

Summary of Oral History: PIETER de RIJKE

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This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on [03/2022]

Pieter de Rijke was born in October 1937 in Leiden, Netherlands to Andres Gillid de Rijke and Wilhelmina Baan. Both parents had several brothers and sisters. Pieter had an older sister, New, and 5 year younger brother, Fans. There was a long explanation of the places the family had lived, but when Pieter was born they were in Lisse, where Pieter's father owned a store. Religiously, the family was Dutch Reformed and had a comfortable life.

When Pieter was about 6, the family moved to Rotterdam, where his father had bought a business from a Jewish man who was pressured to sell his company. The company sold paper and book binding materials. Pieter remembers when the Germans took over Holland and has a memory of Jews wearing yellow stars. Even after the Dutch capitulated, the Germans bombed Rotterdam in 1940 and it was very damaged. He also remembers that the RAF bombed the city a few years later and by accident destroyed the family business.

Pieter's father, like other adult Dutch men, was sent to Germany to work on the railroads. While his father was gone, Pieter remembers that it was very cold and that food was scarce, but his mother still had relatives in Lisse and was able to get some food. Pieter remembers peeing asphalt off streets to use to get some heat in their one stove. He remembers making pancakes from tulip bulbs and describes other food they ate. He remembers food being dropped in air flights from Sweden and the US.

Pieter's father escaped from his work camp by stealing clothes from the US and Canadian soldiers and briefly stole a jeep. He was not too far from the border, so he rode a bike back to his home. He started their business again.

Pieter says that there were some people who sold out hidden Jews but that the Dutch underground was pretty successful. Pieter relates that he now has 5 children, and many grand and great-grandchildren.