

Dear Reader

August 15, 2023

Dear Reader,

This book is a reintroduction to this cultural historical World War Two (WWII) memoir penned by my Grandma, Martha Walandouw Lohn. Were she to meet you, she'd say, "Call me Grandma, too." That's just who Martha Walandouw Lohn is — everybody's Grandma. And by the time you finish reading her memoir, *Blue Skies, Troubled Waters*, I am sure you will know why this little old lady who dresses in pink, wants you to call her Grandma, and is so significant.

This is a memoir about the journey of an American twin girl, Ath, and her odyssey from the United States to Indonesia, at the start of WWII. Ath, her twin sister, Kath, and her parents, a Polish Mama and undocumented Minahasan-Indonesian Papa, said goodbye to family and friends in Elizabeth, New Jersey. They boarded a ship in Brooklyn Harbor, New York, in 1940 destined for their Papa's island home of Minahasa, the northernmost region of the Island Sulawesi (Celebes), Indonesia (Dutch East Indies). Sailing through "enemy"-infested waters of the North Atlantic and Pacific, the Panama Canal, Pearl Harbor before its infamous bombing, and eventually reaching the heart of the Pacific—Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies. Within a year of landing ashore at Manado, Minahasa, where their Papa was born, war broke out. Japanese paratroopers stormed their village, and the family became prisoners of war. They fought for their survival and persevered for four grueling years through the tumult of the Japanese military occupation. Half of their village did not survive.

A scene in the book describes the twin girls scurrying up a tree in the jungle to view the ocean and the deep blue sky. All around

them was a kaleidoscope of beautiful floral trees with white orchids dangling off trunks and yellow ilang-ilang flowers dancing in a slight, tropical breeze. At moments like these, it's hard to believe that violent conflict could ravage a paradise.

My Grandma's story is a message of hope in a time of despair. A miraculous feat for all who have experienced similar atrocities. Ath's journey highlights the importance of family. And a marvel of community coming together called *mapalus* or *gotong royong*. This is a way of helping each other in the face of trials and everyday life.

This memoir was first published as, *Where Now Is My Garden?*, December 6, 1966 by Vantage Press. Two decades after the war. The author wrote it in Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) using Ejaan Republik spellings, English, Dutch and Pecok, a Dutch-Indonesian creole. Shirley Curtis edited the first edition. Shirley was a school teacher and correspondent for the First Methodist Church (now called the United Methodist Church) in Snohomish, Washington, Lands of the Coast Salish. Members of The First Methodist Church of Snohomish sponsored Grandma and our family to enter the United States.

We're on the brink of losing such survival tales. Survivors of these atrocities are elderly or deceased. Those who survive them must learn their stories if their stories, and the lessons embedded within them, are to be remembered and retold.

I am one such survivor.

My maternal Grandma and a family of emigrants from Indonesia, including my maternal grandfather, my mom, and her siblings, raised me. They acquainted me with wartime tales and post-war life since my birth. The Coast Salish lands and waters we now call home provide nourishment and healing from the wars still vivid in our hearts and minds.

Grandma's memoir depicts a time of undeniable pain and tragedy. Grandma, with the support of her family, saw the strength of human bonds and acted accordingly. These human connections proved stronger than destruction. Sometimes befriending "enemies" and sharing moments of humanity and celebration.

This memoir focuses on healing over determining who is right or wrong. In wars, everyone suffers losses. We shall not forget the destruction of civilizations and ecosystems alike. Listen to stories so that we can remember and heal.

Why revisit this story? Why now? Because the world remains entangled in conflicts. In the United States, our military budget is a trillion dollars. We spend more on machines of mass destruction than we do on education, healthcare, and the maintenance of roads. Protecting ourselves as a nation and maintaining friendship across our borders is crucial. But how can we accomplish this without subjecting our citizens and those we steward to the cruelty and power of bloated militarization and corporate interests?

My Grandma's, Ath's story is unique. A young civilian American girl's, historical account of war in rural Southeast Asia. Who else alive today can tell these stories? Taking Minahasa was a strategic military tactic that enabled Japan, a rising superpower, to seize control of Indonesia from the grip of European forces. Grandma, as a young girl, was caught in the middle. These wars that governments wielded cost the lives of everyday people, not only soldiers. World War Two in Southeast Asia resulted in more civilian deaths than military. Grandma, like many civilians during the war, did everything in her power to protect life. We honor the memory of the deceased and survivors.

The expansionist policies of Europe and America around World War Two play a silent role in her story. Violent conflicts continued even after my Grandma's release as a prisoner of war. Indonesia continued a fight for independence. And many revolutions persisted all across the world including Asia, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas long after the war ended in 1945. Ongoing violent conflicts and the restructuring of the Indonesian government led to Grandma's second deportation; from the island nation she still calls "back home." This led to her migration back to the United States.

Here is my Grandma's story. In her simple, heartfelt language, she conveys what few in her position have ever published. Woven into her account of surviving the war is her desire to reclaim her U.S.

citizenship. Through famine, torture, starvation, disease, family separation, witnessing rape and mass execution, my Grandma lived to tell her story. This book, aptly titled by my late Uncle, may he rest in peace, documents her journey to freedom. It's part of our journey to becoming citizens of one of the world's freest, strongest, richest, and most powerful nations. The people and places she met are akin to neighborhoods, communities, and pods we know and live in today.

I hope this story can inspire hope in you. What can help us feel and recall every day of our lives as vividly as both my Grandparents did and retold to us the true cost of war? The devastation that armed conflicts bring. The hardships that they wished would never happen to anyone ever again. This story can inspire pride in being an American and global citizen and to fight for freedom and justice, inclusive of our differences.

*Blue Skies, Troubled Waters*, is also a wake-up call. For me, it is a life-preserver. My loved ones who endured wars and exiles come to mind every time I read it. I recall their words of triumph over hate and violence. And their hope through telling their story, that no one should experience similar atrocities.

We present to you in this edition, eighty years after our family's freedom, and the end of WWII a testimony to the resilience of the Minahasan people whom my Grandma found home in through the most painful and disgraceful humanitarian crisis she had ever experienced. In this edition we highlight the many cultural values and practices that helped my Grandma, among many, including those we might label as "enemy" to cope and heal.

May this gift with sincerity fill your spirit. And may you, like Ath and Kath, continue journeying in the fight for freedom and justice for all.

This is your story too. Lend your voice to it. What do you say? Who do you hold dear? What is your message to your loved ones, far and near?

Terima kasih, makase, because I have received your love, I offer love back to you. Thank you.

May we continue in this blessing. May we live a long and healthy life. Pakatuan wo' pakalawiren.

Sincerely,

Brian Kimmel

Seattle, WA

From the beloved lands and waters of the Coast Salish