



## **Don't Worry About Me**

The Remnants of a Forgotten Life - with Hilda van Neck-Yoder

April 13, 2016

60 minutes, 49 seconds

Speaker: Hilda van Neck-Yoder

Transcribed: Stephanie Duncan

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

UC San Diego Library Digital Collections

<https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb6213894z>

Copyright: Under copyright (US)

Rights Holder: UC Regents

Use: This work is available from the UC San Diego Library. This digital copy of the work is intended to support research, teaching, and private study.

Constraint(s) on Use: This work is protected by the U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Use of this work beyond that allowed by "fair use" requires written permission

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Time	Transcription	Slides
00:01	[The Library UC San Diego]	
00:06	[“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder]	
00:07	<p>Susanne Hillman: I would like to welcome you all to today’s Holocaust Living History Workshop with Dr. Hilda van Neck-Yoder. I’m Susanne Hillman from, well, The Holocaust Living History Workshop, obviously - the program manager. Before I introduce our guest speaker, I would like to draw your attention to our next event which will feature Goldie Morgentaler, a professor of literature at the University of Lethbridge, and a translator of Yiddish. Professor Morgentaler will talk about the work of her mother, Chava Rosenfarb who was a, one of the few Yiddish novelists writing fiction about the Holocaust in the twentieth century. Before the lecture, we will offer a free screening of a documentary that was recently released about the life and work of Chava Rosenfarb. It’s called <i>That Bubble of Being</i>.</p>	
01:01	<p>Susanne Hillman: So, if you take a flyer please note that the screening is going to be here at 3:00 on May 4th, but the talk will start as usual at 5:00. So feel free to come to both events or just one of the two. And now to today’s event. Over the past decade, the Holocaust has generated a massive amount of scholarship, yet even 70 years after the conclusion of the War, the Second World War, there are still stories we don’t know. There are lives that have disappeared without a trace, and there are places we have never even heard of. In recent years, it seems to me that the effort to reconstruct some of these stories has been taken up by a lot of men and women researching their family history, and we’ve had a number</p>	

of them actually speaking at our events. And so the result has been an increasing number of memoirs and histories written by children of victims, grandchildren, siblings, cousins, et cetera.

02:07 Susanne Hillman: Their work, I think, is an essential contribution to the study of the Holocaust. And this brings me, in this context, to our speaker. I take a particular pleasure in introducing today’s speaker, Hilda van Neck-Yoder. Dr. van Neck-Yoder was born in Holland, in the Netherlands, and has taught comparative literature at Howard University in the Department of English. She has published work in Dutch and Caribbean - or Caribbean-Dutch literature. And since her retirement as professor emeritus, she has become a docent at the San Diego Museum of Art. And I’m impressed by the very varied work she has been studying and lecturing on. She has lectured on Japanese woodblock prints, on Rembrandt’s interest in Indian painting, and on Asia in seventeenth-century Dutch art. I wish we could hear more about that but today we’ll learn more about her recent work which has focused on the Holocaust.

03:10 Susanne Hillman: She has for some time now translated letters and conducted research for her Canadian cousin whose Dutch father lost almost all of his family in the Holocaust. I may also add that Dr. van Neck-Yoder has been one of our loyal, most loyal supporters for several years. So please help me welcoming Hilda van Neck-Yoder.

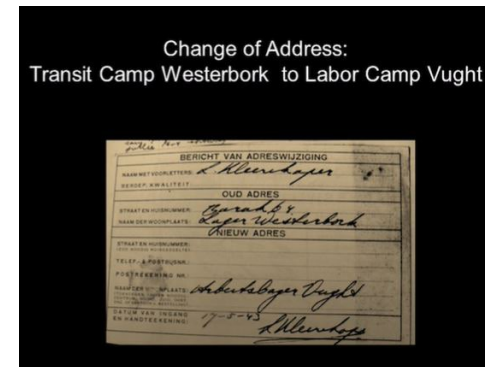
03:33 [Audience applause].

03:38 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: All right, let me turn on my mic[rophone]. All right, can you hear me? Is it on? No? Is it on now? Better? Okay. Thank you. And thank you so much Susanne for inviting me. It’s really a tremendous honor to speak to all of you. I want to first of all thank two people that did a lot of work - help, they helped me

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

tremendously and the first one is Heidi Holler, and her cousin is here. I met her here, and she works at the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., and she told me that she would look up anything for me, and she did. And she found some remarkable things that made a big difference in my research. The other person’s name is Raymond Schultz. He is a professor at the University of Amsterdam, and he is a specialist in one aspect that I will be discussing. And without his help, I would not be able to talk to you at all. I would not have been able to develop the kind of interesting story.

04:40 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: At least I think it’s a really interesting story that begins with the most unimportant piece of paper. That is a change of address. And here is L. Kleerekoper. His name is Leendert. His family called him Loeki and he is moving. This is his little note card that he sends to his aunt, announcing to her that he is moving from Westerbork to Vught. So the function of that little card is for her now to write to him, and especially to send packages which she did endlessly. Every letter he writes, he writes and says - thanks her for the package of the fifteenth, and the seventeenth, and the nineteenth. She sent him many, many packages.



Change of Adress: Transit Camp Westerbork to Labor Camp Vught

05:28 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: To us, it has a completely different function. We’re trying to figure out from these little pieces of paper, the person. The person that we don’t know anything about. We knew his name. My cousin in Canada, Kati, knew his name, but otherwise, he was completely forgotten. We don’t know what kind of education he had, what kind of person he was. So, we have four letters that he left, that he wrote to his aunt from Vught, and then we have this little unimportant piece of paper.

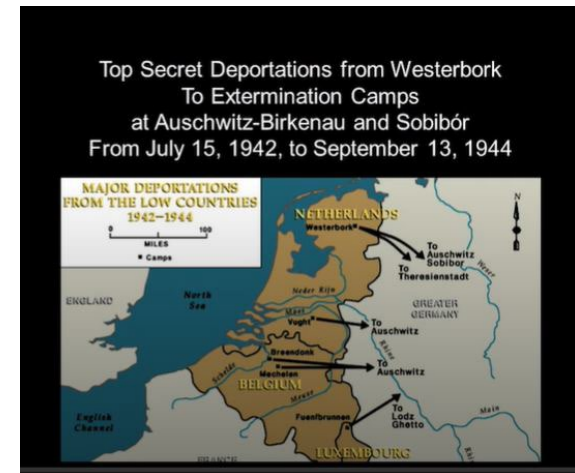
05:58 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: However, if we place this piece of paper within the historical context, we will make some remarkable

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

discoveries because, you will ask when you look at this piece of paper, what was he doing in Westerbork? And what was he doing in Vught? What is going on in Vught? Why would anybody from Westerbork go to Vught? And questions like that.

06:23 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, let me make sure I go to the right direction. So, he was in Westerbork, and Westerbork - let me see if I can point it out to you. It’s right here, in the north. It’s in an area of Holland that is absolutely horrible. There’s nothing there, there’s just sand. No people. Of course on purpose, they put the camp there for the Jewish people that were deported, secret deportations from Westerbork to Auschwitz and Sobibór. All the people were moved from all of Holland to Amsterdam in the spring of 1942, so that they could very easily be deported from Amsterdam, on the train to Westerbork. People would be picked up at night, in the dark. There would be a knock on the door, and they would be rounded up and then the trains would leave at midnight so no one would see any of these trains with these hundreds and hundreds of people. Thousands of people going at night to Westerbork, and at Westerbork they would stay a day, a week, a month, sometimes much longer.

07:37 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And then they would be pushed into cars - railroad cars and sent to Auschwitz. Now, that’s where he is. That’s where he sends his little notecard to his aunt. And these camps - Auschwitz is Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibór - they were not concentration camps. They were really extermination camps. There’s nothing there except gas to kill people. So people would arrive, and within a few hours, they would be dead. This is Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibór, and the period of time is July 15, 1942, to September 1944.



Top Secret Deportations from Westerbork to Extermination camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibor from July 15, 1942 to September 13, 1944

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop


08:20 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Just to give you statistics, to begin with, to set the scene: in that period, over 100,000 Jews were deported on 93 trains, mostly from Transit Camp Westerbork as you can see here, to the extermination camps of Auschwitz and Sobibór. They were not sent to labor camps, they were sent to be murdered immediately. There were two trains that left from Vught, but practically everybody was in Westerbork and then the automatic thing, you had no choice. There was a prison, it was all - you were a prisoner in Westerbork. And you had no choice, you were pushed on that train on Tuesdays, and the whole camp would be on lockdown. Nobody could leave their barracks except for the people who were supposed to go on the train, because otherwise there would be pandemonium because it was so horrific. Out of the people that were deported, only five percent survived. So that, of the 140,000 people whom the Germans considered full Jews living in the Netherlands at that time, between 20 and 25 [percent] survived the War. This is the lowest survival rate of any country in Europe.

09:35 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, how is it possible that Loek Kleerekoper is in Westerbork and is not pushed on one of those trains to Sobibór or Auschwitz? How did that happen? That is a very strange situation. And if we look at Vught, where he was going, what we see is that he is actually going against traffic. Because the people that were imprisoned in Vughtand there were many Jews imprisoned in Vught. There was at one time that Westerbork was so full that the Germans decided to also use Vught to imprison Jews until they could be deported. And in that May, when he is being transferred from Westerbork to Vught, in that very same month there are four trains that took more than 4,000, almost 4,000 people from Vught to Westerbork, and they would then be immediately deported to

**Deportations**  
From July 15, 1942, to September 13, 1944:

107,000 Jews were deported in 93 trains mostly from Transit Camp Westerbork, to the extermination camps of Auschwitz and Sobibór.  
Fewer than 5% of those deported survived.

Of the 140,000 people whom the Germans considered full Jews, living in the Netherlands, between 20 and 25% survived the war.




The map shows the Netherlands with Westerbork marked as a transit camp. Arrows indicate deportation routes: one to Auschwitz, one to Sobibór, and one to Theresienstadt. It also shows the location of Greater Germany and the Vught area.

Deportations from July 15, 1942 to September 13, 1944 / 107,000 Jews were deported in 93 trains mostly from Transit Camp Westerbork, to the extermination camps of Auschwitz and Sobibór. Of the 140,000 people whom the Germans considered full Jews, living in the Netherlands, between 20 and 25% survived the war.

May 1943: Vught to Westerbork to Sobibór

In May 1943, 4 trains took 3,816 people from Vught to Westerbork

In May 1943, 4 trains deported 8,000 people from Westerbork to Sobibór



The map shows the Netherlands with Vught and Westerbork marked. Arrows indicate movement from Vught to Westerbork, and then from Westerbork to Sobibór, Theresienstadt, and Auschwitz. It also shows the location of Greater Germany and the Vught area.

May 1943: Vught to Westerbork to Sobibór / In May 1943, 4 trains took 3,816 people from Vught to Westerbork / in May 1943, 4 trains deported 8,000 people from Westerbork to Sobibór.

Sobibór. In fact, in the month of May and June, from Vught to Westerbork, 12,000 people are deported.

10:39 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And here he is in Westerbork, by himself, going the other direction. I was in the archives in Amsterdam, and I was interested in finding out if there were trains going from Westerbork to Vught because I couldn’t figure out how he got there. Because everybody, you know, when people would be moved, there would be trains, and as you can see the trains would be listed. There are trains, so many trains that are of Jews deported from Amsterdam and other cities to Vught. There was a time that everybody, that Vught was being used to house Jews until they could be deported to Westerbork. But, people choose - going to Westerbork there are only, as you can see: three-ten to three-thirteen, four trains in all of this period. There’s one on February 1943 when Vught just opened as a prison camp and they thought, well let’s put Jews there because Westerbork was so full. And so a huge trainload of people from Amsterdam for everybody who had to be - was now forced to live - a huge train from Amsterdam went to Vught on the twentieth of February.

11:54 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Then on the fourth of June there were a small group of diamond workers because Vught was going to be the place where they were going to have a diamond workshop because the Germans needed people who could work with diamonds. And of course, there were a lot of Jews in Amsterdam who had the skills to do that. It was a very important occupation. And then on the second of October, there’s Mr. Walter Elias who will play a huge role in the life of Loeki Kleerekoper. A total coincidence, I saw this in the archive that here is Mr. Elias. His name is listed, his wife’s name is not, his children’s names are not, and then three other couples and also they’re not listed. And that’s very odd because everybody’s

Deportation Lists of Jews 1942-44 To Vught

Jews deported from Amsterdam and other cities to Vught:  
NIOD: 250g-272 to 310



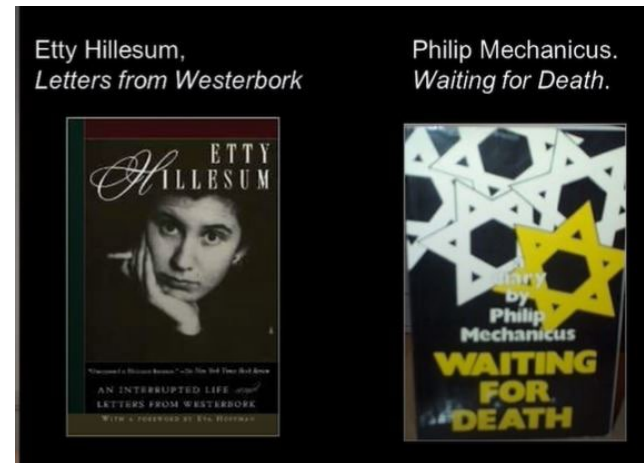
Jews deported from Westerbork to Vught:  
NIOD: 250g-310-313

- 20 February 1943 (huge)
- 4 June 1943 (diamond workers)
- 2 October 1943 Mr. Walter Elias with wife and 2 children and three other couples with 1 child
- 28 March 1944, 25 women and 83 men (Philips workers)

Deportation lists of Jews 1942-44 to Vught / Jews deported from Amsterdam and other cities to Vught / NIOD 250g-272 to 310 / Jews deported from Westerbork to Vught NIOD 250g-272-313 / 20 February 1943 (huge) / 4 June 1943 Mr. Walter Elias with wife and 2 children and 3 other couples with 1 child / 28 March 1944. 25 women and 83 men (Philips workers)

name is always listed on these lists of people. And then in March 1944, there’s another train that goes from Westerbork to Vught with some people that work for Philips, but very soon they are also going back again to Westerbork and then they go to Auschwitz

12:55 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, it is very odd that we have him traveling from Westerbork to Vught. And so I looked at, I looked at some books that are written by people that were in Vught - in Westerbork - at the time. Etty Hillseum wrote letters. She was in Westerbork for a long time. She wrote letters to friends and would describe the things that happened. Philip Mechanicus is a fantastic journalist. He was imprisoned in Vught and managed to stay there for nine months, and kept detailed records of what was going on as a real journalist, smuggled it out. So this book, *Waiting for Death*, is really a gold mine of information about Westerbork. Neither book mentions anyone going from Westerbork to Vught. So how is this possible that Loek Kleerekoper - instead of being sent to Sobibór - manages to go to Vught?

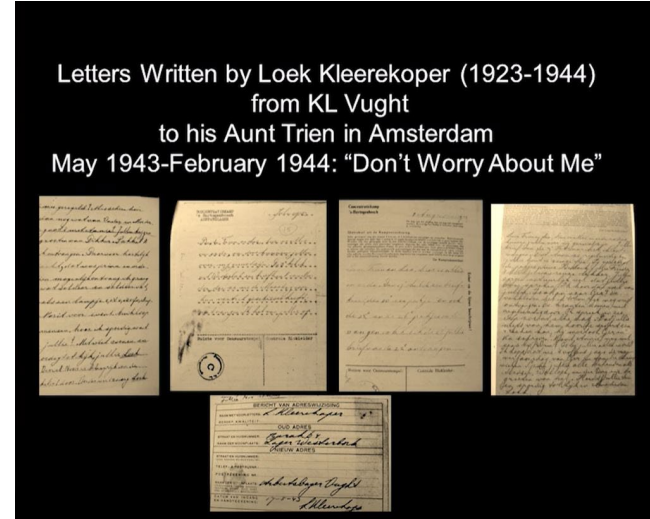


Etty Hillesum, *Letters from Westerbork* / Philip Mechanicus, *Waiting for Death*



“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

14:01 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So maybe the letters will give us an indication. Here are the four letters. Number one - it’s the second page of number one, two, three. And then the last one from February 1944 and this little card. So that’s all we have. In his first letter that he writes, so he is moved to - from Westerbork to Vught in May. In June he finally writes to his aunt and he asks her to renew his subscriptions to certain magazines, and all those magazines have to do with radio. One of them is called *Radio Express* another one is called Radio-something-else. But anyway, please renew my subscriptions, and this one, this one that needs to be paid. And he sends her the address. In other words, he has a sense that he’s going to be there for a while. That he is stable; that this is now his new house.



Letters Written by Loek Kleerekoper (1923-1944) from KL Vught to his Aunt Trien in Amsterdam / May 1943-February 1944: “Don’t Worry About Me”

14:53 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So in the second letter, that is July 13 he writes, “Dear Trein and Leo” These are his aunt and uncle. “Here everything is in order. So You don’t need to worry about me.” And the next sentence is a horrific sentence. He says - he writes, “On July the 8th, I received a postcard from Mother from Westerbork that she wrote the Monday before their departure” which was Tuesday. So, on July 28th or something, his parents and his sister were taken from Westerbork straight to Sobibór. By the time he gets that letter, they have long been dead. And he knows what this means. Of course, nobody had heard of Sobibór. Nobody knew that anyone was going to be killed right away, but people knew that they were going to have a horrible time, that they would be working in difficult situations. It would be a very scary place to be. But of course, now we call it Sobibór. Now we know what it is. But anyway, so he knows his mother, and his father, and his sister have left the Netherlands.

July 13, 1943  
Dear Trien and Leo,  
  
Here everything is in order. So you do not need to worry about me. On [July] the 8th, I received a postcard from Mother from Westerbork that she wrote the Monday before their departure.  
  
At the moment, I am working in my own profession.  
Also, I have moved again, probably for the last time, to B2b. Did you pay the newspaper and did you send a forwarding address to my professional journals? Only the subscription of Radio Express has to be renewed.  
....  
Because of my work, I am again studying a little.  
Dearest ones, please greet all my friends and acquaintances and many kisses for you, from Loek.

July 13, 1943 / Dear Trien and Leo, / Here everything is in order. So you do not need to worry about me. On [July] the 8th, I received a postcard from Mother from Westerbork that she wrote on Monday

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

before their departure. / At the moment, I am working in my own profession. / Also, I have moved again, probably for the last time, to B2b. Did you pay the newspaper and did you send a forwarding address to my professional journals? Only the subscription of Radio Express has to be renewed. / Because of my work, I am again studying a little. / Dearest ones, please greet all my friends and acquaintances and many kisses for you, from Loek.

16:00 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: His next sentence: “At the moment, I am working in my profession.” I don’t know how many Jewish, young men would be able to say that at this point in the history of the Holocaust. In this point of that huge number of people that are being exterminated in Sobibór. He says, “I am working on my own profession.” And he says, “Also, I have moved again, probably for the last time.” In other words: now I will be here permanently. Who had that kind of feeling at that time?

16:35 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: “Did you pay the newspaper?” He gets a newspaper. “Did you send a forwarding address to my professional journals? Only the subscription of Radio Express has to be renewed...Because of my work, I am studying a little. Dearest ones, please greet all my friends and acquaintances and many kisses for you, from Loek.” How many people would be able to say: because of my work, I am studying a little? Again, so there is something absolutely different and unique about him.

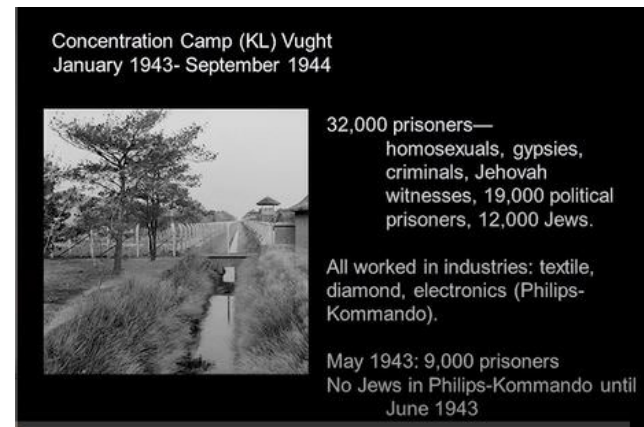
“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

17:05 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, what happened in Vught? So we’ve seen he was in Westerbork, he now is in Vught. Vught is also in an area - Vught is right here - where there is nothing. It’s a very secluded area. The camp here is behind forests. The village is somewhere over here. So nobody in the village would see what was going on in this camp.



Concentration Camp (KL) Vught / January 1943-September 1944

17:29 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: It started in January 1943 in the horrible cold, and it was a prison camp not for Jews but for homosexuals, gypsies, criminals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, political prisoners, and then in February they decided to also put a lot of Jews in that prison camp. It was a horrible camp. It was the only camp outside of Germany that was run by the SS [Schutzstaffel]. And the SS commanders of the camp all trained in Mauthausen and Sachsenhausen which were horrific camps in Germany. So the treatment of the prisoners was awful in this camp. Now when I say they all worked in industries - textile, diamond, and electronics. There was a huge electronics industry factory there, run by Philips. But Philips did not want any Jews. So there were no Jews working for Philips, but there were lots of Jews in textile and of course in diamond.



Concentration Camp (KL) Vught / January 1943-September 1944 / 32,000 prisoners -- homosexuals, gypsies, criminals, Jehovah witnesses, 19,000 political prisoners, 12,000 Jews / All worked in industries: textile, diamond, electronics (Philips-Kommando). / May 1943: 9,000 prisoners / No Jews in Philips-Kommando until June 1943

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

18:34 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: When he got there in May 1943, it held 9,000 prisoners and it was terribly overcrowded. They probably had to sleep three in a bed. So in June 1943, Philips decides to have, to admit Jews. There’s a book written in 19 - in 2003. Finally, a book came out that analyzes the role of Philips in the whole process of having prison camps, prison camps run by the SS, Philips using slave labor. And then of course the issue of Philips not wanting Jews, and then at a certain point, they do want Jews. So - let me just go back here - the explanation that this book gives is that there were prisoners - leaders of the prison camp. Not Jewish prisoners, but other prisoners who watched a huge number of people being loaded on the train in May and in June, as I mentioned about 12,000 people in total - almost 12,000 people in total - on these four trains.

19:56 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And they said to each other, watching that: we need to do something about this. And they went to the leaders of, the managers of Philips and they said, can’t you organize that we can also get Jews, and have a safe place where we can maintain some Jewish prisoners rather than seeing all these people in these horrific situations on these trains. Children were - there was a trainload full of children that is still one of the worst moments in the Holocaust in the Netherlands. Anyway, so they talked to the commander and they decided, they managed to convince Philips to admit Jews, and the commander of the camp agreed. So there’s another book written in 2012. It’s a book. David Koker, who was this young man, he was a prisoner and kept a diary in the camp, and smuggled it out. And he was a Jewish prisoner.

21:01 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And of course, he was not in Philips. Notice that in June, Philips was trying to include some Jewish people, and



Deportations from KL Vught to Westerbork (to Sobibor) / May 1943: 3,816 in 4 trains / June 1943: 8006 in 4 trains (1,187 - 2,862) / Total: Almost 12,000 people

so he decided to see if he couldn’t get into that group of people. He became what you would call a functionary. He helped select other prisoners, other Jewish prisoners, to become part of the Philips-Kommando. There is nothing in either one of these books that says that anybody was brought in from the outside. The emphasis that the Professor Klein, who wrote the first book, he emphasized how ridiculous it was that Philips waited to include Jewish people after all these trainloads full of people had left. There were so few Jews left. And so there’s this criticism that Klein makes of Philips.

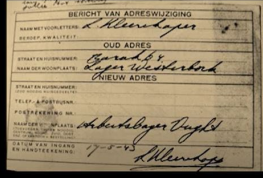
21:57 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: David Koker is a very beautifully written book that is of course very helpful to me in understanding what Loek Kleerekoper went through. But the point I want to make is that David Koker was one of the people picking out people to be part of the Philips-Kommando and that that was only for people who were already there. So it makes absolutely no sense. We see him being in Westerbork, and not being sent to Sobibór. We see him working in his own field, and then we also notice that here, the Philips-Kommando has started based on the pity that the prisoners felt for all the Jews being moved away and that they wanted to give a safe place for Jewish prisoners.

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

22:43 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: This is what the conclusion of the book is. According to this book, Philips Electronics decided to accept Jews after the horrific transports of thousands of Jews from Vught to Westerbork in May and June in 1943. And this is a direct quote, “Thus it was due to the understanding, courage, and ingenuity of the Philips-people,” that means these prisoners that work for Philips, “that the first of the [Jews] would receive the opportunity to enter the Philips-Kommando” in June 1943. And I want to place our little change of address within this context because he is already in Vught, and he’s already been selected to work in the Philips-Kommando way before any of this. So there is something very odd about this whole situation.

According to P.W. Klein, Philips Electronics decided to accept Jews after the horrific transports of thousands of Jews from Vught to Westerbork in May and in June 1943.

“Thus it was due to the understanding, courage, and ingenuity of the Philips-people, that the first of the [Jews] would receive the opportunity to enter the Philips-Kommando” in June 1943. Klein 143.




According to P.W. Klein, Philips Electronics decided to accept Jews after the horrific transports of thousands of Jews from Vught to Westerbork in May and June 1943. / “Thus it was due to the understanding, courage, and ingenuity of the Philips-people, that the first of the [Jews] would receive the opportunity to enter the Philips-Kommando” in June 1943. Klein143.

23:37 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: How do we solve it? And thanks to Raymond Schultz, the scholar from the Netherlands. He pointed out, actually no he did not point out. Let me put it this way: you want to know information about your family, so you write to the International Tracing Service or you write to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Institute and there they have copies of what is called the Cartothèque, the card system, the card catalog. Because, between October 20th, 1941, and August 27, 1942, in that period, the Jewish Council in Amsterdam completed one registration card for every Jewish person in the Netherlands, on the order of the Central-Zentralstelle - the central office of security. That is the office whose only goal was to annihilate the Jewish people from the Netherlands.

Cartothèque: Card Index/Card System

Between October 20, 1941 and August 27, 1942, the Jewish Council completed 160,790 registration cards on the order of the *Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auschwanderung* (i.e., in preparation for the deportations to Auschwitz and Sobibór).



International Tracing Service  
US Holocaust Memorial Museum  
NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide

Cartothèque: Card Index/Card System / Between October 20, 1941 and August 27, 1942, the Jewish Council completed 160,79- registrations cards on the order of the *Zentralstelle fur Judische*

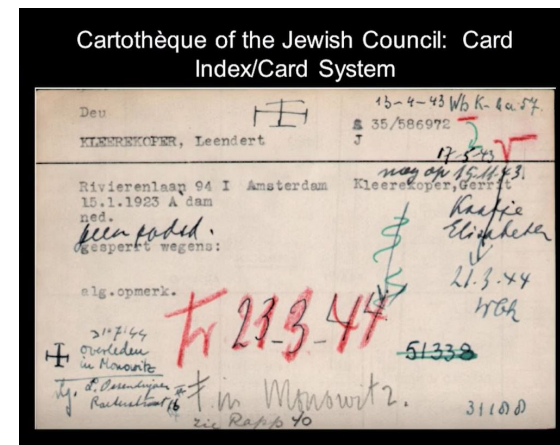
“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

*Auschwanderung* (i.e. in preparation for the deportations to Auschwitz and Sobibor). / International Tracing Service / US Holocaust Memorial Museum / NIOD Institute of War, Holocaust and Genocide

24:42 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And so they had, they ordered the Jewish Council to make one card for each individual so that with that card system, they would know where everybody was and they could easily deport people. They would know exactly where people were, and people had absolutely no way of escaping. So these cards are actually in terms of their function - their function is to murder. For us, now, they have a completely different function. They actually give us information about the person. And they actually humanize the individual, the name, and so forth gives us more information.

25:23 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So this is what the card looks for Loeki. So here is his name, the name of the person who typed this up, his address. He is Dutch, his father’s name, and then his mother and his sister’s name apparently are written later. It says *geen godsdienst*, he had no religion. He was, and here this would be just an automatic little entry that says that you would get an excuse from deportation because many, many people would have temporary excuses from deportation. And then some general remarks. For example, if somebody stole something or if somebody tried to escape. All of this would be recorded here. On the other side, this is his number. Here is the date that he arrives in Westerbork. That is on the 13th of April he arrives in Westerbork. I’m not sure what this is, I’ve forgotten, but anyway he goes then on the 17th of May to Vught, and then he goes from Vught back to Westerbork in March the 21st in 1944.

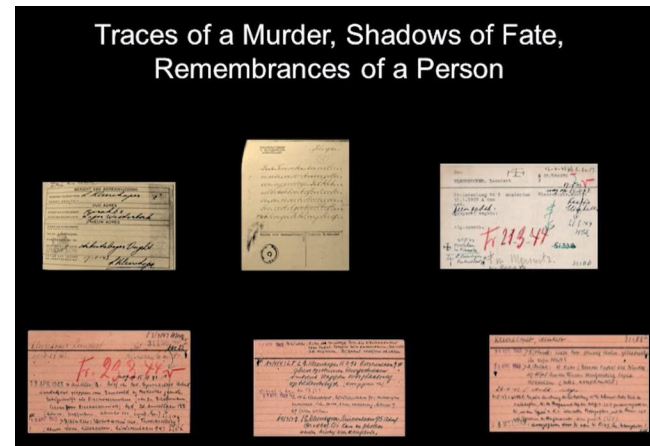
26:35 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So that’s all on that card. Then after the War, this is written on the card: that he’s died in Monowitz, and that the address of his grandmother is here. Of course, the grandmother has



Cartothèque of the Jewish Council: Card Index/Card System

also of course also been killed. And here is another little notice that he died in Monowitz. Here’s another little notice that he’s dead. This red means that was on the train on the 23rd of March 1944 - went out of Holland. That is written after the War by the Red Cross. No one knew when anybody left. Nobody knew, so you would be in Westerbork, people would know that you - your family in Amsterdam may know that you went, that you were picked up that night. But then after that, they never heard anything again until after the War. Until these lists of people came out. So his aunt never knew what happened to him after he left Vught. Here he left - let’s see - he left Vught here. She never knew what happened to him afterwards, until after the War.

27:44 Hilda van Neck Yoder: So these pieces of paper now are actually traces of murder, but they’re also shadows of fate and remembrances of a person. So they have gained a tremendous amount of meaning to us. And these are the three cards that were made that record the process that he went through in Westerbork to be selected to go to the Philips Kommando in Vught. And so I want to concentrate on these cards. These cards are received from the International Tracing Service, but they absolutely meant nothing to me. They were of scribbles, full of abbreviations. And so I asked this Mr. Schultz in the Netherlands to help me with a word, and he says, oh, this will take me a while. And I thought, why would that take a while? Well, he actually went through them and described in detail what every entry in those, on those cards are. And that is really very interesting and very complicated.

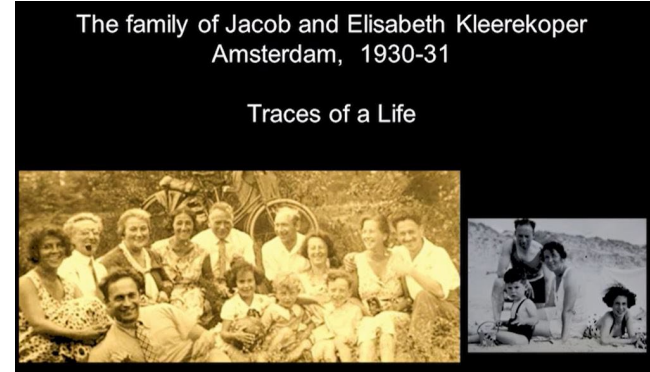


Traces of a Murder, Shadows of Fate, Remembrances of a Person.



28:52 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So before I go on, I just want to let you know my relationship to Loeki. Here is the sister of my father, Coby van Neck, and here is her husband-to-be. He is her fiancé, Herman Kleerekoper, and his father and mother. Here’s Trien, his older sister will survive the War, and her husband. And here is Gerrit Kleerekoper, Kaatje Kleerekoper, Eli Kleerekoper. These are his parents, his sister. His father was very famous. He was the coach of the women’s athletic team, and they won the gold in the 1928 Olympics. So when this picture is taken, he has met the Queen, he is very famous, and he has just started a program on the radio to teach morning gymnastics. At seven o’clock the news, fifteen minutes before seven, you could hear his voice. You could hear his voice, and then fifteen minutes after the news. So all of the Netherlands knew his voice, and people still go to his house every year when they commemorate people who were killed in the Holocaust in Amsterdam.

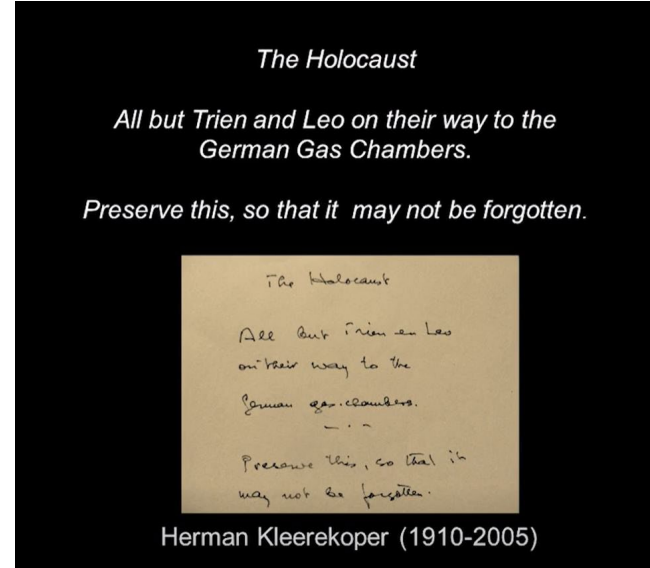
29:58 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, this is his youngest, this is my uncle’s youngest sister. So this is the family of Loek. And this is how I relate. So this is my aunt and uncle. And then this is also, I was very close to Trien as well. Let me just go back. Herman and Coby go to Brazil in the [19]30s because there is no work in the Netherlands. And so they go to Brazil. They have their children, Koos and Catie there, and then after the War, they go to the United States, Canada. And in 1999 my aunt dies, and in 2005 my uncle dies.



The family of Jacob and Elisabeth Kleerekoper / Amsterdam, 1930-31 / Traces of a life

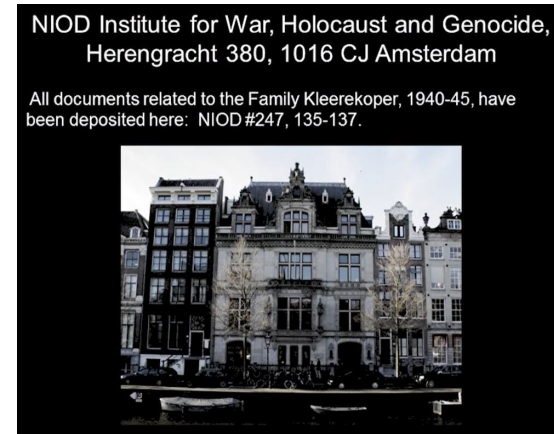
“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

30:39 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: When he leaves, when he dies, he leaves a little note, and that says, “All but Trien and Leo on their way to the German Gas Chambers. Preserve this, so that it may not be forgotten.” In this package were twenty letters. Seven letters written by Trien to Herman in Brazil, telling him that the family was no longer there. That they had all been murdered and describing the terrible years that they had, that she had in the War. Her husband was not Jewish and that is how she survived. She was arrested three times, but he was able to get her out all three times. Father, mother, all of these people, all of them are sent to Sobibór and murdered. There is also one letter written by Gerrit - and on the way to there, to the train in Amsterdam, or on the way to a train in Westerbork, or when they would be pushed in the train onto Sobibór, they would drop cards from the train letting Trien know what was happening.



The Holocaust / All but Trien and Leo on their way to the German Gas Chambers. / Preserve this, so that it may not be forgotten. / Herman Kleerekoper (1910-2005)

31:47 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: There’s also one letter by Gerrit about the younger sister, Mina, and her husband. They committed suicide on the day the Germans invaded the Netherlands or the day that the Dutch capitulated, on the fourteenth, fifteenth of May. So they are - they were already dead with their children. That little package, my uncle decided - requested from his daughter, Catie, to be deposited at the institute in the Netherlands, the Institute of War Documentation that is in this huge building where they have miles of documentation of the Second World War. Anyone can read these letters, these ten - these twenty letters in this building. You can also read it online. So that’s where I read them and then decided to translate them.

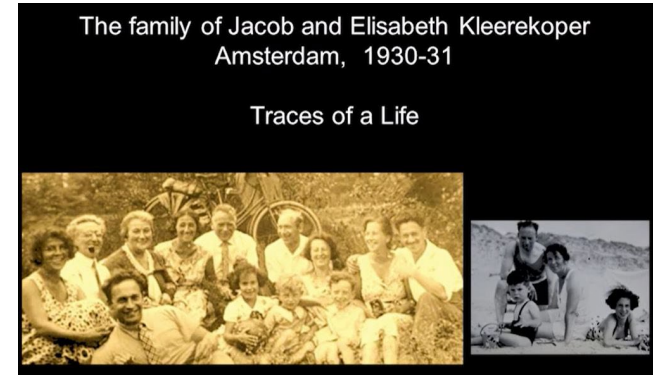


NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide, Herengracht 380, 1016 CJ Amsterdam / All documents related to the Family

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Kleerekoper, 1940-45, have been deposited here: NIOD #247, 135-137.

32:38 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So here are those letters. And if we set them within the historical context of that period. Excuse me. We first of all set them within the family circle. And if you look at this picture, the one that’s missing is Loek. And I think it’s Loek taking the picture. And I think he was probably eight or nine years old. Very precocious and everybody’s laughing at him. That’s what I think is happening. And so what we need to do is gain from their faces, infer from their faces, what kind of person he was.



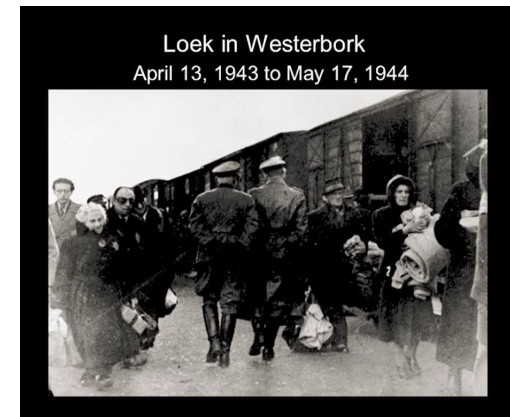
The family of Jacob and Elisabeth Kleerekoper / Amsterdam, 1930-31 / Traces of a life

33:17 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And that is what we have to do from those pieces of paper too. We have no photographs. We just have a few pieces of paper. Draw from those what kind of person he was. And when he writes those letters to Trien there’s something very interesting. He and also his sister wrote an amazing, long letter that goes on and on and on from Westerbork to Trien, and both she and her brother Loek, they both do not call their aunt and uncle Aunt Trien and Uncle Leo like all Dutch proper, you know, like properly raised children do. They use the aunt or uncle in front of it. They call them by their first name. Not only that, they call them by, they call her Trien-mom, and the little - the Eli calls him Lelo. In other words, they have such an intimate, friendly relationship I think they actually are raised in a very modern way, in that all of these hierarchical expressions are rejected and they are very, very close.

34:22 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So it’s a very close family. Loek, in every letter that he writes, says to his aunt: Say hello to so-and-so, thank

so-and-so for the letter, and thank so-and-so for the package. Apparently, he is a very social person that had a whole lot of friends around him. The one person he refers to in every one of the four letters is Annie, and Annie apparently writes to him, and Annie visits Trien, and Annie sends him packages. So Annie must be - I assume, I have not been able to verify this - must’ve been his girlfriend, and must not have been Jewish because otherwise, she would not be alive. So all these people that he mentions in those letters, the same names over and over, I assume they’re all friends that were not Jewish and were helping his aunt, and must’ve helped him also beforehand.

35:11 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, now onto focusing on Loek in Westerbork, how in that period in Westerbork he manages to get that exemption to go to Vught rather than to be murdered within three days. And this is a picture of Westerbork.



Loek in Westerbork / April 13, 1943, to May 17, 1944

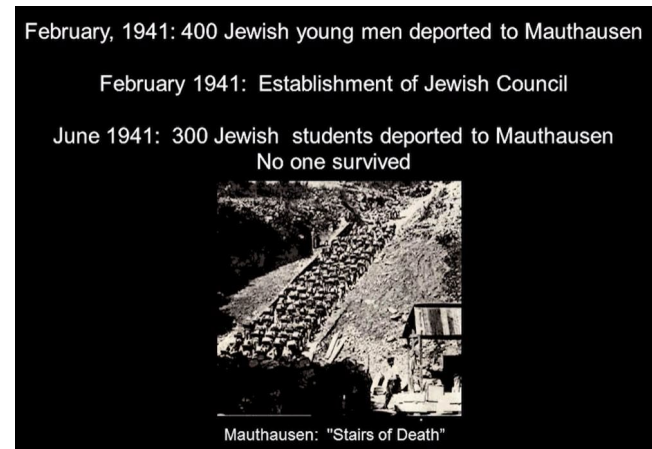
35:29 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So to do that, we have to place Westerbork and that whole Holocaust in the Netherlands, how that went, within a little earlier historical situation. In 1941, in February there were, there was a fight in a restaurant where some Jewish people were performing, and Nazis came in and tried to attack and create trouble, and one of the Nazis - a few days later - died. And so as a reprisal, the Germans collected four hundred Jewish men - young men just

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

from the street - and took to Mauthausen. And that is actually the only time, very early, before deportation started, that people actually knew what happened to their loved ones. In other words, they sent the ashes back. They sent the clothes back. They let people know that your son was not only killed in Mauthausen, he was tortured in Mauthausen.

36:32 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: They established, the Nazis established a Jewish Council. They wanted the Jews to keep order, and so the Jewish Council was tasked with keeping order because there was a big strike because these young men were picked up in the middle of the day - everybody could see that. And then they were sent to Mauthausen and murdered. So there was a strike in Holland of dock workers and all kinds of workers, and so the Nazi government said to the Jewish Council: If you don’t stop the strike, we will pick up another 400 young men and send them to Mauthausen. So at that point, the Jewish Council became part of the whole process by which the Nazis suppressed and then killed Jews. In June, again 300 young, high school students were deported to Mauthausen and no one survived.

37:31 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And so Mauthausen became that horrific threat: the name of Mauthausen gained an almost magical power, synonymous with an unknown but gruesome death. And that is Jacques Presser who wrote the historical work on the Holocaust in the Netherlands. And he says, his paragraph goes on and he says, Mauthausen was much worse than we could have imagined. So this is what then happens, the Jewish Council has a weekly. It’s called *Joadsche Weekblad*, the *Jewish Weekly*, and here is an extra addition.



February 1941: 400 Jewish young men deported to Mauthausen / February 1941: Establishment of Jewish Council / June 1941: 300 Jewish students deported to Mauthausen / No one survived / Mauthausen: “Stairs of Death”



“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

*Jewish Weekly*, Extra Edition: August 7, 1942, /The name Mauthausen had “an almost magical power,” synonymous with “an unknown but gruesome death.” Presser, J. *De ondergang*, I. 87.

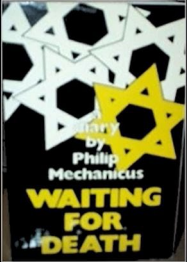
- 38:12 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: The deportations have started. This is, the date is August 7, 1942. The deportations started in July and people weren’t coming in. So the German rulers would send people a notice that would say, you have to come in because you’re going to be taken to Westerbork. And people wouldn’t show up. So what they did is they said, if Jews do not immediately obey the oproep, the call up for - that’s a euphemism for work in Germany - they will be imprisoned and sent to Mauthausen. So, if you got your notice that you were supposed to go to Westerbork, it would be better to go to Westerbork and then be sent to Germany somewhere and be in a horrible work camp. Because if you didn’t you’d be sent to Mauthausen and that was torture and certain death. The next point, all the Jews who do not wear the Jewish star will be sent to Mauthausen. And the third one is the most powerful one, and that is, those Jews that do, that change their living, their address without notifying the authorities will be arrested and sent to Mauthausen.
- 39:34 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: In other words, if you would go underground, and they would find you, your punishment was Mauthausen. And so when Trien writes to Herman after the War that the whole family has been picked up and nobody went into hiding, she says they didn’t go into hiding because they were afraid, and that fear is Mauthausen. So that fear of - this is what you have to remember - that Loek lived with that fear. Everybody lived with that fear. If you in any way violated any of the rules you had a chance to be sent to Mauthausen.
- 40:08 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, while Loek is in Westerbork, he would see these transports and he would see how people were treated on

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
 Holocaust Living History Workshop

these trains. So these transports, as Philip Mechanicus says, the transports arouse absolute disgust. They use cattle cars made for transporting horses. The deported do not sit even on straw but right on the bare floor among their bags with food and their few belongings and the trains are old and filthy.

The transports as described by Philip Mechanicus:

*The transports arouse absolute disgust. They actually use cattle cars made for transporting horses. The deported do not sit on straw but right on the bare floor among their bags with food and their few belongings. The trains are old and filthy.*



*In Depôt (1964) Waiting for Death 21-22.*

The transports as described by Philip Mechanicus: / The transports arouse absolute disgust. They actually use cattle cars made for transporting horses. The deported do not sit on straw but right on the bare floor among their bags with food and their few belongings. The trains are old and filthy. / *In Depôt (1964) Waiting for Death 21-22.*

40:41 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, this is the last card from, written by the grandparents of Loek who are deported on the very day that Loek arrives in Westerbork. And this is what the father writes, and you can see he has beautiful handwriting and of course, he wrote that sitting in that cattle car on the floor. He says, dear family, dear children, and grandchildren, It is impossible to give a description of the journey because there are no windows in the car. That is what he writes up here upside-down. We received everything in the letter from G[errit] today just before nightfall. I have everything that you ask about in my possession, the pipe as well as tobacco. This is the same, this is at the same time the notice of our departure for Poland. Tuesday morning at 5:00 a.m. we received the notice in bed and I spoke with

Tuesday, April 13, 1943,

Dear family, dear children and grandchildren,

*It is impossible to give a description of the journey because there are no windows in a cattle car.*


*We received everything in the letter from G[errit] today, just before night fall. I have everything that you ask about in my possession, the pipe as well as tobacco.*

*This is at the same time the notice of our departure to Poland. Tuesday morning at 5:00 a.m. we received the notice in bed.*

*Yesterday, I spoke with Bram and said farewell.*

*Gerrit's attempts for us have failed. Let's hope that he will be successful for himself and his family because this is a hell. Indescribable beastliness.*

Last letter of Jacob (72) and Elisabeth (67) van Es-Kleerekoper



“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Bram - this is his son-in-law - said farewell. Gerrit’s attempts for us have failed.

Tuesday, April 13, 1943, / Dear family, dear children, and grandchildren, / It is impossible to give a description of the journey because there are no windows in a cattle car. / We received everything in the letter from G[errit] today just before nightfall. I have everything that you ask about in my possession, the pipe as well as tobacco. / This is at the same time the notice of our departure to Poland. Tuesday morning at 5:00 a.m. we received the notice in bed. / Yesterday, I spoke with Bram and said farewell. / Gerrit’s attempts for us have failed. Let’s hope that he will be successful for himself and his family because this is a hell. Indescribable beastliness. / Last letter of Jacob (72) and Elisabeth (67) van Es-Kleerekoper

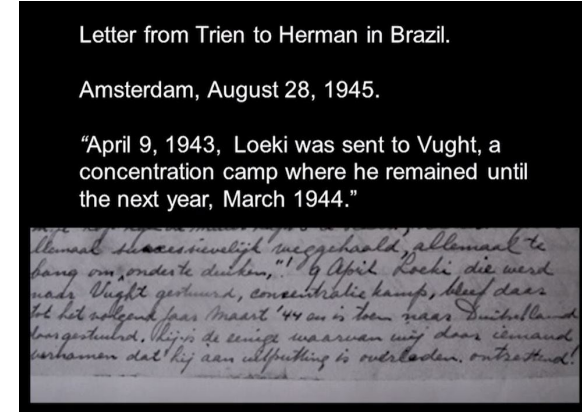
41:36 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Gerrit tried to get them out, get some kind of a postponement. Let’s hope that he will be more successful for himself and his family because - and these were the last words from the grandfather - this is hell. Indescribable beastliness. Now Loek was in Westerbork, and the first letter that Loek writes home, writes to Trien begins with a sentence in which he says, I heard that my, that they went. And of course, we know that he meant Westerbork, but it was a censored letter so he couldn’t say that. And then he says, I had hoped that they would talk to Tante Griet, and Tante Griet went underground. And so he is saying - in other words - I have seen this now, and I wish my parents would go underground. I wish I could have been going underground.



“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

42:26 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So between when he - between May 18 and June 29, a very short period of time - Trien receives all these notecards from all these people, and they're all killed in Sobibór. So after the War, Trien writes to Herman a long letter describing who was taken when. And so now she describes that Loeki was sent to Vught, a concentration camp where he remained until the next year, March [19]44. Which is of course not true. Loeki was sent to Westerbork and from Westerbork he went to Vught. And it is such an unusual journey that she does not remember that because it is so odd. She remembers he was in Vught, and of course, you're sent to Vught. But instead, something is happened that Loeki managed in Westerbork.

43:24 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So, here are five cards of the card collection that the Jewish Council kept in Westerbork that documents the procedure by which Loek Kleerekoper gained an exemption for Vught. And this is, of course, the number of the train again. That's written after the War. But here is his name, here are various dates when things happened. And this is card number one. This is the back of card number one. People are very careful with paper, so it's written on the back. And these are little five, three by five cards, so you can imagine how tiny that writing is. And then this is, this is the last card. So this is number three. This is the back of number two, number one. So let's read these cards to see how it happened.

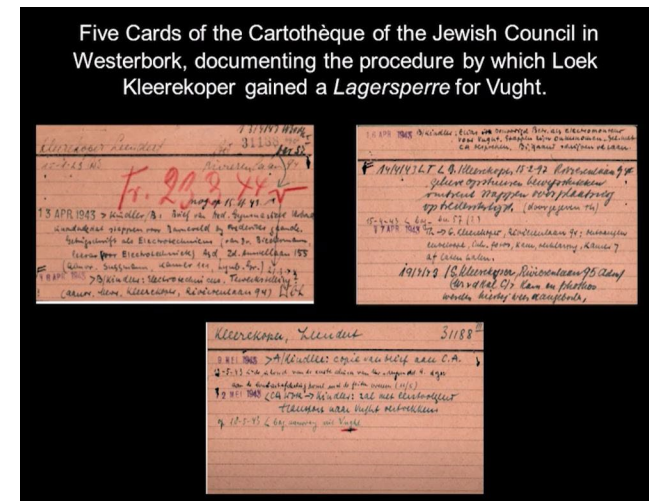


Letter from Trien to Herman in Brazil.

Amsterdam, August 28, 1945.

“April 9, 1943, Loeki was sent to Vught, a concentration camp where he remained until the next year, March 1944.”

Letter from Trien to Herman in Brazil. / Amsterdam, August 28, 1945. / “April 9, 1943, Loeki was sent to Vught, a concentration camp where he remained until the next year, March 1944.”

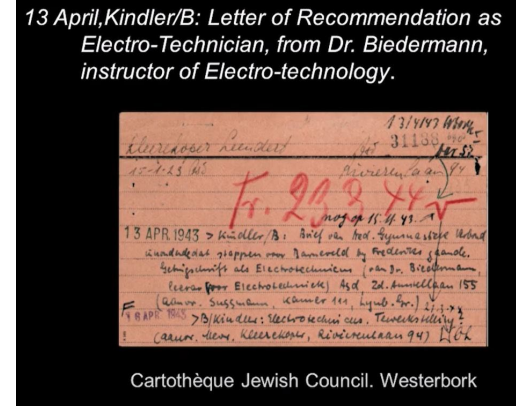


Five Cards of the Cartothèque of the Jewish Council in Westerbork, documenting the procedure by which Loek Kleerekoper gained a Lagersperre for Vught.

Five cards of the Cartothèque of the Jewish Council in Westerbork, documenting the procedure by which Loek Kleerekoper gained a Lagersperre for Vught.

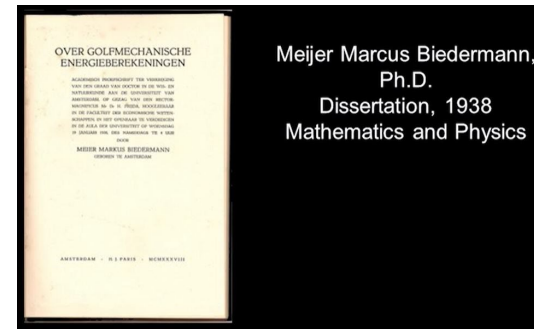
“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

44:15 Hilda van Neck Yoder: So he arrives on the thirteenth and Mr. Kindler who works for the Jewish Council - and he himself, I looked this up, is going to be killed in Auschwitz himself later. But at the moment he has an exemption from deportation because he works for the Jewish Council in Westerbork, and he says there’s a letter from a certain place, but then there’s also a gekeningsschrift, a letter of recommendation, as Electro-technicus, electro-mechanic, written by Dr. Biedermann, who is a teacher in Electro-technic. So apparently he brought with him a letter of recommendation by this Dr. Biedermann and to, that he can do something special. That he is an electro-mechanical person.



13 April, Kindler/B: Letter of Recommendation as Electro-Technician, from Dr. Biedermann, instructor of Electro-technology. / Cartothèque Jewish Council. Westerbork

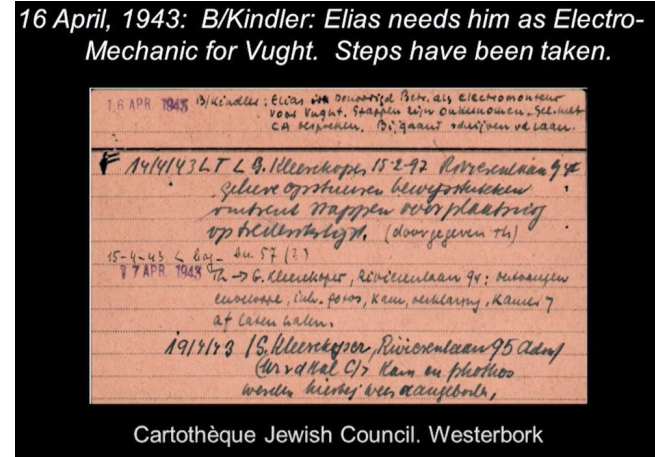
45:06 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And so, who is Mr. Biedermann? And Mr. Biedermann is a very scholarly person, he wrote a dissertation on quantum mechanics. He was a, graduated cum laude, and apparently when Jewish students no longer could go to university, he must’ve been the one that gave private lessons to Loek.



Meijer Marcus Biedermann, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1938 Mathematics and Physics

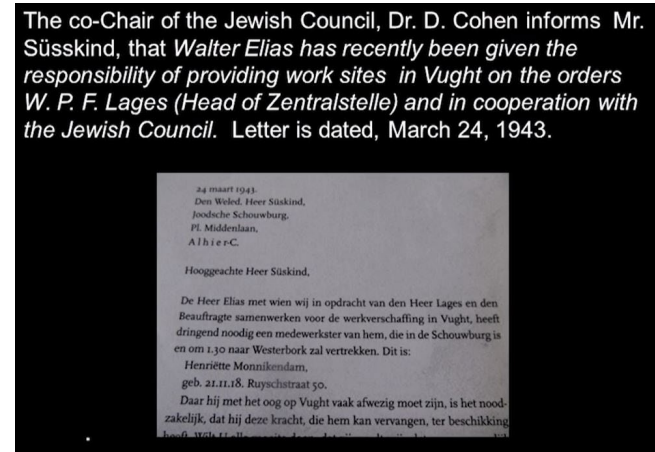
“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
 Holocaust Living History Workshop

45:32 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So that Loek was trained by this Dr. Biedermann. And then there is the next date, 16th of April. Elias needs him as Electro-Mechanic for Vught. This is the 16th of April. He is needed to be sent to Vught where the Philips Company is. Which at this time is not taking Jews. Not till June, and Elias already has determined that this person can not go to Sobibór, needs to be part of the electric industry, electrical industry.



16 April, 1943: B/Kindler: Elias needs him as Electro-Mechanic for Vught. Steps have been taken. Cartothèque Jewish Council. Westerbork

46:07 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And here is - I kind of have to go quickly - there’s a letter that - I couldn’t find anything about Mr. Elias. Who is Mr. Elias that he has this power? But then I found a letter in a totally different situation that he has actually just been appointed by the head of the security in the Netherlands. The one whose only goal was to eliminate all Jews from this earth. He appointed Elias to find Jewish people to be sent to Vught to be part of Philips Electronics.



The co-Chair of the Jewish Council, Dr. D. Cohen informs Mr. Süsskind, that *Walter Elias* has recently been given the responsibility of providing work sites in Vught on the orders W. P. F. Lages (Head of Zentralstelle) and in cooperation with the Jewish Council. Letter is dated, March 24, 1943.

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

46:43 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: There is another very interesting piece of paper that I found in the - that I will quickly summarize rather than read. And this is, Laman Trip is the manager of the Philips-Kommando. He did not want Jews. After the War, he says that it was a total mistake we took Jews, but here he’s talking about having been called by the Nazi commander of the camp. That the Jewish Council - that is Mr. Elias, who is now working there in Vught - is bringing, is bringing things on the black market, and that we will get them too. So the Jewish Council is providing things on the black market for Philips Company and therefore now Philips is willing to take these Jews.

Excerpts from the diary of Rutger E. Laman Trip, Manager of Philips-Kommando, April 14 – 23, 1943. NIOD 250g-658.

14 April. *Talked about written statements with Dy [?] and Nolte [the German administrator of Philips]; beautiful plans to buy everything on the black market. SS Commander has strong stories about all the things that the Jewish Council has provided for him. JC will now also provide for us.*

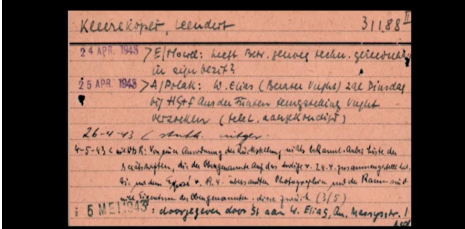
20 April. *Talked with Braak[man ?] about the new plan, also with the SS Commander. Approved (in principle). After Easter we will start with 200 men ... SS Commander has the offer of machines from the Jewish Council and does not foresee any difficulties getting material.*

23 April. *The circus is getting crazier. Women are being trained.*

Excerpts from the diary of Rutger E. Laman Trip, Manager of Philips-Kommando, April 14 - 23, 1943. NIOD 250g-658. / 14 April. *Talked about written statements with Dy [?] and Nolte [the German administrator of Philips]; beautiful plans to buy everything on the black market. / SS Commander has strong stories about all the things that the Jewish Council has provided for him. JC will now also provide for us. / 20 April. Talked with Braak[man ?] about the new plan, also with the SS Commander. Approved (in principle). After Easter we will start with 200 men ... / SS Commander has the offer of machines from the Jewish Council and does not foresee any difficulties getting material. / 23 April. The circus is getting crazier. Women are being trained.*

47:35 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: So here is another page, and that is Mr. Elias, will request from Hauptsturmführer Aus der Fünten a transfer to Vught. There is a special permission he has to ask to get this guy - this Loek from Westerbork to go to Vught - and who is Aus der Fünten?

25 April 1943, A/Palak: On Tuesday, W. Elias (Advisor Vught) will request from Hauptsturmführer Aus der Fünten a transfer to Vught.

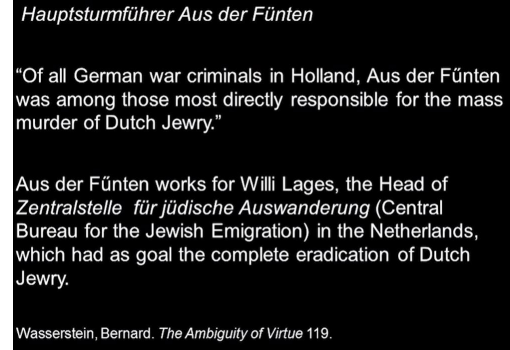


The image shows a handwritten note on lined paper. The text is in Dutch and includes dates and names. The top line reads 'Kleerlijst, secundair' followed by '31188'. Below this, there are several lines of text, some starting with dates like '24 APR 1943' and '25 APR 1943'. The handwriting is somewhat cursive and difficult to read in some places. The note appears to be a request or a record of a request for a transfer.

“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

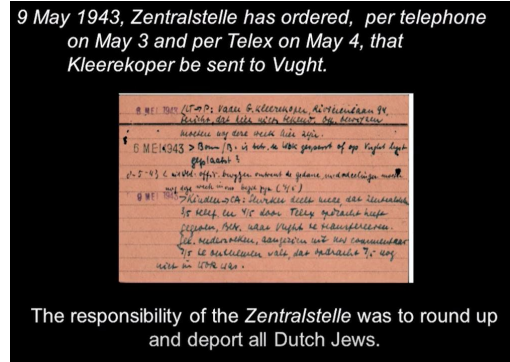
25 April 1943, A/Palak: *On Tuesday, W. Elias (Advisor Vught) will request from Hauptsturmführer Aus der Fünnten a transfer to Vught.*

47:54 Hilda van Neck Yoder: He is of all German war criminals in the Netherlands, he was among those most directly responsible for the mass murder of Dutch Jewry. And so he worked for Willi Lages, and their goal was to complete the eradication of the Jews.



*Hauptsturmführer Aus der Fünnten* / “Of all German war criminals in Holland, Aus der Fünnten was among those most directly responsible for the mass murder of Dutch Jewry.” / Aus der Fünnten works for Willi Lages, the Head of *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Bureau for the Jewish Emigration) in the Netherlands, which had as goal the complete eradication of Dutch Jewry. / Wasserstein, Bernard. *The Ambiguity of Virtue* 119.

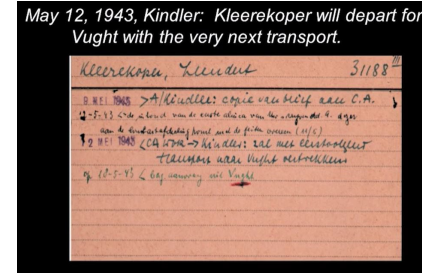
48:10 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: This man had to give permission for Loek to be sent to Vught. So then, let us get lost in lots of problems. So finally on May the 3rd and May the 4th, Zentralstelle - the office of Aus der Fünnten - sends at first a telegram and a telex to make sure that Loek does not get on the train to Sobibór, but gets to Vught.



*9 May 1943, Zentralstelle has ordered, per telephone on May 3 and per Telex on May 4, that Kleerekoper be sent to Vught.* / The responsibility of the *Zentralstelle* was to round up and deport all Dutch Jews.

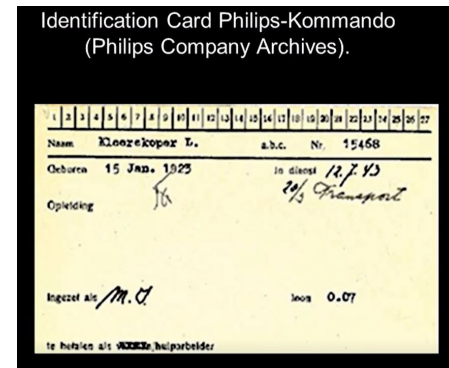
“Don’t Worry About Me” The Remnants of a Forgotten Life with Hilda van Neck-Yoder (2016)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

48:38 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And here it is, this is the final one. He will depart with the very next transport to Vught.



May 12, 1943, Kindler: Kleerekoper will depart for Vught with the very next transport.

48:44 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And now he is part of the Philips Company. And so now what we have seen is that the explanation in this book, that says that people were so moved by these huge departures, these huge deportations - what do you call them - deportations in May and June, and then convinced Philips to admit Jews, is totally wrong. It is based on the recollection of people who survived and said, yes I remember we saw these horrible train loads, and then we went to Philips and said, why can we have some Jews? When you look at the cards, all of this was decided on a much different level, and that is the level of Berlin and the level of Lages, the central office, the man in charge. Because Germany was terribly short on manpower, needed to win the War, and needed highly skilled, highly trained technicians, and so apparently they decided to also in the Netherlands find some people that were highly skilled - Jewish people that were highly skilled.



Identification Card Philips-Kommando / (Philips Company Archives).

49:59 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And they would be temporarily put in these labor camps, work for Philips because Philips was of course run by the Germans. Philips made things for the German, the German government to win the War. So you can see the incredible contrast between, on the one hand, that they wanted to, the Nazis wanted to eradicate all the Jews, and on the other hand, they wanted to win the

War. And you can see that very story played out in the life of Loeki Kleerekoper. And now, looking at the little innocuous change of address, we now see that a lot was accomplished in Westerbork. Of course, it is so terribly sad that his brilliance was, led him to Vught and ultimately to Auschwitz, and he was killed there. Thank you very much for your attention. I’d be happy if you have any questions.

51:03 [Q & A]

51:06 Speaker 1: My question is about his aunt - about his aunts that he wrote to all the time. Didn’t his letters to her put her life in jeopardy?

51:09 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: About what? No, because - well this is very interesting. There was a period that the Nazis were not sure what they were going to do with people who were mixed-marriages. And then on certain days, they said we have to round them up, and other days they said we don’t. And at a certain point, they decide. And she was actually among the very first people that were arrested. On the very first day, she was rounded up and had to walk in circles for three days. It was horrible. Together with Jacques Presser - for those of you who know Jacques Presser - he describes it in his book what actually happens. She was arrested twice more, but then at a point, they decided that people in mixed marriages - if they were old enough and did not have children they could stay. Or if they were not old enough and could still have children, if they were willing to be sterilized, they could stay. So I assume that she had a permit or whatever - vrijstelle - an exemption from deportation, and was at a certain point completely safe. But for a long time, she was not.

52:30 Speaker 2: What work has been done on this German effort to use Jewish talent because obviously, they were shipping at the same time cause one guy got out. They were shipping all sorts of other people that they could have used in the war effort and chose not to.

52:46 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: It was totally, totally illogical. That’s one of the things that that book says. Also, there were all these Jewish scholars, Jewish engineers, and so forth on these trains being killed, and it was a contradiction that you have in the war effort - that the Germans wanted to win the War, but at the same time, they hated the Jews and wanted to kill all the Jews. And so, you can see that in this story. There’s a book that’s just recently was published last year called *KL: Concentration Camp*, by Wachsmann, and he writes about this contradiction. Any other questions? Yeah.

- 53:41 Speaker 3: Is the thought that at a certain point Philips did not need Loek anymore and that’s when he was shipped out?
- 53:49 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Oh, this is a very interesting question, what happened? Philips was of course run by the Germans and had to do what the Germans said. And the commander decided that he wanted to get rid of all the Jews in the camp. And there was this other, there’s always various layers. In 1944, March 1944 when the camp, when the Jews were sent to Westerbork this was also the period that the southern part of Holland was just about to be liberated. And so the Germans did almost, well, they evacuated the Jews to Germany because they wanted to use them. And so when Loek went, was moved to Auschwitz, he was placed in another place where he was used as an electrician. And all of these people from Philips were placed in places where they built anti-aircraft tanks or whatever. All kinds of things in the war effort. Yes, they were. So they were needed in Germany, and they were afraid that Holland would be liberated. So they wanted to move them out. Yeah.
- 55:04 Speaker 4: What is your plan to do with the research from here?
- 55:08 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Well, what I’m planning to do is to put something on paper as soon as I can and be finished with it so I can do something else again. It’s very time-consuming, but it’s been absolutely so satisfying, especially since I had had this help with, from Raymond Schultz reading those cards. He knew exactly, he was the one who worked for years as an archivist for the Red Cross making order in these thousands and thousands of cards. Because when I went to the archives in Amsterdam, I found so many more cards on Loek. I couldn’t copy them but there’s so many more cards on everybody and so, yeah. Thank you for the question.
- 55:54 Speaker 5: Is this the person you’re, one person you’re really going to focus on, or are you going to follow more of the tree?
- 55:58 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Well, what I’ve done is for the family, I’ve translated all the letters and I’ve placed them within a historical context. So you know, beginning with 1940, with the grandkids in mind who know nothing. And so when they read these letters they know what the family went through. But now that I’ve seen this amazing story about Loeki, I’d kind of like to have something written about him. Because I think he is, it’s so incredibly sad. Eli, his younger sister, writes this incredible letter. She is a year older than Ann Frank. She’s in the same school as Ann Frank. Gerrit Kleerekoper teaches Phys-Ed at the school where Ann Frank went. The other two cousins are also at that school, and Ann teaches math at that school, so Eli writes this incredible, long letter. She’s there for days and she describes all the crazy stuff that she sees around her. And I first thought, oh I wish I could do something with it, but you know I can’t find



anything on her. It’s all gone. There’s no, there’s this one picture. My uncle knew nothing about any of this at all, about what happened to Loek. And the interesting thing is that this one little story about Loek that he - that my cousin Catie in Canada remembers about Loek.

- 57:27 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: And that is that her father told her that when Loek was very young, her father taught him how to build radios. And her father was fifteen in 1925 when he built his first radio. So her father, my uncle Herman, was crazy about building radios. He built a radio for my aunt when they were engaged. In this early time nobody had radios, you know people built their own radios. And so Loeki must have been seven or eight when this happened because after that my uncle goes to Brazil. So, my cousin Catie thinks had my uncle known what happened to Loek in terms of his, at a moment in his life he felt appreciated. He felt that he had now, he was studying a little. I’m working in my own field. He had recognition in the world of radio and it may have given my uncle some consolation, you know, living with his terrible loss and not knowing any of the stories about his family at all.
- 58:38 Speaker 6: Did the ones that went to Brazil, were they two brothers?
- 58:43 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: No, my uncle only.
- 58:44 Speaker 6: One uncle went to Brazil?
- 58:45 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Yeah, so Loek’s father, Gerrit, had a brother, Herman, and that’s my uncle. He married my father’s sister. And they went to Brazil.
- 58:56 Speaker 6: I see. And that’s where the whole family now comes from, just that branch.
- 59:02 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Exactly.
- 59:03 Speaker 6: Just from him.
- 59:03 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Exactly. That cousin, those two cousins, Catie and Koos. She lives in Canada. He lives in Texas. They are the only ones who have survived from that whole family. Yes. Yes, and Koos’s grandson is called Gerrit after

Gerrit Kleerekoper. And actually, the father’s middle name is Gerrit. There’s a lot of Gerrits in the Kleerekoper family, and that name continues, yes.

59:13 Speaker 6: from that family? I see. Thank you. And did Trien never have children?

59:35 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: No Trien never had, did never have children. She was born in 1895, so she was past child-bearing age. Her husband, she married someone who had children. It was his second marriage. She had no children. She, after the War, went to my uncle and lived with them in, she and her husband went to my uncle in Canada and they lived there. She worked. She was a brilliant woman. She was very artistic. She worked in the diamond business making, sharpening diamonds, or whatever you call that. Not that you don’t call it sharpening, you call it something else. Anyway, she was very artistic and worked for Harvard for a while in their gem department, whatever technical term that is. Yes, and then she, but she was always very close to my uncle. Yeah.

1:00:27 Speaker 6: Thank you.

1:00:31 Susanne Hillman: Any more questions?

1:00:33 Hilda van Neck-Yoder: Oh thank you all so very much for your attention. It’s just been wonderful being able to share this with you.

1:00:42 Susanne Hillman: Thank you all for coming, I hope to see you in May, and thank you, Hilda.