

### **Cornelia de Reuver (Zwart)**

Marinus and Maria Josepha Zwart lived in the town of Blaricum, North Holland, with their 12 children when Germany invaded and the Nazi regime was enforced. Among their children was Cornelia (Cockie) Zwart, who had been working as an au-pair in a nearby town.



Cornelia (Cockie) Zwart

Maurits (Mau) van Praagh and his wife Judith (Jet) and their four children, Rosa, Bela, Leo, and Bob, lived in Scheveningen district of the Netherlands when the Nazi Army invaded the country in May 1940. Mau van Praagh quickly understood that the Jews are in great danger and sought ways to save his family.

After an unsuccessful attempt to flee to England by boat, the family went into hiding in separate locations with the help of a neighbor. All four children went to different families. Bela reached Laren, where she was taken in by 'Aunt' Mieke Brinkman and her husband, 'Uncle' Paul, who were active in the resistance. This presented great risk for Bela as the Nazis constantly raided and searched homes for resistance members. Cornelia was working as an au-pair for the Brinkmans' five children and decided to take Bela to her family home in Blaricum. Bela joined Cornelia's 11 siblings and was raised by their parents, Marinus and Maria Josepha Zwart. The family also took in young Bea Hartogs, a friend of Cornelia's sister, Emmie.

Bela and Bea slept in the loft under a slanted roof behind a hidden door in the back of a cupboard. At times, the Zwarts even hid Bela's parents, despite the risk of being caught. During one of the Nazi raids, Bela and Bea were moved from their usual hiding place and laid under the wooden floors for 12 hours.

As the situation became more and more dangerous, especially with Bob Zwart (Cornelia's older brother) being active in the resistance, the Zwarts ensured Bela's safety by moving her to different locations. One time, Bela was brought to friends of the Zwart family, Gerardus Martinus Maria (Gertje) and Elisabeth Id Ephemias (Beppie) van Houten. Unfortunately, during that time Bela contracted hepatitis and once back with the Zwarts, she had to isolate for six weeks. On another

occasion, Bela spent over a month at Suzanna Oldeman-Met (also recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 1982).

After the war, Bela returned to Meern and reunited with her family, but remained in contact with the Zwart family, in particular with Guus and Loes. She also kept in close contact with Mieke Brinkman, who attended Bela's wedding and other family events.

On December 2019 [Yad Vashem](#) recognised Cornelia de Reuver (Zwart) as Righteous Among the Nations.

Her parents, Marinus and Maria Josepha Zwart, together with Paul and Meike Brinkman, Gerardus Martinus Maria (Gertje) and Elisabeth Id Ephemina (Beppie) van Houten were also recognised as Righteous Among the Nations in October 2018.

Story by courtesy of [The Embassy of Israel in Canberra](#).