

-TITLE-JAN SEVINGA  
-I\_DATE-JULY 17, 1987  
-SOURCE-CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-  
-DURATION-  
-LANGUAGES-DUTCH  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

In the 30's we had a general knowledge that Hitler was acting mainly against Jews. We weren't married. We met through the resistance work. We found out about Hitler through the radio and his speeches. Our first response was that there would never be a war, nothing would happen. The first thing done was illegal work. I was 20, my father brought Jews home, we lived in a village. My father was an office worker, he got involved because many of the people in his office were involved. Slowly contacts were growing, people all over were helping Jews were in the West. (Jan was born in 1920, and Jansje 1923). Mother (Jansje speaking) was very involved. The Jews were in her household we (Jansje and her mother) fed, and played the part of caretaker before they went to the next house. (Being pressed for story) We started with illegal papers and working with non-Jews, then Jews started to appear. When it became more difficult for Jews to go places, we had already begun. When the situation got worse, the Jews went into hiding. Hundreds hiding in the village. There were many of us, our friends, working for the underground resistance for two reasons: we were disappointed that people who were wrong were not punished, and people who helped were not recognized. We met two types of resistance. One was general work and one was actually hiding the people, we took care of English pilots so they could go back to England. We don't want to tell any specific stories, we don't want a hero dilemma. The children they rescued were very young. They lived in their houses and were raised as part of the family. Hundreds of Jews were filtered through. Jan's (male) parents were farmers and hid children and others. Problems occurred when one got along with only some of the people. It was hard because the men couldn't leave the houses or got outside. It took up time, finding places for people. It was easy for a week or month but then you had to look for a new placement. Some families did stay in one home the entire time. We had to get rations for them. They (Jan and Jansje) met at a coffee shop. He worked with English pilots, as well as Jews. Really they took care of all those who needed help. In their circle the most important idea was liberation and everyone wanted to help speed the process, after this initial motivation our organization grew larger and selective, my doctor put me in touch with the Jewish population.

Background:

Mr. Sevinga-Brouwer was born in the north in a village called Burum in Holland. He had two brothers, two sisters. He was the oldest, his father was a farmer. He was religious, church was important in his family but not only Christians were part of the resistance. Mrs. Sevinga-Brouwer had a giving family. To find someone safe you thought first of your friends to help. If I'd have to do it again, I would do many things different, she said. When you are young you don't see the danger. Together with her father she was imprisoned for seven years. Someone was caught with their rations and said they were from us. We were caught by KP (?). Jewish girls stayed in the house with the mother. They were denounced because the person was scared, they were not sold for money. In essence, it was war against Jews by power hungry people. The risks we took because these people were in danger. It wasn't because we wanted to specifically help Jews, but anyone who needed help. It was easier to recognize Jews so they needed more help in this respect.

(Jan-male) One regret we had, a seventeen year old girl we took her with five guys, there was shooting, we were in an armed car, you realize you are doing something dangerous, but you just need to do it. The war changed you when you are faced with something horrible. The mother of the children came and stayed with the family and after a few months they left together, mother and children. It was difficult to see them go, we were attached to them. But we stay in touch with those we helped. They come from Israel to visit us.

One lady we always see, she used to stay with us on Wednesday. Something like one hundred people passed through our houses and went untouched. We have taught some to children. High school children can grasp the concept but elementary children can look at pictures and not believe. What is important for children to learn is that war is not good. We must make sacrifices for people and all people should be treated equally. War is not good but the people united. May 18, 1949 we married after the war. He (Jan) was in the military service then an investigator for the police. We have four children two boys and two girls.

Their parents were honored at Yad Vashem. Yes, a holocaust could happen again because Jews are the people of God, and many people can't tolerate this. Why can you take risks when others can't? The only difference was fear, most people were to scared. I can't blame people for being scared. That doesn't make us heroes, we just were able to overcome our fear. (Jansje-female) Your true character doesn't change. What is different about you that allowed you to help Jews. I don't know. (Jansje) The war changed the direction. She wasn't tense, though they understood what was happening, they hope it never happens again. It is finished and over for them.

They went to Israel May of 1980 where they planted a tree at Yad Vashem.  
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