

Anni Zarudzka (August 9th, 1916 - May 31, 2008)

Starting at 6 am, and every six hours, four 30-minute programs aired each day during the Second World War, as the anxious people of Denmark settled in around their radios to listen to a broadcast from BBC. They heard the beginning strains of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, followed by a voice saying "**THIS IS LONDON CALLING DENMARK**". The voice was that of Anni, a young Danish woman.

Anni Karla With was born in Copenhagen on August 9, 1916. After she graduated from school, she worked at *Magasin du Nord*, a large department store in Copenhagen. She worked there for two years until her employer gave her leave to go to London to improve her English.

Anni arrived in London in June of 1939, supposedly for a one year stay. For a time, she found a job as an au-pair girl. Two months after her arrival, on September 3, Britain and France declared war on Germany after Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany. Then on April 9, 1940, Denmark and Norway were invaded by German forces. Anni was cut off from her family in Denmark. Consequently, she decided to stay in Britain for the duration of the hostilities.

A member of the British Parliament, a family member of her employer, then recommended Anni for a job with the British Broadcasting Corporation. After passing rigorous security checks, lasting a year, they were satisfied that she was not a spy, and she was hired.

Her job with the BBC was to send coded announcements in Danish to resistance fighters in Denmark. The greetings seemed innocuous, and generally consisted of "birthday greetings to Torben" or "greetings from Nana to Ole", for instance. But each broadcast sent an important message to the Danish underground, letting them know where to find ammunition and weapons which the British pilots dropped for them, or to let them know of the movements of German troops. Throughout Anni was kept in the dark regarding the real nature of these messages.

The British Secret Intelligence Service prepared the messages which Anni were to read in Danish, and they made sure, for security reasons, that she never knew about their significance. Anni often ate and slept at the BBC broadcast building, eight floors underground.

During this time, Anni met Kazik Zarudzki, a Polish engineer and sailor who had travelled the high seas with the Polish Merchant Marine. When the war broke out his ship was sailing near the Gold Coast. Hearing the ominous news, they headed straight for London. With London as home base, he sailed to Halifax and New York, carrying arms and munitions back to the Allies for duration of the war.

In 1944 Kazik and Anni were married in London, and this is where their three children were born. Then in 1957 they emigrated to Canada, settling in Montreal.

By chance, many years later, likely around 2003, Anni met Peter Aage Jørgensen at the Danish Club in Montreal. While getting to know each other, Aage realized that Anni's was the voice he had heard on the radio in Denmark during the war. At the time he was a 16-year-old member of the Danish Resistance. Imagine his surprise upon meeting the woman whose voice he had heard every day during a large part of the war. Unfortunately, Aage was captured by the Nazis in late 1944, was tortured and beaten before being sent to Dachau prison camp until the end of the war. Fortunately, he survived.

In the Freedom museum in Copenhagen, where Anni's wartime broadcasts can still be heard, you can also read that 500 members of the Danish resistance were killed during the Second World War. About another 100 were tried and executed while nearly 300 died in prison camps. Allied casualties in Denmark included about 2,000 airmen, 180 of whom were Canadians. Thousands of Danish civilians died. Moreover, about 25,000 Germans are buried in Denmark, both soldiers and civilians (refugees from East Prussia).

Anni held a number of secretarial jobs in Montreal, including a thirteen-year stint at McGill University, until she retired in 1981. After her retirement Kazik and Anni moved to St. Sauveur, Quebec. Sadly, she was widowed in 1993. Anni was also the secretary at St. Ansgar's Lutheran church for about eight years, during the tenure of Pastor Marat M. Holobow.

In her later years Anni was honoured and received recognition for her work during the war. After meeting Anni, Peter Aage Jørgensen lobbied to have her recognized for her wartime contribution. As a result, Anni was awarded the Danish Memorial Medal for the Liberation of Denmark. The Danish Club also honoured Anni for her work during the war, presenting her with a plaque. In addition, a full-page article was published in *The Montreal Gazette* on August 11, 2007, bringing her wartime contribution to light for the general public.

After a short illness, Anni died on May 31, 2008. She is survived by two daughters, Hella and Julia and a son, Richard, as well as their spouses and her three grandchildren.

(by Jette Blair)