

**Anneke, SBS Radio:**

“We are going to Arizona where Ronny Herman de Jong resides. Ronny told us a few weeks ago about her first book “In the Shadow of the Sun” based on the diary her mother kept during the years they spent in Japanese concentration camps. The sequel published just recently is called “Rising from the Shadow of the Sun.” Ronny was three years old when she entered the Japanese concentration camp.”

**Ronny:**

“Despite all the misery and hunger my mother remained positive. She wrote in great detail about daily life: letters to her parents in the Netherlands. It started with a weekly letter exchange after my parents moved to the Dutch East Indies. The letters took a month to get there because there was no airmail in those days, but they stayed in touch until in May 1940 Rotterdam was bombed and the Germans occupied the Netherlands. My Mom bought a large thick journal – you can see pictures of it on my website – in which she wrote weekly letters about how her little girls grew up and soon, how the Japanese army marched into town and put us into prison camps.”

**Anneke:**

“Can you read a little from the journal?”

**Ronny:**

“Yes.”

“There were other things we did to boost our morale, to show each other that we had faith that the war would one day come to an end. Some of us would wear clothes that showed the three colors of our flag, the red, white and blue. A blue dress, a white belt and red shoes for instance, when we still had shoes. Or we would hang out the laundry on the line, blue next to white next to red. Those things were secret messages to one another of hope and faith, which went unnoticed by the Japanese.’

**Anneke:**

“What made the biggest impression on you in the journal?”

**Ronny:**

“The great detail with which Mamma describes conversations between her and the little girls, the conversations with the neighbor who moved in with her; and also the fact that Mamma always had such a positive outlook on life. In every bad situation she saw something that was positive. I really

believe that pulled her through and that was the reason she lived until she was almost 102 years old.”

**Anneke:**

“That is a ripe old age for someone who was in a concentration camp.”

**Ronny:**

“Indeed. She was in reasonable good health until the very end and she lived to see the galley of my second book.”

**Anneke:**

“And that second book is a sequel to her journal but I assume it takes a different course.”

**Ronny:**

“Yes. The first part based on the journal ends at the end of the war, when we went to the Netherlands for our furlough. Then the Bersiap started.”

**Anneke:**

“So you experienced the Bersiap period yourself?”

**Ronny:**

“Yes. It was dangerous out on the streets; we often heard bombs explode close by in Wonokromo. We couldn’t go anywhere, we never went on vacation, it was just too dangerous. I was a teenager then. But later on, when I read stories from people who experienced the Bersiap as adults, I cringed. The young nationalist incarcerated and brutally killed more than 20,000 men, women and children, whites and Indos, and only 4000 bodies were later found. The devastation the Bersiap created was unbelievable. And not many people here know about that either.

**Anneke:**

“Not much anyway.”

**Ronny:**

“In Part two I describe my life in Indië after the war...”

**Anneke:**

“You keep saying Indië, never Indonesia.”

**Ronny:**

“Ah, yes. When I grew up my mother used to say, ‘You were born in Indië, not in Indonesia.’ So in the second part of my book I tell about my studies, about the fact that I didn’t go to Med School which is what my father wanted, but went into acting instead. Then I describe a pilgrimage we took together to Indonesia. After four days on Bali we flew to Soerabaja on Java where we rented a van and driver and drove to all the places I describe in my book: the camp in Semarang where we lived in cramped little houses is now a very friendly green neighborhood.”

**Anneke:**

“What did you feel when you stood there?”

**Ronny:**

“I cried and cried when I saw all the white crosses on the children’s cemetery and the other cemeteries. Our visit to Semarang was very emotional. In Soerabaja, when we went to the spot where once our house had been we were told it had been torn down a year earlier. That was sad.

**Anneke:**

“And did all that bring back memories, or not any more?”

**Ronny:**

“Oh yes, definitely. We went to my old elementary school; as kids we used to go there on foot or on our bike, but now we took a betjak. And because we are such large people compared to the Indonesians, the flap in front could not close and so we went in the heat of the day to my old school, my elementary school. The students all wore a red-and-white uniform; the colors of their flag, and many wanted my autograph and gave me little gifts. Inside, the principal invited me to sign the alumni book and complimented me on my Bahasa, upon which I told her I had learned that at this school! Actually, after 39 years I had forgotten all about the language except a few words here and there, but what happened was that after four days in Bali it all surfaced again.”

**Anneke:**

“How old were you when you left Indonesia?”

**Ronny:**

“I was seventeen, so I had a reasonable command of the language, but after 39 years I did not remember anything any more. When we drove across Java with the driver, to Tjilatjap from where my father had left, and to Semarang and so on, I sat next to the driver and we spoke Bahasa and I could ask him all kinds of questions. So when we left after two weeks, I remembered a lot.”

**Anneke:**

“You were really home again.”

**Ronny:**

“Yes, it was wonderful.”

**Anneke:**

“Are you planning to write a third book?”

**Ronny:**

“Yes, but first I will be busy marketing my second book. I speak for schools and veterans organizations and so on. The second generation of Indos often does not know what happened in the camps because their parents can’t talk about it.”

**Anneke:**

“Understandable.”

**Ronny:**

“A movie company in New York asked me for the PDF file and said they would look at it in August to see if it was something their company could use.”

**Anneke:**

“I wish you success!”

**Ronny:**

“Thank you Anneke.”