

-TITLE-JAN VAN DEN BERG  
-I\_DATE-5/28/91  
-SOURCE-JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-VERY GOOD  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT  
-DURATION-1 HOUR  
-LANGUAGES-DUTCH WITH INTERPRETER ENGLISH  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

Jan was born August 20, 1923 in Dordrecht, Netherlands.

0.00 He was the second oldest in a family of seven brothers and sisters (ages 69 to 42). Family was working class. His father was a machinist on a tugboat.

0.02 Jan finished grammar school, at age 12 he started to work with his father on the tugboat. From age 16 until age 20 he worked as a machinist on a tugboat with his uncle in Ymuiden.

0.05 Family religious background: Dutch reformed church, but not attending.

Father leaned politically toward Dutch Nazis, influenced by a neighbor and by the economic depression in Holland, 1930-'37.

0.06 Jan's Mother was approached by Jehovah's Witnesses in the middle of 1942. She, in turn, urged Jan to meet with them. Jan immediately became interested in Jehovah Witnesses believes and accounts. He started devouring their literature, have a lot of free time on his hands on his tugboat. Because Jehovah Witness three months later his sister became a Jehovah Witness - so did an aunt.

0.15 Jan knew that the Jehovah's Witnesses were under ban in Holland. He also knew that danger of persecution. Despite this he became a Bible Education Worker and attended meetings with other workers, meeting never exceeding 12 people.

0.18 First week of June 1944 Jan and a fellow worker went proselytizing in the country, not too far from Dordrecht. They approached the mayor of Alplasserdam, who belonged to the Dutch Reform Church, who threatened that he could have them picked up.

And that is exactly what did take place a few hours later, after the Mayor had alerted the police and a member of the NSB (Dutch Nazis). Jan was taken for interrogation at the police precinct of Alblasserdam. When Jan refused to name the Jehovah's Witnesses leader he was severely beaten on the face, then placed in a cell for one night.

0.21 The following day, with his legs bound to sticks so he could not walk, he was transported to the prison in Rotterdam, to its Invalids Division. He was again interrogated. He noticed by a row of Bibles that other Witnesses had been interrogated in the same place. Again Jan was severely beaten, when he insisted on his faith and protested against Hitler. Upon refusing to sign a renunciation of his faith, he was told that he would be sent to labor camp. He refused again.

0.24 From Rotterdam he was sent to the concentration camp Vught (in the south of Holland, near the city of Breda.), which was a staging camp. During Jan's stay in Vught (June 7, 1944 until September 6, 1944) there were about 40 Jehovah's Witnesses, including Arthur Winkler, one of Jehovah's Witnesses' leaders. The latter had just arrived in Vught, after undergoing severe torture, Jan stated that the presence of this leader and the companionship of other Witnesses strengthened his faith.

By September 6, '44 the sounds of approaching US Army could be heard in Vught. This led to the rounding up of all prisoners in Vught, totalling about 4,000.

0:27 They were herded into cattle cars - 8- men per cattle car - and were transported for three days and three nights - without food or water - to camp Sachsenhausen. During this transport several of the men started to hallucinate. Apart from K.W.'s the other prisoners - all Dutch - were political prisoners or black marketeers.

0:29 On arrival at Sachsenhausen the prisoners were given tea. It then became evident that the camp was not prepared to absorb the 4,000 new inmates. They were all chased to an airplane hangar outside the camp. They remained in this hangar for 14 days. Accommodations consisted of bunk beds, no sanitary facilities, hardly any guards. At the end of the 14 days they were divided into smaller groups and sent to several camps such as Ravensbrück, Rathenau and others. Jan was sent to Rathenau.

0:33 Rathenau was not a part of Sachsenhausen. Rathenau was located about 70 km south of Berlin. It was a labor camp. In Rathenau Jan's hair was shaved, but he continued to wear the prison uniform, issued in Vught.

Rathenau manufactured wings for fighter planes. Jan was detailed to metals works, specifically the making of screws.

0:37 At some point he was ordered to work on digging shooting galleries for the training of German soldiers. Jan Refused. For his refusal he was condemned to being flogged. A German soldier, under the supervision of a Hauptschaftsfueher, flogged Jan. After the 7th flogging the Hauptschqfsfuehrer told the soldier to stop the flogging. Instead Jan was ordered to dig his own grave. Jan was then told that he would be shot to death. A first bullet was fired. The bullet was a blank. Jan was ordered again to work on the shooting galleries, Jan again refused. This was followed by the

0:45 shooting of 3 more blank bullets at Jan. Then the Hauptschaftsfuehrer ordered the soldier to get a Kapo to beat Jan about in Jan's dug grave. Jan survived that and then he was ordered to do exercises for more than two hours in front of a rank of soldiers. The soldiers were Ukrainians, Not Germans.

0:46 Jan felt that throughout all this his faith sastained him.

Jan Reports on two different experiences in camp :

1) his encounter with his Blockaelterster, Rudi, who allowed him to read the Bible for two hours every evening.

2) The S.S. commandeered the J.W.'s to play the accordion for their parties, since the J.W.'s were not violent. Regularly these J.W. musicians started to play J.W. songs, once the S.S. were sufficiently drunk.

0:56 Jan again reports on the strength of his faith maintaining him through increasing physical weakness and hunger. He mentions another J.W., name: Ferdinand Holtorf, who assigned bible text. He could no longer work and suffered from memory loss. His face became black from hunger. He had become a Muselman. He was predicted to die within a fortnight. He was given slightly increased rations, but was sure death was close.

1:01 The camp inmates subsequently walked and bicycled toward Maagdenburg, which they found to be a ghosttown. Then they proceeded in the direction of the River Elbe, where they met American troops.

1:02 The Americans hospitalized them for 14 days, then sent them by train to Valkenburg, in Holland.

Almost immediately upon return to Holland, Jan resumed his preaching. Between '45 and '53 learned painting, a trade he has practiced the remainder of his life.

He married in 1952.

.END.