

DR. CARL VAN OSS
DUTCH CONSUL

Carl van Oss grew up in Holland. After Germany took over the country there was little change for about one year. Before the war, the Dutch Government had planned to issue identity cards to everyone and the Germans added an indelible J (for Jew) for the Jewish citizens. He shows a picture of one card with the J prominently displayed. To help two girls in his school, two teachers gave them their cards and reported them as lost to obtain replacements.

He finished secondary school in 1941 and had planned to study dentistry. Instead he became involved with forging identity cards. The original photograph was replaced by one of the new holder and the seal was restored. Many people were involved in this activity which was not considered unlawful but an act against the Germans. The vast majority of the Dutch people were opposed to the occupation, and although forgeries were apparently widely known by the local people, nobody talked about them. The entire activity was carried out by an informal organization which also tried to help Jews to leave the country. Some were arrested by the Germans but apparently none were executed. There also were food shortages and the organization was also involved with forging papers to help bring food from the countryside to the city. Some Germans could be bribed to supply them with original document forms. His mother had died before the war but his elderly father encouraged his activity and also did courier service for the underground organization. Even some Dutch policemen helped but one had to be careful. He estimates that during almost four years he forged about 900 documents for Jews and some Allied pilots. He estimates that he saved about 150 pilots.

Later, the railroad workers went on strike to interfere with the German war effort. He helped many of them by changing occupation and sometimes age to enable them to pursue other work. In all, 230 - 250000 people (Jews and non-Jews) were taken away by the Germans.

After the war, Queen Juliana did little for the resistance movement but her successor, Queen Beatrix, instituted a decoration in 1980 the Resistance Cross. He shows his own which bears the numbers 10412. After liberation, he obtained a commission in the British Royal Air Force and his duty was to screen Dutch recruits. Because of poor eyesight he could not become a flyer and was sent back to Holland. He had lost 5 years of study and started at the University. At first he studied law for one year and then switched to science. Later he received a PH.D. in Paris. Subsequently, he came to Buffalo where he has lived now for over 16 years and where he currently is teaching in the Medical School. He became a U. S. citizen but was appointed Dutch Consul for Western New York. This work requires only a small fraction of his time.

He concludes by saying that to do what he did requires that you are young and have the necessary aptitude. He does not know what happened to the people for whom he forged documents but hopes that perhaps one-third to one-quarter were really helped. He did this work not so much to help people but as his part in the fight against the Germans. In retrospect, he also admits that it was probably more dangerous than he realized at the time.