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ADRIANUS AND BERTHA VANAS

Adrianus has always fought injustice. When he saw the Nazi persecution of Jews in Holland, he and his wife, Bertha, immediately joined the underground. In 1942, when Jewish deportations began, his role was to find out what happened at the end of their journey.

And so they came to Westerbork, which became the largest Nazi transit camp in Holland. Adrianus, an employee of the Dutch government, was in charge of food distribution in the camp, ensuring that rations were fairly distributed. However, his major work was for the underground: removing names from deportation lists; supplying false papers and finding safe houses. Bertha hid documents under her corset and smuggled them out of the camp. They knew that the Nazis suspected them and Adrianus was threatened more than once. Assurances from the underground that their 2 children would be cared for, gave them the courage to continue.

On 12 April 1945, the Germans fled the camp and Adrianus became Camp Commander, on the orders of the Dutch Government-in-exile. He stayed on after liberation, until August, when he had escorted the last Jews from the camp. A true hero, Adrianus has never lost his passion for justice nor his willingness to fight for it.

Courage to care