

-TITLE- BOUWMA RINZE  
-I\_DATE-  
-SOURCE- CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY- FAIR  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY- GOOD  
-DURATION-  
-LANGUAGES-  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

Rinze was involved in the underground and participated in acts of sabotage, smuggled food, and salvaged weapons for use by the underground. Sjoukje and her parents hid Jews in their small house.

One Jewish couple stayed in their house for a year and a half before being taken away by the Dutch underground. Their bodies were found the next day. Rinze and Sjoukje never learned who had shot them, but Rinze notes that the Jewish woman had become "nervous" and increasingly difficult to keep hidden. The Bouwmas are still searching for the couple's daughter who was hidden on a farm elsewhere in Friesland.

After the war, Rinze fought in Indonesia before returning to the Netherlands and marrying Sjoukje. In 1951, they emigrated to Canada and their three children were born there. They have been active in their Church, including activities to fight the power of the unions, and started their own business.

00:30 Interview of Rinze and Sjoukje Bouwma by Martha Drucker and Gay Block Sarnia, Ontario June 2, 1988

#### Background and Family Life

Sjoukje (sounds like she is called Shirley on the videotape) was born in 1923 and lived in Tzum. Rinze, her husband, was born in 1916 in Tzummarum.

01:00 These were two small villages in Friesland. Sjoukje had one older sister. Her father worked in a dairy and her mother worked at home. Rinze was the oldest child in his family and had two brothers and three sisters.

02:00 Rinze's father put tractors together and drove them. They lived in agricultural villages, and Rinze says they were poor and happy (Sjoukje agrees).

03:00 They knew no Jewish people, although Rinze points out that there were Jews living in cities close by and that they heard about

Jews on a daily basis because they are described in the Old Testament. They both come from very religious backgrounds, the Christian (Dutch) Reformed Church.

04:00 Sjoukje says that she was closer to her Father because he was always smiling and she could talk to him. Her mother was helpful to others, working with the sick and through the women's group at the Church.

05:00 Her mother was "quite a woman" in charitable activities. Rinze says that he was close to both parents and that they were "average". They were warmhearted with strong social feelings and that he was raised within this atmosphere.

06:00 As an example, Rinze says that his parents let him keep on their property the weapons for 21 men. They suspected what was going on but let him do it so they were brave, too. He points out that they lived on the top of a hill in a small house at the highest point with neighbors on either side and without auxiliary houses, barns or other structures on their property.

07:00 It was an exposed spot so they took a risk.

08:00 Sjoukje says that she went to school during the day and had no other special people in her life.

09:00 She was taught to be honest and helpful. Rinze says that religion was emphasized in his family; love of God and love of neighbor were the two most important things.

#### When They First Realized What the Germans Were Doing

10:00 Rinze says that he was in Germany in 1939, when he was in his early 20's, for half a year. He went to work in Germany because of unemployment in the Netherlands, but when war broke out he went home. He was in Dortmund and would talk to Germans until late in the night. He heard about persecution of the Jews. The Germans told him that it had started in 1933.

11:00 He made up his mind to work against the Germans before he left Germany. He went home in November of 1939. In Spring of 1940 the Germans invaded Holland. He had already warned his friends and felt that he was ready because he had already experienced the Nazi regime. He had not seen persecution but he had heard about it.

12:00 Sjoukje had not heard anything until one spring morning [when the Germans invaded]. She was out of school and living at home. She was shocked by what the Germans were doing.

13:00 Rinze was 23. He was ordered to work for the Germans but he refused. They never "got" him. He ended up in jail twice, but it was "quick in and out".

13:50 In the beginning of the war, Sjoukje did not think she would

become involved but she did become involved about the time that she met Rinze (1943). But she did not realize at first that he was in the underground. Rinze says that this was part of their success: they did not talk.

#### Rinze's War Efforts and Aftermath

14:40 Rinze says that weapons were dropped close to Sjoukje's house.

15:00 Everything took place in Friesland with the SS there. They did not realize that Rinze was a troublemaker. He burned, did not respond to, and quietly ignored notices he was sent, as if he were stupid. The weapons for twenty-two men were hidden.

16:00 They conducted acts of sabotage and stole food for people in hiding. Three hundred fliers from England, from the bombers that flew over Friesland, were hidden in a town of 350 people. It was a frightening time.

17:00 It felt like a dream...numb. They were involved in it, so decided to do good. They lost seven men. After the Germans were defeated, Rinze went on to fight in Indonesia against the Japanese. He says, "we really meant business" and he felt good when the war was over.

18:00 So many things still go wrong in the world. Why not oppose what is wrong? He was glad the "powers of wrong" lost.

19:00 He's not sure if it could happen again. You have to be very careful and work on it. Wanted to help make this video. They were lucky because their family did not lose many members. It's part of "our thinking".

20:00 If they had not done it [acted as they did], they'd feel guilty.

21:00 After the war they went to Canada and did not talk much about the war, but it was a far-reaching experience that Rinze says is still with him. On April 15, 1945, while Rinze was part of a group of saboteurs, a Canadian "tankspitz" stopped and gave Rinze papers and took possession of 550 Germans. They asked questions. Rinze said, "If I go to Canada I give one of you fellows a case of beer." Five years later they moved to Canada.

22:00 After twenty years he found one of those Canadian soldiers in North

Sarnia who remembered that day. Rinze discusses why he came to Canada.

The Netherlands was thickly populated and Canada offered more opportunities.

23:00 As far as people in the underground, he met someone in Canada accidentally. A top man in the Dutch Underground who had become sick and lost everything. They met him here. [The man's name was Mohr?] He met someone in Indonesia. Once in a while he meets one.

24:00 Prior to the interview he had forgotten a lot [about the war]. Rinze set feelings aside because otherwise he would breakdown.

24:30 Rinze then tells a "little story". In 1985 he returned to the Netherlands and went to where the Germans shot the boys.

25:00 He saw a man working there, painting a house. Rinze said, "how are you doing?" The man recognized Rinze. Both were now 68 years old. This man was one of the boys who had thrown weapons in the water. Rinze had been one of the group to recover the weapons.

26:00 So two boys from the same village who had both experienced a similar, dangerous experience did not compare notes until forty years later. This man told Rinze how they had escaped. A farmer went in front of the cows and the men hid behind the cows. The Germans did not want to search among the cows. The Germans did get seven and all were killed.

27:00 Someone went to the Germans and told everything including the names of the people who had helped him. He (the villager) did not remember a lot of things because he had not known the "whole story". They could not talk about things.

28:00 During the war, Rinze lied to Sjoukje, but she found out. Sjoukje mentions that Rinze brought food to her house because they were hiding Jewish people there. Rinze says that they were beginning to work together. He says that before too long that they discovered from both sides that they were working for the same goal.

28:40 Rinze says that the hardest thing was the tension. At one point he had all of these weapons and his father and him were cleaning them.

29:00 A fellow rode up on his bike and said, "I don't know what you are doing" and warned them that 50 Germans were headed that way on their bikes. This man had smelled what they were doing. Rinze waited for the Germans but they went through a field instead. There were few traitors where they lived; Friesland was unified.

30:00 He didn't even know the man who warned them (never saw him before or afterwards).

#### Sjoukje's War Efforts

30:30 Sjoukje says that until the invasion she didn't know anything. She doesn't recollect how she first got involved.

31:00 She did housework at the home of a village Reverend. Three Jews came to the Reverend because he was helping Jews. She does not know how the Jews got there. She was 19 years old. The Reverend did not have a wife and the Jews could not stay because there was a lot to do (running a household, taking care of church business, and hiding three Jews). So the three Jews were moved to her parents' place.

32:00 Her parents took the Jews in without question. But the house was too small. So the husband and wife stayed but their daughter, Sylvia, was moved. Sjoukje took Sylvia on her bike to a bus stop and sent her via a bus somewhere else. Sylvia was 18 years old and the two girls got along well. (This is why Sjoukje is still looking for her.)

33:00 Sjoukje stayed at home to help her mother and did not work at the Reverend's anymore. They needed extra food for the extra people. The underground helped. Sylvia was staying with a farmer [Gilliam?] who had other people there as well. Sylvia went to pick her up once so she could bring her to visit her parents.

34:00 The farmer Gilliam is probably dead now, but he and his family had hidden a lot of people.

#### The Strength to Do What They Did

35:00 Rinze addresses the question of how they had the strength to do this and to overcome fear. He says it is nothing to boast about. It is either given to you and you have it or it is not given to you and you don't have it. Strength is a gift. You could not do it without strength. It is a privilege to have.

36:00 You are better off to help someone. Rinze can not understand why lots of people look strangely at such things. It's an obligation, you have to use your strengths. That's what life is all about. If you don't have that you have nothing left.

37:00 It's about the misuse of power. It is a strange thing. Nine out of ten [people] turn away. He does not want to point a finger so he says they do not have the strength.

38:00 His brothers and sisters were too young to participate as he did. His brother was 14 while Rinze was in his early twenties.

38:40 Sjoukje says that the war was not easy in one way. Friends who used to come over for coffee after church could no longer visit them.

39:00 The Jews stayed upstairs during the day and came downstairs in the evening. They came up with 1001 excuses for their curious friends in explaining why they could not come over anymore. Sjoukje says that one Wednesday morning she was out shopping and heard that searchers were going house to house and seizing things.

40:00 She went home and lay in bed with bandages around her head and with iodine mixed with water in the chamber pot. The Jews hid under the bed. Three houses before they reached her house the searchers quit and stopped looking for Jews.

41:00 They did not find people but did find radios and things.

#### The Jewish Family

41:15 The husband was a friendly guy and the wife was too but more harsh. They were about 50 or 48 years old.

42:00 The underground came to move the Jews out of her parents' house.

Her father wanted to know where they were being moved. Her father said,

"No, I won't let them go unless I know where they are going." But he

had to give up. They never learned and they were not told. They were

driven away and Sjoukje can still see them being driven away. Next day

they heard that they had both been killed.

43:00 [Sjoukje cries and Rinze says that this is emotional for Sjoukje.] Rinze says that the Dutch underground (not Friesland) had connections via the police, the NSB, with the Germans.

Rinze says that this Jewish couple could hardly be placed anymore. The

woman became too nervous in a narrow place and because they always were

kept in hiding.

44:00 The Jewish couple had the names of Dutch underground boys kept in

their clothes because if they got caught they would all go together. He

does not know why they did it but because of this they were dangerous.

They were a very difficult couple and no one could take care of them.

45:00 They needed medicine for her but could not use her name. The Dutch underground told them to throw away empty medicine containers in

the garbage. But when they were shot medicine things were found on her

with the name of Sjoukje's sister. Sjoukje's family had to go into hiding. Her family split up and Sjoukje went on foot 10 kilometers to

Rinze.

46:00 The Jewish couple were shot in the middle of Friesland and no one

knows who shot them. Some say that the Jews were caught between the Germans and the Dutch underground. Rinze has researched this.

47:00 The newspaper said that there was no strong proof. It might

have  
been the Dutch underground, the NSB, the SS or a German military  
group.  
The couple had left with the underground and only the two Jews were  
killed and the people from the underground disappeared and were  
never  
seen again.

48:00 Rinze says that plenty of Dutch underground were killed and  
never  
found [buried by the Germans]. The Jews had stayed in one place for  
a  
long time and may have been moved for their safety. Sjoukje's  
father  
was upset because the Jews had left. He did not trust it.

49:00 He felt guilty when he heard later that they were killed; he  
felt  
he should never have let them go. Maybe a week later the NSB (four  
men  
with rifles) entered the house and questioned Sjoukje and her  
sister,  
who were in bed. If the Jews had still been there they would have  
all  
been killed.

On the question of whether someone informed on Sjoukje's family,  
Rinze  
says that there were 500,000 Frieslanders and one or two could do  
damage.

50:00 Two weeks or maybe ten days later four men checked over  
Sjoukje's  
house and held a rifle to his father-in-law's back. Rinze says that  
water ditches run through the cities in Friesland.

51:00 If caught by the Germans, the Friesland underground had laid  
wires from the house where the Germans interrogated prisoners  
through  
the sewer to the other side of the street and the underground could  
listen to see if the "boys" said anything. Couriers (girls on  
bikes)  
would ride throughout the countryside and warn others in time. The  
Germans never found out.

52:00 The Jewish couple (the "Hoffmanns") were taken away late in  
1944  
after staying one year. Another half year and they would have made  
it.

53:00 Sylvia knew that she lost her parents because their picture  
was  
in the newspaper. Sjoukje was never in contact with Sylvia again,  
they



never heard from her.

54:15 The newspapers have reported that she went to Israel. The village mayor from Friesland wrote her. Apparently, late in 1944 Sylvia was moved from the house where she was hiding and Sjoukje never spoke to the Farmer about it.

55:00 She never knew exactly where Sylvia was. They used different names with the Jews. Sylvia's mother discovered the real name of Sjoukje's family on mail and medicine containers. Sjoukje did not know Sylvia's real name at the time. Sylvia Hoffman was an alias.

56:00 Sylvia had nice "black, black-blond" hair. Sjoukje says that they were close and had fun together. They always met each other half-way, 5 kilometers away by bike and Sjoukje never went to visit Sylvia in hiding. The family was German Jews from Amsterdam.

57:00 Sjoukje and Rinze found out that the official name of Sylvia's parents was Hertz.

57:30 [Discussion about how the Holocaust museum in Israel helps to find missing people.]

58:00 Rinze says that the husband's name was Wilhelm Hertz, born in 1898 and that the wife's name was Hannah Hertz, born Gutman in 1895 (she was older than he was). They were taken from Tzum but were originally from Germany and lived in and had a jewelry business in Amsterdam.

59:00 Sjoukje ended up with Sylvia's mother's watch and would like to give it to Sylvia.

#### Others Were Hidden

Sjoukje points out that this was not the end of it; other Jews stayed in the house. Sjoukje says that first they had someone [unintelligible] (before the Jews) and then had him again with his brother after the Jewish people. Then a family of four was in the house for quite a while.

60:00 Then Mr. Schenk came to stay. Rinze says that they had to sleep on the floor because the beds were all full. The Gestapo and the NSB never came back again,

61:00 although there was a lot of tension for the family during the war. In the evening the people who were hidden would come into the living room. They had trouble understanding the radio and wanted it louder but they had to listen quietly. One evening they heard footsteps and were scared and ran to hide upstairs; Rinze had brought her bike over and it had made noise on the gravel.

62:00 On her mother's birthday they invited friends over as usual. Her father became upset and her mother cried. It was really tough for her parents. They tried to be normal but they could not because they were hiding people.

63:00 The villagers and neighbors did not know that they were hiding people and were very surprised after the war. It helped that there were eight couples with their last name [DeFriest?] in Tzum. Her sister was not part of it. Sjoukje was stronger than her sister. (Rinze says, "she was a little devil!")

64:00 Sjoukje says that after thirty-six years it is difficult to explain in a foreign language. Her husband can explain himself better.

After the War

Rinze says that he has spent 35 years working with and talking to members of the public. He worked hooking up water lines and in the sewer business for thirty years.

65:00 After the war he volunteered to fight the Japanese in Indonesia because Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had been allied. He fought or Indonesia because the people were in concentration camps. A Canadian neighbor was Indonesian and realized the Rinze had been there has part of the group from Friesland.

66:00 Another friend had a sister in a camp in Indonesia.

66:30 Sjoukje says that after the war they took care of a 10 year old boy from Vienna, Austria and clothed him. They haven't seen him for forty years,

67:00 but he is visiting in the U.S. now (1988) and they hope to see him. They were married in 1948 (although they had met at the start of the war, Rinze says "she let him go" at first).

68:00 They took care of the Austrian boy from July 1948 through 1949. In 1951 they went to Canada. All of their children were born in Canada in 1953, 1955, and 1960. Their children know about what they did during the war, although their daughter, Anne, was more interested to hear about it than their sons were.

69:00 The minister of their church was interested in what they had done during the war. Rinze makes clear that they are not against labor unions but that the church wanted to "counterbalance power of the labor unions."

70:00 Rinze was working in a union job but didn't want to be a union member. He quit his job and worked a milk route (non-union) and made a lot less money.

71:00 They lived for five years without making a lot of money. Five or six of their friends eventually went over to union jobs. They stood alone, but were successful because they made it without unions. The unions are still strong. But they made their own non-union business.

72:00 They could not pay union wages. Sjoukje says that she went to the Old Folks Home today and brought grapes and cake and talked to them. Rinze says that people get power and misuse it; many nations are the same.

73:00 In response to a question about what they would want children to know about this time, Rinze says you have to be careful. He has seen things he wishes he never saw. (As a child) little goats in Friesland were slaughtered and their throats slit.

74:00 But in wartime what he has seen is ten times worse. They put Jews

on trains. Children should know about it but children's education should be based on religion.

75:00 Love the Lord and love your neighbor as yourself -- as much as you can. Sjoukje speaks about television. She says they should put stories on television so they don't forget the stories. There is value in remembering. Should know war is an awful thing and how terrible it is.

76:00 discussion about whether they can tell others and children about what they did during the war.] They agree that you can't tell about what you've done.

77:00 Rinze says that lots of times they don't tell what they did [during the war] because there is so much jealousy in the world and that the neighbors would not like this about them. He says that it's written that you shouldn't praise yourself. He says that they risked their lives -- he doesn't care how often --

78:00 but its the nature of people to [downplay good deeds]. It's wrong.

78:15 They are asked how the Holocaust Commission got their names, and Rinze says that all these years they have searched. If there was something in the paper they wrote. They have been honored by the Dutch government and also in Canada.

79:00 They sent things to California and have not gotten them back yet. Sjoukje says they included a picture of her home and her father. [Discussion of how to get materials back.] Rinze says that about recognition and how that works:

80:00 a recent newspaper from Friesland featured people who were killed during the war but did not include one word about "working boys" who were successful. No hard feelings.

81:00 As a final word, Rinze says that they still love Friesland. Sjoukje's family did not have a basement, an attic or a stable, just a little house. Why should she have to hide people and not wealthy farmers?

82:00 The only thing that really hurts him is that "Our own people," he says, "let us down." He says that they respect the Jewish people in Washington for a ceremony with recognition and that they got recognition from a place they didn't expect it.

83:00 [Discussion of whether survivors of the camps are capable or recognizing that anybody did help during the war.] Rinze is ashamed of the Germans (they are so closely related to the Dutch). Wonders why his own people did not do more.

84:00 One thing he is proud about: the Dutch Reformed Churches in North Friesland, village after village, were faithful and successful.

84:45 - 87:45

[Wrap up discussion. Rinze asks if the interviewers would like some food and Sjoukje says that they are welcome to stay in their home. Discussion of contacting authorities in Israel to find "Sylvia Hoffmann" and discussion of materials that the Bouwma's have collected in their research.]  
.END.