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**AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL DETAILING LIFE AS
A CHILD OBSERVING
THE DUTCH RESISTANCE OF WW II
CREATES A TELLING PICTURE
OF A FAMILY COMING TOGETHER TO RISE ABOVE
THE NAZI OCCUPATION OF HOLLAND**

San Luis Obispo, CA (Publication Date TBD) – A remarkable autobiography, *A Point of Reference* explores a young Dutch girl's perspective of the Nazi occupation of Holland during World War II. Van der Laaken expertly weaves a historical tale that mirrors the resistance, resilience, resourcefulness and ethics of her family under the Nazi occupation of their home in The Hague during the early 1940s.

“In any war winners and losers equally suffer,” accounts the author, whose parents were two of the many unheralded soldiers of the Dutch resistance waging underground war against the Nazis. Central to the story is her mother, a transplanted German who must decide whether to side with her adopted nation, or her homeland. Through the author's eyes we see how her parents make a life for themselves and their daughter under the harsh conditions of wartime and Nazi occupation. Her experiences point to the ingenuity of the human spirit in troubled times - from her father's conversion of a bicycle into a press that extracted oil from rape-seed, to the grating of white sugar beets as a sugar replacement.

Van der Laaken also depicts the Nazi occupiers with insight, noting that many of them were anonymous pawns in a game of global dominance. Upon receiving the gift of an egg from a friendly Nazi soldier, her mother astutely noted that war affects everyone involved, stating, “Some soldiers are just country boys who had to leave home too soon.” Indeed, being a German married to a Dutchman gives the author's mother a layer of added gravitas that makes the story more poignant, and illustrates that making the choice between right and wrong is not something that should be guided by nationality, religion, or political affiliation, but by the moral high ground.

As a peer of van der Laaken wrote, “it's easy for us, not having faced a real war in our adult lives, to forget how horrible life is for everyone... and easy to forget how wonderful our lives are (also) because of it.” Van der Laaken's powerful novel underscores this point with stunning and uncanny accuracy.

About the Author

Elsa M. van der Laaken grew up in The Hague, Holland where the Nazi High Command settled during WW II. Born in 1936, she observed her family's precarious situation while living in the Royal Stables, a Nazi-occupied building in The Hague where her father was employed in Queen Wilhelmina's service.

Elsa left Holland at age 22, married, and lived in various countries where her professional life focused on teaching English as a second language.

Her desire to write about WW II never wavered and over the years she preserved boxes full of photos, articles and personal notes. In 1994 she graduated from Vermont College after studying Psychology and Creative Writing while still teaching in Brazil. After a period of intensive research in Holland, she moved in 1995 to California where her children and grandchildren live and started to write.

A POINT OF REFERENCE

By Elsa M. van der Laaken

Publication Date: May 7, 2002

Trade Paperback; \$18.69; 232 pages; ISBN 1-4010-3150-1

Hard Cover; \$28.79; 232 pages; ISBN 1-4010-3151-X

The author is available for interviews by calling (888) 795-4274 ext. 190 or emailing Beth.Staples@Xlibris.com. To request a complimentary review copy of *A Point of Reference*, contact the publisher at (888) 795-4274 x.190.

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