

*YOUNG READER'S EDITION*

# **GOD'S SMUGGLER**

**BROTHER ANDREW**

WITH JOHN AND ELIZABETH SHERRILL



**Chosen**

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Brother Andrew with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *God's Smuggler, Young Reader's Edition*  
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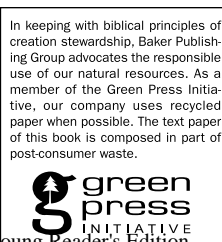
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# *PREFACE*

**T**he events in this book are true. They happened before many of us were born. They happened in places many of us have never seen or may never visit—and they happened to people we don't know.

And yet such stories can be thrilling to read.

After World War II, the victorious Soviet Union (now Russia) imposed Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe. These countries were known as being behind the Iron Curtain—not a real curtain, but an imaginary curtain separating the free world from Communist nations. Under Communism, citizens living behind the Iron Curtain were not allowed to leave their country without permission. Nobody was allowed to own property, and everyone worked for the government (or the State). If a person wanted to leave or to live a more individual life, that person was likely to be punished.

Communists were atheists—people who believe God does not exist. Faith in God was especially threatening to the regime, because Communism could not have its people more devoted to religion than to the State. So they outlawed worship.

How did Communist regimes enforce this? Sometimes they closed churches. Sometimes they ridiculed believers publicly or took away their jobs or their homes. Sometimes they imprisoned believers, and occasionally, yes, they even killed them.

This meant that people in Communist countries either were frightened into submission or worshiped secretly. Religious reading material was usually outlawed—especially Bibles.

This is important to know as you read *God's Smuggler*. History is part of the book, and of course you can always supplement your history knowledge by using the library or the internet. Look especially for a map of countries behind the Iron Curtain.

But the story is really this: Many years ago, a boy in a small town in the Holland region of the Netherlands wanted to trade in his wooden shoes for excitement. You will read how he grew up in search of adventure, only to make many mistakes in his life. But God used this Dutchman's particular talents—his intelligence, his imagination, his work ethic and his nerve. When our Dutchman decided his life's mission was to serve God behind the Iron Curtain, his life truly had purpose. He became known as Brother Andrew, and he found the adventure he'd always sought.

He also found himself connected to believers around the world—people who loved God but thought their fellow Christians had abandoned them until Brother Andrew showed up with greetings from the outside and, miraculously, with Bibles.

God used Brother Andrew's unique talents to help him become a smuggler for the faith. As you read, think about how God could use your talents—even those that people in your world may not appreciate right now. Keep that in mind.

So let's go meet that adventurous boy in his wooden shoes. . . .

# Smoke and Bread Crusts

**F**rom the time I first put on wooden shoes—*klompen* we call them in the Netherlands—I dreamed of derring-do. I was a spy behind the lines; I was a scout in enemy territory; I crept beneath barbed wire while bullets flew around me.

We kids didn't have any enemies in my hometown of Witte, so we made enemies out of each other. We fought with our *klompen*; any boy who got hit with a wooden shoe just hadn't reached his own fast enough. I remember the day I broke a shoe over my enemy-friend Kees's head. What horrified us both was not the enormous bump on his forehead, but the ruined shoe.

That night my hardworking blacksmith father had to repair my shoe. Already that day Papa was up at five to water and weed the garden that helped feed his six children. Then he pedaled four miles on his bicycle to his job



in Alkmaar. Now he spent the evening gouging a little trough across the top of the wooden shoe, pulling a wire through the trough, nailing the wire down on both sides and repeating the process at the heel so that I had shoes to wear to school.

“Andrew, you must be careful!” he said in his loud voice. Papa was deaf and shouted rather than spoke.

In my boyish fantasies there was one family that acted as the enemy—the Family Whetstra.

Why I picked on the Whetstras I do not know. They were the first in our village to begin talking about war with Germany. They were strong Christians. Their God-bless-yous and Lord-willings seemed sickeningly tame to a secret agent of my stature. So in my mind they were the enemy.

Once I passed Mrs. Whetstra’s kitchen window as she was putting cookies into the oven of her woodburning stove. Leaning against the front of the house was a new pane of window glass, and it gave me an idea. I picked up the piece of glass and moved stealthily through the lines to the back of enemy headquarters. The Whetstras, like everyone in the village, had a ladder leading to their thatched roof. Off came my *klompen*, and up I went. I placed the pane of glass on the chimney. Then I crept back down the ladder and across the street to watch from the shadows.

Sure enough the smoke backed down the chimney. It filled the kitchen and began to curl out the open window. Mrs. Whetstra screamed, jerked open the oven door and fanned the smoke with her apron. Mr. Whetstra raced outside and looked up at his chimney. The expression on his

face as he climbed the ladder was worth it. I chalked up for myself a victory.

Maybe my action fantasies were a means of escaping Mama's radio. A bad heart forced her to spend much of each day in a chair, where her consolation was the radio. She kept the dial on the gospel station from Amsterdam. Sometimes it was hymn singing, sometimes it was preaching; always—to my ears—it was dull. Not to Mama.

We were poor; our house was the smallest in the village. But to our door came an unending stream of needy people who knew that they would be welcome at Mama's table. The cheese that night would be sliced thinner, the soup stretched with water, but a guest would never be turned away.

Thriftiness was as important as hospitality. At age four I could peel potatoes without a centimeter's waste. When I was seven, the potatoes passed to my little brother Cornelius, while I graduated to the responsibility of shining our leather shoes for Sunday. My older brother Ben did the laundry. The only member of the family who did no work was the oldest child, Bastian.

Bas never learned to do the things other people did. He spent the day standing under an elm tree, watching the village go by. Witte was proud of its elms—one for every house, their branches meeting to form a green archway over the road. For some reason Bas never stood beneath our tree. His post was under the third one down. There he stood all day, until one of us led him home for supper.

As the villagers passed his elm tree, they would call to see his shy and wonderful smile. "Ah, Bas!" He heard this

so often that he began to repeat it, the only words he ever learned.

Though Bas could not even dress himself, he had a remarkable talent. In our sitting room, as in most Dutch parlors, was a small pump organ. In the evenings Papa would sit on the bench, pumping the foot pedals and picking out tunes from a hymnbook while we sang.

The minute the music started, Bas would crawl beneath the keyboard, crouch out of the way of Papa's feet and press himself to the baseboard of the organ. Papa's playing was full of mistakes; years of wielding a hammer on an anvil had left his fingers thick and stiff. Sometimes he seemed to hit as many wrong notes as right ones.

To Bas it never mattered. He would press against the vibrating wood with rapture on his face. From there, he could not see which keys were played. But all at once Bas would stand up and gently push against Papa's shoulder.

"Ah, Bas," he would say.

Papa would get up, and Bas would take his place at the bench and begin to play. From beginning to end he would play the songs Papa had played that night. But Bas played them perfectly, with such beauty that people would stop in the street to listen. On summer nights when our door was open, a crowd would gather outside. When Bas played, it was as though an angel sat at the organ.

The big event every week was church. Witte was in the polder land of Holland—land that generations of Dutchmen had reclaimed from the sea—and like all villages in the polders was built along a dike. It had only one street, the road leading north and south on top of the dike. The

houses were virtual islands, each built on its mound of earth and connected to the road with a tiny bridge spanning the drainage canal. At either end of town were the two churches.

Because of Papa's deafness, we sat in the first pew at our church. The pew was too short for the entire family to sit together, and I would lag behind Mama and Papa and the other children going in first. Then I would walk toward the rear of the church to "find a seat"—usually far beyond the church door. In winter I skated the frozen canals in my wooden *klompen*. In summer I sat so still in the fields that crows would sit on my shoulders and peck gently at my ears.

Somehow I knew when the church service was over and would slip into the building. I listened for comments from the congregation about the sermon, picking up the minister's text, his theme, sometimes even a story.

This ploy was important so that I could discuss the sermon that afternoon with the family. Could I fool my parents into thinking that I had been to church?

I blush to think how seldom I attended church as a child. I blush more that my trusting family never suspected.

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By 1939 the Germans were intent on conquest that included the Netherlands. In our house we scarcely thought about it. Bas was sick with tuberculosis. For months he lay coughing. His suffering was horrible to watch.

I remember one day just after my eleventh birthday creeping into the sickroom while Mama was busy in the kitchen. Entering that room was strictly forbidden, for the

disease was contagious. But that was what I wanted. If Bas was going to die, then I wanted to die, too. I threw myself down and kissed him again and again.

In July 1939, Bas died, while I stayed healthy as ever. I felt that God had betrayed me twice.

Two months later, in September, our government called for a general mobilization. Now Mama allowed her radio to be used for news.

My sister Geltje stationed herself at the set and shouted information to Papa. "All reserve units are activated, Papa. . . . All private cars are commandeered."

By nightfall, every automobile in the Netherlands was on the road. I watched from under the tree where Bas used to stand. Nobody talked much.

I could not understand why I was drawn toward the Whetstras at this time, but I found myself walking past their kitchen window.

"Good afternoon, Andrew."

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Whetstra."

"On an errand? You'd better have a cookie for energy." She brought a plate of cookies to the window.

Mr. Whetstra spoke up. "Is that Andrew? Out to see the mobilization firsthand?"

"Yes, sir." For some reason I put my cookie behind my back.

"Andrew, you must say prayers for your country every night. We are about to go through a very hard time."

"Yes, sir."

"They'll be here, Andrew, with their steel helmets and their goose step and their hate, and all we will have is our

prayers.” Mr. Whetstra came to the window and leaned across the sill. “Will you pray, Andrew?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good boy. Now get along on your errand.”

As I started down the street, he called after me. “You know, sometimes that old stove of ours smokes something awful. But it’s worked fine ever since I got my new window in.”

He had known all along. I wondered why he had not told my father. I also wondered about his wanting me to pray. If the Germans came, I planned to do a lot more than pray. I fell asleep that night dreaming of the feats of daring I would work single-handed against the invader.

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By April, our country was bombing our own dikes, deliberately flooding land to slow down the German army. Every house except ours, which was too small, held a homeless family from the flooded land.

But the Germans did not come by land. The first planes flew over Witte the night of May 10, 1940, the night before my twelfth birthday. We spent the night huddled together. By day we saw planes and heard them bomb the military airfield four kilometers away.

Then the Germans bombed Rotterdam. The radio announcer wept as he read the release. In one hour Rotterdam disappeared from the earth. The next day the Netherlands surrendered.

Soon a German lieutenant arrived in Witte in a squad car and set himself up in the burgomaster’s house. The handful of soldiers accompanying him were older men; Witte was not important enough to rate crack troops.



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I really did act out my fantasies of resistance. Many nights I crept barefoot down the ladder from the loft bedroom as two o'clock struck on the town clock. I knew my mother heard me, but she never stopped me. Nor did she ask the next morning what had happened to our rationed sugar. Everyone in the village was amused when the lieutenant's staff car began to give him trouble. Some said there was sugar in the lieutenant's gas tank; others thought it unlikely.

Food ran out in the towns before it did in farming villages. One day that first summer, I loaded a basket with cabbages and tomatoes and walked four miles to Alkmaar. A store there still had fireworks, and the proprietor wanted vegetables.

The proprietor watched as I filled my basket with firecrackers. Then he reached under the counter and brought up a large cherry bomb. "Get home before the curfew," he said.

That night, I slipped out. Four soldiers moved up the street toward our house. I flattened myself against the side of the house as they drew closer. The minute they passed I sped across the little bridge to the dike road and ran to the burgomaster's house. I could have fired the cherry bomb in the lieutenant's doorway while the patrol was at the other end of the village. But I wanted more adventure than that. I was the fastest runner in the village, and I thought it would be fun to have these old men run after me.

The patrol began back down the street. Just before they got to headquarters, I lit the fuse and ran.

"*Halt!*" I heard a rifle bolt being drawn. I had not counted on guns! As I zigzagged up the street, the cherry bomb



exploded. For a moment the soldier's attention was diverted. I darted across the first bridge I could find, raced through a garden and flung myself down among the cabbages. For an hour they hunted for me, shouting to one another. Finally they gave up.

Elated by this success, I began discharging volleys in broad daylight. Once I stepped from hiding straight into the arms of a soldier. In my left hand were firecrackers, in my right, matches. My hands clenched.

I grabbed the edges of my coat with my clenched hands and held it open for the soldier to search. The soldier went over me from my trousers to my cap. When he left, the firecrackers in my hand were drenched with perspiration.

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As the occupation dragged on, I tired of my games. In villages near ours people were lined up and shot and houses burned to the ground as the real resistance took shape.

All over the Netherlands men and boys went into hiding in the polders to escape deportation to the forced labor camps in Germany. My brother Ben, sixteen when the war began, went into hiding. For five years we had no news of him.

Possession of a radio became a crime. We hid ours in a space under the sloping roof, and we would crouch there listening to Dutch-language broadcasts from England.

As the Germans grew desperate for manpower, Witte's occupation force was withdrawn. Then came the dreaded *razzia*. Trucks sped into the villages, at any hour of the day or night, sealing the dike road at both ends. Soldiers searched every house for able-bodied men. By age fourteen I



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joined the flight of men and boys into the polders at the first sign of a German uniform. We ran across fields, crouching low, and leaped canals, making our way to swamps beyond the railroad. By the end of the war even my deaf Papa was racing to the swamp.

Life became hard. Electricity was reserved for Germans. With nothing to power the pumps, rainwater lay stagnant over the polders. There was no coal, so Witte cut down its elms, including the tree under which Bas had stood.

We were constantly hungry. Crops were commandeered for the battlefield. Our family of six lived on rations for two. We dug tulip bulbs from our garden and ate them like potatoes. But the tulips ran out. Many nights I saw Mama divide her food portion among the other plates. Her only consolation was that Bas had not lived to see this.

Then in the spring of 1945 the Germans left. People wept for joy in the street. But I was running five miles to a Canadian encampment, where I was able to beg a bag of bread crusts.

I brought it home to my family. As Mama gnawed the dry crusts, tears of gratefulness rolled down her cheeks.

The war was over.