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**A remarkable story**

**On 25 March 1945, just months before the Netherlands and the rest of Europe got liberated....my aunt Rita Jansen tried to save the life of a shot down 22 year old pilot. His name, William Arthur ( Wacky ) Kalka, Flying Officer of the 486th Squadron Royal New Zealand Airforce ( RNZAF ), age 22 years, service number 415415. He flew in his Tempest fighter NV981.**

He was a so-called V1 Ace and had eight of the V1 flying bombs off the air before they could carry out their destructive work. On March 25th 1945 , a few days after the Allied invasion hit with about 450,000 men from Groesbeek - Gennep in Germany , Kalka was hit by FLAK ( German anti-aircraft guns ) and could not reach his home Airbase in Volkel. Near the town of Grave, he had to jump, but he waited to prevent his plane from crashing in a populated area. Because he was flying too low the parachute did not fully function and the injured airman "Wacky " Kalka jumped in the river Maas. He landed with his heavy equipment near Niftrik and Balgoij in the cold Meuse water. His clothes sucked itself full of water, the weight dragged him to the depths.

His agony was being witnessed on Sunday March 25, 1945 by dozens of church visitors who just came from the praise. Nobody went into the water to rescue the distressed New Zealander. Until my Aunt Riet Janssen cycled along. She was on her way to her uncle and aunt who with their barges were moored in the dead Maasarm in Niftrik.

Rita did not hesitate, she threw her bike on the roadside and plunged into the river. Bill Kalka was carried by the current, but the 21-year-old Rita was an excellent swimmer. Rita got hold of the pilot but failed to keep him above water and make his pack loose. She struggled but could not prevent that Kalka was pulled to the depths and she held his first aid kit in her hands.

Exhausted and in tears my Aunt managed to reach the shore only to find her bike had been stolen. Bystanders gave her blankets, which could not dispel the chill from her body and head. She got cigarettes for her father, her mother and chocolate candy to her four sisters. In June 1945 the whole family was invited in Huize St-Anne, at Groesbeekseweg, temporary city hall of Nijmegen and headquarters of the military government. A delegation handed Rita on behalf of the High Commissioner for New Zealand a letter of thanks and a brand new English Simplex bicycle.

The body of Bill Kalka was removed three weeks later from the river Maas . Thanks to the recognition plate around his neck , he was quickly identified. His squadron had left Volkel, following the army that chased and would seal Hitler's downfall.

Not long after the war ended my Aunt Rita Jansen married with US Army Colonel Pat Guiney (who also fought at Omaha Beach and helped liberate us). My aunt moved to the United States of America, raised a loving family and lived their for the rest of their lives.

After nearly 50 years, during Desanding work in the Loonse Waard a crane pulled the wreckage from the earth, oblivious to the importance of the discovery. The gearbox of the propeller of the aircraft was found and among the debris an aluminum plate was found. On that plate the number NV-981 was painted, incontrovertible evidence that it was Bill Kalka´s Hawker Tempest.

Now, on 11-11-2015 more than 70 years later I find out that Flying Officer Kalka is buried at the War Graves Cemetery in Uden....only 5 km´s away from where we live. I will visit his grave together with my family to pay honour to him, my uncle and aunt and all those other brave men and women who fought and still fight for us and our children to live in freedom.

Thank you Rita, William and Pat for risking your lives to save the lives of others.

Courtesy of Mr. Henny Meijer [http://www.noviomagus.nl/…/Meij…/RitaJanssen/RitaJanssen.htm](http://www.noviomagus.nl/Gastredactie/Meijer/RitaJanssen/RitaJanssen.htm))