

Unveiling of the 'Stolpersteine' at 30A Wolweverstraat, Zwolle

In 2013, I was looking through the window in my sister's room, the sun was shining brightly and we always like lying there then. Her room has a big window and we were gazing at the beautiful tall ones of what we then thought to be 'some sort of church'. That afternoon, however, I noticed that there was a Star of David sitting on top of the building, therefore making it a synagogue. For me, that window meant an introduction, albeit an indirect one, to Martha, Isidor, and Hugo Lippers, as well as Rolf Eichenberg, the former residents of 30A Wolweverstraat. Since that day, those windows have urged me to bring to light the horrendous ordeals that took place in these streets and in this house.

The Lippers family was big and originally from Adelebsen in Germany. They sensed they were in danger and by the time the war started, they had already fled to the Netherlands.

Martha and Isidor had two daughters, Julia and Bertha, both of whom were married with children. The parents were blessed with three grandchildren: Ursula, Martha and Dietrich. Ursula was handicapped and a great favourite with all the family, as can be read in the archives. The family lived at the Sassenstraat in Zwolle and the Kerkstraat in Hattem. Assisted by a foundation finding shelter for Jewish refugees from Germany, Isidor, his wife, and brother Hugo found a place to live at the Wolweverstraat 30A. Rolf Eichenberg, probably a friend from Adelebsen, went to live there too.

Earlier, Ernst Gerson had already been a suspect with the German police in connection with an act of rebellion. That is probably why, in 1942, he arranged safe houses for the Lippers family and Rolf Eichenberg on the Molecaten estate near Zwolle. All were housed in small huts. It must have been cold, cramped and isolated.

On the Molecaten estate, a passer-by must have seen the family and betrayed them. On 2 September 1944, the Lippers family arrived in Westerbork and all were placed in the Penal Block. Some days later they were deported to Auschwitz and nearly all were murdered on arrival on 6 September of that same year.

Rolf Eichenberg was detained earlier and arrived in Westerbork on 3 October 1942. Weeks later, on 19 October, he was deported to Auschwitz, placed in the Penal Block and murdered on 28 February 1943.

Now that I have lived in Amsterdam and studied Cultural Heritage for some time, I return to Zwolle quite frequently. So every now and then, I and my sister, who has moved out too in the meantime, find ourselves lying in the sun in her old room, gazing at the windows of the synagogue again. They keep reminding us of the Lippers family and Rolf Eichenberg, and they teach us the importance of tolerance, solidarity and mutual respect in any society.

Martha Lippers-Stehberg, Isidor Lippers, Hugo Lippers and Rolf Eichenberg.