

Good afternoon,

First of all I would like to thank the ambassador of Israel, the municipality of Ermelo and the museum for making it possible to have the ceremony here in Ermelo.

I am also very pleased that my uncle Ben, my father's brother is here. Nice that he can experience that his parents and brother receive this Yad Vashem award posthumously.

When I was a boy my father told his story with Aby Staal. That they had seen each other again in June 1985. Unfortunately, at some point, contact was lost. It was therefore very special that in July 2016, Lorri and her daughter Hannah came to Ermelo to meet my father. We visited the same places back then as we do today. I often think about this special day. It was an emotional day for my father, you could see it was still on his mind.

My father wrote down his story with the Staal family and with Aby in particular. From his story I want to tell you in abbreviated form how they met and what happened.

Here's his story:

We lived at the post office in Ermelo where my father was director. I went to public school on the Burgemeester van Oordtstraat, I was 12 years old and in 6th grade.

In the spring of 1941, Aby, who wrote his name like that, came to sit next to me in class, his sister Betty and brother Jaap were a few classes lower. A few weeks later I understood that they were Jewish children who had changed their names for security reasons.

It soon became clear to my father that the Staal family was on the run to escape the persecution of the Jews in Amsterdam.

Because they lived too far from school to eat at home for lunch, I asked my father if they could eat their bread at our house.

Spring 1942, the Staal family moved to a summer house. For security reasons, I was no longer allowed to go to Aby. After the summer holidays, the Staal children stopped coming to school. Then I understood better what was going on with the persecution of the Jews and the raids in Amsterdam and that they had therefore fled to Ermelo.

March 1943. The family is betrayed and is arrested in the summer cottage, Aby runs away and flees towards the railway.

The story now continues as it was told to me by Aby after his escape.

He hides by the railway on the waterfront of a ditch, on the other side lived friends of my parents, if he could reach them unseen he could expect help. This was the Elsgeest family, Aby knocked on their door and told his story. Cor

Elsgeest called my father that morning for help because Aby could not stay there, he had a printing office and that was too dangerous because sometimes NSB members and Germans came there.

My father arranged for his most reliable main postmen, Arie van den Berg, to pick up the mail from the station by cargo bike and to take Aby with him. Aby was quickly taken to my bedroom through the back of the post office.

He stayed for 2 weeks. When I was home we would gather and eat together, usually after my brothers and sister had gone to bed.

My father was allowed to enter the station for some reason, with false papers. He managed to inform the Staal family who were on the train that Aby was safe.

In the second week of his stay with us, my father was told that he had to quarter Germans. They had to tap telephone connections at the post office. Their presence was, of course, dangerous to Aby, and he temporarily moved to my aunt's house in the stationsstraat. My father found a safe hiding place with a carpenter in Apeldoorn. It also went wrong there, but Aby was able to flee in time. In the meantime, my father was also informed and he arranged that Aby was given shelter, where he remained until the end of the war. Shortly after the liberation he returned to us in Ermelo.

Soon after, my father made contact through the Red Cross with an uncle of Aby's who lived on Long Island. Aby left for America by boat. My parents had regular contact with him by letter. Sadly, my father passed away in June 1952 and my mother had to quickly leave the post office servants' quarters. To my great regret, Aby's letters along with many other papers were lost. Not long after my mother moved there was no contact with Aby .

In June 1985, Aby and his wife Barbara paid a short visit to Ermelo on a return flight from Israel via Schiphol. They did not find my parents anymore, but after some information they ended up at my aunt Dekker-Aal. Coincidentally, we were with my mother in Ermelo for a few days and were able to meet each other, this was very emotional.

So far my father's story.

Lorri, due to your great effort and dedication at the Yad Vashem we all are here together. You have made it possible that our parents and grandparents receive recognition for what they have done for your family and your father in particular. Lorri from the bottom of our hearts, thank you for all you have done to make this real.

Finally, I would like to thank Yad Vashem for granting the Righteous Among the Nations award to our parents and grandparents.

Thank you for your attention.