

André Hissink



WW-2 Veteran

André Louis Armand Hissink,

Born in Batavia, Netherlands-East-Indies, on the 26th of June 1919.

When my age was 8 years old, our family moved to the Netherlands. Only very few things, can I remember of the time in the Dutch Indies, before my eighth. My father was an agent for the SMN (Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland) in Medan. When I was 5 years old, I was sitting on my mother's lap, in a small aeroplane flying above coconut trees, with leaves bent down like an umbrella.

Hilversum

In the Netherlands, we lived in Hilversum, my grandmother lived in the nearby city of Bussum. After primary school, I went to the H.B.S. (highschool) these days, not far from the railway, in the northern part of the city.

Kalmthout

Our family moved to Kalmthout in Belgium. This was in the neighbourhood of Antwerp. I went to H.B.S. in the city of Bergen op Zoom, in Holland, because there was not the same type of school in Kalmthout. Every day we (me and my brother) passed the customs checkpoint two times.



Part of the University in Utrecht, view from the Dom church, in Utrecht

Upon successful completion of the H.B.S., I went to the University in the city of Utrecht to study Law. However, because of the looming war I had to suspend, and was called up to join military service. We were mobilized in 1939, due to the threat from the east: Germany. I never had the intention to join the army, however, was forced to, due to those circumstances. My intent was to become a lawyer, I never made it. I got my call up in my third year, specifically, on Oct. 3, 1939. A week later, I was in uniform.

The invasion - on the 10th of May 1940

In Rotterdam, the 10th of May, early morning, I was on guard, when in large numbers, German planes came over. We first thought they were going to England. We received information about parachutists nearby. The next day with a small group of LSK (Airforce Army) soldiers, we stood guard on top of the PSCHORR dancing/restaurant. In the evening, we were invited by the director (Dirk Reese) to have a delicious diner, which became our last hot meal in the Netherlands. There were many shootings in Rotterdam, until the moment (on the 14th. of May) that the Nazi's decided to bomb the city.

At that time, I was with the LSK regiment under command of Officers E.A. Harloff, and J.J. Moll, to stand guard near the Parksluizen. There were numerous attacks by Stuka's; dive-bombers. The tunnel under the river Maas was still under construction. On the northern bank, where we were, a large piece of this tunnel section was already completed, and used as a temporary bomb shelter. That is where we took refuge and hid. When the bombings stopped, we tried to reach Hook of Holland.

Two lorries were arranged, and together with 70 remaining Air force men, we travelled to the city of Vlaardingen. We had not had food for quite some time and were exhausted. Halfway we stopped, and the Officer told us: "it's time for lunch, get some bread from the bakery".

Therefore, we did, and consequently were ordered to consume this separately, to avoid being snapped by the invading army. Each of us asked permission at different homes in the street. My friends and I rang the doorbell at a house, a friendly woman opened the door, we were invited, and we had our lunch, she gave us coffee. Looking back, we saw large clouds of smoke rising from the burning city; it looked like a big mushroom.



The city of Rotterdam bombed, on the 14th of May 1940

At that moment, six of us decided: to act the same, but then back onto the enemy. We were with my friends Bill Hamilton of Silverton Hill, Jan Wildeman, Frits ter Braak, Evert van 't Eind, and Jan van Dijken.

Then we ran forward to Hook of Holland. We were completely exhausted, a car came along, Jan Flinterman was driving. This car was already fully packed, and we could not get in. Therefore, we stood on the footboard, and held ourselves tight thru the open window, and this way were driven to Hook of Holland.

To our surprise, we noticed h.m.s. "Keith", a British destroyer, alongside the quay.

We asked the guard at the gangway, to be allowed to board, in order to hopefully cross the North Sea to England.

h.m.s. "Keith"



"Wait a moment", he said. After a while, he came back, and admitted our entry to the h.m.s. "Keith". The ship waited until it became dark. We observed a German fighter plane, flying low over the river "Nieuwe Waterweg" (the seaway from the port of Rotterdam to the North Sea). Suddenly there was a very loud noise. Our ship's battery of three anti-aircraft canons attempted to shoot down this enemy airplane, no result. I was standing next to these canons. Then something came down from this German airplane, a magnetic sea-mine, dropped on a rope, into the "Waterweg". Our question was: "Can our ship leave with these mines everywhere"? However, we were told that our ship had a long electrical cable around it, which generated a magnetic field, to disturb the sensors on the sea-mine. We were safe! Until then I was not aware of this new technology. I was corporal in the Dutch army when we left Hook of Holland. After we had arrived in Dover, I became a sergeant. The British took us to a castle near Dover. The ship h.m.s. "Keith" sailed back to the continent, to bring more refugees to the British Isles. A month later she was sank near Dunkirk.

Engelandvaarder

Officially, I am not acknowledged as an 'England paddler', be it, in accordance with the general definition of it, because I crossed the North sea to England before the official surrender of the Dutch government on the 15th of May 1940.

Engelandvaarder, (literally translated as "England paddler") was the term given to men and women who, during the World War II, escaped from occupied territory (like the Netherlands) to England (or another Allied territory) to join the Allied forces so as to continue to fight against the Axis countries (Germany, Italy and Japan). The period covered is between the capitulation of the Dutch armed forces on 15 May 1940 and the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944 (D-Day).



Bill Hamilton of Silverton Hill, his real name was Henk, a Dutch name. When we met him for the first time, we asked: "what is good about this Dutch name, from now on, you are: "Bill". Nevertheless, he was a real Dutchman. His early ancestors (1800's) were from Scotland. His father was mayor in Etten-Leur.

As soon as we arrived in England, we stepped forward and firmly said: "We want to fly."

My friend Bill Hamilton of Silverton Hill

30 June – 7 September 1940: Until our departure to the Dutch Indies, we were assigned to R.A.F. Station Hednesford. Here, we finally received a new battle dress. Of course, in RAF blue, together with a khaki RAF uniform with helmet for the tropics.

During my last week in England, I became acquainted with an English girlfriend, named Janet Russell. Eventually we married in August 1941 in Soerabaja, the Dutch Indies.

On the 7th of September, our group of trainees and officers, left by train to Liverpool, and embarked on the s.s. "Durban Castle", a large troop ship of the Castle Line. That day, there was an air raid on the port. Soon enough, we were on our way in convoy, to Cape-Town and Durban, and from then on to Mombasa, followed by Dar es Salam, Zanzibar, Sabang and Medan, where we had a short stopover. Finally arrived in Batavia, on the 20th of november, where I had a chance to meet my family in Bandung. Our training in Soerabaja started on the 6th of December 1940.



pupil pilots of the Dutch Air force - at a parade in Capetown



Engaged: Janet M. Russell and A.L.A. Hissink) - 17 of June 1941



Married, August 19th, 1941



“How did you came about to become a pilot?”

That was my preference because if your airplane crashes, you will die instantly, but on the battlefield as a soldier, you may be lying there in the mud, maybe brought to the hospital, and become disabled for the rest of your life. As a sailor, your ship goes down, and you go with it.



On the airfield of Tanjung Perak, Soerabaja, most of the apprentices continued with their training to become pilots. Jan, Bill, and I received our first lessons here.



Training lessons in so-called "land Ryans".

"we hebben gezwind"

' we got lucky '



July 1941 - the visit of the Governor General of the NEI accompanied by Vice-Admiral Helfrig to Soerabaja 4th from the left, front row, is André standing



I learned my basics of flying at the training school of the M.L.D. at the airbase of Morokrembangan, Soerabaja. A few planes (Tigermoths) were hired from the VVC, a local aero-club in Soerabaja. I later applied as trainee Officer-Airman. The training schedule included many flights with land- and sea-Ryans. Only once I flew as a pilot with the older Dornier Wal; Take Off, and Landing on water. That was between Soerabaja and Madura, such a slow and sluggish airplane."

Which squadron did you fly with?
André: "No I was trainee, till the end."



Land-Ryan, Dutch Naval Air force, registration S-14

War in the Dutch Indies

On the 7th of December 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the imperial Japanese navy. From then on, imperial ground forces entered and conquered territories of Indochina, Philippines, China, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, and the Dutch-East Indies.

The original idea was that after completion of our training, we would be sent to England around the 15th of December 1941, now we were to stay in Surabaya.

The Dutch naval air force was on high alert, and many reconnaissance flights were made, stretching over long distances across the isles of the Dutch Indies.

André:

I didn't know this was coming, and hadn't anticipated the situation had become so bad. I was in Bandung, temporarily working at the office of Commander Lt. Gen. Sir Archibald Wavell. But on the 17th of February '42 I was called, and was requested to quickly return to Surabaya. We were not able to take the night train, because we were not ready with packing all of the things. I was told that I would be transported to Australia.



January 1942, Bombs fell on Surabaya, the base of Morokrengan.



*In the middle: André, pulling a rope onboard of the s.s. Tjinegara
Source: collection Duijzing & Schraa - NIMH*

Therefore, at the end, we arrived 2 days later in Australia, than Janet. We were reunited and both safe in Sydney. I became stationed at the base of Rathmines, but that was only for a short period. From there we sailed with the s.s. 'Mariposa' to San Francisco. This time there were no restrictions to allow family on-board. We were not made aware of submarines, however, the s.s. Tjinegara was zigzagging, but the ss Mariposa went straight ahead to San Francisco.

Arrival in San Francisco, 3rd of May 1942

The ss. Mariposa arrived that day in the port of San Francisco.



The journey continued by train from San Francisco to Jackson airbase in the State of Mississippi.

Jackson and Midland - RNMFS
(RNMFS ; Royal Netherlands Military Flying School)

May 1942



In the background there is a so-called 'link trainer', today we would name this a flight simulator. My operational training was in the OTU of Pensacola. In the middle.
(OTU = Operational Training Unit)

At that time, we did not know anything about the situation in Holland. Only once I had the opportunity to write a letter to my family in the Netherlands, through the so-called 'black cross', sent from Jackson Mississippi. Eventually I received a reply that the family was okay.

Note: the "black cross" was a sort of illegal (underground) service meant to deliver postal messages to family in occupied territory.



At the Log Cabin Inn
From left to right: Janet, Andre, Nancy, Eric, Sizoo, Frances Ann, Cap. Kooistra, Jean, Engel
"celebration of Jean's arrival from England"

1943 - April

Training at the R.M.F.S. was completed.

We left the USA for England on the s.s. 'Queen Elizabeth'. The ship was fully packed with troops. The next day after departure, the ship was in pack-ice. This also provided some protection against submarines.



Dutch aviators, in New York.

just before departure to England with the s.s. 'Queen Elizabeth'.

“we hebben gezwind”

‘ we got lucky ‘

1943 - arrival in England

In May 1943, I was posted at 320 Squadron, which at that time was stationed near Attlebridge. I joined in the crew of Capt. Lou v.d. Akker



Aircrew of No. 320 Squadron, Royal Air Force (Royal Dutch Naval Air Service) were photographed with their B-25 Mitchell Bomber in the winter of 1943-44. From left are Sgt. Joop Jillings, Sgt. Jung de Vries, Lieut. Evert Wils, and Lieut. Andre Hissink.



Aircrew of No. 320 (Royal Dutch Naval Air Service) Squadron, Royal Air Force, are briefed before a bombing mission in the winter of 1943-44. Lieutenant Andre Hissink is second from the right, immediately under the window.

In the UK we occasionally listened to the news radio. Several enemy controlled radio stations changed the actual facts. In particular, there was this newsreader, whom we called "Lord Haw-Haw." (real name William Joyce) we laughed about the nonsense he was telling.

1944 Dunsfold

Squadron 320 moved in August 1943 from the base near Attlebridge, to Lasham, and in Febr. 1944 from Lasham to Dunsfold.



Mensingh, Koymans, Posthumus, Voogt, ?, Quak, van Dam-Merrett, ?, ?, Wijtman, Limbosch, Geraets, Harselaar, Jillings, Vijzelaar, Mulder, J.N. Mulder, Wils, Nuesink, Morpurgo, van der Kop, Ijsselstein, Engels, de Haan, Hissink, van Offeren.

1944, the 8th of June

Bill Hamilton's plane (André's best friend), was hit by flak, shortly after D-Day, and crashed just outside the coast of Normandie.

Lt. H. L. Hamilton . Royal Air Force No. 320 (Netherlands) Squadron RAF (d.8th June 1944)
On 8th June 1944 a RAF plane, a Mitchell FR179 of 320 Squadron FTR from night mission to Vire (France)
Crew Members were:
Lt. H.L. Hamilton - MIA
Off. W. Badings - MIA
Sgt.I. Posthumus - MIA
Sgt. T.M. Kuypers - MIA
All have a memorial stone at Orry-la-Ville (Senlis) France with their names on.

In October 1944, Squadron 320 was finally moved to the continent, to Airbase Melsbroek (near Brussels).

On my leave-day, the 29th of December 1944, things went badly wrong, our crew was asked to replace a crew in a Mitchell of 180 Squadron. During flight, we were hit by Flak, and both our engines stopped running and were on fire. Our crew tried to bail out, but the escape hatches did not work, and were stuck. Finally, only the front hatch gave way. One of our gunners, in the back, Joop Jillings, lost his life.

A few days later, early morning on the 1st of January 1945, our Base Melsbroek was attacked by the Luftwaffe.

Post War

To find a job after WW-2 for many of us, crew in 320, was difficult. There was a rush to rebuild the damaged houses and enterprises, which needed rapid assignment of those men leaving military service, and prisoners. By the time I was dismissed, in 1947, the availability of vacant jobs was minimal. And I needed employment in the Air Industry, because that was the experience I had.

KLM

Between 1947 and 1950 I became employed with KLM, first at the nav. buro in Amsterdam, and later as Operations Officer in Switzerland, the airport of Zurich.

During this time, I met with Hugo Burgerhout, who was a test pilot at Fokker.

He was one of our best commanders in 320.

In 1950 I lost my job at KLM, and Janet and I eventually decided to immigrate in 1951 to New Zealand.

I worked during 8 years in Wellington, in the Air Department, as an aeronautical navigation and mapping officer.

From then on I immigrated with my family to Vancouver, Canada, to initially assist my brother Henri.

However, I was not happy with this job, and found employment during 3 years as navigation and operations officer with Canadian Pacific Airlines.

ICAO

At last, we moved to Montreal. I became assigned as operations and regional affairs officer, with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of the United Nation Organization (UNO, New York). until my retirement.



André visited the cemetery of Grebbeberg in June 2014
25 of the 320Sqn crewmembers are buried here.

Article: Ottawa Valley - Jun 05, 2014

Perth vet to honour Dutch vets at D-Day ceremony this week

Remembering D-Day

Liam Grove

Perth resident Andre Hissink was one of those representing Dutch veterans of the Second World War when the 70th anniversary of D-Day was marked on June 6.

Perth Courier

By Desmond Devoy



Then, *"out of the blue, I got a phone call from Holland."*

A commander with the Dutch Naval Air Service told him that they would fly him to France.

In 1944 he did come back to Melsbroek with holes in his aircraft on one occasion, but he only had one truly terrifying flight. While providing air cover, they were hit by anti-aircraft fire, and *"we had to bail out. We all got out, except one. He, unfortunately, went down with the aircraft."* – With his parachute, André managed to land safely in Vielsalm, Belgium

Both engines had been hit and were on fire, and the plane was slowly going down - over enemy-occupied territory. Looking at the map, Hissink told his captain, "if we can hold on for 10 minutes, we will be over our own liberated areas. That is what we did and started jumping out."

As for the man (mr. Jillings) they lost, *"that is still our big regret, that we lost this one man."*





- 3 medal clasps:
-Oorlogsvluchten 1940 - 1945
-Nederland may 1940
-Javazee 1941 - 1942
Medals:
-Airman's Cross
-War memorial cross
-medal for honor and extended service as officer

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contact:

grumpy.b25@gmail.com