

JOHANNA MANTEL
RG-50.154.0017 (rec. 1987 in Sarasota)

Johanna and her family were considered righteous gentiles as they hid many Jews in Amsterdam during the Nazi period. Johanna had 4 brothers and a sister. At 18 she started working in Hollandia Fabriken cotton works, a raincoat factory that employed 1200 people and many of them Jews. After Holland was overrun by the Germans in 1940, people in the factory started asking her to save things for them that might be taken by the Germans. Johanna's brother married a Jewish girl in 1942 but she didn't wear the Yellow star and went out freely. At the time Johanna was engaged to Rudy, but she didn't want to get married in this dangerous time.

Her brother was very involved in the underground and he started finding hiding places for Jewish people. Johanna would help by getting coupons for food for those in hiding. In 1942 the Nazis surrounded the factory and separated the Jews. The next day the Jewish workers and their families were sent away in trucks. Some of the Jewish managers managed to hide behind fabric in the basement. Johanna's brother was made president of their sister company in Weeso because the Jewish management were afraid what would happen if the Germans came in.

Johanna's brother asked the family to move to a bigger house so they could hide more people. Although this was very dangerous, and if people were caught they and their hidden Jews would be taken out and shot, Johanna stated that when you are young you don't think about the risks. In 1943 things got really bad, and a married couple came to live in Johanna's home while their younger daughter was sent to hide with her sister. This couple, Mr. and Mrs. Weinberg, stayed hiding in the house until the end of the war. They never went outside. Occasionally their daughter would visit, but this was very difficult and very emotional so didn't happen often. Johanna tells a story of how her brother jerry-rigged the electricity so that they could have light behind tight shutters.

Near the end of the war, Johanna went to the country where her in-laws lived, 110 miles from Amsterdam, to get food for the house. Boys and men could not go out because they would be picked up and sent to Germany to fight. So, Johanna rode the 110 miles on her bike. After a few weeks she loaded her bicycle with about 150 pounds of food and tried to cycle back to Amsterdam. She found a way to get the food little by little across a bridge where the Germans were stopping people and taking their food and goods.

The whole family was involved in helping the hidden Jews. Her brother worked very hard for the Underground to ferry and distribute food. At one point Johanna gave her ID card to the sister of their friend Max Bullock so she could go to Switzerland. Johann convinced the authorities she lost her card and got a new one.

When asked if she was aware that her family was not mentioned at Yad Vashem, Johanna says she doesn't even think about it.