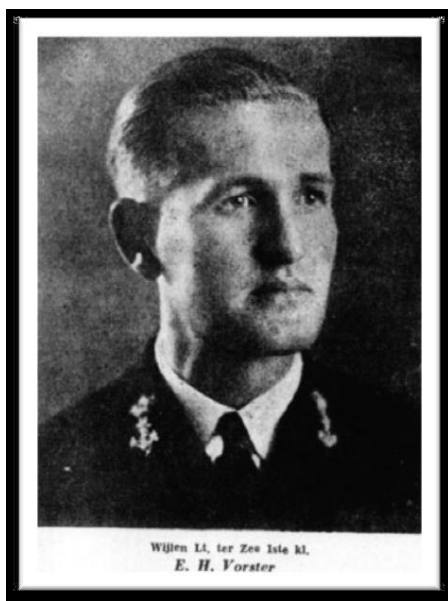


Sea Commander 1st Class Edward Herbert Vorster †

Last letter of a fallen hero



"Sea Commander 1st Class Edward Herbert Vorster, son of a captain of the Government Navy in (former) Dutch Indies, was a sailor at heart," said the Soerabaiasch Handelsblad on 19 August 1940.

He was born on 21 September 1905 in Ambon. Growing up in the Dutch East Indies in a naval family in May 1918 he passed the entrance examination to the first class of the HBS in the Dutch East Indies, that he was taken in Medan. After to have visited the H.B.S. Surabaya, he went in 1924 to Willemsoord in Den Helder and was sworn in as an officer in 1927 and placed in the Submarine Service therein.

He spent a large part of his naval career in the East Indies. From 1928 to 1932 he was already stationed there. Later in 1935 he came with submarine Hr. Ms. "K. XVII" back to the East Indies again.

Hr. Ms. "K. XVII" departed in January 1935, along with sister ship Hr. Ms. "K. XVI" to the Dutch East Indies. Along the way the crew received ample opportunity to go ashore and once were visiting Vatican City. LTZ 2 Vorster is on the front row, fourth from the left. In the Dutch East Indies, he took command of the sub K XVII itself.



The lieutenant was in the course of time a seasoned professional in the Dutch submarines. The latest news that his family in the East Indies received from him before the war was that he had become the commander of submarine Hr. Ms. O13.

What happened next, the escape to England and the inclusion in the International English 9 the flotilla submarines Dundee, became known only after the war. Yet, his family knew as one of the first that the boat was lost with all hands. In the Netherlands navy news was scarce and these news messages appeared until months later and then often only through the Red Cross.

In the Dutch East Indies, however, a notice was already published on 9 August 1940 in the Batavian Newspaper by the Department of the Dutch Navy in Indië under the headline: "Tribute to the Fallen!" above the title "A Dutch loss list", in which it announced that the following officers and crewmembers for the period June 15 to August 1 had given their lives in the struggle against the enemy. The entire crew of the perished O13 was published on that list.

The next day already an obituary was posted on behalf of his relatives:

"Today we received the sad news that our dear son, brother, brother in law and uncle, Mr. E.H. Vorster, alive Lieutenant At Sea 1st class RN, at age 35 years was killed".

"Lt1 Edward Herbert Vorster was a sailor to the backbone" writes the Soerabaiasch Handelsblad the following day under the title "Last letter of a fallen hero". The magazine continues "This is evident from his last letter he wrote to his mother in the East Indies, dated London, May 27, 1940".

In this letter he wrote - after May 10, 1940, when he escaped to England with his submarine on patrol from Den Helder - about Joel and his son Robert Edward:

"Since May 10 I have not seen Joel and Robby nor heard anything from them. After two weeks of despair, I calmed down and have the confidence that Joel and Robby have been spared the worst. "

"In Edward Herbert Vorster lived the tradition of the Dutch Navy at its best," continues the newspaper, "witness another fragment of this letter, in which he writes:"

"For me in the Navy and on the side of the Allies there is a beautiful task to fulfill. I assure you that I will fulfill this to the best of my ability. Besides the feeling of deep hatred of the Germans it is a salutary thought to be allowed to work on the final victory of the Allies. "

He ends his letter to his mother with the words:

"Mom, I may not and cannot tell you more about my position. I hope to hear some of you soon from the happy East Indies. "

Article written by: Fred Rienstra (2 Feb. 2013)

- source: old pre WWII newspaper archives
- Photo audience with the Pope has been made available by Mr. C. Witkam.
<http://www.go2war2.nl/artikel/1948/Hr-MS-K-XVII:-gezonken-door-een-mijn-of-door-een-aanslag?.htm?page=1>
- For more information about the submarine Hr. Ms. O-13 or the O13-commander or my personal involvement into the O13, visit my site at <http://home.hccnet.nl/f.rienstra/Rienstra/O13%20zoektocht%20en.html>