

MY OUMA ESTHER REID (GEB. EKSTEEN)

Rentia Landman Reid

Esther Margaretha EKSTEEN (13-11-1869 Agter Paarl † 13-05-1956 Pretoria Ω Zeerust) x 27 Januarie 1896 op Klerksdorp met William George REID (Bill) (01-08-1864 Mowbray † 10-05-1947 Ω Zeerust).



Ouma Esther (staande) en haar ouer suster Lenie.

My pa was 'n laatlammetjie en daarom het ek nie veel persoonlike herinnering aan my ouma nie, maar sy het 'n fotoalbum en 'n paar briewe nagelaat. Hierdie onthoupaadjie met my ouma Esther is aan die hand van haar korrespondensie gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog en veral met haar 21-jarige swaer, Charlie Reid kort voordat hy gesneewel het.

Beleg van Ladysmith

Tydens die beleg van Ladysmith skryf Charlie 'n brief gedateer 7 Desember 1899 uit die hooflaer dat hy gelukkig 'n vel papier by die veldkornet kon kry om vir Esther 'n brief te skryf. Hy vind dit 'n vervelige lewe, maar hy is tog opgewonde oor die moontlikheid dat die Engelse uit die beleg gaan breek:

I must say it is very monotonous and trying, as one has to have the horses saddled up and oneself ready with gun and 150 rounds of ammunition. It is not a bed of posies but still the excitement breaks the monotony as they expect the English to break out every night and try and join General Buller, who is coming up, according to reports. It is no novelty to be sitting up the whole night at times or be sleeping out in the open away from the laager, towards Ladysmith direction.

Dit blyk dat sy skoonsuster vir hom 'n paar kosmaaklesse gegee het voordat hy op kommando gegaan het:

By the way, the training you gave me in the kitchen stands me in good stead now, as I am able to take my share of the work. Today I am the cook for our little lot. Still I have a lot to learn yet as regards camp cooking – compared to some of them in the camp, any how we have fritters (stormjagers they call it) every other day and I can make them as good as the next one. Still something else have I learned, and that is to skin and cut up a bullock, of course not properly, but anyhow to do my share.

Stormjaers is van meel en water met 'n bietjie sout en bakpoeier of koeksoda gemaak. Die deeg is lepelsvol in 'n pot met warm vet gaargemaak. Dit is na bewering *Stormjaers* genoem omdat dit vinnig gemaak moes word, soos 'n vinnige aanval of stormloop. Met té min rysmiddel het dit toegeslaan en is dit maagbomme genoem.

Charlie vertel ook van die speletjies wat hulle speel en die "brandhous" wat aan die verloorspan toegedien word:

We have an awful cure in our camp by name Louw Erasmus, a cousin of the general. He is a big chap, but he goes about and laughs and jokes with everybody from the general himself to the poorest burgher; he is liked by everyone as he is so full of fun. We all play a game in which you throw flat bits of lead into a hole, we have sides and he must act as "strafrechter" to give "brandhous" to the side that loses, he is then in his glory, and with a shout like a bull bellowing he gives you as hard as he can.

'n Week later, op 15 Desember 1899 skryf Charlie weer 'n brief. Hy noem dat hy nie juis 'n briëfskrywer is nie, maar dat hy graag briewe van sy skoonsuster ontvang om te hoor hoe dit met haar en sy broer Bill gaan wat opgekommandeer is om vir die ZAR in die Robinsonmyn te werk. Hy vertel dat hy twee weke laas in 'n tent geslaap het omdat hulle steeds verwag dat die Engelse uit die beleg gaan breek:

The sky, whether it be wet or fine, has to serve as a covering, with the hard ground as a bed and gun for a pillow and to make matters worse still we have orders not to take our bandoliers off when we sleep. At present we have to keep 3 hours wacht every night and then we sleep the other 6 hrs by the wacht. It seems all right, but many is the night, when no one has got a wink of sleep, on account of alarms that the enemy are making a sortie.

Die beleg duur nou reeds 118 dae en die verveling is erg. Hy en 'n vriend tel die bosluise op hul bene:

What between flies, fleas and bush ticks, life is made a comfort, so much so that we miss them very much when it is a cold day. Between two of us the other day we caught no less than 13 ticks hanging on by their eyelashes on to our legs, its wonderful how they love us. I suppose they scent tender flesh from a long way off.

Laaste brief van Charlie

In 'n brief die dag vóór Kersdag verlekter Charlie hom daarin dat die Engelse die slag by Colenso op 15 Desember 1899 verloor het. Hy skryf verder dat hulle genoeg vleis kry en in Natal eet hulle baie rys, maar nie veel groente nie.

Vegetables at odd times, 3 tomatoes since I have been down, but plenty of rice. About the ... hamper the good people are sending down, I have not seen it as yet but I hear it is on the station.

Steeds die verveling en hy en 'n vriend speel met messe waarmee hy sy duim seermaak:

You must excuse my bad writing, but two of us were having a play with knives and my thumb is cut along the ... of it just where I must grip the pencil.

Hy vra dat Esther vir hom 'n paar benodigdhede stuur en dat sy van sy geld wat hy by haar gelaat het, moet gebruik. Hy vra spesiaal vir twee dosyn koeverte en met die opdrag: "Address all the envelopes so that if anybody wants them he will be fooled."

Charlie en sy broer Bill was beide ystersmede by die Simmermyn en hy wonder hoe dit met sy broer gaan en of hulle gereedskap nog daar is:

By the way does Bill get the £1 per day as usual as he is working any heavier than at Simmer? Are all our tools yet lying in the tank and is the Simmer working as yet?

Hy sê dat die lewe in die buitelug hom geval en hy glo God sal maak dat hulle mekaar weer sien. Aan die einde van sy brief stuur hy baie soentjies vir "wee Jimmy", Esther se babadogtertjie:

*Trusting with God's help that we soon will meet I will now close, wishing you both and baby with all my new friends in this country, a happy and prosperous New Year, more so than those that are past.
I remain (with plenty of kisses to wee Jimmy)
Your affectionate brother
Charlie*

Brief van Esther aan haar skoonouers

Charlie sneuwel by Spioenkop en Esther skryf 'n brief aan haar skoonouers wat in Mowbray in die Kaap woon, waarin sy hulle meedeel dat hul jongste seun Charles Kirk REID op 22 Januarie 1900 gesneuwel het.

*Dearest Parents
I hope God will give you strength to bear the sad news, ... Charlie got wounded on the 20th of January and died on the 22nd January¹. He left a letter for you, which we will send later on. I have also lost one of my family on the 29th of January.
Will & George² are still well also myself & baby. ... with hope of hearing from you soon.
I remain your loving daughter
Esther*

Esther se brief aan generaal Ben Viljoen

As deel van die Britse owerheid se strategie om 'n einde aan die oorlog te maak, het hulle 'joiners' gebruik om die Boerevrouens in die konsentrasiekampe aan te moedig om hul mans te oorreed om die wapen neer te lê. Esther het nie op haar laat wag nie en aan

¹ Haar broer se seun, die 17-jarige Ockerd Jacobus EKSTEEN sneuwel tydens die beleg van Mafeking.

² George is Bill en Charlie se oudste broer wat ook aan die kant van die Boere veg. Hulle pa is 'n Skot.

generaal Ben Viljoen geskryf waarin sy die mans op die slagveld aanspoor om voort te veg en hulle te verseker van die volgehoue steun van die vrouens. In die kriptiese aantekeninge van haar man, Bill, lees ons:

Received letter from wife, addressed to c/o Ben Viljoen. Encouragement. Saw on his face couldn't tell. Stuck in throat. All leaders read. Ben Viljoen made speech on it to Commando.

Konsentrasiekamp

Op 18 Oktober 1901 is Esther en haar dogtertjie na Natal vervoer waar hulle in die Howick-konsentrasiekamp ingeteken word. Esther is nommer 621; sy 31 jaar oud en haar dogtertjie twee jaar oud; hulle kom van Pretoria, haar eggenoot is op kommando en hulle besit geen eiendom nie. Esther en haar dogtertjie verlaat Howickkamp op 5 Julie 1902 en twee dae later haal Bill wat 'n bittereinder was, hulle by Pretoriastasie af.



Esther, Ettie en Bill Reid kort ná die oorlog

Bill en Esther se kinders

- (1) George Gordon REID (26.12.1897 Mowbray, Kaap † 02.08.1898 Zeerust). Sterf as baba aan witseerkeel.
- (2) Esther Margaretha REID (Ettie) (09.08.1899 Paarl † 12.08.1990 Pretoria Ω Zeerust) x Claude E LE ROUX (18-04-1890 Germiston † 15-09-1983 Tzaneen)
- (3) Ada Magdalena REID (28.11.1903 † 24.01.1979 Heidelberg) x Philippus Bernadus WOLFAARDT (04.11.1903 Hoopstad † 23.03.1945 Pretoria)
- (4) Pieter Eksteen REID (19.04.1913 Ventersdorp † 04.11.1998 Centurion) x 28 Junie 1941 Dorothea Scholtz SWANEPOEL (16.04.1916 Kroonstad † 19.03.2001 Centurion)