

Chapter 3

The Netherlands

My first hours in the Netherlands made two very distinct impressions on me. One was the amount of water surrounding the area; the other was the friendliness of the people and the great number that spoke some fair to excellent English.

Soon after dark, the young men returned as promised and rowed me from the island back to the place from which we had left that morning and to the house where I had eaten breakfast. There I had food and was introduced to a man and his wife who would take me to their place in Amsterdam.

For the trip I was provided with a warm coat that had gathered the odors of a cow barn, but covered my flight suit to my thighs, helping me to appear more like a local. My transportation was a bicycle with hand brakes. I knew how to ride a bike well, but this was my first experience with hand brakes. I learned quickly as I rode in the darkness following my guides. Luck was with me as we made our way safely into the city.

At one place my guides slowed to point out a hospital. It seemed that our medium bombers were attempting to knock out a factory in that area but they missed and hit the hospital. “The bombers returned later and got the factory. Good, good!” my new friends remarked. It was a gesture of forgiveness and appreciation all in one expression, with a feeling of sadness for those at the hospital. I was starting to understand something of the hell these people were living in and why they were willing to run the risk of resistance.

To reduce the risk to my helpers, if I should ever be captured, I made no effort to remember their names. And in many cases the names they used were not real anyway. I did recall some, however, and learned still others years later. In this case, my helpers were Mr. and Mrs. J Rensink who lived at Andoor-skeet 21 house, Amsterdam-Noord, Holland. To Weit Abercrombie this was Uncle Jan and Auntie Riek. Jan was a barber and most of the Board of the Directors of the Directors of the Netherlands Bank were his customers. Rensiks lived in a house which seemed to have common walls with those which adjoined it.

Bicycles were not left out at night, so it was natural for all three to be brought inside. My extra bike thus would not be noticed. (Just like I did not know a man called "Black Jan" had followed us on his bicycle in case a problem developed.) The next day a man with organizational connections visited. He wanted to be sure I was soon moved to another location, and from him I inquired about my fellow crew members. He told me that everyone except the bombardier had landed safely, but they had all been captured by the Germans. Identified by his dog tags, the bombardier was pronounced dead where he landed. For all but one to be reported safe was encouraging news. However, the official report upon my return to England read as follows:

Position	Rank/Name	Status
Pilot	Capt. John W. Watson	Returned
C.P.	2 Lt. Clayton C. David	Evadee
Nav.	2 Lt. John G. Leverton	POW
Bomb.	2 Lt. Vance R. Colvin	MIA

R. Op.	S/Sgt. Harry Romaniec	POW
T.T.G.	Sgt. Eugene R. Stewart	POW
B.T.G.	Sgt. William H. Fussner	MIA
W.G.	S/Sgt. Samuel L. Rowland	MIA
W.G.	Sgt. Fred H. Booth	MIA
T.G.	Sgt. Roman P. Kosinski	POW

After the war the status of the four men reported MIA was changed to KIA (Killed in Action).

I have never been able to reconcile the differences, but as I learned years later, only four men were initially taken to a prison in Amsterdam before being moved to their prisoner-of-war camps. These were the four men who were officially reported as POWs. I do not know at what point Sergeants Fussner, Rowland, and Booth were killed, but they were.

I spent two nights and two days with Mr. and Mrs. Rensink before being moved to my next location. But before leaving their home, Mr. Rensink made sure I left with a clean shave, and he gave me a mug and shaving brush which I've never let get away. He was also my guide to my next stop. It was dark but early in the evening when we left his house. We walked to a crowded ferry that had a number of German soldiers on it; but it was the quickest and best way across the large canal. On the other side we had a long walk to the place where I would be staying. Mr. Rensink took his bicycle along to aid in a faster return home, but because I was not riding a bicycle, we both walked alongside his, which was not uncommon.

When we reached my new location, I found we were at a second-floor apartment over a small business shop at a street corner. Mr. Rensink remained for only a few minutes, and then said good-bye. In this new location, still in Amsterdam, I remained for 17 days with Miss Betty Glimmerveen, a maiden lady who worked at the Netherland Bank. Her address was 69 Amesteldyke South, overlooking a street and the Amstel Canal. I spent much time observing the people on the street and the traffic on the canal, which gave me an opportunity to try to adopt more of the local behavior.

Miss Glimmerveen went to work each day and returned each evening at a regular time. This meant that it was essential that I be very quiet in my movements during the day, as no was expected to be there during those hours.

One day, soon after my arrival, Miss Glimmerveen came home with a suit for me that was an excellent fit. She also brought a shirt, a tie, and a topcoat. They were apparently acquired by some of Rensink's customers and they were my size. I now had civilian clothes which would be necessary for traveling when I left. My G.I. shoes were brown and distinctive, but good shoes that fit were even more difficult to get than clothes, and thus I was given black dye for the shoes. Few, if any, men who evaded were better dressed or prepared for walking than I. This was very important to my future.

Miss Glimmerveen was a good cook and I believe she made the best red cabbage that I have ever tasted. Food was in very short supply, and a single person couldn't just start buying larger quantities, so some arrangements had to be made. To help out, Betty's sister and her son with a farm connection would appear occasionally with produce and wheat among other items. We ground the wheat into flour, from which Miss Glimmerveen would bake bread. It was much better than that which was usually available at the store.

Using electricity would also create some problems. The apartment was on a coin meter which would cause the lights to go out when the amount paid for had been used. It was then necessary to take a flashlight and put more coins or tokens into the meter. There is no doubt that this method is effective in making people aware of the amount of electricity they use and that it causes them to be more conservative.

News was something you naturally longed for. When the air-raid sirens sounded and you heard the planes going over, you always wondered where the target was. Locally, there was little response to the sirens except to make certain that the blackout curtains were tightly drawn. Amsterdam was on the route to German targets for the planes from England, but it was not a target at that time. In an effort to control information, the Germans had confiscated the radios and had equipped apartments with radio systems that permitted the choice of only three stations. These were naturally German controlled stations which provided only the information they wanted to release in the way they wanted it to be released. Hidden in a closet was a radio which would be brought out each evening so that we could listen to the BBC news. At the same time, one of the German controlled stations was played loudly to cover the very distinctive sound of the BBC.

We also would get some information on the nights when Miss Glimmerveen's sister Willy and her young teenage son brought food. The son was able to converse in English and seemed to delight in briefing us. I never did see the boy's father, but I understood that he was part Jewish. He was forced to wear the identifying J badge and work for the Germans at least one day per week. Up to that point he had not been sent to a concentration camp as his wife was not a Jew.

I was told this story about the forced labor that had come from the boy's father:

They were being forced to help build barracks or housing for the German troops that controlled the area. As they were putting in the sewer lines they would, when not being watched, put plugs in the pipe and cover it up. The last task in finishing the buildings was the pouring of concrete stoops. The keys were in the doors ready for moving in. As they poured the concrete stoops, the forced labor locked the door and dropped the keys into the concrete. Once the problem of all locked door and no keys was solved the Germans moved in only to find that their plumbing didn't work as expected.

This was a simple, but effective means of harassment that might be called sabotage.

A more fatal type of resistance was reported to occur on occasion in Amsterdam when German soldiers would try to court the Dutch girls. From time to time some of the unidentified Dutch girls would go willingly for a walk at night with a German soldier along a canal. The next day the soldier's body was fished from the canal.

While I was not a witness to these reported incidents, I can believe them. They exemplify the determination the people of the Netherlands had to make the occupation of their country as difficult as possible for the Germans. However, in the final analysis, the Germans got revenge.

The peace loving people of Holland have directed their conquest for more land toward recovering it from the sea, not toward taking it from other people. But Holland had fought the Germans for five days, 10-15 May 1940, before it was forced to surrender to the mighty German army. To the survivors, surrender didn't mean quitting. They just fought on in a less apparent way. Their resistance, the smallness of their country, and a language that was less of a barrier than in France and Belgium, appeared to combine and provide the Germans an excuse to be very hard on the Dutch people.

How Miss Glimmerveen became involved in helping me is described in the following letter, written by her brother, John Glimmerveen, from his home near Visalia, California. The details are as they knew them.

Visalia – Jan. 22, 1946

Mr. David, Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A.

Dear Sir or family,

I have before me a long letter from my sister out of Amsterdam, Holland who asked me to inquire about Clayton C. David 2nd pilot age 26 years and will try to tell you my sister's story about him: Clayton was on a mission to bombard the German city of Brunswijk, the mentioned city was bombarded. However, on the trip back to England via Holland his plane was shot on fire at 15,000 feet altitude. He was 2nd pilot on board with 10 men, all bailed out. Some were taken prisoner, one was drowned. He landed with only a little scratch on his right hand. He buried his uniform and parachute, the Germans were only 1500 to 1800 feet away, however did not see him. This happened on Jan. 11, 1944 close to Durgerdam and Edam, the main cheese market of Holland.

He hid till the Germans disappeared, walked to a Dutch farm where he met a farmer by the name, Schouten, who had a son who worked at the Netherland Bank where my sister Betty also is employed. Mr. Schouten Sr. did not know what to do because the Germans were going to search the town for the missing fliers who escaped. They were good Christian people and prayed to God about what to do. You know if the Germans found them guilty of helping the Americans they would have

shot the whole family. They hid him in a kind of stable in the field, next morning they searched the house, but never came to his hideout. By dark they got him out and brought his away to another party over river. Those people kept him two days. They could not keep him either so, the man in the back told my sister in deep secret the story.

My sister who is 45 years old and not married offered to take care of him. She has a big apartment. Mr. Schouten Jr. said to my sister, "Do you know if they find him at your place you sure will be shot?" She said, "OK we will do our part, the Americans give our lives for our cause. We will do the same." So Clayton was dressed as a Dutch farmer with a bicycle, somebody also a brave man brought him over on the ferry boat loaded with German soldiers and Dutch people at dark about 7 o'clock. This was Jan. 4, 1944. They brought him through Amsterdam to my sister's place who took care of him about 17 days. They, my sister Betty and her married sister Willy and her children took care of his food, clothes entertained him. Told him what they knew about the war. Also the underground movement helped him.

He stayed home for 17 days and Jan. 31, 1944 was smuggled out of Holland and shipped to England. She has never heard from him any more. He promised to write me and also her. He memorized both addresses because it was too dangerous to have any address with him. He got safe in England because my sister got a visit from two officers (Dutch and Canadian), who said they were sent from the combined English and Dutch Governments to thank her for her brave deed. He sent greetings to my sister. The officers asked my sister, "How was it possible for you to feed him because there was not hardly enough for you to live

on, and how could you give him so good clothes? Even England people did not have any clothes.”

Now my question is, does your boy Clayton still live? If not I thought you would interested to hear this little story. Please write me as soon as possible. My sister asked me to inquire; she is not so good in English correspondence. Receive my greetings.

Yours truly,
Visalia, Cal. J. Glimmerveen

As it turned out, John Glimmerveen did not have my complete address and I didn't fully remember his sister's. Therefore, it was several years before I received the above letter and sent a proper reply to his sister. Once we got our addresses straight and I was to get a letter directly to Miss Glimmerveen, the following letter was received.

Amsterdam, 28 Maart 1951

Dear Mr. Clayton David,

I cannot tell you how glad I was when I received your letter of the 23rd November last.

All the years since 1944 I have been very desirous to know if you were alive and to hear something from you. I did my utmost to get your address but until some weeks ago all in vain.

I am very glad that all is all right with you, that you now have a family too, wife and child, so at any rate these are signs of peace. Under these days I am not prepared to think disagreeable things, for now I know that all is well with you, there is sunshine for me. It is a matter of fact that I have given you hospitality on account of Christian being and because I had to do my duty for the sake of freedom, for which you risked your life. Well we

had a hard time but you came through and for this moment all is all right.

In my opinion people that lived together some time, every minute with the death before them, grow deeper and deeper in each other's mind and form in future a part of their lives.

I understand, that it must have been for you a very unpleasant thing to be inclined to write me and not be able to do so on account of not knowing my address.

I have not visited the barber, who you remembered and whose name and address is, Mr. J. Rensink, Andoornskeet 21 house, Amsterdam-Noord, Holland. Please you will also write to your friend Rensink, he shall be very glad that all is all right with you. I send you a photo of my house, that is a remember of Amsterdam.

Good bye Clayton, I hope that you shall write to me and I answer real soon. Many greetings also for your wife and child.

Yours M.E. Glimmerveen

I never made it back to Holland while Miss Glimmerveen or Mr. and Mrs. Rensink were still alive, but I understand Miss Glimmerveen married and continued to live in the same apartment. She also worked at the same bank until she retired. To my knowledge, I'm the only airman she or the Rensinks ever hid in their homes.

For me personally, it has been frustrating to try to make contact with people who helped me when I did not know their names and addresses. I believe Miss Glimmerveen's letter expressed that same frustration of not knowing for certain that I had survived and returned home. In the interest of both helpers and the airmen that were helped, the search continues on both sides of the Atlantic.



Above: Clayton and his wife, "Scotty," stand on the dike of the Zuider Zee near where Clayton landed 11 January 1944.



Right: In 1985, "Joke" Folmer stands in front of the entrance to the second floor apartment where bay windows provided a view from the living room.



Above: Miss Glimmerveen in her living room where Clayton hid for 17 days in January 1944.