



© Ferry Vloet Van Bebber Family

Case Study: Josephus A.J.M. van Bebber

The atmosphere in 36 Cornflower Street, Tilburg was very tense. A woman, who had not coped well in hiding, was now sleeping peacefully. She had tried to open the window in the middle of the night crying "Here are Jews in hiding!" and had to be calmed with sleeping tablets to keep everyone safe. No-one could afford to take risks, lives were at stake.

It was an ordinary family house with two ground floor rooms, a kitchen and four upstairs rooms with an attic. The attic was filled with camp beds. From this house Josephus Van Bebber, known to his friends as Jef, carried out his secret resistance work. He used his home as a shelter for Jewish people hiding from the Nazis. He also worked for illegal newspapers which stood up to Nazi policies of hatred and he helped to distribute food coupons to those in need. Jef had to be very careful. He tried to avoid attracting attention to the house and did his best to avoid unnecessary risks.

In 1942 Jef, a 34 year old Roman Catholic, lived with his parents and sister Agnes. He worked as a civil servant at the "Office for Food Supply in Wartime".

On August 28th 1942 members of Tilburg's Jewish community received some terrible news. They were ordered to report to the train station so that they could be deported. The son of a Jewish man who had been in the same class as Jef's father, was included on the list of deportees. Jef decided to help him and to encourage as many Jewish people as possible to go into hiding.

For two years Jef worked hard for the Resistance, sheltering people. 36 Cornflower Street was always full. Jef was not afraid to **Stand up to Hatred**. He did all he could to protect those who were hiding from the Nazis. He worked carefully and secretly.

Sometimes Resistance workers were less careful and took too many risks. One man was hiding three English pilots in his house. Thinking it was safe, he took his guests out of hiding to play billiards in a local bar. But it wasn't as safe as he thought. The fugitives and their host were arrested. The men were tortured until they gave away the addresses of other Resistance workers.

On 2nd August 1944 36 Cornflower Street was raided. Jef was hiding eight people in the house. They were all arrested and taken to Westerbork camp. From there they were deported on the last transport to Auschwitz.

Jef was sent to Camp Vught, the only concentration camp in The Netherlands. He was held captive for a week and faced execution by firing squad on 11th August. His family thought he was still alive and did not find out that he had been murdered until October 1945, after the war had ended. Only two of the eight people arrested alongside Jef survived Auschwitz.

During his two years resisting Nazi oppression Jef managed to hide and save at least 160 people. His willingness to **Stand up to Hatred** was recognised when a tree was planted in his name in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem and in 2008 a film was made for Dutch students and their teachers so that they could learn all about Jef's brave stance against those who targeted the Jews of Tilburg for destruction.