Arnold Vanderhorst was born in 1935 in Arnhem, Holland. His family owned a bakery and delivered the loaves to customers on the weekends. Life was pleasant and in 1940 his sister Theodora was born. That same year, the Germans invaded Holland.

On April 29, 1942, the Nazis ordered that all Jews older than 6 were required to wear a Yellow Star with the word “Jood” on it. Arnold had to wear his on the way to school while being taunted by his former friends with “Rotten Jew!”

One day when the family returned home they found their home sealed by the Nazis. The Vanderhorsts broke the seals, taking their necessities. His mother dropped Arnold and Theodora off at trusted neighbors and then gave herself up to the Nazis.

Arnold was introduced as the nephew of the family to his new neighborhood. Only on the rare occasion was he allowed to play outside with the other children.

In September 1944, Allied paratroopers descended on Arnhem with hopes to liberate the city and the nearby bridges. To avoid the war, Arnold’s foster family fled to the woods and built a makeshift tent from wood taken from their home.

Arnold lived in the woods for three days with his foster family and survived through the Hungerwinter from September 1944 until May 1945, when the Canadians liberated them. His parents were murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 28, 1944.

Malnourished, Arnold was sent to England to a camp for children to recuperate for three months. He then moved from various families and orphanages until he finally immigrated to America in 1963. He is married and has two adopted children.

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Holocaust Survivor Biography: Arnold Vanderhorst

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Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

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