

# The Extraordinary Legacy of Hans Calmeyer: Rescuing Thousands from Nazi Persecution



## The Unassuming Hero

Amidst the horrors of Nazi Germany, a beacon of humanity emerged in the unlikely figure of Hans Calmeyer. As an official in the German occupation of the Netherlands, Calmeyer defied the tide of hatred to save the lives of thousands of Jewish families, including my own.



## Shedding Our Stars: The Story of Hans Calmeyer and How He Saved Thousands of Families Like Mine

by Laureen Nussbaum

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 4105 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 232 pages



Born in 1903 to a middle-class family in Schleswig-Holstein, Calmeyer was an unassuming and unyielding man. His education in law and economics instilled in him a deep respect for justice and human rights. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Calmeyer initially supported them as a nationalist. However, his views quickly changed as he witnessed the escalating persecution of Jews.

## **The Turning Point**

In 1941, Calmeyer was assigned to the office responsible for the implementation of anti-Semitic measures in the Netherlands. Faced with the moral dilemma of his life, he chose to subvert the Nazi regime from within. By exploiting loopholes and using his discretion, Calmeyer began systematically identifying Jews and issuing them protective certificates that declared them "volljuden" (full Jews) instead of "mischlinge" (those of mixed Jewish and Aryan heritage).

Calmeyer's actions were fraught with risk. The penalties for helping Jews were severe, including imprisonment and even execution. Yet, he persevered, creating an intricate network of trusted allies within the occupation bureaucracy. Together, they falsified documents, shielded Jewish families from deportations, and organized safe houses for those in hiding.

## **The Ripple Effect**

Through Calmeyer's selfless efforts, an estimated 5,500 Jews survived the Holocaust in the Netherlands. Each rescued life became a ripple effect, touching countless generations. My family owes its very existence to Calmeyer's indomitable spirit.

My grandmother, Rosa van Dam, was one of the many Jews who sought refuge from the Nazis. With her husband and two young children in tow, she fled to the Netherlands. When they arrived in Amsterdam in 1941, they found themselves facing imminent deportation. Desperate, they contacted Calmeyer through a trusted acquaintance.

Calmeyer meticulously reviewed my grandmother's case and issued her and her family protective certificates. For the remainder of the war, they lived in hiding, constantly fearing discovery but grateful for the sanctuary provided by Calmeyer's actions.

## **The Recognition and Legacy**

After the liberation of the Netherlands in 1945, Calmeyer's role in saving Jews became known. He was hailed as a hero and received numerous accolades, including the prestigious Yad Vashem recognition as "Righteous Among the Nations."

Despite his extraordinary accomplishments, Calmeyer remained humble and never sought recognition. He believed that he had simply done what was right, regardless of the personal consequences.

The story of Hans Calmeyer is a powerful reminder of the indomitable human spirit and the transformative impact of compassion and courage. In

a time of darkness, he stood as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path for thousands of families like mine.

As we navigate the complexities of the present, let us draw inspiration from Calmeyer's legacy. Let us be the agents of change in our own communities, standing up for what is right, even when it requires us to make difficult choices.

In ng so, we honor the memory of Hans Calmeyer and ensure that his profound message of compassion and humanity continues to resonate throughout the generations.



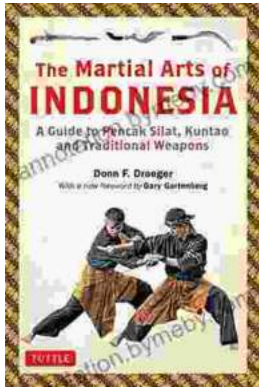
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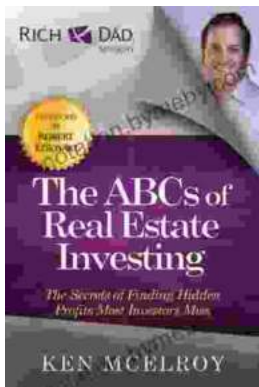
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