



**Groesbeek
Airborne
Friends**

31st Annual Monument Tour

Sunday 17 September 2023

Captain Stefanich Monument



**I British Airborne Corps
Monument**

'Soldier and Civilian'

Captain Stefanich Monument



WELCOME

Jeanne Melchers

INTRODUCTION

Roel Kerkhoff

MUSIC

"Andantino molto cantabile e con dolore"

WORD

Colonel Jason Schuerger

MUSIC

"Andantino"

WORD

Major General Trevor Bredenkamp

TAPS - MOMENT OF SILENCE

Theo Jetten, Bugler

WREATH LAYING

on signal

THOUGHT

Major Eric Moler, Chaplain 82nd Airborne Division

NATIONAL ANTHEMS

The Star-Spangled Banner - Het Wilhelmus

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

All

I British Airborne Corps Monument



WELCOME

Jeanne Melchers

INTRODUCTION

Hessel Terwisscha van Scheltinga

WORD

Brigadier David Pack

MUSIC

Ensemble Jubilate Deo

WORD

Theo Giesbers

PRESENTATION

Attending children

LAST POST - MOMENT OF SILENCE - ROUSE

Theo Jetten, Bugler

FLOWER LAYING

on signal

THOUGHT

Peter Pot, pastor

NATIONAL ANTHEMS

God Save The King - Het Wilhelmus

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

All



September 1944: south of Nijmegen Gavin (on the right) en Browning (4th from the left) discuss the progress of Operation Market-Garden with other officers. On the left is John Norton, G-3 (Operations) en Wienecke (3rd from the left), both staff officers from Gavin's headquarters.

Special thanks to:

Clarinet Choir 'Mooi van Hout', occasional ensemble Jubilate Deo, Theo Jetten (bugler), Wim Slebus (sound) and Henk van Lin (sound)



17 Septemberstraat Commissie



INTRODUCTION

Hessel Terwisscha van Scheltinga

The Soldier and the Civilian.

The soldiers defend land
They defend, sometimes even with their lives, our
freedom,
that's what we think about now.
But this is one part of the commemoration.
Where there others who defended our values and
norms, our way of living?
Yes, definitely!

Heroes are not born as heroes. They're there all of a
sudden— when most needed.
They are on the same page as the soldiers, but they take
a different approach and defend themselves and us in a
different way, because they are not so strong,
or because they have a different view.
A good example is his holiness Titus Brandsma.
Titus Brandsma stood up for the freedom of speech and
opposed the Nazi regime.

Then there are the civilians who sometimes assisted the
soldiers with advice and deeds,
and sometimes even with their lives and thus stood up
for our freedom.

That is why it is important that we feel responsible for
defending freedom. Freedom that we must cherish.

Hessel Tevanes
September 2023

The growing humanitarian role of the 82nd during Market-Garden.

Thanks to oral history and the publication of some of it we know that the Allied soldiers when they carried out their military task, in situations also tried to help the civilian population. Here are a few extraordinary examples.

From the Diary of Petronella Dozy:

Sunday, September 17, 1944: Tank mines had been laid across the street with a sign next to it of which the inscription was not very understandable to the people from Groesbeek: "Watch out, mines". The soldier on guard kindly warned: "Take care of our doggie Madam".

Tuesday, September 19, 1944: This morning a large group of captured German soldiers passed through the village being transported from Nijmegen to a prison camp in the forest. In front some officers, sneering and conceited, the soldiers with thumping steps. Three indifferent Americans with tommy guns sauntered next to them as guards. For such a large group, the whole neighborhood appeared. Even Mr. Verheij, old and crooked with rheumatism, stumbled out. His eyes began to tingle in his grim walrus face, his white mustache trembled, and suddenly all the annoyance and fear bottled up in the years of oppression erupted into a perfect imitation of the so often heard German command: "Eins, zwei, eins, zwei, singen!" The Americans paid no attention to it.

Searching houses that previously served as a radio station for the Germans was done by the Americans, including a house named 'The Finish' near the forest. The American, Mr. Allan and Petronella Dozy found two neighbors in this deserted house. The neighbors were somewhat restrained and stated that the brandy found was not good at all. The American, however, handed out beautiful underwear with prints of large swastikas and eagles on it which the neighbors accepted in gratitude.

Wednesday, September 20, 1944: The vicar had just left when another visit arrived at Villa Vogelsangh, this time two Americans. One asked in perfect Dutch if Mrs. van den Bent lived here and made himself known as her cousin named Bolle who had left for the United States at the time. Now he had returned to help liberate his old homeland from the oppressors: he served as an interpreter. The visit could not stay long. They had only taken a few steps outside the door when bullets fired tapped sharply against the gravel at their feet, the pebbles jumped up. "Snipers," the Americans shouted, disappearing with great speed.

Friday, September 22, 1944: Somehow all movements of the Allies immediately came to the knowledge of the Germans. As soon as a battery was set up somewhere or ammunition was stored, a heavy shelling hit that same spot. The Americans complained, thinking spies at the frontline caused this, they threatened to evacuate the entire village. At the same time, the Americans released some Dutch National Socialist Party members who were imprisoned in a former Luftwaffe Ammunition dump.

Saturday, September 23, 1944: Half crawling and half walking and under heavy fire inhabitants of the Wylerbaan moved along a secondary road up the hill. The Americans, suspicious, did not want to let them through at first, but as soon as they understood they were refugees, they helped as much as was in their power and pointed out the safest way to the village. These people had brought as much as they could carry, every member of the family was laden with suits and bags. A farmer's wife called Dora Janssen, carried a heavy suitcase. One of the soldiers took the suitcase from her and carried it further. "Just imagine, that soldier was not an ordinary person, but a professor, an educated man and he carried my suitcase. As if he was just like you or me," said Mrs. Janssen with amazement and admiration.

Tuesday, September 26, 1944: In the kitchen of Monestary Mariendaal, a gentleman in uniform with black curly hair, a café au lait facial color and loyal brown eyes waved his ladle. "He's a captain," one of the German nuns whispered to me with reverence in her voice. The nuns themselves were content with a very modest corner of their own kitchen. With fully loaded trays, they carefully pushed through the hustle and bustle. With delight they displayed the delicacies spread out on the trays: "Everything gained from the Americans!" it's incredible how helpful they are and what they give us to feed the many mouths that need to be filled. Without them we would not know how to feed the refugees and now, thanks to them, we have plenty! "Ah, ich liebe die Amerikaner."

The rear basement of Mariendaal was partly furnished as a chapel. A Jesuit priest came every day on foot from Nijmegen to read mass, sometimes a second mass by the American chaplain followed. Two U.S. military doctors and the cook provided assistance as altar boys.

Two sisters in Mariendaal, one bedridden for years and the other in need of help because of blindness, well over eighty but clear and strong-minded, had refused to be brought down during the first bombings. The next day, however, a grenade hit their room and everything around them turned black with dust and smoke. Soldiers, sisters, the chaplain, everything rushed to the scene to help, but both sisters were, to everyone's surprise, unharmed.

Saturday, September 30/Sunday, October 1, 1944: In this night, a grenade fell just in front of the sandbag- and plank-covered basement window of the house of Bart Nillesen, the carpenter. The entire construction was knocked away, the side wall destroyed and a man who was closest to the window, was seriously injured. An American ambulance transported this man to the hospital in Nijmegen; He would be nursed there for months. It is only thanks to the skills of the American military doctors, who are familiar with such severe war wounds, that he made it out alive.

Jeanne Melchers has managed to find a number of remarkable stories also.

1. During the exodus of Breedeweg:

One stroller was heavily loaded with blankets, clothes etc. And underneath all that stuff, a little boy lay quietly sleeping. He had been born a few weeks before. His father had been killed elsewhere; his mother was killed by shrapnel on Sunday 17 September. A few days later, the boy was brought to the nuns in Breedeweg in the basement. They took care of the child and while fleeing pushed the pram towards the village. Sometime after leaving Groesbeek, American soldiers brought the boy to his family in Limburg with the words: "Here is the boy."

2. A prayer?:

A paratrooper broke his chocolate bar ration to pieces amid a group of boys and girls who looked at it with yearning eyes. As the American looked around the group, he counted out loud their numbers: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven and eight". An old woman watching put her hands over her mouth, for she thought the paratrooper was saying some sort of prayer before the kids could eat it.

3. From a diary a customs officer stationed at Groesbeek:

Sunday, September 17, 1944: The weather is nice and very dark. We run our patrol separately, two by two. My American friend is a son of Dutch parents and he is 19 years old and very cautious. At the slightest sound, he pauses and listens, the Tommy gun at hand. Even at the railway tracks that cross the street here, we remain dead silent for quite some time. No noise, no danger. It is now half past three at night when the paratrooper decides to return. Around three o'clock in the morning we walk past the café of Piet van Bernebeek, back to the command post when we see a streak of light shining out. Let's warn the café owner. When we are in the café, Piet shouts in dialect: "The first American in my café, can you ask him what he wants to use?". I ask the 19-year-old para what drink he likes. As the son of Dutch parents, he tells me that his mother always made **eggnog** at Christmas time. Pete dives into the basement and comes upstairs with the only long-preserved bottle of **eggnog**. We each get a glass of **eggnog** and another, because it's party time. "Good stuff, real good stuff," the para repeats. Piet is full of joy. "The first American in his café!".