome by the family Berends of hotel Boschoord, at the same time a trainstation coffee bar on the railroad track Dieren-Apeldoorn. Also another family with a lot of children, the Macrander family had ten children, found shelter there, so that youngsters could search for support from each other. "We lived there happy weeks; we were young, the elderly had more worries. Especially Ms. Daniëls was very frightened and worried when we tried to go from Loenen to Arnhem to pick up some stuff. Sometimes this succeeded.

We were with so many youngsters, the boys and little girls Macrander and Hermsen, what a pleasure we had. During one of those excursions I fell because the bicycle of my little brother Jan collapsed; the bicycle had no tyres and I drove on the iron rims. Hop, I jumped and sat on the rear of the bicycle behind Theo Macrander, screaming with laughter. Everyone tried to go to their houses and we had



agreed that we would get together later on at the cemetery Moscowa. Everyone was present on time, only I had no bicycle. A horse cart was halted and I could ride with it to the 'Woeste Hoeve'; soon the others also rapidly threw their luggage on the car. On the way I saw nothing and when I was put off the car with all the luggage, it was already twilight. I still see myself standing there, not knowing if the others had passed already. I was not frightened at all, sixteen years of age, can you imagine. I heard whistling and

Drama in Loenen

yes, there was Theo Macrander to pick me up with a large delivery bicycle. With me on front he cycled with his fathers' delivery bicycle into Loenen.

To Utrecht

The family Frequin, good acquaintances from the religious community, had swerved to Klarenbeek. A son, Louis, the later head editor of 'De Gelderlander' (4), was kept in prison in Utrecht; he was sentenced to death. As a result of 'Dolle Dinsdag' (5) the execution had not been carried out; everyone now hoped that he would be released soon. When our mother heard that his son would cycle to Utrecht to visit his father, she asked him to tell and reassure her family that we were safe in Loenen. Much later Ben told that he was captured by the Germans on his way to Utrecht and escaped in a cunning manner. Together with his youngest brother Adam, who studied in Utrecht and was my future spouse, he delivered the message. In the meanwhile Louis had been released and should cycle back with Ben to Klarenbeek; my uncle Do asked if he could join them. It sounds simple, but was perilous for three young men. But to our great surprise suddenly uncle Do stood there in Loenen; tears of joy. Mummy said that we lived there well, but he did not like it and wanted us all to come to Utrecht. Coming home he asked his friend Mr. De Jong, director of Douwe Egberts (6), for advice, and Mr. De Jong promised that one of his chauffeurs, who was transporting employees during the night with a trailer to the 'Achterhoek' (7), would collect and transport us. Indirectly we heard that we had to be ready on a certain night at three o'clock.

We would rather stay

That night we said goodbye to the others. "disappointed; we would rather stay", says Elly Velthuis. But when the trailer arrived, exactly on time, the driver was shocked of the amount of luggage. "Madam, I am half loaded, I can take along You with the children or your luggage". "I am sorry", said her mother resolutely. "This is all I have left and will not leave this, even if I would get all the gold in the world". The trailer went away without us and relieved we jumped into our beds. But the next day, totally unexpected, again a trailer stood in front of the door, this time completely empty. Upon arrival in Utrecht De Jong had asked the driver where the family was, and after his explanation he returned the trailer immediately; a dangerous venture during the daytime. Total overwhelmed we packed our stuff and went along. Brother Jan was with Ben Hendriks 'en route', later on he followed us on his bike.

Terrible news

Some weeks later a terrible message was received from Loenen. "A bomb was dropped on Boschoord. Defeated we heard the message. The family Daniëls all dead; man, woman and four children, among them Gerard, my old school comrade, a budding love from both sides. Seven out of the ten Macrander children. The family Hermsen: a couple with two daughters. The two spouses of Mies Wissing and Marie Gabriël, the daughter of the proprietress of Boschoord, both in expectation and suddenly without husband, little son Harry of Mies, swung out from the window and retrieved dead in the garden; a couple named Put from the Boterweg (8), who fled for the bombers into the building. Without any warning, in the early afternoon of Sunday December the 10th 1944." The despair in Loenen was complete. The three bombs, of which one was fallen down in a farmland, were thrown off by British bombers. The trainstation coffee bar however was definitely not a strategic object. Already shortly after the disaster the rumours were that the trainstation restaurant of Lochem was the real target. That was an ammunition depot; Loenen and Lochem makes a difference of only a small couple of characters.

Drama in Loenen

A short-sighted navigator

The Arnhem-journalist Bert Kerkhoffs lost his youth love Gonnie Hermsen at the bombardment. 'A short-sighted navigator exchanges two names of places and kills in one blow 35 innocent lives', he wrote bitter in 'Slag van de Tegenslag'; a book that was dedicated to the errors made in the battle for Arnhem. But according to Huub van Sabben of the Stichting voor Historisch Onderzoek (the foundation for historical research) in Deventer, they were the victim of a common miscalculation, of bombs that were thrown off a fraction too soon or too late. "In the Public Record Office in London the report of the attack on Loenen can be found; for privacy reasons I will give no squadronnumbers and names of the aviators. It says how six Spitfires, armed with bombs, started around 13.25 for an attack on the railroad track Apeldoorn-Zutphen; railroad tracks were bombarded almost every hour to make the supply of German material to the fronts impossible. Since the wheater was not ideal - much too low clouding - the flight commander decided to bombard the railroad track Apeldoorn-Dieren around 14.00. The squadron logbook is mentioning that the railroad track was hit, but also... a building, with map coordinate E.855910. That proves to be a point of the railroad track at north of Eerbeek – the trainstation coffee bar of Loenen?" "On the Roman Catholic cemetery of Loenen a memorial stone for the victims has been set up", tells Elly Velthuis. "When I recently paid a visit there, I wondered myself: is there ever someone who comes for you on this church court?" That was on December the 10th 1994, exactly fifty years after the calamity, really the case. The publication of her letter with this story, in the appendix of the Arnhemse Courant (9) and other papers, currently on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the battle for Arnhem, resulted in a flow from responses. Numerous evacuees attended a wreath lay, which was followed by requiem-mass in the church. Wim Wissing, who lost his father and little brother, retrieved alive and unharmed in the ruins of Boschoord, was paying honour to the victims by reading their names.

(Source: <http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/1557/arnhem12.html>, translated from Dutch by F.G.S. Macrander)

1. Leidse Plein = a famous square in Amsterdam;
2. H.B.S. = High School;
3. A road
4. De Gelderlander = a regional newspaper;
5. Dolle Dinsdag = the 5th of September 1944 was called 'Dolle Dinsdag' (= Crazy Tuesday) because on this day the Dutch people thought they would be liberated by the Allies. The Allies were moving fast and gaining terrain rapidly. They had already liberated the Belgian cities of Antwerp and Bruxelles a few days before;
6. Douwe Egberts = a famous coffee brandname in The Netherlands;
7. Achterhoek = a region in the east part of The Netherlands, near the border of Germany;
8. A road
9. De Arnhemse Courant = a regional newspaper