

**Memories of the war cause sentiments. Especially when, due to events which took place in Zeeland, one appears to be connected closely to a Canadian family. Anja Romijn from Oosterland shares her story.**

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Anja did not experience the moments herself. She was born in 1946, just after the war. But she can imagine how the Canadian liberators entered Sint Philipsland on 4 November 1944. And how her 18-year-old aunt Jacoba -Koojsje for short- watched them pass the Voorstraat. Did she wave, or cheer? It was the Lake Superior Regiment of the Canadian 4th Armoured Division entering the streets. Among them was sergeant Ardagh Cadieu. Did he see Koojsje straightaway? Did Jacoba see the sturdy Ardagh ride his motorcycle?

Anyway, the two fell in love then and there. "Koojsje was a pretty girl", Anja says. "I knew her very well. She died in 2006. She became demented, my brother and I took care of her."

Anja Romijn lives in Oosterland. She used to be a reporter for the PZC and weekly papers. She quit, since she and her husband wanted to spend more time with their grandchildren. She claimed to know her aunt Jacoba, who was her mother's younger sister, very well. As a child, Anja grew up in Sint Philipsland. She and her brothers spent their holidays in Bruinisse with their aunt Jacoba, who still lived at home with her parents. "She made 'poffertjes' (a kind of tiny pancakes)", recalls Anja, "and we walked the dog together."

Last year, Edwin Popken of Battlefield Discovery from Nuenen in Brabant contacted Anja's relatives. He maintains a correspondence with descendants of Americans,



■ Rob de Raat and Anja Romijn-De Raat in the Voorstraat in Sint Philipsland. photograph: Leo Adriaansen

## Koojsje and Ardagh fell for each other at first sight

Canadians and Australians who fought in Holland during World War II. A Canadian family was looking for Jacoba van den Berg. He had enclosed a picture. Anja instantly recognised her aunt Jacoba.

The person looking for Jacoba was Mervyn Saxberg. He lives in Canada and is Ardagh Orval Cadieu's nephew. The memory of Jacoba has always lingered in Mervyn's family. Anja recites: "When Sint Philipsland was liberated, Koojsje and Ardagh's love flourished. Koojsje actually lived in Bruinisse. She was the youngest of eight children.

Her father was an oyster- and mussel fisherman, who sailed the BRU 21. Besides that he was in trade. In 1944 the family was evacuated to Sint Philipsland, where they were sheltered by my parents. My father was a local contractor. When the Canadian soldiers entered the village, the family went outside. Koojsje was 18, Ardagh was four years older." So far, Anja was familiar with the history of her aunt's love life. But through the Canadian family, this history was continued.

Ardagh and his three brothers had joined the forces together. They all fought in Normandy

in June 1944. They fought in France, Belgium and took part in the Battle of the Schelde. After the liberation of Sint Philipsland, Ardagh's division moved to Brabant. Ardagh took every opportunity to drive up to Koojsje. Eventually, he was stationed in the North of Germany. There he died on 25 April 1945.

Anja: "Her relatives never knew. The news of Ardagh's death must have been quite a blow for Koojsje. We also didn't know she kept in touch with Ardagh's family in Canada. She has had relationships after Ardagh, but she never married. According to

Edwin Popken of Battlefield Discovery, such a thing occurs more often: Girls who became involved with Canadian soldiers did not engage in long-term relationships afterwards. Ardagh was buried at the Canadian cemetery in Holten, Overijssel. We now know that Koojsje has regularly visited the grave. At first she went by bike, she would spend the night at youth hostels. Later on she went by car. All this time she sent letters and photographs to Ardagh's mother. Without us knowing, she kept in touch with the Canadian family. They invited her to come and visit her, but

she never has."

Last year August, the first contact with Ardagh's family was established. It appeared that Mervyn Saxberg and his family -his wife Ruth and their son Scott- had been looking for Koojsje before. When touring Europe, they had visited Bruinisse. Anja and her brother Rob met the family in a restaurant at the Grevelingendam in May. They went to the port of refuge in Bruinisse, where Ardagh had taken part in sinking German ships. Anja: "They brought letters and pictures. I instantly recognised my aunt's handwriting. Presumably, Koojsje took lessons in English. Mervyn had been told all of the stories by his grandmother, Ardagh's mother. We went to Sint Philipsland, Voorstraat 54, where Jacoba stayed after they had been evacuated. We even went up to her room. The Canadians were billeted in a barn opposite the house. Ardagh's brothers survived the war. Ardagh was killed in an accident, not in a fight. His grave is still there. Yes, it is very special to discover that an aunt, whom I claimed to know very well, has had a sort of second life. A life in which Canada was very close."



■ Jacoba (Koojsje) van den Berg



■ Ardagh Orval Cadieu