



Anna Golesworthy

Anna was born in 1922 to Jan and Marie Valk, and was the eldest of three children. Although her nationality was Dutch her father was working in Indonesia before Anna was born and this is where she spent the majority of her life until after the war. The family moved around a great deal and before the end of the war Anna had only been to Holland twice.

When the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941 meant war with the Japanese, Anna left university and signed on for the Women's Driving Corps. The Japanese invaded Java on 8th March 1942. They took over the family home and the Valks moved into a smaller company house. Jan was allowed to remain in charge of the power station but was told that if anything went wrong he would forfeit his life. However one day the Kempetei (secret police) arrived to take Jan away. They held him for a few days until his Japanese boss arranged his release as they wanted him to be available in case of a major break down at the power station. After an incident where Jan felt that a Japanese officer was too familiar with his daughters, the family moved house once more. Two days later he was imprisoned again. Nettie (his youngest daughter) visited him a couple of weeks later and found him in the square waiting to be registered. They managed to simply walk away and from then on Jan did not leave the house. Much to their father's annoyance, Anna's brother volunteered at the age of 16 and was taken to work on the Burma railway.

Around this time the Dutch were forced to wear armbands with a number on and they began to be put into camps. Jan's "boss" came for him and the family never saw him again - he developed cancer and died during an operation in his camp. Marie and the rest of the family (Anna and Nettie) were told to report to the camp. They were given a room in a big house, which originally held 9 adults and 11 children. By the end of the war it held 150 people. Marie and her children were later moved to a much smaller house. It could hold 4 people but ended up holding 48.

The conditions in the camp were appalling. There was a policy of deliberate starvation, used as a form of collective punishment. For one person's misdeeds the whole camp would be put on a diet of porridge for six weeks. When the camp came under the control of a new commander, Sonei, he instigated a much more brutal regime. From March 1944 the Japanese policy was to "quietly exterminate the inmates".

Peace was declared on 11th August 1945 and the British arrived in September. The ex-prisoners of war were evacuated back to Holland. It was on the voyage home on the *New Amsterdam*, carrying approximately 5000 passengers, that Anna met her future husband Roger, a British soldier. They formed a friendship, which turned to love on the journey home



Detail from Anna Golesworthy's
Japanese passport



and once a visa for marriage was obtained the couple was reunited, and married in England, where she remains to this day.

When Anna's brother was released he was left in Jakarta with no shoes and no money. His family had already returned to Holland and he had to make his own way home working as a deck-hand.

The Centre is honoured to preserve a tape-recorded interview with Anna along with a copy of her memoir. We also have some fascinating items of memorabilia and some wonderful original artwork, done during her time in the camp.

From Anna's Memoirs:

"What is the matter, Stansche?" asked Marie.

"I don't know what to do about my jewellery", cried Stansche, "What jewellery?" said Marie. The girls had pricked up their ears, and were stupefied to see Stansche pour beautiful diamond rings, bracelets and necklaces out of the chamois leather bag. The stuff was diamond encrusted and had rubies, emeralds and sapphires in the glittering settings. They had never before seen anything like it.



"It is my nest egg" wailed Stansche "What shall I do with it? I don't want to lose it". Annie had never seen anything so comical. "Dear me, you have got a problem, Stansche, wherever are you going to keep that lot?" Another long wail from Stansche, and hand wringing.

"We will have to hide it", (not only from the Japs, but from other people, of course).

There was literally nowhere to conceal anything. No use under the beds, for that was the first place they would be searching. Nor could one hide anything in the garden or around the houses, for one was moved so often, and at short notice.

"How high are the blocks your bed stands on?" asked Annie. She had helped Stansche when she moved last time, and seemed to remember that the blocks were substantial conical shaped pieces of teak, or some other sort of hard wood. Stansche and Annie went back to Stansche's sleeping place. Annie said "Yes, I know what we will do. We will hollow out one of these blocks and put the stuff inside. If I push that block nearest to the back wall I'll bet no Jap will crawl right under, and take the bed off the blocks to look for something. We will be cunning. You will have to keep the floor under the bed beautifully clean and uncluttered and they will look under it and think "This one is very tidy, and has nothing to hide".

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She gave Annie a full packet of porridge oats for her trouble. It was taken home in triumph and came in very handy later on when they were hungry. Quaker oats should put that in their advertisements - 'a teaspoonful a day keeps the hunger at bay!'

Through all the war Stansche's bed was taken hither and thither, but the jewel hoard was never discovered. Later on, after the war, she bought a flat in Amsterdam and lived there for many years.

From Anna's Memoirs:

In the women's camp in Batavia things were getting really bad. Another restriction on food was imminent, and the Japs were looking for an excuse to put it into operation. They soon found it.

One of the women in Marie's house was out for a stroll with her two little children when they met up with Sonei, the camp commander. He was a tough one, and since he had come to the camp the more relaxed atmosphere that had prevailed under the previous (Christian) commander had distinctly altered to a more brutal system. Beatings, and long withdrawals of essential food were the order of the day. The women thought he had a case of moonmadness, as these trials always seemed to come during the nights that the moon was full.

That may be true, but this time there was no full moon, nor any other excuse. When the woman saw Sonei she bowed, as everyone else would do, but her little son ran up to Sonei and stuck out his tongue and pulled a face whereon Sonei grabbed the woman by the hair and wrenching an iron bar from somewhere, hit her until she was a crumpled heap of humanity, lying on the ground. The children ran screaming back to their place, and no-one dared to go and help her until the brute had gone. She was picked up and carried to the hospital where she was seen by the only female doctor in the camp. She never recovered, and died later in the mental hospital to which she had been moved, and where the patients starved to death.

The children were taken into the orphanage. This was bad enough, but worse was to come. The whole camp was called out on parade, and Sonei sounded off a long tirade that nobody understood. Within an hour, a group of Hei-Ho soldiers appeared before the house where the woman had lived and, having been shown her room they systematically wrecked it, tearing all her clothes and photographs, and in the end they defecated all over the room, leaving a filthy mess.



Sonei the Camp Commander was hanged



Inventory of the Donation

- Husband's paybook
- 14 pieces of artwork - 4 original, 10 photocopied
- Typescript memoir
- Japanese passport
- POW camp number
- Book, *The Solid Angle*, 1945, by Anna Golesworthy
- Set of letters
- Photograph of the camp commander (cut from newspaper)
- CAS magazine
- Manuscript recipes in Dutch (she wrote them out in the camp)



Anna Golesworthy's Japanese passport