

Cornelis van der Knaap

(2nd pilot obs/nav. 320 Sqdn)

born: 10 july 1916 in Rotterdam

deceased: 28 oct. 1943 , Cherbourg, B-25 Mitchell FR 174

as: reserved 1st Lt. Observer/Nav.

RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL, Surrey

VAN DER KNAAP, Pilot Officer, CORNELIS, 104591. 320 (Dutch) Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.
28 October 1943. Panel 133.

crew (all died):

1st Pilot Capt.A.J. van Dieren Bijvoet

2nd Pilot and navigator C.van der Knaap

Wireless Operator P.F.van Woesik (Pierre Fortunus)

Airgunner A.G. van Apeldoorn



*mr. C. van der Knaap, standing on the right, behind h.m. Queen Wilhelmina in front,
lt.-general-commander mr. van Oyen on her right hand,
(RCAF official photograph)*



Cees, as a 4 year old boy

Cornelis was born in Rotterdam, date 10-july-1916 from Simon Philippus Hendricus van der Knaap and Theadora Hoefnagel.

After elementary school, he went to R.K.H.B.S. (Rooms Katholieke Hogere Burger School, in Rotterdam, which took 5 years.

On the 24th of june 1933 he passed exams with an average of 7+, an indication that he was more intelligent than average.

Letter: 5th of nov. 1940, by mr. J.L. van Heck, consul of the Netherlands in Angola, announcing that mr. C. van der Knaap will leave the port of Luanda, approx. 20th of nov. 1940, destination England, by s.s. 'Quanza'.

Letter: Porto, 26 december 1940, Avenida Dos Aliados, 151-2. : the dutch consul expresses surprise, but wishes him success and all the best.

Daily Mirror 14 jan. 1941 -

Lisbon - Cees van der Knaap, twenty-four, is on a 5000 mile journey to join the R.A.F. He has left his job with a dutch import and export firm in Portuguese West Africa "because I have the chance, which hundreds of my fellow countrymen envy me, to do my duty, and fight for my country." His firm has paid his fare to England and all his expenses.

This is the second time he has tried to join up.

When Holland was invaded he tried to reach the Dutch Army, in which he holds a commission.

"Holland fell, and when my brother who was in the Dutch Army wrote to me from Holland I wept like a child."

His brother wrote: "We, too, laid down our arms without firing a shot."

So Cees has taken on the job for him.

Ref.: [1]

Letter, dated 28 june 1941, signed h.m. Queen Wilhelmina, and by the minister of defense, mr. van Boeyen, assignment of mr. C. van der Knaap, to the 18th Regiment Infantry.

Ref.: [1]



Cees, sitting in the front row, middle seat

After his training at the RAF in England, he is transferred in may 1942, to the Air Navigation School, no.33 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

He receives his license as Nav. Officer, and becomes the assignment as 1st lieutenant observer.



view into the cockpit of a B-25 Mitchell

Letter, dated 1 march 1943 entered service in the MLD (Dutch Naval Airforce) – per assignment London 18 march 1943, by minister of war, lt. general J.F. v.d. Vijver

This assignment included:

- * C. van der Knaap
- * L. Koops
- * N. Keizer
- * R.W.H. van Pelt

Ref.: [1]

On the 28th of October 1943, 6 Mitchells B-25 took off for a mission to Cherbourg. The sixth airplane in the formation, FR174/K did not return to base. The returning crew reported seeing the airplane going down in flames. Pilot mr. van Dieren Bijvoet, mr. van der Knaap, Radio Op. Woesik, were buried on cemetery Orry La Ville (Senlis). Airgunner mr. Woesik was never found (seamansgrave).

Ref.: [3]

References

[1] Private family archive (Cees vd Knaap)

[2] Official Archives

[3] book: "Alle Hens" – Nico Geldof

LINKS

 <http://srs.ogs.nl/slachtoffer/79885/cornelis-van-der-knaap>

 <http://www.backtonormandy.org/the-history/youtube-footage/squadron-320-mission-to-cherbourg.html>

note about his captain, 1st Pilot A.J. van Dieren Bijvoet-
André Hissink memorizes : “van Dieren Bijvoet was a serious and dedicated pilot. He never spent a penny to anything else than food and clothes, which he packed in suitcases, ready to be shipped to his family in Holland. He knew that in the occupied country his family had nothing. So he did everything to help them.”



many thanks for allowing access to the family archive: Cees v.d. Knaap, Kessel.

contact: <mailto:grumpy.b25@gmail.com>

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