

-TITLE-GERRIT VON LOCHEN
-I_DATE-MAY 31, 1988
-SOURCE-CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-
-IMAGE_QUALITY-
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

Although from time to time it was difficult to understand his broken English, the simple message came through clearly and strongly. Mr. Von Lochen was a Christian who risked his life to hide Jewish people in his home for several years during the Holocaust. His bravery and compassion are worthy of note. This is the kind of simple heroism which argues that there were indeed men of goodness during this time of such ripe evil. That he and his family could not simply stand by amid the horror of what was going on, and do nothing, helps to strengthen one's faith in humanity. He did whatever he could. Even if he could save one life ... He was

just a simple man doing a simple good, and thereby making himself

remarkable. Hannah Arendts's equation that "Banal + banal + banal

= Remarkable." is applicable and in evidence here. As a Christian,

I could identify with the part Mr. Von Lochen played during this historical interlude, for if I would have lived then I can only hope that I would have the necessary courage to act in this example.

* Also , please note that I transcribed the tape as he spoke, so the sentences are reflective of the fact that he is not a native English speaker.

TEXT

Q- Mr. Von Lochen, we would like a full account of what your rescue

was, please..

A- It has been 45 years since...

Q- You know, I'm writing a book for children. I think its important. You would be surprised at the number of books coming out now on the Holocaust for children. What do you think they should know?

A- It is important for them to know what happened during the last

war. People have to know this. The killing, the numbers...

Q- By knowing, do you think it won't happen again? It could

prevent...

A- That is hard to say. It would be hard to hate a people. Now we

know the signs of hate to look for.

Q- It is important for the children to know that people like you did try and help. While so much evil was going on, there were some

good people living at the same time. I often ask rescuers what would you like your children to know about the time? Do you have any grandchildren.

A- Yes, they are still too young. I have told my own as much as I

can.

Q- Were they interested growing up?

A- Yeah, read books in English.

0149

Q- Have your children read anything about you?

A- No, only mentioned in books in Dutch language.

Q- And can't they read that?

A- No, I went however, on a trip to Washington to talk about it with the government of the U.S. Also speak often with a man you might be contacting... a Mr. Young (ph). Ask if he lived in Berlin

at the time of the war. You went to visit him?

Q- I don't think that I had an appointment with him. I don't think

that he responded.

A- This lady come here. We had a letter too. This lady phone up, and I don't receive a letter. Then the mailman bring it.

Interested. Friend invited too. But the interviewer have no time in her schedule.

Q- I'd like to begin at the beginning, Mr. Von Lochen, just to ask

what year you were born.

A- 1916

Q- And where?

A- Winterwijk

Q- A large town or small town?

A- About 20-25,000.

Q- Brothers or sisters?

A- Two brothers and two sisters.

Q- You place where?

A- The first born.

Q- Did your father work?

A- We had a small farm.

Q- Your mother?

A- She did house work.

Q- Which taught the lessons to the children? Taught them to be honest and good...

A- Most likely, Mother. You come home out of school and the first

thing a child asks is for mother.

Q- Was your mother giving and helping of others? How?

A- At that time there were a lot of beggars. Don't see it here now

like after the first war. She'd go to the German border. Young people come over the border. She'd help with what she could do...

food. Then we'd have chickens stolen out of our coop.

Q- Was your family religious?

A- Yes.

Q- What religion?

A- Protestant.

Q- Were there Jewish people in town?

A- Yes.

Q- Did you go to school with them?

A- no, they had a separate school. Jewish people not really mixed,

in touch at the time when I was raised...

Q- Did you go to a Christian school? Your family would go to church

every Sunday?

A- Yes.

03:85

Q- Before you were growing up and before you did heroic things during the war, did you ever do anything remarkable?

A- The times had changed. My later life was much different. Cars...

electricity... I still remember none of it. There was not much going on living in the country school.

Q- So, when war started to break out and the Germans came, you were

still living at home?

A- No, I was in 1936 training in the army, a draft. Three years later was the 1939 mobilization and I was called up. Then the Germans came I was in the army.

Q- And then what happened?

A- May 10, 1940. There were always some promises by Hitler... "we

don't invade Holland." But ha! He did... it was mixed up reasoning.

They came to the capitol. The first days they shot at us and we shoot back. I was in the Red Cross, but wanted to be in the infantry. The sky was red and burning. Bad days. Live and wake up

without sleep. There was so much going on. You must watch it. Close

to the hate. Diplomats, consuls from France, came and told us to go

to another airport base, "Shusterberg" and if we have work we can

go home. Some friends help me to get a permit so I can prove I can

work, and I get out and go home. So, that first year Jewish people

always in fear about what happen next.

There were some Jewish people in the army. I see their faces, they

know what was coming. They know. I don't know if they died or not.

They lost so many.

Q- During this time you came home and worked?

A- Yes, During the first year you had to watch yourself.

Q- But you were in no danger.

A- No.

Q- Only the Jews were in danger.. ?

A- The first year the Jews had the thing called the David Star. David Star.

Q- Did you know anyone personally... any friends were Jewish?

A- You know them, not friends though. See then in the store, on farms. They have businesses.

05:87

Q- How did you get started?

A- In 1941, 1942, Jewish people had to go and hide. There was a

family Rosembaum. In July 1942, my mother picked up the lady at night. They walk about 4km. to our place.

Q- So your mom went to get them? Someone from the underground came

to your mother. Is that right?

A- No, I don't know exactly how it happened. Trough friends... close to underground. Another couple had promised to help but then they were too scared.

Q- I see, so then your mother took them to the farm.

A- The lady was the same age as Mother. She is still living today.

They walked that night some. She hide herself. No one else know at

first. You had to be careful. There were food rations.

Q- So the people in the grocery store knew that you were hiding someone?

A- Yes, as there was Father, Mother, and me. But we had food ration

tickets. If you have more than appropriate they ask how you get it.

They know but say nothing. Unexpectedly, a little boy found out. He walked in and saw a lady down there (in the basement). Says, "I

have never seen that lady before", and Father was quite nervous about that. It was the boy of the grocery store. We had to tell him

to shut his mouth and he did.

Q- So now you have just the one family?

A- No, just the lady, Mrs. Rosenbaum. Next month she'll be 97... still in good health... in an old age home in Holland. I still have pictures of her.

Q- So who came next?

A- A year later her son. A TB patient, yet healthy. He had been allowed for a while by his doctor to stay in the sanitorium. Then all of a sudden they had to get out. We picked him up that night and brought him to our place, to his mother. He stayed for a couple of days and then found another place for him to go. But not that far. He was a livestock dealer too. And he knew a lot of farmers. He stayed then on a farm where the farmer put him to work in the field.

Q- Did your mother know Mrs. Rosenbaum before?

A- Not really. There was a mailman, and he was her neighbor and he knew all about what was going on. But he was tight. He'd bring her letters. It was nearly the last year... Mrs. Rosenbaum had another son, Max, he's passed away now too. It wasn't safe where he was hiding. Sometimes he came in, one or two times, to see his mother. And then it wasn't safe, so he came along too. And then there was

another boy. I can't remember his name. So for not quite a year there were three. Not much room. Eventually we had five.

Q- Did they have to hide and stay inside all day? 0889

A- Yes, it was the last two weeks that were the worst. The last months before the war was over in 1945.

Q- And so what would they do during the day?

A- The last two weeks we had Germans in the house. German soldiers.

She say no, but they move in anyway. They had the whole front house

they took over. And the Jewish people, they slept in the barn and

upstairs in hiding places in straw. The house was insulated without

straw. There was no special heating. They had to lie in these spaces created between the straw and the ceilings for nearly two weeks on their back. The Germans had the kitchen.

Q- So Mrs Rosenbaum did that too? Hid in the straw...

A- Yes, it was nice and warm there though. Hade electric blanket.

Safe there. One day I see this boy sitting down there in the kitchen. There were good German soldiers too. I saw one who had tears in his eyes and said how he wanted to go home to his mother.

Q- Oh yes, some of them were young boys.

A- One night they got so drunk and came up not as early as usual,

about 7 A.M. Before Germans came up, Mrs. Rosenbaum wanted to use

the toilet. She had to come downstairs without a miserable German

not to see her. That morning we heard planes. The Germans wake up.

Mother had to get Mrs. Rosenbaum out of there.

Q- So this is really kind of your mother's idea? She started this

... to rescue?

10:32

A- No, in agreement with my father too. I was a single man at this

time. Lived at home.

Q- So you wanted to help your parents do this?

A- Well, I lived at home and we wanted to help each other. We tried

to make fun too... to escape from all this...

Q- It must have felt good, though, doing this with your family.

A- Oh yeah, I had brothers and sisters too, and at first Mrs. Rosenbaum said nobody else in the family has to know. Father and Mother said we cannot do that. All must know. The brothers and sisters... everybody in the whole family had to know. It was interesting how my sister would cook for visitors and sneak food for the Jewish people so as not to destroy the hiding place. The last year and a half were critical. At anytime the Germans...

Q- Were you afraid a lot?

A- It could cost us our lives.

Q- Did you know other people who hid Jews and so were killed?

A- Oh Yes. Good friends of my father and mother were killed. And another family, all living there would walk along their country. road and one day they picked up the boy and girl living there and

the man and put him in a concentration camp in the south of Holland. He spent 7 months and came out alright as he lied and say

he didn't know they were Jewish people.

Q- You mean he claimed that he didn't know those children were Jewish?

A- Yeah, but yes he knew.

Q- But you think that's why he lived and they didn't kill him?

A- Yes. Mrs. Rosenbaum had three stepsons and she was married to Rosenbaum as his second wife. Before the war had lived in Germany.

As German Jews they came and took the Dutch nationality. The two boys were livestock dealers. The TB patient, and the other was Max.

Walter was the name of the first. His wife, her family, and all died in the camp. Had no children yet.

Q- What about Mr. Rosenbaum?

A- Mrs. Rosenbaum, her husband, had passed away in 1936 before the

war. He is buried in Germany. Was never in Holland. The boys had

moved to Holland with their mother.

Q- How does this seem to you... the war years? Does it seem a horrible time?

A- A- Well, we knew what was going on in Germany already, how they

hate the Jews, and about what they want to do. Some say a hoax that

6 million dead...

12:22

Q- But for you, Mr. Von Lochen, when you think back on the war years, when you were hiding these Jews with your family, what kind

of a time does this seem like? A good time?

A- Good and bad times. You had to watch it. Lock the doors.

Q- Did your wife suspect what you were doing?

A- No, not at all.

Q- A lot of people would walk in the farm house.

Q- Sometimes I've spoken to some rescuers who said after the war there was no other way to help. At least during the war you felt like you were doing something.

A- The war was over. Free. The boys go to town and all ask them where they had been.

Q- How did your neighbors feel about the fact that you had hid them

during the war.?

12:79

A- Some thought that it was alright. Others never suspected it.

Q- Of course if this were in Poland, the neighbors would have been

angry at you for saving Jews as the Poles were also anti-Semitic.

But in Holland, they must have respected you for doing this.

A- Some not, but not many. One day, someone came over and we had to

hide Mrs. Rosenbaum in the rye. It was the time when the grain was

high, and we kept this household inspector chatting over coffee when Mother went to hide Mrs. Rosenbaum in the rye where it would

be safe. So he looked everywhere, the], and the closets... but he

couldn't find her...

Q- Your mother must have been something...

A- My parents were sometimes...

Q- Remarkable.

A- Well, if one needs a place, and there is not other place to go,

you take in a fourth or a fifth one.

Q- You were honored for what you did?

A- Yeah, in Washington.

Q- From Israel did you not get a certificate?

A- No.

Q- Are these brothers still alive?

A- Ernst still is. He had married a young lady. Max has passed on.

Q- You were in Holland two years ago and saw them?

A- Yes?

Q- Is it possible when you save someone's life for them to thank you?

A- They helped us plan to move to this country in 1950. A lot they

did for us, these people. We had no money, only a few hundred dollars coming in this country. They helped us to get work.

Q- Were your brother and sister involved too?

A- Yes, they did a lot of work too. My sister lives in Canada too,

close to Lake Erie. How we got involved with you was when she saw

a statement in the paper for information from those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

Q- It must have been so hard to keep five people...

A- With rationing and all...

Q- And living in fear... What was your wife doing during the war?

14:71

A- Working on a farm nearby, one-half an hour by bike. We had no

cars.

Q- So, it must feel good looking back now.

A- Oh yeah, if you can save someone. The two young boys... for them

we had false names to use concerning them in our discussions.
Max

was "John". Also there was that young boy, about 20 years of age,

not too long with us. He had relatives in the States. Later on he

did well in the States. He lives in Chicago. The girl Sarah, she lives in the States too. Her husband Russell he escaped the country

only to get stuck in France and he could not get away. That's often

happened. People would escape to go help in the army and get stuck

or lost. At least for us there was always food to eat.

15:40

Q- That's right, as you had the farm you could raise food. After the war, what happened? Everybody went home and you got married. Is

that right?

A- Well, after the war, still everything was scarce. Lots couldn't

find a house. In 1947 we found a place to live. A farm. The summer

of '46 we talked about immigrating to Canada. The door opened and

we had relatives in Wisconsin in the States. Mother was writing to

these cousins of us, saying, "My boys want to come." They said to

come and they'd help us, but at that time it was easier to get immigration papers to Canada. But in the meantime, I got sick for

a while, a Year, and I could not pass the medical test for immigration. Had no idea it took so long. We put in the application

in November and heard in April.

15:97

Q- And how many children do you have?

A- Three boys living and one girl passed away at age 28. She had MS. She got through school with good grades and later on worked for

a couple of years. Then the MS started up. It comes and goes.

She lost her speech..., eyesight. The last 2.5 years she couldn't

talk anymore. To talk we had to write it all out. Spell it all out.

Otherwise we couldn't talk with her.

Q- She lived with you?

A- Yes, the last 2.5 years when the MS was in a steady state. Before that she worked a while. It's been nearly 12 years this month.

Q- Were all your children born in this country?

16:60

A- No, this girl and a boy born here in 1948. Twins. Two of the boys work in the same place. I did... a big lumber yard... building materials. At one time all three worked there. Harper and

David . Bill, the other son, is in the little town of Fenwick working for Westinghouse Research as an atomic inventor. 3.5 years at research.

Q- Do you think about the war very much? Those years... during the

day.. Do you dream about it?

A- Oh yeah. I think about those days. Never forget it and what happened. Those days.

Q- Do your children say "I can't believe you did that. Imagine you

doing that"?

A- No, the understand that what the situation was. An invasion of

your country... curfews... You are not allowed freedom anymore.

Q- When I think about what your family did, so difficult and brave,

... obviously many didn't do this. Why you? Where did your family

get the strength and bravery?

A- God. Get the strength from him. The Lord.

Q- Are you still religious?

A- Oh Yes. We go to church.

Q- The Christian Reform Church?

A- Close by. A beautiful building. Congregation of 75, with a minister. I did a lot of volunteer work this past winter. What I could do as a craftsman, ...patching roofs ... climbing on a ladder. Spent a lot of time there. Friday nights there is the open

house for the neighborhood and then there are Sundays.

Q- So you're still doing good work.

A- I hope so. If you can do it for the Lord, I think that it is the

best way to do it. We are not here in this life forever. There is

a Resurrection. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will return

to Earth again.

Q- Well, it seems that the more good people there are like you in

this world that maybe the sooner the Resurrection will come. Jesus

said we do not know this time. In the Jewish tradition the idea is

that the Messiah will come. But the more that people do good it will hasten the Coming.

18:17

A- In Jewish tradition you expect the Messiah.

Q- It is the same idea that when the Messiah comes, or the Resurrection that the world will be different. So, what I'm saying is that it is the same idea, that the world will be different, changed...

A- The promise of the Old Testament. The hope. Christ is born. He has suffered here on this Earth. Died on the cross. He has risen from the dead. Then he ascended to the Heavens.

Q- Did your wife do a lot of volunteer work as well?

A- Knitting sales for the church. We are retired now, but she cannot resist making socks.

Q- Well, I don't know if I have any more questions. It's very interesting and wonderful what you did. How many grandchildren do you have?

A- Eight. No girls. All 8 are boys. Last year we are 40 years married.

Q- A wonderful big family you have.

A- Not too big. Good boys.

Q- How often go you see them?

A- Every week they all come from work. We have a cup of coffee and they see their mom and dad. We live close by. Now we realize the

importance of family. When are young to look to own life.

Q- Your brothers and sisters left Holland before you?

A- Yes, a few months. Some were married in Canada and the others came over to help. We have to help each other. If one comes to your

house and has no place to stay and nothing to eat, the door must always be open. Mother was always afraid. But ... almost 50 years

ago.

19:66

Q- Do you have the address of Ernst in Holland? We'd like to get him to write an attestation of what your family did so that you can

get a certificate from Israel.

A- They still live in the same town where the hiding took place.
.END.