

ARIE VAN MANSUM

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Arie van Mansum was born March 5, 1920, in Utrecht, the Netherlands, to Gerrit and Neeltje van Mansum. Arie had two sisters,

Margeretha and Gerrie, and one brother, Gerrit Jr. When Arie was six, the family moved to Maastricht, where his father was a laborer for the Dutch railroad. While most Dutch Christians were Catholic, Arie and his family were Protestant. In May 1940, the German army invaded the Netherlands. Everyone—including Dutch Christians—had to carry identification cards, and eventually, Jews had to wear a Yellow Star.

According to Arie's church, Nazism was anti-Christian. His church denounced anybody who became a member of the Nazi party. When the occupation began, Arie worked as a traveling salesman and had a rail pass that allowed him to travel freely. Not long after the invasion, a friend of Arie's from church asked him to accompany a Jewish couple on the train to a hiding place in the center of the Netherlands. With the help of his church, Arie was active in the resistance throughout the war. He found hiding places for Jews, and created counterfeit food stamps and false identity cards. Arie's parents encouraged his work in the resistance, and they even hid a Jewish young man and a Jewish baby girl throughout the war.

In 1943, the Gestapo arrested Arie for his resistance activities. He was first taken to Gestapo headquarters in Maastricht, where he was interrogated and beaten. Arie was then sent to the city of Scheveningen, near The Hague, for a couple of days before being imprisoned in a prison in Haaren, where he spent six months in solitary confinement. While in solitary confinement, Arie was allowed to read the Bible. Arie was then taken to Amersfoort, a police transit camp

in Holland. He was there for a few months until he was transferred to a prison in Utrecht. There, Arie appeared before a court martial where he was questioned about his underground activities.

In May 1945, the Canadian Army liberated Arie in Utrecht. He returned home to Maastricht, where he worked to reunite the families he had helped to hide before his arrest. Arie also aided the local police force with investigating and interrogating war criminals, including the Gestapo officer who beat him. In 1946, Arie appeared as a witness at a war crimes trial.

In 1952, Arie married Doris van Diggele. Wanting to start a new life outside of Europe, they immigrated to Ottawa, Canada in 1958. They had three children, Ria, Girret, and Margeret. Doris passed away in 1970. Yad Vashem named Arie Righteous Among the Nations in 1969. It is estimated that Arie helped save 150 Jews, many of whom Arie remained in contact with. In 1992, Canadian author Janet Keith published *A Friend Among Enemies: The Incredible Story of Arie van Mansum in the Holocaust*. At the time of his interview in 1996, Arie was married to his second wife, Annette van Loenen.