

# NEI Royal Navy Sailor Hendrik Dob POW-an autobiography

Childhood memories: I was born at home on the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1920. We were living on a farm on the isle of Texel, in Holland called "Het Noorden". My fathers name was Gerrit Dob and my mothers name was Janna Cornelia van den Berg. My mother was a housekeeper who worked for my father when they met. My father's sister Marina had a son who married my mother's sister Anna. They were married where my mother's parents were then residing in the South of Holland in Nieuwkerk on de Isle. They originally came from that region of Holland but lived on Texel for some years. It was a normal custom in Holland at the time that the father is present at the birth of their children. My father's sister tante (aunty) Beth helped as a midwife at my birth. My eldest brother Johannes was 12 when I was born. My sisters, Johanna was 6, Cornelia was 5, Hendrika was 3 and Gijsbertha was 2 years old. 3 years later my sister Aaltje was born and four years after her, my brother Klaas arrived.

I recall at the birth of my brother Klaas, I could hear my mother yelling from the bedroom as she was giving birth. I remember her saying something like, "pull my leg!" A doctor was there. My older sister had to take us children to the neighbours.

My earliest memory was when it was nearly dark and my father came through the door and a wild cat followed him and ran up the Holland blind and tore it. Another early memory was when I was about aged 3 when a salesman came to the door selling manchester. The man had a half-meter measuring stick that was brown and I took off running with it and they had to grab me back.

From what I can remember our farm was close to the dyke, on the bottom of the dyke was a small canal and I was told not to go near it because the "Heintjevaar" (monster) will get me and he will pull you under the water. I remember one day my Father took me to the garden, there were some fruit trees and one had a few pears on it, he told me not to pick them because they were not ripe. Later on I went back and picked two pears and hid them in a haystack. Some time later I went back, but I could not find them again.

On the farm we had a cow, a horse and some pigs, Mother was making butter and cheese and some times I was allowed to turn the handle on the churn. We only ate meat on Sunday and my mother would use the juices from the meat to make enough gravy to last the week which we would eat each night with the vegetables.

I remember I was about 5 years old and it was at night and I went with my father into town on the wagon to pick up the pork from the butcher's store.

I started school in April of 1925, it was an hour to walk to school. On the first day of school we all received a chocolate milk drink it was served from a great big bucket with a ladle. My first grade teacher was Mister Bakker, he was a nice teacher. I remember my

friend who was named Sieman (Simon). My next teacher was Miss Kikkert in Eierland, Mr. Bakker, Miss Lint, then Mr. Bonne and Mr. Broere. I remember one time when I was sent out of the classroom into the passageway for misbehaving. I became board waiting for the teacher so to entertain myself I decided it would be interesting going through all the coat pockets hanging along the passage way.

In Den Burg I had Mr. Goedhard and my last teacher was Mr. Slort. I had Mister Slort in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, he taught 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade all together. I had done something wrong and Mister Slort had me sit at the desk in front of him and he sat on the desk top. He would hold my chin about 15 cm (6 inches) away from his face and have me look into his eyes without looking away and there we would sit for about 10 minutes, it was like hypnotism. There is a saying in Dutch, "Even a stubborn donkey will not stumble on the same stone twice." Mr. Slort had me do 50 lines of, "A donkey will not stumble on the same stone twice but I am a triple donkey."

I raised rabbits and guinea pigs and we had a dog. The rabbit hatch was made out of wood with wire mesh nailed across the bottom so that the hatch could be moved to a grassier area for the rabbits to eat. In winter the rabbit were put under shelter. I didn't like to eat my pet rabbits I preferred to sell them. I didn't like it when my father killed a rabbit or a chicken.

It was a year later that the farm we lived at was sold, we moved away from there to a place called "de Ruige" (the Rough) dyke in "Eierland" (eggland). From there it was a twenty-minute walk to school. We lived there for two years and moved to another house, the road was called "het Dreefje". We lived there for a year and moved again to another house. This time we stayed another year before our final move to Den Burg. Our house was just outside Den Burg off Schilderend road, number 95 and only five minutes walk to school, I think it was in April of 1930. I attended a Christian school.

The house was brick with a straw roof and three layers of tiles around the bottom of the steep roof. It looked like the house was cut in half with a flat face from the roof to the ground at one end. The ground floor was the kitchen, living room, toilet and my parents bedroom. Upstairs in a loft area under the roof were two divided rooms with a girls bedroom and a boys bedroom. We had wooden bunk beds, where we slept with another sibling to keep warm. We slept head to toe. There was one water hand pump over the kitchen sink and another one outside near the front door where my mother would wash the clothes but the ground water was hard. We had to go outside also for drinking water from a square well with a lid over top. It had a bucket with a chain attached and the water was collected from the roof and drained into the concrete well, which went quite a way under the ground. Behind the front door, which was the only entrance was an inside toilet closet that contained a metal bucket. It was emptied by hand and buried in the back garden, this is one job I did not want to do but it had to be done. The toilet lid was closed when it was not being used to contain the smell. We would have a wash each Saturday night. Mother would heat up the water on the wood and coal burning stove in a big kettle. Mother would wash us as children in a wash tub in the kitchen. As a teenager we would take the wash bowl with the warm water upstairs to the bedroom and use two

towels to dry ourselves with. One colour for the top half of the body and the other towel for the bottom half of the body. The whole family would use the same towels as instructed. The other days of the week we would have a cloth to wipe our face and hands before bed, we did not brush our teeth back then.

The back half of the house was a barn where we kept the hay in the loft. It was a secret place where we would access it up the ladder and there was a small window where we would look down on the back garden and the rabbit hatches that my mother kept.

During the depression a lot of people were unemployed. Father was working for a farmer for about two years and was looking for another job. He worked for the local council during those years for two or three days a week. Everybody was poor in those days, but we managed by growing our own potatoes and vegetables.

One day I went with my friends to the rubbish tip and found bike parts, which we put together from the old bits and pieces and made a pushbike that worked. We would use sandpaper to remove the rust and scratches then use a special black paint lacquer, everyone had black bikes back then. Some times my Father took me to the dyke fishing and we caught a few big fish. My friends and I would go to the “Wad” at low tide, behind the dyke to collect mussels or snails when the tide was out. Other times we would go to the west coast of the island to the beach to go swimming or just beach combing. We would always come home with all sorts of treasures, one times it was enough timber to make a rabbit hatch. I found bamboo washed up on the beach, that I was able to make a fishing rod with.

I was still at school when I started a bird egg collection. I believe it was about 80 different eggs species (my brother Klaas still has them). In the winter when the lakes froze over, ice-skating was my favourite sport and there were ice skating competitions in Den Burg at night under lights. There were little stores that sold “anys melk” aniseed milk and almond cakes, which were very delicious.

In summer we would ride to the dyke and we had a swimming club there. I remember in my later school years making kites with flypaper, starch, glue and string. I was very good at making kites and so I make them for other boys too.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April was Meirblis (May fire) this was when all the people would spring clean their homes and all the rubbish was carted to a place designated in the village and as night fell we would be allowed to light the piles of rubbish with matches and watch it burn which was a lot of fun for the children. We could cook potatoes on the ashes.

I remember it was in May and a sunny day when a group of boys and I decided to go swimming in the canal on the Polder. It was very cold, but even though we had no bathers we all went in the nude. We were not allowed to go swimming at that time of the year, but that didn't stop us from having a lot of fun.

November 11<sup>th</sup> is Saint Maarten day (Saint Martin) This is a children's event where a large beet is carved out and a piece of string is tied to a stick with a candle placed inside the beet or the children may buy a paper lantern to use instead. In the evening when it becomes dark the children sing songs at the front door of each house about Saint Martin in return for a treat like an apple, biscuit or lollies. Often a man dressed as Saint Martin rides on a horse in front of the procession with black Pete accompanying him.

We also had a "jongers" boys club, which we attended once a week. We did some fret sawing and I won prizes, I made a picture frame, cigar holder, and many fancy designs. During winter time we mainly played games indoors.

At home during winter I did a lot of reading and fret sawing. It was always nice and warm and cozy inside by lamplight and with the stove burning, it was a nice atmosphere.

On Sunday my Father took us to church. We attended the "Hervormdekerk" Protestant church for Sunday School, which was at 12 o'clock. Mother stayed home and prepared us a midday meal and that was always special. With boiled potatoes, applesauce, meatballs or chicken, followed by dessert of custard and "bessen vla" berry sauce. Sunday afternoon I would meet my friends to watch football or we would go on our bikes to the forest (de Denner), there was always some place to explore.

At Christmas, as a child, we had a pine tree in a pot and mistletoe hung around the room. We had real candles. At Sunday school we had a Christmas party with a tree and presents. Each child received a book and an orange from Spain and a present of clothing like pajamas, hat, socks etc. The women in the church made the clothing. On Christmas day we had a special dinner. At night we sang songs around the Christmas tree and ate a special baked cake.

When I was about 12 years old I joined the school football DEO (soccer) team, the football field was right in front of our house. It was in 1934 that our team won the championship against 7 or 8 other schools in the competition. We each received a medal.

It was the same year in 1934 when I was 14 and I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, that I left school to seek employment. My first job was in the bulb fields planting tulips and narcisses, but that only lasted a few months and I was looking for another job. I kept all my money in a money box. There was an ad in the local paper for a messenger boy. I applied and a few days later I got the job. There were 13 boys that had applied for the job and I was lucky to be the one that got it and I was very happy because I did not like to work on the land. I earned 2.50 guildens a week, which I gave to my Mother and she gave me 50 cents back. My job was in a clothing shop and sometimes I worked behind the counter and also delivered parcels. It was a family business, which also did furniture repairs and carpet and linoleum laying, and I helped there as well.

The first thing in the morning when I arrived at work, I had to go down to the basement of the shop and stoke the coal fire to bring the temperature up in the central heating. I also had to pump the water to the roof for the water pressure. Throughout the day I

served at the counter and delivered parcels and sometimes I would go out with the boss and lay carpet or lino. When the business became slack and there was little to do, the boss sent me out with a case of clothing to sell door to door, which I did not like very much.

One time I was sent out to Oosterend, it was a rainy and stormy day and it was very hard pedaling on the heavy pushbike with the force of the wind, the freezing cold and the rain beating against me.

The job I liked the most required me to pick up the boss's car from the garage, which was 30 or 40 meters from the shop at the house and that is how I learned to drive. I was 16 at the time. I gave all my wages to my mother and she gave me back what she thought I needed.

At about that time the brothers split the business and I went to the repair and upholstery furniture shop where I learned a bit of upholstery and also fixing curtain rods and drapes.

One time I had been changing a tyre on the car and I had not quite finished when the boss called me away on an errand. When I returned he had taken the jack from under the car and we loaded the furniture on the back. The boss said I could drive, we had driven about half way there when the back wheel came flying off. We picked up the wheel and put it back on using some of the nuts from the other wheels. Well you guessed it, I got the blame. That was the week he opened his new shop. I worked like a dog that week and I never got a bonus for all my effort.

One time when Mother had some groceries delivered she said she didn't have enough to pay again and the shop keeper said, "Don't worry about it pay it later on." I felt really bad about the fact my mother couldn't pay for them and she owed so much from before that I said to my mother that she could use the money from my money box. There was about 80 guilders that I had saved.

It was in 1938 that work was slack and the boss gave me days off because there was no work and no pay and another job was hard to find. I decided to apply to join the Navy. After a few months a letter arrived informing me to have a medical examination, and I passed. The months of February and March I was unemployed. The papers arrived from the Navy in March and I was required to join up on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1939 on the Hr Ms Braband, which was a training ship in Vlissingen, Zeeland.

The Hr Ms Braband was an old cruiser that was docked, where I spent my first year training to be a sailor. The first three months were where I had to prove myself, I then signed up for 6 years.



In September of 1939 war broke out between England and Germany and Holland mobilized its troops and reserves. It was a busy time for us having to accommodate and feed the reserve Navy personnel. Holland was in an alert state, we did a lot of extra sentry duty. At the time I was on leave and near the end of my leave when the Navy sent me a telegram, informing me to return immediately to base. After a few weeks we went back to our regular training again. In December of that year the winter set in and it was very cold. I remember the temperature was 25 C degrees below zero and I was put on sentry duty on a very cold night on the harbour. I had to keep walking all the time, otherwise my feet would have frozen and two hours seemed a long time. It would have been a nice time for ice-skating.

In February of 1940 I was transferred to the cruiser the HNLMS Samatra in Den Helder. I remember it was before our transfer in the beginning of February that I had a weekend off and had gone home. On the Monday when I had to return to Den Helder the ferry could not sail because of the ice so I had an extra day home. I had to get a letter from the Lord Mayor to say that the ferry could not sail due to the ice.

We sailed on the Sumatra from Den Helder and did some conveying work escorting German ships in our coastal waters. Holland was neutral, but Germany was at war with England and so we were escorting the German ships in the Dutch section of the North sea. I recall we often sailed in stormy waters and I was very seasick.

We were laying for anchor one night and a storm blew up and our anchor broke, luckily we were able to get up enough steam to make a quick get away because we were drifting close to a mine field.

Our home harbour was IJmuiden where we sometimes stayed for a few days. Whenever we were on shore leave we had to leave an address to call us back in case of an emergency. Sometimes when that happened not everybody was contacted and when we

sailed there were times when there were always a few people missing. We would pick them up a few days later when we came back to harbour.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, I requested leave so I could attend my sister Jo's wedding. That was the last day I was home and it was another six years before I came home after the war. I was promoted to third class seaman that meant a little rise in pay on the first of May.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HNLMS\\_Java](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HNLMS_Java)

## **HNLMS Sumatra**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*HNLMS Sumatra also performed convoy duties during World War II and transported part of the Dutch Royal Family to safety in Canada, but due to problems with her propulsion she was unfit for combat duty.*

*In the end Sumatra was scuttled off the coast of Normandy on 9 June 1944 at Ouistreham as part of a "gooseberry" pier to protect an artificial Mulberry Harbour built by the Allies as part of Operation Overlord. Sumatra's 150 mm guns were used to replace the guns of the Flores class sloops, which were worn out by extensive use.*

We were with the HNLMS Sumatra near Vlissingen when we received a general alarm at 2 o'clock in the morning on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1940. We were told that the Germans had invaded Holland and had crossed our boarders. We had seen a lot of airplanes flying over and we engaged in firing on them. The Germans were laying magnetic mines in the mouth of the river Schelde trying to prevent the ships from leaving and escaping into the North Sea. The French came with some mine sweepers and cleared a way to escape. We waited till high tide and all men were on deck in their life jackets and the ship went out at full speed. Our destination on leaving the harbour was for England.

It was not easy to enter an English harbour for they thought that we could be Germans. It took a number of days before we were accepted and was able to dock in Hull, Scotland. We anchored at Grimsby for a few days for repairs and the ship was fitted with a magnetic cable.

We sailed from there around England and Scotland to Bristol. We were very surprised to hear that Princess Juliana and her husband Prince Bernard of Holland with their two children princesses Beatrix aged 2 and Irene aged 1 has been recognized coming on board ship. Prince Bernard was saying good-bye to his family who was sailing with us, the destination unknown. We finally arrived in Halifax, Canada where Princess Juliana and her daughters spent the rest of the war years.

My friends on the Samatra were Ekabus and Ardrie van Harhen. Ekabus went down on a submarine and Ardrie was on the HNLMS Java and it went down in the battle of the Java Sea. During the battle of the Java Sea on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1942, she was sunk reportedly by a Long Lance torpedo from the Japanese cruiser Nachi and went down with the loss of 500 crew.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HNLMS\\_De\\_Ruyter\\_\(1935\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HNLMS_De_Ruyter_(1935))

## **HNLMS De Ruyter (1935)**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*HNLMS De Ruyter* was a light cruiser of the Royal Netherlands Navy, the lead ship of her class. She was originally designed as a 5000-ton ship with a lighter armament due to financial problems and the pacifist movement. Later in the design stage an extra gun turret was added and the armour was improved.

*De Ruyter* was laid down on 16 September 1933 at the Wilton Fijenoord dockyard in Schiedam and commissioned on 3 October 1936 by Captain A. C. van der Sande Lacoste.

During World War II *De Ruyter* saw repeated action in the Dutch East Indies in fruitless attempts to ward off the Japanese invasion. She was damaged by air attack in the battle of Bali Sea on 4 February 1942, but not seriously. She fought in the battle of Badung Strait on 18 February 1942.

[http://ww2db.com/battle\\_spec.php?battle\\_id=23](http://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=23)

### **Battle of Makassar Strait**

4 Feb 1942

On 3 Feb 1942, the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command gathered a sizable task force to stop a Japanese invasion force sailing down the Makassar Strait. On the morning of 4 Feb, Japanese reconnaissance aircraft discovered this Allied fleet, and two-engine bombers were sent to attack. Without air cover, the Allied fleet suffered two damaged cruisers and was forced to turn back to Tjilitjap without making contact with the invasion fleet. Makassar fell shortly thereafter.

### **Battle of the Java Sea**

27 Feb 1942

On 27 Feb, ABDA commander Karel Doorman gathered a task force and sailed northeast from Surabaya at the east end of Java, attempting to intercept a Japanese convoy sailing from the Makassar Strait. Doorman's force consisted of every warship available to him, including heavy cruisers HMS Exeter and USS Houston, three light

*cruisers HNLMS De Ruyter (flagship), HNLMS Java, and HMAS Perth, and nine destroyers HMS Electra, HMS Encounter, HMS Jupiter, HNLMS Kortenaer, HNLMS Witte de With, USS Alden, USS John D. Edwards, USS John D. Ford, USS Pope, and USS Paul Jones. The Japanese convoy was escorted by two heavy cruisers Nachi and Haguro, two light cruisers Naka and Jintsu, and fourteen destroyers Yudachi, Samidare, Murasame, Harusame, Minegumo, Asagumo, Yukikaze, Tokitsukaze, Amatsukaze, Hatsukaze, Yamakaze, Kawakaze, Sazanami, and Ushi, all under the command of Rear Admiral Shoji Nishimura of the Japanese 3rd Fleet.*

*The two forces met in the Java Sea. The Allied ships immediately aimed to reach the troop transports, but the superior Japanese firepower quickly overwhelmed the Allied fleet that sported some obsolete WWI-vintage ships. In one of the more rare occasions, the Allies actually had air superiority in the region, but bad weather prevented the aircraft from operating. The Allied inability to operate as a coherent unit, which was worsened by Japanese jamming of Allied radio frequencies, sealed their doom from the start.*

*The Japanese used their 24-inch torpedoes to effect at the start of the battle, sinking the destroyer Encounter. Japanese gunfire, questionable at first, nevertheless scored an accurate barrage on Exeter, critically wounding her in the boiler room. As the damaged Exeter attempted to withdraw with a destroyer screen, the Japanese forces continued to exert pressure with accurate gunfire and torpedoes. Four older American destroyers, low in fuel, retired eastward on their own initiative; they eventually reached Australia via Bali Strait safely. Kortenaer was struck by torpedo, breaking in two and sank quickly. Electra remained in the rear and drew fire from Jintsu and Asagumo, driving Asagumo into a withdrawal, but Electra also suffered critical damage which eventually led to an abandon ship order.*

*As light waned at dusk, Admiral Doorman tried on several occasions to double back and attack the Japanese transports, but was intercepted and driven back each time, losing one destroyer in the process to an uncharted minefield. During his last attempt, a spread of long lance torpedoes fired by cruisers Nachi and Haguro struck both Dutch light cruisers, sinking De Ruyter and killing Doorman. At this point the remaining two Allied ships, cruisers Perth and Houston, fled westward towards Batavia.*

*As the damaged Exeter and destroyers Encounter and Pope attempted to flee from the Japanese fleet, they were given chase and discovered by Japanese aircraft on 1 Mar. The aircraft damaged and crippled the ships, and heavy cruisers Nachi and Haguro reached the scene to sink them by gunfire.*

*This battle was the first large-scale engagement between Japanese and Allied fleets, and it resulted in a Japanese victory. The ABDA fleet was essentially written off after this battle, with 8 warships sunk and about 2,000 officers and sailors lost. Without a naval fleet to deter the Japanese invasion fleets, American and British aircraft began falling back to Australia, hence marking the practical fall of the Malay barrier. The only*

*strategic goal achieved by the ABDA fleet was delaying Japanese invasion plan by one day. The remnants of Dutch and British troops surrendered on 9 Mar.*

### ***Aftermath of the Campaign***

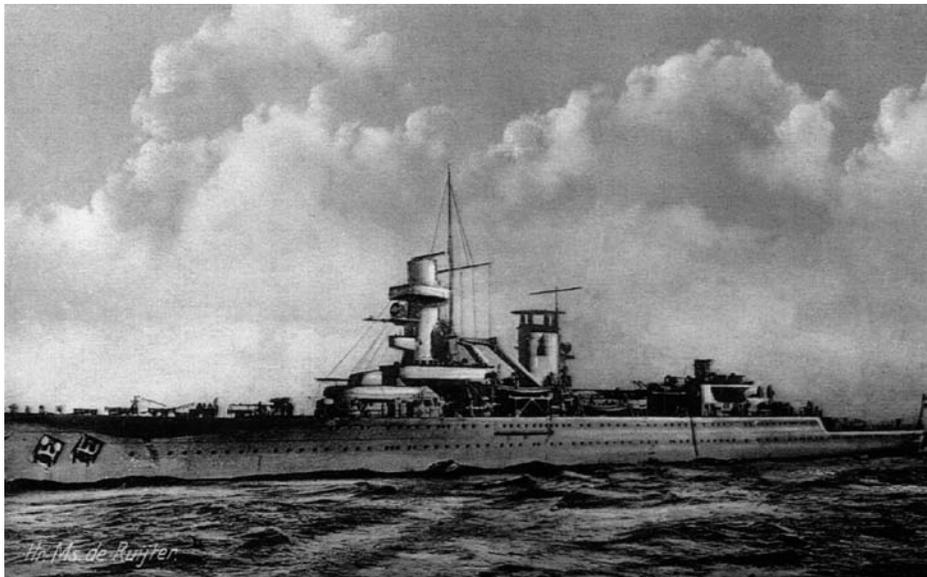
*The termination of the Java area battles saw the Japanese securing the vast resources of the Southwest Pacific and establishing a defensive perimeter along the arc of large islands stretching from Singapore south and east through Sumatra, Java, the northern shore of New Guinea, and Rabaul in New Britain. The Japanese Navy proved itself as equals to their western counterparts, but in retrospect Captain Mitsugo Ihara, staff officer of the Japanese 3rd Fleet, lamented that the*

*"[Allied] opposition [in the Java area] was so light that the Japanese forces were not put to a severe test and consequently they concluded that equipment available and the tactics used were satisfactory for future operations. It would have been better for the Japanese if they had encountered more opposition."*

*Sources: Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Nihon Kaigun, Wikipedia.*

*In the Battle of the Java Sea on 27 February 1942, De Ruyter was the flagship of the Dutch rear-admiral Karel Doorman. Off the north coast off Java the ABDA fleet was surprised at night by a Japanese squadron consisting of the heavy cruisers Nachi and Haguro supported by 14 destroyers. De Ruyter was supposedly hit by a single Japanese Long Lance torpedo at about 23:30 and sank at 02:30 the next day with the loss of 345 men, including Admiral Doorman.*

*She was the seventh ship of the Dutch Navy to be named after Admiral Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter. See HNLMS De Ruyter for other ships of this name.*



When I was on the Ruyter I vividly remember when the ship has received the message, alarm stations and we were warned to be prepared for action in a few hours.

Soon we were called to hunt a German raider in the Caribbean Sea, which was making shipping very hazardous. The places that we called at were Bermuda, Jamaica and later on Curacao, which was a Dutch colonial island. We stayed there for a few weeks for rest, recreation and repairs. Soon we again sailed across the Atlantic to West Africa, we called at Lobito and Freetown for fuel then we sailed on to Cape Town in South Africa. It was a very nice town and we stayed there for about fourteen days. The next Port of call was Maritus to fill the ship up with oil. Then we sailed to the Dutch East Indies.

Our first stop was in Batavia, where we were welcomed by our Dutch Navy ships and they put up the flags. Then we sailed on again to Soerabaja. We had 14 days leave, so Ekabus and Ardrie van Harhen and I went to Malang in the mountains where we went swimming in a river and out to dinner, my favorite dish was Nasi Goring. When we returned from leave, I was transferred to HNLMS de Ruyter on the 10th of October 1941. We did a lot of exercise maneuvers in the Java Sea.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> June I was promoted to seaman second class and soon after I did a course for signalman, which I passed in January 1942. In January I became sick with diphtheria and was transferred to the hospital in Batavia. I think I was there for 10 days, after I was discharged I was sent by train to Soerabaya. I was stationed at a Naval Barracks at Oedjoeng. My job placement was as a signalman in the Navy Harbour signal tower. The sleeping quarters were just below the tower.

The worst thing I ever saw was in Soerabaja in February of 1942, I was out walking when the air raid sirens went off and I ran to the nearest air raid shelter. The Japanese were heavily bombing all around and I had never been so scared in my life before. Later that day, after the bombardment was over I went out with a friend to look where the bombs had fallen. One had made a direct hit on another air raid shelter. I could see Dutch Indonesian men in army uniform dead, with their heads off and body parts everywhere. One look and I walked away feeling sick.

I had been working there a few weeks when one day in February I was assigned to clean out the gutters when I fell down the stairs and fractured my wrists. The doctor sent me to hospital to have an X ray done and my wrist was put in plaster. One day the de Ruyter came in to refuel and left two days later and was sunk in the Battle of the Java Sea.

I had just arrived back to the barracks and a notice came to evacuate Soerabaja to Tijilapjap. We were told to pack our bags and go straight to the station where military trains would be provided. We traveled by train a couple of hours and after arriving we were told to board the merchant ships that were in the harbour. As we left the base we were each given a 2kg tin of mixed vegetables and these were our emergency rations.

We sailed after dark on 3<sup>rd</sup> March so we couldn't be spotted so easily by the Japanese pilots. I was on board the Tjissaroea. We sailed along the coast of Java zig zagging, our

destination was the west coast of Australia. The ships maximum speed was only 15 knots and we slept on deck. The next day was the 4<sup>th</sup> of March and about 10 o'clock in the morning we were spotted by a Japanese reconnaissance plane and a few hours later we were encircled by Japanese ships.

I read the story years later about the wives and children of the Navy personal that were also fleeing on a Catalina and they were machine gunned down near Broom by a Japanese plane. Some of those people are buried at Karrakatta cemetery in Perth, Western Australia. A man that belongs to my Dutch Club, his uncle is buried in Karrakatta.

We were ordered to stop and surrender. When I saw their Japanese faces I felt sick to the stomach. A Japanese crewman came on board and we became prisoners of war, there were about 600 men on board. We were escorted with a destroyer, to Makassar in Indonesia. Life on board ship continued with meals and we ate our emergency rations because we were still hungry. We were now POW and we were wondering what would happen next.

We disembarked in Makassa and were escorted by guards to the local jail. It was March the 8<sup>th</sup> and there were about 200 POW military personal. The Japanese put us in cells that normally held about 15 people but they ordered about 50 men per cell pressed together. The next day they pushed a wash tub of cooked rice under the door into the cell and nobody had a plate or spoon so we each received a handful of rice to eat. We had the choice of either eating or starving to death the choice was ours.

I had a camera and it had to be handed in as did watches and other personal items. I kept my silver cigarette lighter and managed to keep it hidden throughout the war. I later make a compartment in a block of wood and nailed it under the barracks. I took up smoking at age 14 years and I smoked most of the time, every day if I could.

After a few days there was a lot of diarrhea and dysentery and we only had a bucket that was emptied each day. There were two wooden bunks in each cell and some men had to sleep on the concrete floor. Some of the people were taken to a hospital ship the Op ten Noort, which were captured by the Japanese.

<http://www.histarmar.com.ar/Hund2GMA/1945a.htm>

### OP ten NOORT

*(August 30, 1945) A 6,000 ton Dutch passenger liner based in Java and on regular service between Surabaya and Singapore. Converted to a hospital ship for the Dutch Navy at the outbreak of the war. In harbour at Surabaya during the Battle of the Java Sea, she was dispatched to look for survivors but was intercepted by two Japanese destroyers and ordered to turn back to Bandjarmasin in Borneo where she was boarded and apprehended. Ordered to take on board 970 Allied prisoners-of-war, including around 800 survivors from the British cruiser Exeter sunk in the Java Sea battle, she sailed for Makassar and there, for the next eight months served as a hospital facility for*

*the POW camps in the area. Later she sailed for Yokohama under the Japanese flag and a new name 'Tenno Maru'. For the remainder of the war she sailed between Singapore and Manila carrying looted gold and other treasures from the Japanese occupied countries. Just weeks before the war ended she arrived again in Yokohama loaded with 2,000 metric tons of gold but instead of offloading her cargo she then sailed on to the Maisaru Naval Base where more gold and platinum bars, diamonds and other gems were put on board. (A metric ton of gold equals 26,400 ounces) Realizing the war was over it was decided to sink the ship and recover the treasure at a later date. Just days before the Japanese surrender the Op ten Noort was taken out into Maisaru Bay late at night by a group of high-ranking Japanese naval officers. The Japanese captain and twenty-four crewmen were shot dead and the ship scuttled. When the wreck was found in 1990 the Japanese valued the treasure at thirty billion US dollars (Three trillion Japanese yen)*

After about 5 weeks in April of 1942, we were taken to an infantry barracks, it was quite a big improvement from our previous accommodation. All personal possessions were removed for safe keeping but we never saw any of them again. The camp had about 3,000 prisoners.

I met up with some men that survived the sinking of the de Ruyter in the POW camp and they told me what happened during the Battle of the Java Sea. The captain of the de Ruyter went down with the ship as did the commander of the whole fleet, Doorman. After the de Ruyter was hit with a torpedo it sank slowly. The survivors went to the front of the ship as the back was sinking. The floats were taken off and floated away from the sinking ship. They lowered the boats on ropes into the water. One bloke told me that they had to take their shoes off to climb into the boats with their life vests. The funny thing was looking back and seeing the shoes nicely stacked in a row together. He heard the commander say, "It is about time to get our revolvers." The captain stayed with the ship, as he didn't want to be captured by the Japes.

The bedding was better in this camp. Secretly we did transactions with the natives by throwing notes over the fence during the night. If the Japanese caught us we were given a thrashing. Some bloke had a wrist watch and a Japanese guard paid to buy it so he could have money to barter with the natives for food.

We were sent out in working parties to work in the warehouses and cleaning up jobs. This enabled us to pinch some food or buy some from the natives which we took back to camp. Some times we were searched and lost the stuff. The European people had owned beautiful homes but they left them abandoned. The POW working parties were required to clean them up so the Japanese could live in them. The local natives had already ransacked the houses so there was nothing of value left. We thought ourselves fortunate if we found a fork or a spoon. I remember I found a spoon and I used it all the years I was in the POW camp. When I first came into camp all prisoners were using chopsticks but they were too slow to eat with. The boseman had a big serving spoon. I found a tin plate and a little stone pot. One time while collecting my rice ration the handle of the pot broke off.

Most men made special secret pockets in the trouser legs to hold the contraband. I had a large green coat with deep pockets. There was a Japanese sergeant who was a guard, an ugly man named Josida he was a real mean man. One day he inspected a working party coming back into camp and he found a bottle of soya sauce and he made the prisoner drink it all up. Another time he made a prisoner eat a banana with the skin on. He was a sadist who seemed to take a delight in the discomfort he inflicted.

Smuggling still continued regardless of the punishment, food scrapes and useful items were taken from the rubbish heaps and from houses that we cleared out for the Japanese.

While in Makassa three people escaped at night, a sub lieutenant, a recruit air mechanic and a half-caste. After three days they were betrayed by the natives and captured. They were beaten black and blue. A few days later the men were taken away to be beheaded. Some POW's were taken to witness the beheading. They watched as the 3 men had to dig their own grave, kneel down and a Japanese soldier used a sword to chop their heads off. They were all Dutchmen. This was a warning to all prisoners that the death penalty was for any prisoner who tried to escape.

Some POW were bitten by the malaria carrying mosquito while we lived here and they would have repeat episodes while in our next camp where we did not have the Malaria mosquito breeding there. I was fortunate not to experience that. We also had a bad episode with throat infections so POW's were required to gargle with Conti's crystals, a red antiseptic.

It was in October that the Japanese commander called together 1000 prisoners for transportation to Japan. We were put on a Japanese ship the Azuma Maru bound for Nagasaki on 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1942.

We arrived in Nagasaki on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942 and the next day we are sent to the POW camp on the Japanese Island of Kyushu. This camp was located on the east side of Koyagi Shima about 5 miles out in the harbour from Nagasaki in the midwestern section of Kyushu Island. It was in a small cove on the water's edge and was about one kilometer south of the Kawanami Shipbuilding plant. To the west and south of the camp was a village but it was inhabited by the dockyard workers. Koyagi Shima is very hilly and it was necessary to cut a place out of the side of the hill in order to build the camp, even then it was very close to the edge of the water. Size of prison compound was 50' x 500' surrounded by a bamboo fence. We walked the kilometre to the POW camp called Fukuoko No. 2.

Our camp was newly built and didn't look too bad. Each room had double bunks and accommodated 48 men. There were 18 barracks for general POWs and 2 or 3 barracks for officers. I was in barrack number 8. The Americans were put in barrack number 4. Each prisoner was given a number and mine was 336, in Japanese I would say, "of wel san san

roke”. Kura means “Come here” probably used in military circles. Mata koi means “Come again.”



Drawing by American POW Fred Neale inside his barrack.

*People in story: Fred Neale,  
Location of story: Nagasaki, Japan  
Background to story: Royal Air Force  
Article ID: A3055547  
Contributed on: 27 September 2004*

*The camp as it looked at the time of capitulation. (15th August 1945 Japan official surrender) The number of men in the camp was 42. This picture was hand painted by Fred during his time as a POW on an island off Nagasaki — he made his own paint brush by using the hairs from a local dog, the corner of the painting was eaten by termites*

*(Note: the Hiroshima bomb was dropped on the 6th August 1945, the bomb Fred mentions is the 2nd bomb dropped in Nagasaki on the 9th August 1945).*

*After the Atom Bomb we sort of regrouped on what was left of our camp. There were still guards and we had to sort of toe the line, otherwise you got beaten up anyway. The day after they dropped the bomb we went down and marched to the docks, what was left, and to see what would happen. We were severely left alone, there was nothing to work on, there was nothing left. We mooched around I came across - and this has stuck in my mind - this woman with a baby. This poor woman, her baby was skinless and the flies... She was burnt and she was trying to feed it, and her fingers were sticking to it. What could I do? I picked up a piece of wood and fanned them to keep the flies off, until they keeled over.*

*During the morning we had nothing to eat or drink. Then a big black B29, flew slowly around, under the wings were written, 'P.O.W. SUPPLIES'. We had to attract its attention. We took our rags off and spelt out, 'HELP P O W S'. They must have seen us as later a Liberator came over and dropped a message using a field dressing. "Hang on." it read, "We'll be back!" In the afternoon a flight came over and dropped lots of things, but we could not hold anything down. I was so sick, I rubbed some peach juice into my skin, but it attracted the flies. I*

*had to wash it off so I jumped in the sea. One man, who was after boots, got squashed like beetle under a parachute drop from the plane. We scrapped him off the sack. The containers had everything in them.*

*The next thing a little aircraft carrier, the Chennang U.S.A, staggers in and tied up over what was left of the jetty on the other side. Then the invasion barges came across with the Marines in. To see those chaps! They must have been ten foot tall! Well I did not weight six stone, and was all bones, gums all receded and teeth all rotten at the roots. We had no hair, left the whiskers though; I looked as if I had my head upside down. The Marines came in and the first thing they did, obviously, they counted the heads. The Medical Officer (M.O.) came, checked us over. "What atrocities did you suffer?" He asked. "Captain Rice Flitch", a Dutch collaborator and a captain M. O." we replied, "He refused to let us have medical stuff." He was salting them away for when he got to the islands round Java, when he would be king dick. He was taken away, later we heard he had been shot. Amazingly, we suffered no radiation; Jesus must have been blowing the wind onto the land that day.*

*The next thing was a cable to send home. So I filled in the forms like they told me "Home address, say you are alive" That was the first thing my mum and dad had heard from me, of course, since the fall of Singapore, I had been posted missing believed-killed. It was a great shock to them! When I came home. "Welcome home Fred", there was bunting all up the street. I took it down and it was all up the next day. I did not know what to expect, I was frightened. I was a POW for three and half years and more to follow. In Japan I knew I would not survive - it was on the books that I would eventually be killed. If the Americans arrived we were all to be killed in the caves, as they were all wired with explosives, we would be buried in there. The Japes were going to fight to the last man; even their little kids were trained to throw hand grenades from the cliffs tops. Until the ATOM BOMB SHOOK THEM RIDGED! We had got something they had not got. They had not got that!*

At the back of the camp was part of the bay. The other side was a road and there were people living close by too. One time I remember a captain took 2 or 3 of us to his home which was close by. His wife bowed to us and it seemed so funny as we only bowed to the Japanese soldiers. Inside the house they had thick straw mats, which they used to eat and sleep on. They always left their shoes outside.

Our camp was situated about one and a half kilometers from the shipyard, where we were going to work and the Japanese needed all sorts of tradesmen to build the ships. I started as a sheet metal worker, a plater in the shipyard on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1942. I did not have any shoes. After a few weeks working, the army kept us in camp because we had no proper shoes to wear, when we were supplied with shoes the men with large feet did not get any. Those that had shoes learned to keep them together with wire or insert

cardboard to keep out the cold when they wore out. Shoes were a valuable possession. When our shoes wore out we wore rubber shoes.

My friends in the POW camp were Jaap Slieker, Henk Bruyn and Henk van Os. The only possession we were allowed to have was a comb, but all our hair was cut off. We wore Japanese army clothes, which were well worn and also bits and pieces of Dutch army clothing and Japanese hats.

Some of the Guards I remember are Nasami, Gropi – he was veteran of the Chinese war and he had no toes and walked funny. The young guards were fanatic but I found the older men more reasonable.

The Japs kept a few chickens in a barn. One day I heard a chicken clucking and I made sure no one was around so I sneaked in and grabbed the freshly laid egg. The man in charge of the chicken must have heard the clucking too as he came over to check on the chicken but I was back working by then but he did look at me suspiciously. There was an elderly Japanese bloke that stoked the boiler and he was very friendly. A tap was attached with boiling water available so I put my egg in some boiling water, left it in awhile and then ate it. That was the only egg I ate in three and a half years.

There were about 6 or 8 guards on duty each shift. My first job in the camp was as a platter in the ship building yard. The work involved hammering together the iron plates with a long spike on a big board. The wood of the hammer was soft so I deliberately broke the handle to idle away the time for 10 to 15 minutes while I fetched another handle and this I repeated a number of times. My behaviour gained the attention of the young guard and I had an argument with him.

December is very cold and many men are sick. Henk Bruin is eating out of a bedpan. I worked at the shipyard the whole month of December with no days off. In Makassa we were given two flannel blankets, we cut up the blankets to make undershirts to keep out the cold. Anyone that could get hold of sugar bags could make themselves overalls.

In a short time all our ribs were showing and there were no fat POW's. When we were first taken prisoner some of the petty officers were quite fat, but after a few months they too became skinny.

Breakfast: A small bowl of rice, cabbage, horseradish soup with barley.

Lunch: A sardine tin of rice.

Dinner: Usually soup, occasionally with fish (white bait) or whale meat, cooked in the soup.

Occasionally we had seaweed that looked like brown spaghetti and it was awful and sometimes with one or two bits of meat. Later in the war for the last 18 months, we had two little bread rolls for lunch instead of rice but no butter on it.

New year of 1943 I worked in the shipyard 2 days and then have two days off because I have no shoes. We have no cigarettes so we smoked using all sorts of leaves.

I got a job in camp as a carpenter and I received my first beating. We did a lot of maintenance and our favourite job was in the galley (kitchen), where we sometimes got hold of some rice crusts from the bottom of the pots because we were always hungry, usually they were given to the fowls. One of the kitchen cooks reported me in to the Japanese sergeant. The Japanese sergeant made me empty my pockets and found a grain of rice in my coat pocket that had been left there from before. I had hidden the rice in my toolbox, but he didn't look there. I stood to attention for three hours in the sun for punishment but I still had my stash of rice to go back to eat.

I remember going to the bathhouse in the village once a week, it was open on all sides and half the villagers would be watching us having our bath. I think the people had probably never seen so many big foreigners in the nude. Later on they made a bathhouse in the camp, the bath was about 8 by 4 meters. The water was heated by steam. The way to bath was first you soaped up and then you rinsed off and then you sat in the bath.

March of 1943 we filled in a Red Cross card with name, address and so on. Last winter - many deaths mostly from Pneumonia. No extra clothes only what we had from Makassar. We seem to be waiting for things to happen. We only talk about food, smuggling, news, rumours, stone-hard Americans, sugar thefts. Barter with the Japs. Drawers as a pair of overalls. Blankets and overcoats as underclothes. Struck with a stick and slapped in the face for: cocking your hat, losing a button and so on. We are obliged to salute all Japanese military men.

We were always interested in the news regarding the war and what was happening around the world. Because the Japanese didn't allow us to know what was going on, the POW's stole Japanese newspapers and brought them into camp. There was a Chinese in our camp who could read the Japanese newspapers that were stolen from the bins in the shipyard and smuggled back into camp. So sometimes we heard snippets of information. The Japanese bribed a few half-breeds and for a bit of bread they betrayed our translator. The Chinese translator was severely punished. Sometimes we received information from an English newspaper. There were also lots of rumors going around too, but it kept us optimistic that the war would soon be over. I did not think that I was going to die throughout my POW ordeal.

There was often sickness in the camp: pneumonia, diarrhea, boils, abscesses, wound infections, influenza, tropical diseases and accidents in the shipyard due to not having safety regulations.

The insert now following is the story written by Jan Peereboom.

*Jan Peereboom was in the same POW camp as myself. He lived in Maaken, Holland after the war. Jan worked for a bank in Amsterdam and wrote some articles for a local newspaper there about his war experiences. I visited him in 1965, he was a funny man, Jan spoke loudly and would often swear.*

Nagasaki, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1943: The day in the life of a POW

The day began as any other day, but alas, would end as a tragedy. For me personally, it was already a very unpleasant day for it was my brother's birthday and my thoughts went out to the family at home and so I did not pay enough attention to my work, at least not in the opinion of the guardsmen and I was promptly rewarded with some blows by fist and club, for the work had to be done. We were at work with people of seven nationalities at one of the largest shipbuilding yards of Japan, situated on a small island in the bay. I estimated the distance to Nagasaki to be about two miles. In this yard there were no less than seventeen ships under construction at the same time. Nowadays the largest ships in the world are built here.

It was around two p.m. when I saw two guardsmen of the almighty Japanese Kaikun (Navy) coming towards me. They seized me with strong hands in a kind of vicious grip in order to take a closer look at my POW number (1422) and ordered me, with the aid of the ominous truncheon, to come with them.

My first thought was: another beating, for if these "gentlemen" wanted to see you it did usually not come to any good. But I was not to be beaten, I wished it had though, but I had to identify the heavily mauled corpse of one of the members of our group. How was this possible, that our good friend Deen, who always was so careful and decidedly did not do more work than strictly was necessary, met his death by an accident. Exactly that behaviour, not work any more than was strictly necessary, had been the cause of his death, for therefore the Jap went after him.

During his flight to escape from a beating (corporal punishment were legal in Japan) he slipped on the gangway of the ship under construction, where he had nothing to do. He fell on a flight of stairs some 16 metres high and bumped, by sheer accident, into a heavy fittings (destined for the engine room) which happened to be just a little bit too close to the edge and he finally landed on a concrete platform of the quay with the heavy mass of metal on top of him and thus was smashed beyond recognition. Only from his POW number could one tell that it was Deen. Strictly speaking, it was not at all amazing for the Japanese practicing no safety measures at all and not a day passed without a casualty, most of times lethal.

Under the watchful eyes of the guardsmen we brought the remains of our comrade, on a cloth-stretcher, to the camp and placed them in an empty barrack. The Japanese did not, at least at the time, acknowledge us as POW's, but neither were we common criminals and because in Japan criminals are only buried, we obtained the right, you may say the privilege, to be incinerated in a crematorium. The cremation had to take place the following day. In the evening I was instructed to go with one of the other mates to the carpenters workshop to fetch the coffin. It was ridiculous. The coffin, which barely earned that name, was made of the thinnest and worst grade wood. It's cover was loosely placed on it, without even hinges to secure it. But yes, it had not to be such a solid piece of

work because it would be burned up, but this ramshackle affair mocked everything, which at least in my opinion, might be called a coffin.

There was a rather strong wind that evening so we decided to take the lid under one arm and the casket under the other. Not at all was the order of the guardsmen, put on the lid and then the complete case on the shoulders. Before we were 50 yards further, the top was blown off by the sudden gust of wind. It took us an hour to find it back in the absolute darkness and at the given moment we had even lost our guardsman. When he saw us again we were rewarded by a blow with the butt-end of the gun.

Next morning at 8 o'clock , we left camp in a small boat, destination Nagasaki. Over a narrow gangway we got on board and we had to sit in a small hole. With drawn-up knees, Deen between us, we sat below the closed hatches. When we got to the middle of the bay the small vessel began to sway and Deen followed that movement on his last voyage. It became oppressive and it was well that we were all seamen for otherwise we should have fallen seasick in that cramped room with the unpleasant smell. After more than an hour we heard the engine stop and when the hatches were opened we saw that we were moored at a small jetty.

It was low tide and the height to the quay was about 3 yards. So it was quite a job to get the coffin up. There was a kind of stairs as slippery as soap, so we had to hand over the coffin from man to man. For all of us it was quite an experience to have to transport a good friend, in this way, on his last voyage.

We were with six bearers, two of them in reserve, one Dutch officer and two guardsmen. The whole was under supervision of the Japanese Army-Sergeant who, I have to admit it in all honesty, he seemed to feel something of what we felt, judging by his behaviour and the way he acted

The crematorium was on one of the hills between which Nagasaki had been built, so that the way went up. Being one of the tallest, I had to take the rear, which became heavy and painful. The rear bearers had to hold the coffin securely with one hand in order to prevent it's slipping down.

(A page or pages of this story is missing.) . . .

They too wore a large red band over the back of their shirts. There has been much trouble about these urns. An American has thrown them in the bay during the first overwhelming joy of liberation (by the way it took nearly a whole month before the first liberator appeared in our camp). But later US navy frogmen scoured the muddy bay till the last fragments of bone were returned.

The picture of Nagasaki which I got in the few hours I was there has also enabled me to get an impression of how enormous the destruction, caused by the atomic bomb, has been.

A few years later when I was evacuated from Japan via Nagasaki on an American Aircraft carrier, I saw two tower-high funnels like a Chinese question-mark outlined against an immaculately blue sky and in the rear the greenish shining cupola-formed crematorium, which was still fully intact. That was all that remained of the town.

My story has come to an end, it was not a happy one, but still one of the many experiences, which you can never forget.

*Jan Peereboom*

I had dysentery while a POW and I would go to the toilet about ten times a day. Bandages were made of paper and patches of material. The ill treatment, cold and hungry got to us sometimes. About 10 per cent of our POW's died from tropical diseases but mostly pneumonia. I don't think anyone died from starvation. If we wanted to keep good health particularly when it was cold we opened the windows and doors. We rubbed ourselves bare chested with a sort of straw brush twice a day. The "horijo" is very innovative. We would have competitions as to who could catch the largest and the most body lice.

In the spring of 1943 there seemed to be less lice but the fleas are coming. Before we could go to sleep we needed to clean our bedding of fleas and lice. The Japanese commander told us to hand in all our pens and paper and he said they would save it for us. The first Red Cross parcels arrive. We are now bald headed and we wore Jap caps.

One day one of the POW shipyard workers returning told us about a very big accident in the shipyard. The ships were built one in front of the other and one ship was nearing completion when the door in front collapsed. The burst of water pushed the ship on the other ship half built. There was quite a lot of damage done to both ships. Coal baskets are used as stretchers. 60 Japanese men died but no POW's reported. This was good news for us.

The day the Japanese heard the news that the Italians has surrendered, the guard rounded up all the people in camp (carpenters, cooks and workers). They gave 5 or 6 hits with a baseball bat. If you showed any weakness they hit you harder. I knew something was up and went missing to avoid the beating but the guards realised it and called me up later and gave me a thrashing too. I fell over and acted like I had had a fit with jerking hands and feet and then the Japanese guard stopped hitting me. The Japanese would be belting us behind the legs but at times they would belt so hard that we would fall over. They left painful blue bruises on the backside and legs.

We arrived with 1,000 POW's and after 3 months 300 men from Singapore arrived in camp. In our camp there are now: 250 Dutchmen, 350 from the Dutch East Indies, 550

Englishmen, 150 others nationalities Americans, Canadians, Africans, India, Chinese and Mexicans, West Indians and Javanese.

On one occasion I developed an abscess in my neck and half my head was swollen up like a football. The Dutch army doctor, Dr Wysfies (the English called him the butcher) used a knife with no anesthetic to operate. ( I think Dr Wysfies was a good doctor, he did the best he could under the circumstances.) Dr Wysfies had to operate so I was put on a table and four men held me down while the doctor operated. It was a horrible experience the pain was unbearable and agonizing. After a few days I developed an ear ache and also a high fever. I developed middle ear infection.

There was another Dutch doctor, Dr Niewhuisen who was an ear, nose and throat specialist before the war and he operated on my ear. Dr Niewhuisen was called up and conscripted during the war, he was well respected as a doctor and was like the Australian doctor Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop.

The orderlies put me on the table with two of them holding my arms, two holding my feet and another holding my head so he could operate and another man held a light. The doctor operated through the eardrum to let out the puss in my middle ear. The next day a lot of muck came out of my ear and it was such a relief. My hearing in my ear has been poor ever since. There was no medicine at all to help with recovery either.

We often worked 14 days and one day off. Later in the war we worked 6 days and had Sunday off. We earned 10 cents a day and with the money we brought cigarettes and biscuits. It often happened that someone was caught doing some minor thing wrong and they were punished with a baseball bat and the prisoners were required to make the bats. The POW would often choose the most knotted wood but soon the Japanese woke up to that and so they supplied oak wood to make the bats for them.

The time seemed to pass slowly. Once there was exciting news when Red Cross parcels had arrived in the camp but the Japanese kept them back which was a great disappointment. On rare occasions they gave us something out of the parcel like a tin of beef to share between 5 men. We believe the Japanese stole from our Red Cross parcels.

September of 1944, about 200 Australian joined our camp, they came from the Burma railway. There were 3 fires in the camp. Air raid alarm practice commenced. We made bets as to when the war would end.

Doctor Nieuwenhuis was imprisoned for one week in a cell. Red Cross medication arrived and there were 30 packing cases. The Japanese distribute the items and the POW's receive very little.

Bokeko is notorious for his cruelty even amongst the Japanese he is feared. When he enters the camp we have to look out if he is coming our way, he is so hated. If he catches you inside with your cap on, you get punished such as carrying materials for 3 nights after you have finished your day job An Indian boy was imprisoned for 2 years for giving

a Japanese dock worker a slap. One year in a prison cell and one year in the country working.

Christmas was a good day we were given a day off from work and a bit extra to eat and we were allowed to have a Christmas service. Christmas of 1944 we had a Japanese preacher who conducted a service in English and some photos were taken possibly for propaganda.

As the years slowly passed, I think it was in the beginning of 1945 that mail arrived in the camp. For me it was the first letters I received from home since I left in April 1940. The Japanese kept the mail back for years. I can tell you it was a great relief for us. The letters were very brief on Red Cross forms. We wondered if what we heard was true information as there were many rumors in the camp; we heard that Germany had fallen at least three times.

Everything that is eatable is taken away such as linseed oil and grease etc. After one year there is hardly any fresh vegetables. We receive fish sporadically. Meat is 8 kg between 1400 men. A lot of thieving goes on. Potatoes were taken from a small garden. Now we have no food until the thieves are caught. Somebody smoked in the A.R.P. shelter and now we are banned from smoking for two days. The POW's develop their skills through their own initiatives like making fires, making their own tobacco and soap. Money, rings and watches had to be handed in. The Japanese are afraid that we are too enterprising and may go into business. Someone broke into the Red Cross shed again and this time they stole butter. We don't mind as the Japanese took home a lot of parcels for their own families, the only problem is now we don't get any food for three days.

As I was working in the carpenter shop I often made wooden soled shoes. We wore them in the camp and the cooks wore them in the kitchen.

In the beginning of 1945 the bombardment started on Japan. We were also building air raid shelters. During one air raid in May 1945, a ship, which lay at anchor, received a direct hit and sunk. That was good news for us POW's and lifted our spirits.

June of 1945 about 920 men were selected to go to the coalmines, about 200 of them were Australians. With the men gone there was more space in the camp. We knew the war must soon come to an end because of the frequent air raids.

We are devoured by bugs. Now and then there is a steam disinfection. That is only good for about two weeks. The whole of Japan is verminous with lice, fleas, bugs, cockroaches, rats, flies, and mosquitoes. There is another order no smoking again. Those Japanese are always thinking up new ways to annoy us. Every day now there is an air-raid alarm and we are seeing many aircrafts. The Japanese are running faster to the air-raid shelters than we do. About a kilometer from the camp a bomb came down. I can hear them whizzing. Different bomb splinters are found in the camp.

August 5<sup>th</sup> 1945 it is my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday today! I was always hopeful that I would be home for my birthday or at least in freedom.

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1945 and the air-raid alarm goes off many times. It is a nice sunny day we were working outside as usual and there was a B29 airplane flying very high up in the sky and we were wondering why there was no air raid siren and suddenly there was an enormous glaring flash and about 15 seconds later a terrific storm blast. We all fell to the ground, because we thought it was a very big bomb blast close by that had exploded. There was an enormous atmospheric pressure and doors flew off and broke to pieces. Windows came out of their frames. There was a lot of broken glass and other damage to the camp. Was this a new sort of bomb? About nine kilometers from our camp we could see the whole city of Nagasaki and an 18 km pink glowing mushroom appeared above the city and later on it turned into black smoke. We thought at first they must have hit an ammunition dump. Toward night time we could see how fiercely the city of Nagasaki was burning. The Japanese guards didn't know what it was and they looked dumbfounded. Later we heard of the terrific destruction and so many casualties. Some 60,000 deaths in Nagasaki, in our camp 6 men died and there were 40 wounded, some badly.

For the next few days nobody went to work on the docks and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August the Japanese commander told us Japan has decided to stop the war for a special day of prayer. In our camp we had to work regardless. We heard rumours that the Japanese were at war with the Russians. We were told to paint the roof white with big letters POW.

August 16<sup>th</sup> no one went to the shipyard to work. New rumours. I continued with camp work. It started to rain in the afternoon so we stopped work as it was very heavy. The Japanese are walking around without their helmets on. They are taking all kinds of things out of the underground shelter. We see that they have shot and killed 8 hens. We figured out something was going on.

August 17<sup>th</sup> 1945

All the Red Cross parcels are distributed and we realize that they had been keeping back food stuff and medicine on at least four occasions. The camp commander informed us that the Japanese have agreed with the Allied powers to end the war. The camp commander and Bokeko depart for headquarters. Bokeko was an old man, he looked about 80 years old. I hardly ever saw him he was in charge of the guards.

Yes the war is over. At first we dared not believe it, but it sank in and we know that we are free at last. Hardly anyone can sleep with excitement. The next two days I am walking around in a daze as though I have a lump in my throat, it feels like I have swallowed a ball. I feel elated and excited, it is too good to be true. It is so great the war is over at last! I have been in prison for three and a half years. We can do anything we like now. In the past we only were allowed to smoke inside near an ash tray at appointed times, now we smoke whenever we like. Some men fetched 5 pigs and 5 goats from the shipyard and now the food is so much better. It was a real feast after so many years of hunger.

August 20<sup>th</sup> 1945 10:00am

*Proclamation from the Japanese camp commander*

*Japan and the allied powers have an agreement to finish the war and before long the armistice will be signed. Then the war that lasted almost four years will be over. We know you are tired of this sort of life in the prisoner of war camp. We can imagine how happy you are now. Your long entertained hope to be with your beloved will be realized soon. Anyhow we are friends with each other. We gladly see you return to your beloved ones to start anew and enjoy a normal life. At this moment we don't know exactly when you'll depart. We will inform you as soon as the date is announced by the army. Let us have an orderly and peaceful camp-life until that moment.*

*We shall assist you so you'll be able to set out on your return safely. On the other hand we ask you to behave yourself and to pay attention to the camp rules.*



August 27<sup>th</sup> 1945

Some planes came over and dropped parcels with cigarettes in them, one fell in the sea but could not be saved in time. The plane circled again and dropped a note with the

words “make room throwing off packages”. Then three drums fell into the water and three more behind the camp. It was magnificent to see those big four engine airplanes flying very low over our heads. Letters arrived too. Four B24 bombers planes came back in the afternoon and dropped a lot of drums with all sorts of food. With blankets the camp doctor formed the letters N E W S and a short time later a small sheet of paper from a note book enclosed in a first aid pouch was dropped. JAPAN SURRENDERS AFTER SECOND ATOMIC BOMB ON NAGASAKI. We were so overwhelmed and very happy, we jumped for joy.

The first official news.

*345<sup>th</sup> bombers group. 360<sup>th</sup> bombers flight air apaches.*

*The war is over! Japan has surrendered unconditionally on his own accord to the Allied Powers after an atomic bomb has fallen on Nagasaki and Russia started the war against Japan. Within a few days Mac Arthur will arrive in Tokyo to accept the surrender of Hirohito.*

*American troops will soon be here to set you free. Soon there probably will be more.*

August 28<sup>th</sup> 1945

This morning a new flying boat came over here. They dropped two packages. Two parcels contained cigarettes. Each man received two cartons. The rest of the day airplanes circled over the camp.

Notice in camp

*On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, a part of the American navy will anchor in Nagasaki harbour. Within a few days a Red Cross committee will arrive to inspect the camp, among others, a Swiss, a Dane and a Norwegian.*

August 29<sup>th</sup> 1945

Today airplanes came over the camp again. The Japs offered our officers a dinner party and they accepted!!

August 30<sup>th</sup> 1945

Today some airplane flew over head again. They dropped some packets of cigarettes and more news. We seem to be putting on weight quickly in such a short time.

.We were also told not to go to Nagasaki as we could catch some contagious diseases. (The authorities did not know then about radiation.)

August 31<sup>st</sup> 1945

Queen Willamina’s birthday today. At 8:00 am we lined up for showing the flag. An address was given by Dr. Weisvies and we sang the national emblem. At 9:00 am we started a sports competition with sack races, relay races and tug of war. It was interrupted because airplanes came over and they dropped on parachutes of red, blue and orange many parcels and oil drums with clothing and food inside. There were also Dutch airplanes in the sky as well. The whole camp set to work to drag everything together.

We searched the whole island because some of the drums broke apart and the contents were scattered around. It was truly a wonderful day!

The Japanese citizens too were out looking around to grab whatever they could find because they too have nothing. From grown up to little children they too were scavenging and some people were begging for cigarettes. Nearly 70 parachutes came down. An elderly Japanese man was given some shaving cream and he wasn't sure what it was so he licked it. The local people are very poor and need help too.

August 31<sup>st</sup> 1945

*To the Allied Prisoners*

*The Japanese government has surrendered themselves. You'll be sent home by armed forces of the Allied Powers of Nations as soon as possible. Meanwhile your present needs shall be replenished by air transport with American food, clothes and medicine. The first load of these articles are coming down within one or two hours. Clothes will be dropped in units of standard packages for 50 or 500 men.*

At night there was music played in the infirmary. It had been a splendid nights entertainment.

September 1<sup>st</sup> 1945

*Proclamation: If any airplanes are coming again for droppings, there must be taken positions on the hills around camp.*

No one had been killed with the falling parachutes of food, clothes and medicine but there were near misses. So when drops were made we were required to go into our barracks to wait.

September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945

Today is a particularly good day. The camp guards have been taken over by our own men. We were given an address in which was said that we were free men now. Airplane came over again and dropped drums with content. About 70 parachutes. It is estimated that we loose about 40 percent of goods in each drop.

Today it has come to our ears, the former camp commander nicknamed "the spectacled owl" committed suicide. Also today we received mail that was written in June and July 1943!

September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945

Very heavy rainfall. Worse than I ever saw it before. Close behind our camp there is a valley with about 40 small houses. The rain has made the valley into a lake, some 12 meters deep. The side of the camp is barricaded with sand.

September 4<sup>th</sup> 1945

Very early in the morning airplanes came over again to drop big loads of parcels with food and cigarettes. We still are not allowed to walk out of the camp freely.

About 6:00am three Englishmen entered the camp. They came from Moedjie, camp 21. They left there camp without permission and set out on there own. They said some of their friends went to Tokyo and others manned a ship and left Japan. We now have a piano and the band is complete now.

September 5<sup>th</sup> 1945

There has been an accident involving and American airplane. Four officers went to investigate.

September 6<sup>th</sup> 1945

At least we are free to walk about the island. I had an enjoyable hike around with some friends. When I arrived back there were 2 letters from my sister Cor, dated August 1944 and only a year old.

September 7<sup>th</sup> 1945

An American War correspondent informed us that we most probably will be going to Manila.

September 8<sup>th</sup> 1945

The airplanes came back again to do a large drop of food. It is a hard pull to get the parcels to the camp. We let the Japanese people carry them for a few cartons of cigarettes or damaged tins.

September 9<sup>th</sup> 1945

At 3:00 pm the fleet sailed into the port of the bay of Nagasaki. At about 6:00 pm, unexpectedly a speedboat came to our camp. They asked for all the sick men and they took them away in a real American manner. That has been the first time I met Americans that aren't POW's. They informed us that we will be leaving in 48 hours.

September 12<sup>th</sup> 1945

Today was a full day of emotions. Some American and two Dutch officers arrived in camp. We had to fill in some forms etc. We were told that we will be leaving tomorrow morning about 8:00 am. At last we will be leaving this miserable country and there will be no looking back, this is the day we have hoped and prayed for. The Dutch military officers gave us the latest news about our evacuation plans.

September 13<sup>th</sup> 1945

The boats arrived this morning and took us back to Nagasaki. As we moved through Nagasaki we could see the devastation from the atomic bomb blast, it must have been horrific. Everything was blasted flat, only thing left were brick shells a chimneys or a wall. As far as we could see everything seemed to be black. Besides the devastated city the people were pathetic, hair and teeth that had fallen out, flesh falling off the body of people.

One Dutch POW's whole back was just raw flesh and maggots were eating the flesh. He was taken out to the hospital ship in the bay. I spoke to a man from another POW camp and they were working on the wharf and they heard a plane overhead and looked up. The bloke felt uncomfortable so he went into the air raid shelter and not everyone did. Later when he came out he and the others in the shelter with him had no injuries but the people who remained outside had burn injuries on their arms, face, back, etc.

There in a building near the port. We had to queue up. We had to undress, bathe, disinfect and we received new clothes and other necessities that we needed. Then we ate as much food as we wanted and after we boarded an aircraft carrier. There are about 700 prisoners of war on board.

September 14<sup>th</sup> 1945

More POW's arrived and now there are about 1500 men altogether.

September 15<sup>th</sup> 1945

We left Japan and sailed up to Okinawa.

September 16<sup>th</sup> 1945

Indeed we arrived in the entrance of Okinawa harbour, but we had to sail away up further as a typhoon is coming.

September 18<sup>th</sup> 1945

Once again we enter Okinawa and disembark in rather heavy swell. We traveled by bus to the camp of tents. All the tents had blown down during the typhoon. After we put the tents back up we made ourselves as comfortable as possible and everything was well organized and the army style food was very good.

September 19<sup>th</sup> 1945

More ex POWs arrived into our camp and there were about 1000 more men. It seems to me that everything is coming out of the assembly line like in a big factory. We were given an American army uniforms and a tropical outfit too.

September 21<sup>th</sup> 1945

We were taken by car to the airport. Each person was equipped with a life jacket and a parachute and put on a B24 bomber with 20 men on the plane. I was the last one aboard and I got to sit in the seat behind the cockpit. The other men were sitting on planks on the bomb racks. At about 5:00 am we took off for Manila in the Philippines. We traveled at 2000 meters and the weather was fine but cloudy. The flight lasted about five and a half hours. I really enjoyed the trip as it was my first plane ride ever. We landed at a Military air field at 10:30 am on a sizeable air strip, which was about 100 kms from Manila.

After we landed we were transferred to another plane and then flown to Manila, which was only about a twenty minute ride. We were given a cup of coffee each before

dividing up and sent to camps set up by our own nationalities. All the Dutch people from Japan, Thailand, Korea etc came together here in Manila. Here we are waiting for transportation to our next destination.

The first day in the camp to my surprise I met up with my old friends Iwe Hillen and Joop de Jong, they had arrived from North Japan, we have so much to talk about and catch up on.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1945

Today we were queuing up in front of the canteen and next to me there was an officer. We talked for a while and I asked him, "Captain, what is the signification of those golden strips below those three stars?"

"Oh," he said, "you fellows probably do not know, but this is a new outfit. I am a colonel."

September 27<sup>th</sup> 1945

When we were in the canteen this evening somebody called out, "Is there anybody interested in going to Manila?" So a group of us drove into Manila by truck. It was the first time I had been to Manila. We left at 7:00 pm and arrived back at 11:00 pm. When I was in Manila I met a few Americans of the merchant navy and naturally one of them had a Dutch grandfather.

*I remember the relocation of about 500 POW from our camp that was sent to the Coalmines 3 or 4 months before. I met up with one of my Australian friends who also were waiting to be evacuated from Maccasa, Alex Paxston from Queensland. His friend Syd James from Sydney was killed in a mining accident not long before we were liberated.*

September 28<sup>th</sup> 1945

Today I went into Manilla to make a few purchases and buy souvenirs to take home.

September 29<sup>th</sup> 1945

Yesterday I received an invitation from some Americans to go to Bangos, which is about 50 kms away. My friends and I went there and had a very nice day.

September 30<sup>th</sup> 1945

When will I get a reply from my telegram?

October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945

Iwe Hillen is admitted to the hospital. I visited him with Joop de Jong and another friend. We did not know where the hospital was so we went into Manila and then found out the hospital was only 7 kms from our camp.

October 5<sup>th</sup> 1945

We are moving to another camp about 6 kms away.

October 17<sup>th</sup> 1945

An announcement was made in the cinema tonight. 250 Dutchmen will be departing tomorrow. Hurray! (People had a choice of where they wanted to relocate like Indonesia, Australia or America etc. Someone would come in and make an announcement when transport was available.)

*The Dutch army personal was sent to Thailand for training for the rebellion in Indonesia. The native Indonesians refused to be under Dutch domination again after the war and wanted their independence, a struggle that took four and a half more years. A lot of Dutch navy personal relocated to Australia and also Ceylon.*

October 18<sup>th</sup> 1945

Today we departed at 6:00 pm. At last we are on our way closer to home. At 10:00 pm we embarked on the S.S. General A. W. Brewster, which is a troop ship.

October 19<sup>th</sup> 1945

At 7:00 am the ship ropes were loosened, the hawkers disappeared into the distance and we sailed into the ocean, bound for San Francisco.

October 20<sup>th</sup> 1945

The ships speed is 15 miles. Nice weather.

Some of the American soldiers carried a lot of dirty washing (clothes and sheets) and they just threw it over board as they knew in a few days they would be given a new kit. After coming from a POW camp that was unbelievable to watch.

When we arrived in San Francisco there was a big air balloon with WELCOME HOME BOYS written on it. At our arrival birth a brass band played wonderful cheerful music to welcome us. We were put on buses and taken to the US Navy hospital in Oakland where we were given a thorough examination. At the dentist it was found that my wisdom teeth were coming through and the gums needed to be cut because they were causing a lot of discomfort and pain.

We received some money so we could buy things. Also the local people invited us out for dinner. One woman invited my friends and I to her home where we meet her mother who was Dutch. Many years later in the late 1970's I received a phone call from this same woman she had found my name in the telephone directory. She told me she wanted to know what happened to me. Her mother had since died and she never married and by a strange coincidence she was investigating the Mormon Church? Barbara wrote her address on a piece of paper and she lost it.

We stayed in San Francisco for about 5 weeks until transport could be arranged by train to New York. What a magnificent country. Many Dutch people lived in California. It was the beginning of December when we were put on the train. We stopped at different places along the way, I remember stopping in Salt Lake City at night and there was snow

on the ground. On one of our last stops in Baltimore we were told we would be stopping for 20 minutes, we walked around a bit and when we came back our train had already left. Lucky for us the following train was also going to New York and we arrived shortly after our train. From there we were taken by bus to the harbour, where we boarded the Queen Mary, it had been fitted out as a troop ship during the war and we slept in a cabin on bunks. It was the biggest ship I had been on. It was a pleasant sea voyage that lasted 5 days and we arrived at Portsmouth in England.

We boarded a train to an army camp in Worchester. The following day we boarded a train to Dover and then by ferryboat to the Hook of Holland. After so many years it was so good to step foot on home ground. We were taken by army truck to Den Helder and I was able to catch the last ferryboat home to my family on Texel and it was the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1945 the date I will never forget. The bus from Oudenschild took me to Den Burg and I got off on Schilderend. As soon as my mother saw me she came running to me with my sister Riek and her daughter Henny who I had never met.

There were a lot of changes. When Klaas my brother walked in I did not recognize him he was 13 when I left and now he was 18 years old. It was good to be home again after nearly 5 years away. It was a cold winter and freezing. The next day was New Years Eve and my Mother made the traditional Olie Bollen. Most people make it with yeast but I would make mine with SR flour, eggs, sugar, milk, salt – apples, currants or banana, and deep fried, drain and then dust in icing sugar. They taste delicious warm. The traditional recipe:

### **Olie Bollen**

Olie Bollen are small round Dutch doughnuts; they are traditionally served on New Year's Eve in Holland. The name literally means "oil balls." Don't let the name turn you off because Olie Bollen are delicious. The Dutch regularly add raisins, currants or even finely diced dried apples to their Olie Bollen dough.

1 envelope dry yeast  
3 T. sugar  
1 c. warm water, divided  
2 eggs, at room temperature  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 tsp. salt  
4 c. all purpose flour  
3 c. fruit (diced fresh apples, raisins or dried currants)  
oil for frying  
confectioner's sugar for dusting

Pour 1/2 cup warm water, about 85 to 115 F., into the bowl of a large food processor. Sprinkle the yeast and sugar over the water and mix at low speed. Let stand for five minutes. Slowly mix in remaining water, eggs, vanilla and salt. Slowly add flour a cup at a time. Mix on high for about a minute or two. The dough should turn into a ball and roll around the processor. If the dough does not ball up because it's too dry, add water one tablespoon at a time until it does. If your mixture is more like a batter, add flour one tablespoon at a time. Mix in fruit. Remove from food processor. Place in an oiled bowl, cover with a clean kitchen towel and let rise until doubled, about 1 1/2 hours.

Heat about 2 inches of oil in a large skillet. Punch down dough. Roll the dough into small balls, about 1/2 - 2 inches in diameter. Drop dough balls into hot oil, frying until golden brown, turning as needed. Drain on paper towels and dust with confectioner's sugar. Serve hot.

Makes 4-5 dozen

I was able to go ice skating again, which was my favorite sport and I enjoyed being with my old friends as well. I was interviewed by the local Texel newspaper "*De Texelse Kran*" in January 1946 and they wrote an informative account of my war experiences. "Native of Texel saw the atomic bomb drop on Nagasaki". The writer asked me, "And what are you going to do now?" I replied, "I'll have two months holiday and then join up with the navy again."



I remained in the navy as there was a need for trained naval personnel, due to the war, there was a shortage of skilled officers. After 3 months holiday, I had to go for a medical examination and was given another month leave and this continued until August for 8 months. Then I started back in the navy and worked as a watchkeeper during the day at the ammunition fortification in Den Helder. I was able to catch the ferry boat home each night at a discount rate. August 16<sup>th</sup> of 1947 I was honourably discharged from active service for disability due to my eyesight. During the war I became short sighted and received a small disability pension, which I am still paid monthly.

I received a large payout from the accumulated time I served in the navy, which were 800 guilders. My brother in law Albert, borrowed 400 guilders to use in his business and he went bankrupt and never paid me back, even though he did well years later in Australia. We had a written agreement that he, my sister Aaltje and I signed. With the money left over I used it to pay my fares to Australia.

My first job after the navy, I worked as an upholsterer for a few months, staying with my sister Aaltje and her husband in Leiden. Then I lived in the same boarding house as Joe

de Jong. I met Tine at a dance in 1947 and dated her for over a year. Joe dated Tine's younger sister Annie. I was planning to immigrate to Australia and Tine didn't like the idea so we broke it off. Over the years Joe and Annie told me about Tine. Tine's first husband died. Tine's second defacto husband left her and went back to his wife. Her third defacto husband was a heavy drinker and died in a auto accident. She only married once and had no children. She actually came to Australia to visit her sister and I remember how heavily made-up she was when I saw her again. She is still alive and I hear about her from Annie and she lives near Rotterdam in a suburb of Leiden.

I moved to Oegsgeest, a suburb of Leiden and continued to work there as an upholsterer until 1949. In one boarding house I stayed with an old man, his wife and their daughter who was an old maid. The other one I lived with was a widow, her married daughter and a daughter with a mental disability. In the boarding houses in Holland they washed my clothes and cooked my meals.

My sister Aaltje and her husband immigrated to Australia, they were on their way to Sydney but due to a porters strike in Fremantle the ship was there for three days and Albert was able to secure a job so they disembarked there. Albert worked for Wentward Motors in Murray Street, Perth, he sold cars and scooters. He was a keen motor mechanic and motor bike fanatic and enjoyed tinkering with them.

I had considered immigrating to the USA or Canada like my cousins, but it was easier to immigrate to Australia as there wasn't a long waiting list. To immigrate to American it was a five year waiting list.

It was a bit of a wait to secure a passage booking, due to a shortage of ships. In June of 1949 I left for Marseilles in France. I boarded the ship Champeljon to Singapore. A group of us from the Champeljon stayed in a small hotel until the next ship arrived called Maetsuiker, which took us on to Fremantle where I disembarked. On my arrival my sister Aaltje (now called Alice) and her husband Albert met me and I stayed with them for a few days. I soon found a job in an upholstery shop and moved to a boarding house in Hamersley Road, Subiaco. I had to wash my own clothes there, fortunately for me I had learned to do that in the navy. The board also included breakfast, which was bacon and eggs and an evening cooked meal.

The job did not last very long because I was considered to be too slow. The Australians were not meticulous but rough in there work as I was trained in Holland as an upholsterer to do more layers and use more care. I looked in the paper for another job and applied to Whitakers as a carpenter and joiner. This job suited me better as I had had experience due to my POW training.

First time I tasted vegemite was at Barbara's house.

I met Barbara at the Embassy Ballrooms in Williams Street, Perth. When I got engaged to Barbara I made a green divan and slept in the lounge room at her parents place so that we could save money to get married.

After we were married we moved to Kimberley Street, Leederville and shared a house with Barbara's cousin Shirley and her husband Stan. I was earning 4 pounds 4 shillings a week. Shirley and Stan moved out first and we could not afford the rent anymore.

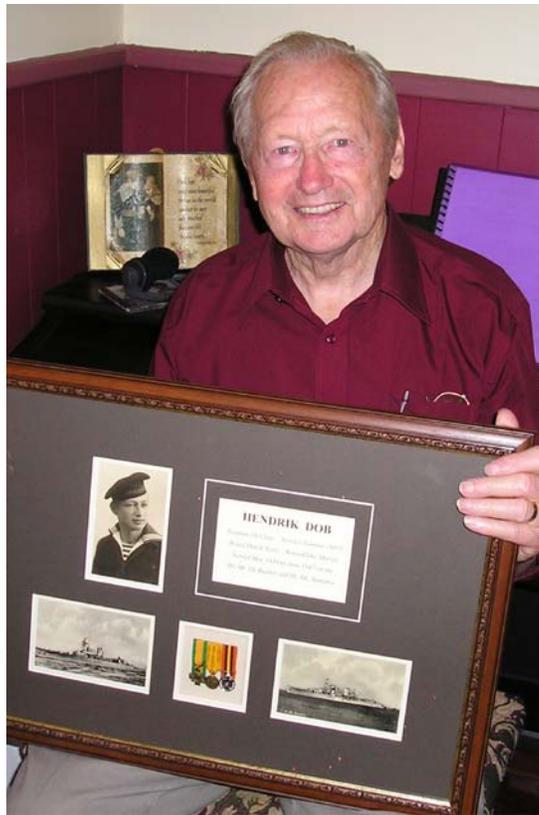
We bought a block of land for 145 pounds in Victoria Street, St James Park. We found the block for sale in the paper and we went to the real estate agent. It had a 55 feet frontage, which wasn't very wide. Later on we bought a fridge for 90 pound.

We started to clear the block of bush. I bought a load of yellow sand and started making bricks. Bob Doddermead built a house behind us at the same time we did in St James Park. I was making bricks for the house using planks of wood and he told me not to do that, the best way was using a cement base. He showed me how to build the base. I improved my house building skills as I went along. At first I would only leave the bricks to dry out a day but when I stacked them the bricks on the bottom would crumble and I would have to start over. I learned to let them dry out 3 or 4 days before I would stack them, patience made better bricks.

We hired a caravan and lived on the block for about 3 months while we first built the garage. We had no electrical power until we had the garage connected up to the pole at the front on the street. I built a pan toilet behind the garage, which had a pan that I emptied myself by burying the content. Barbara helped during the day when I was at work by taking the bricks off the plate during the day and I would make more bricks at night.

Barbara's stepfather, Clarrie helped to lay down the bricks. We put the footing down. From Whitakers I brought the door frames already made up and we put them in. Then we put the ceiling supports up and then the rafters.

We hired the supports and machines and had them delivered to the block. To make the tiles we hired the molds and we would grease it with diesel oil, fill the mold with a cement mixture and leave it to dry a day or so then kick it a few times to loosen the tile from the mold and leave it to dry properly a few more days. We could make 30 or 40 at a time.



This article of the life of Hendrik Dob was provided to Lt Col Peter Winstanley in 2009. The article was typed by a member of Hendrik's family and has been lightly edited.