

Cornelia Arnolda Johanna “Corrie” ten Boom

Background to the Crisis

The Netherlands (Holland) was occupied by Nazi Germany beginning on 15 May 1940, during the *blitzkrieg* (“lightning war”) in which Germany occupied Norway and Denmark (April), Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg (May), and France (June).

Under German occupation, food and materials were rationed, many social activities were banned, and evening curfews were imposed. Persecution of the Jewish population also was gradually implemented, starting with the requirement of wearing a yellow star bearing the word *Jood* (Jew) and attacks against Jewish businesses and places of worship, culminating in the deportation of Jews to unknown locations.

Additional Information about the Rescuer

Corrie ten Boom was born in Amsterdam on 15 April 1892, the youngest of the four children of Casper and Cornelia (“Cor”) ten Boom. Soon after Corrie’s birth, Casper ten Boom inherited the family watch shop at 19 Barteljorisstraat in the city of Haarlem and moved there with his family. The house came to be known as the Beje house (short for Barteljorisstraat).



The shop and residence
of the Ten Boom family

Corrie established and maintained a youth club for teenage girls, which provided religious instruction and classes in the performing arts, sewing, and handicrafts. Corrie’s involvement in this work over more than a decade was an expression of her family’s strong religious faith, which inspired them to serve their fellow human beings. The youth club was one of many social organizations and activities that were banned during the German occupation of the Netherlands.

As the German occupation became more repressive, the Ten Boom family worked with the Dutch underground to shelter Jews and others in danger:

A secret room, no larger than a small wardrobe closet, was built into Corrie's bedroom behind a false wall. The space could hold up to six people, all of whom had to stand quiet and still. A crude ventilation system was installed to provide air for the occupants. When security sweeps came through the neighborhood, a buzzer in the house would signal danger, allowing the refugees a little over a minute to seek sanctuary in the hiding place. (Biography.com: Corrie ten Boom)

Occupants of the "hiding place" stayed for only for a few hours or days before being transferred to one of a network of safe houses that Corrie oversaw. An estimated 800 Jews were saved through the rescue work of Corrie and her entire family.

On 28 February 1944, the Gestapo, acting on information from a Dutch informant, arrested the Ten Boom family. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. In Ravensbrück, Corrie and Betsie held worship services by using a Bible that they had managed to smuggle in. Many of their fellow prisoners were inspired by Betsie and Corrie's faith and acts of charity, and some converted to Christianity.

Corrie was released Ravensbrück on 27 December 1944, twelve days after Betsie died. She learned later that her release was the result of a clerical error and that a week after her release, all the women in her age group were sent to the gas chambers.

In the decades after the war, Corrie ten Boom traveled the world as an evangelist, motivational speaker, and social critic. During her talks, she often referred to her experiences in Ravensbrück. Her story became particularly well-known among American evangelicals.

Timeline

- 1892 (April 15) Born in Haarlem, Netherlands, the youngest of four children
- 1922 Becomes the first woman to be licensed as a watchmaker in the Netherlands
- 1942 (May) Beginning of almost two full years of rescue work by the Ten Boom family in coordination with the Dutch resistance (underground).
- 1944 (28 February 28) Arrest of the entire ten Boom family; (December) through a clerical error; (28 December) Corrie ten Boom is released from Ravensbrück concentration camp



Betsie ten Boom, from
Ten Boom Museum, Haarlem

- 1946 Begins a worldwide ministry that will take her to 60 countries. Corrie ten Boom traveled the world as an evangelist, motivational speaker, and social critic. During her talks, she often referred to her experiences in Ravensbrück. Her story became particularly well-known among American evangelicals.



Corrie ten Boom on
her travels as a speaker
(Wheaton College Archives &
Special Collections)

- 1967 (December 12) Recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations
- 1971 Publication of *The Hiding Place*, the story of the Ten Boom family and their work during the German occupation of the Netherlands
- 1975 Release of 1975 of the film "The Hiding Place," starring Jeannette Clift as Corrie and Julie Harris as Betsie ten Boom.



The Corrie Ten Boom House Foundation

- 1977 Emigrates to Placentia, California
- 1978 Suffers two strokes, causing loss of speech and paralysis
- 1983 (15 April) Dies on her 91st birthday from a third stroke
- 2007 Yad Vashem honors Casper and Betsie ten Boom as Righteous Among the Nations.
- 2013 Release in the United States of *Return to the Hiding Place*, a film based in part on the 1993 book of the same name by Hans Poley, a non-Jewish fugitive who had refused to pledge allegiance to the Nazis. Poley was the first person hidden from the Nazis in the Ten Boom's house.

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