

**Inhoud van het hoofdstuk 40: The Granddaughter**

For his part, Thijs was pursuing the man whose grandparents had successfully hidden Anne-Marie van den Bergh during the war. When Thijs spoke with him by phone, he was friendly and offered to provide an introduction to Van den Bergh's granddaughter, with whom he'd kept in ~~close~~ contact. (To protect her privacy, we have not identified him and have followed her wishes by referring to her as Esther Kizio, the pseudonym she requested.)

On February 13, 2018, the man sent a letter [email] to Esther to introduce Thijs. He asked whether she would like to participate in the cold case investigation and reminded her that at the end of the war, her grandparents, Arnold and his wife, together with their three children, moved to Minervalaan 72-3. It was a couple of ~~miles~~ km from [the] Merwedeplein, where the Frank family lived before going into hiding.

On March 6, she answered. Somewhat warily, she agreed to a meeting. Thijs described for me his drive on March 15 to Esther's town, which is close to the North Sea coast outside Amsterdam. He said he felt very tense, knowing what was at stake. Before he left, he'd reread the 1963 police report and the note naming Arnold van den Bergh as the betrayer.

Thijs could feel Esther's reluctance; suddenly a stranger comes along who wants to talk to you about your grandfather, who, she probably knows, was on the Jewish Council, whose members were so vilified after the war. He parked his car and rang the bell. A woman in her fifties opened the door and welcomed him. She was all warmth. While talking, she led him through a living room to the garden side of the house and the kitchen. She offered him tea. And biscuits. Ginger biscuits.

That turned out to be the first of several interviews. Esther was quite forthcoming. Though she'd never met her grandfather, who had died before she was born, she had plenty of family stories about the past.<sup>1</sup> Esther recalled that she was nine or ten years old when her mother first spoke to her about the war. Anne-Marie told her that after the Nazi invasion, the family was protected from deportation because of her father's position on the Jewish Council.<sup>2</sup>

However, sometime in 1943, things changed; suddenly they were at risk. (That likely occurred when the Jewish Council was abolished in late September [29 September] of that year.)

The family felt terrible anxiety and always had bags packed, ready to flee, to leave everything behind. Anne-Marie told Esther that that was when her grandfather turned to the resistance for help in hiding his three daughters. The resistance always advised that it was safer for a family to split up than to go into hiding together, and Esther remembered her mother saying that she was asked if she wanted to stay with the family and she had said no.

Anne-Marie had a poor relationship with her mother, whom she described as cold and socially ambitious. On the other hand, she loved her father deeply. They shared a bond rooted in their love of art and literature. As Esther put it, for Anne-Marie the death of her father was "the biggest disaster of her life. She didn't really care about the rest."<sup>3</sup>

The resistance placed Anne-Marie's twin sisters on a farm outside ~~the northern town of~~ [Noord-]Scharwoude with a family named De Bruin.

Anne-Marie went into hiding in Amsterdam, but the experience was dreadful. The family forced her to work, and she was given very little to eat. At one point she was so hungry that she stole food, which led to a terrible fight. Esther also understood that Anne-Marie was sexually abused, though the words were never spoken.

After Anne-Marie complained to a resistance worker who'd come to check on her, she was moved to a new location in the south of the Netherlands. The resistance worker accompanied her partway on the train journey. While waiting alone on a train station platform for the final leg of her trip, she was noticed by a Dutch man whom she remembered as wearing a German-style hat with a feather on it. With her dark hair and eyes, she must have looked Jewish to him. The man tipped off the police that there was a Jewish girl at the station. The police picked her up, took her to a jail in Scheveningen, and placed her in a cell with other Jews. During several interrogations, she repeated the story the resistance had trained her to say if she was ever stopped. Years later, she told her daughter that she had retained her composure by staring at the photo of a happy family displayed in the office of the man who was so aggressively interrogating her.

Anne-Marie finally provided the name Alois Miedl to her interrogator, a name her father had told her to use if she was ever in trouble. Miedl was a German business associate of Van den Bergh who was involved in the acquisition of antique paintings. At the end of two weeks, Anne-Marie was the only person left in the cell. All the others had been deported. She was released without explanation and continued her train journey to the small ~~town~~ village of Sprundel, where she was met by a ~~Professor Ruijter~~ H. Ruygers, who took her to the Bastiaensen family, who'd agreed to hide

her. They were Catholic and very welcoming.

70 But children in hiding could not expect stability. Anne-Marie was suddenly [this event must be much later, namely several months after D-Day] moved again after word came that German soldiers were to be lodged with the family. The resistance then placed her with the Sadée family in the city of Breda [better Ginneken], where she stayed for about six weeks before rejoining the Bastiaensens after the Germans vacated their house. She stayed with them until the liberation [of the Northern part

75 of the Netherlands, and thus of Amsterdam]. Esther said that her mother didn't want to leave the Bastiaensens after the war ended. She'd come to think of their children as her stepsisters and [both] stepbrothers and even wanted to become Catholic.

80 Eventually the Bastiaensens were able to convince her to rejoin her own family in Amsterdam, but she kept in contact with members of the family until her death in 1983 long after the war.

This is Esther's version of her mother's story, and it closely matches the information the Cold Case Team uncovered in her grandfather's file.<sup>4</sup> In his testimony to the Dutch authorities, Van den Bergh said that his daughter was arrested in 85 Rotterdam on her way to her hiding address. He said that she was imprisoned for nine days and was released because her identity papers did not carry the letter J. However, he did not mention that he had told his daughter to use the name Alois Miedl if she got into trouble.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps he understood that in the postwar era, indicating that he'd had a strong relationship with a well-known Nazi would not reflect well on

90 him. When the Cold Case Team asked Esther if she knew more about Miedl, she recalled that he was an art collector and had a Jewish wife. Esther's grandfather collected seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings by famous artists, and he and Miedl would go to art auctions together. She also recalled that Miedl was the person who purchased the Goudstikker art collection around the time of the German invasion. He 95 then sold the collection to Hitler's close henchman Hermann Göring.

Esther did remember once seeing a wartime photo on the internet of Göring leaving Miedl's office. However, she seemed unaware that her grandfather was the notary who officiated over Göring's purchase of the collection. Esther used to visit her grandmother and aunts regularly. She remembered that when 100 she opened the door to her grandmother's house, it felt like walking into the Rijksmuseum. The walls were covered in paintings from the school of Jan Steen and others. After her grandmother died in 1968, Esther had the task of going through their Amsterdam home. She found many documents, but her grandfather's collection of valuable paintings seemed to have disappeared (she is still trying to trace them). 105 She told Thijs that there was a suitcase full of documents that had sat in her grandfather's house for forty years. But as had happened in Abraham Kaper's house, there was an accident and everything was destroyed in a house fire caused by a gas leak. Esther was eventually invited to the Cold Case Team's office in Amsterdam-Noord, where Vince and Brendan interviewed her.<sup>6</sup>

110 Finally, they showed her the anonymous note that identified her grandfather as the betrayer of the Frank family. She was visibly shocked. "What would motivate someone to send such a note?" she asked. She told them that after the war there was a great deal of anger directed against the Jewish Council. She said that her grandmother rarely spoke about the war and there were never any accusations about her grandfather 115 within the family. But she also said she'd personally received verbally abusive anonymous phone calls about the Jewish Council well after her grandfather's death. "Why would someone betray others like this?" she wondered aloud again. Her grandfather must have been forced to cooperate with the Germans, but she could not imagine him betraying Otto Frank. Reading the note carefully, she realized that it referred to lists, not specific people. Yes, she could imagine this. If indeed her 120 grandfather gave up the Prinsengracht 263 address, it was probably just an address on an impersonal list; he didn't know who was living there. If in fact he had done it, she said finally, she knew it could have been for only one reason: because he was forced, because he had to save his family's lives.