

-TITLE-ARNOLD DOUVES
-I_DATE-JULY 17, 1988
-SOURCE-CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-
-IMAGE_QUALITY-
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

Seine Otten was born in the Netherlands in the year 1910. He had three brothers and four sisters. His father was a farmer. He was the sixth child of a Christian religious family. He now has two children and four grandchildren. At the time of the war has was a teacher at a Christian school in a small town named Neulanda (ph.). Sometimes he used Bible stories to teach his students. He cites a strong influence on his life as the social control of his village. There were many Jews in Neulanda. After the announcement in 1941 of the persecution of the Jews the village offered to help her Jews.

Arnold added that in 1941 all the Jews were told to move to Amsterdam by the Germans. Most moved because they didn't know what would happen to them. Most of the Jews were already gone when they tried to save them. Otten was married in 1938. His son was born in 1939. He knew of the German treatment of the Jews prior to 1941 because of the yellow stars and the restrictions on their movement. All the Jews from a small town near Neulanda, Holervein (ph.), were sent to Amsterdam and then to the camps. He clarifies that there were no Jews in Neulanda itself. They saw the persecution of the Jews step by step. He says that it "came to him" that he had to help the Jews. A neighbor asked him to take in a married Jewish woman for a month or more. He said yes because this was his friend. At this time they were not sure what was happening.

Arnold was born in 1906 in a small village named Laag Keppel . There were eight in his family. His father was a Dutch Reformed minister. There was only one Jewish family in his village. His mother died in 1939 and his father in 1935. His father had been a very religious man. Arnold says that he was the black sheep of the family.

Otten shows a picture of the Jewish woman. She came at the end of 1942. Her husband was at another farmer's home one kilometer from Otten's home. The couple could not meet. Both survived the war. Otten says that this friend knew that he had opened his house to the Jews. He knew what Hitler wanted to do and knew how difficult it was to find someone to help the Jews. He also was aware of the danger of helping the Jews. The rescuers could have been deported, sent to the camps, or shot depending on the mood of the Germans.

Arnold says that one SS officer had been in hiding under the church but that there were no other German soldiers or Nazis. There were Dutch Collaborators but not in Neulanda so it was possible to hide many Jews there.

Otten went to school everyday while his wife stayed at home. The first Jewish woman was there for five months. It was not good because she was not very pleasant. He understood that it was much more difficult for her but there was still tension. She would not help much in the house and did not know how to garden.

When she left they had a moment of rest. It was at this time that his wife said, "Now I know why Hitler wants to kill every Jew if all the Jews are like her." They had received 100 guilders a month for keeping this woman. Later on they refused money. They could get food from the farmers (milk, potatoes, pigs). The Germans could demand and take food and things like radios. After a period of rest they met a man called Johannes Paust (ph.). He was Otten's neighbor in Neulanda and also a farmer. There is a book written about him. Otten says that he was the first man to really understand the Germans and that Hitler was a beast. Arnold interrupts to protest this reference to Hitler. He believes that the comparison is unfair to the beasts. Paust came one day to ask Otten and his wife to give him their identification cards and then to claim that they had lost them. He told them not to ask why. His advice was to "look, listen and hold your tongue." They gave Paust their cards and went the next day to the town hall to get new ones. Later they had nothing to do with him. Paust had to flee Neulanda because he was know by the Germans. Paust had been the first to help the Jews.

Arnold was not in Neulanda yet when this incident happened. When the Germans invaded he was thrown out of France. He returned to the Netherlands to the work. The 10 of May 1940 he was awakened by the master of his boarding house. He heard airplanes overhead. Eventually Arnold became a gardener for Paust. Otten saw him at the house. Many came to Paust for advice. His general advice was to not obey the Germans. After Paust fled Otten saw Arnold on his bike in Neulanda and wondered what he could do to help him. Otten tapped Arnold on the shoulder and said, "Hello old fellow. When you need a bed, food you may come." Arnold came one day and the two men became very close friends. Arnold began to take Jews from Amsterdam to Neulanda by train. Often he brought them first to Otten planning to find a place with neighbors later. Sometimes Otten also tried to find places for the Jews. This was very hard to do. One day they had four boys aged 12 or 13 to hide. It was very difficult but they did succeed. By 1943 there were many Jews hidden in many places. Otten and his wife opened their house for emergencies. There were constantly three emergency cases and at times 12 or 13.

Otten's house was small. There were two rooms, a small kitchen, an attic and a lavatory outside. the hiding place was under the house. Arnold and the other rescuers turned this space into a work place complete with a mimeograph machine. In the house

there were sometimes 6 to 8 people.

They would sleep on the tables and the floors. It was especially difficult for Otten's wife. He emphasizes that the wives should not be forgotten. They never said no to anyone. The house was always open. There was only one house in Neulanda comparable to Otten's house. The total number of Jews they helped is difficult to estimate. He thinks it is about fifty. As far as he knows they all survived the war. Otten never talked about the Jews to his students. He is asked why he helped the Jews. His answer is that when Hitler said he would kill all the Jews, his wife said we must therefore say we will save all the Jews. They were aware of the risks. In the beginning they were not very afraid because there were no Germans. Later in 1944 it was more difficult. There was always a danger of being captured at school. Otten worked out a plan with the headmaster. The headmaster locked the door during school. Otten's classroom was at the end of the passage. If a bell was rung he could then look out the door. If it was a German then Otten could flee. This plan was never used. In most cases the Germans came early to make arrests, 5:00 am. The Germans captured member of the Resistance in a neighboring town. They were questioned about others in the movement. Arnold and Otten were warned by note of the arrests. Otten was in a difficult position because he could not leave the school. Everybody knew that he was hiding Jews. A second warning arrived stating that his name had been mentioned by the Germans in the prison. Otten and his family left their home. Arnold argues that he had to throw out the family. It was the 10 may 1944. The family went a neighboring village. They took bikes to a farmer's house 6 kilometers from Neulanda. The farmer had offered help before. From here Arnold could still work at the school. This move was made just in time. Arnold and two friends slept under the floor the night after the family left. A piece of the floor 65 sq. cm. had been cut by a carpenter who had kept their secret. This section could not be seen and could be closed from the hiding place. Once under the floor Arnold remembered that he had forgotten to lock the door and had the key with him. He was afraid that this would seem suspicious to anyone entering the house. The next day the Germans arrived in Neulanda. They killed two people.

Arnold details the story of the flight of the family and the arrival of the Germans. The new hiding place was nice. The huge barn had a false roof. There was a space 1.5 m wide that ran the length of the roof and could not be seen. That night Arnold was too tired to go to the hiding place in the forest so he stayed at Otten's. He did bring the key with him into the hiding place without locking the door. The next morning he awoke at 6 am with the hand of his friend on his mouth. From 6 to 9 the Germans were in the house. Only the wooden floor separated Arnold from them. The floor of the hiding place had been cushioned with straw. This straw made noise each time they moved. There was also a carrier pigeon with them. This pigeon was intended to fly to England with messages. They were unable to quiet the pigeon because the straw would have made noise. (Here Arnold tells an unrelated story of the

work that he and his friends did.

One time the Germans ordered all the farmers to bring their horses to a certain spot to turn them over. Arnold and his friends made false posters like those of the Germans announcing the cancellation of this event.) The Germans thoroughly searched the house even tearing the wallpaper. They knew they were too late because the beds were too neat. They believed that they had found the hiding place when they discovered the upstairs room. Arnold stops here to explain why there was a pigeon in the hiding place. The Allies dropped the pigeon in a cage for them. A farmer found it in his field. He knew who it was for and passed it on to Arnold. Most people in Neulanda could trust each other. At the time of the coming of the Germans they were preparing to send a message to England telling the Allies the location of an airfield where the Germans stored aircraft parts. The Germans began shooting. The daughter of the headmaster was shot. She did survive but the doctor refused to come for a long time. The Germans left a light burning in the house so Arnold was not sure that they had gone. He had to take a chance since the hiding place had to be cleaned out before the Germans came back. The first thing they did was to let the pigeon go. That night on the radio they heard the music CARPE DIEM indicating that the message had arrived in London. The airfield was later bombed. They then had to find a place for Arnold's future wife, a Jew. She went into hiding at a local farm. Otten and his wife stayed one month with the farmer and then moved to a friend's home. They finished the war in hiding. Arnold's future wife went with them. Arnold was in jail until liberation. During all this time the house in Neulanda was empty. The people of Neulanda bought the furniture in order to return it to Otten after the war. A postman lived in the house during the remainder of the war. Otten let him stay for a while after the war.

Otten is asked to describe Arnold. He says that Arnold is more a Jew than the Jews. He did whatever he could against the Germans. Arnold is his best friend. They had fun during the war also. After 8 they came out of the hiding place and told stories. Arnold always told long stories in Dutch and in English. The war years were good years in some ways. They were together. They saw needs and met them.

Everyone was against the Germans. They were successful only because there were no traitors in Neulanda. There was only one exception and he was not a true traitor, only not with the others. Arnold lives in Israel now.

Arnold says that Otten is his best friend. Otten is too modest. He claims that they were not heroes. There was a Jewish girl with Johannes Paust who was captured and placed in a camp in the Netherlands. She could have escaped. All the arrangements had been made. She refused because then someone would have to take her place at Auschwitz. Paust was killed when an attack he had planned on a prison in Amsterdam was betrayed. The bad memories are of the captures. Arnold thinks about the war everyday. It can't be erased.

His thoughts are always in that time. Arnold is glad that he was thrown out of the U.S. because he was in Europe during the war. He was thrown out of the U.S. because they thought he was a Communist. His lawyer was Sidney Adler. He was deported from Ellis Island. He then went to the South of France, near Italy to work. After the outbreak of the war everyone was forced to move away from Italy. He then went to the Netherlands. Arnold could do nothing else but help the Jews. He believes that when one sees an injustice one does something against it. He had to help the Jews because they were persecuted. It did not matter to him who they were. He is asked why more people did not act this way. It was the hardest thing to find someone to take the Jews. Once he and a friend were trying to hide a Jewish couple. They had to lie to the Jews because if they did not the Jews would not come with them. Arnold told them that he had nice farms and lots of good food for them. They did not see the danger that he did. In 1941 he was working in a small village, Bosco. He had to leave so he went to Laag-Keppel and got a job planting trees. He was jailed for six weeks but does not know why. They told him that it was because they thought he was an enemy of the Germans. He said that he was. They let him free with a warning. Later he was warned by the police because they had orders to pick him up. He left on his bicycle. He just missed the Germans. He roamed for awhile. On his way to his sister's home he was recognized by the villagers. He is interrupted at this point. They regret that they were unable to do more. It is forever a shame that more places could not be found. Returning to the story of the Jewish couple, he had promised the people a nice place. Arnold and his friend found a farm and were invited in. They asked the farmer to take the Jews but he refused. He would give money but not shelter. The two people were waiting outside. His friend invited them inside and they left. The couple stayed on the farm for two weeks. They felt that it was their duty to help the Jews. The Jews did their duty sitting hiding thereby saving themselves. They did not stay in touch with the Jews. They were only passing through. Their names were not known Arnold was against the award made to the village of Neulanda for saving so many Jews because it was not the whole town. But compared to other places there was more done. It is an eternal shame that so few were saved.

In 1941 Arnold met a girl racing by on a bike. The girl gave the bike to Arnold and told him to warn someone that the Germans were coming. Arnold raced to tell him but was too late. The Germans picked him up, put him on a train, and sent him away. Two weeks later a message was posted in the town hall that the Jew, Sam Jacobs, was dead. Arnold knew then what he had to do. Children must be told of the Holocaust because it must never be forgotten. But they are not to be told too early. The subject is too terrible. The stories should be written down. It was obvious how they had to act. Arnold believes that it is possible to change people. They must learn to do more. He was disappointed after the war. People are the same. Examples are Palestine and South Africa. People do not understand. Otten shows several pictures from the time of the war. There are pictures of Himself, his wife, Paust, and the young Jewish girl.

Arnold never told his children of what he did. They figured it out.
.END.