



# **Darkness in Paradise: Memories of Onno VanDemmeltraadt from His Youth in Indonesia during WWII**

*Gloria VanDemmeltraadt*

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## **Darkness in Paradise: Memories of Onno VanDemmeltraadt from His Youth in Indonesia during WWII** Gloria VanDemmeltraadt

Onno VanDemmeltraadt was born in the Dutch East Indies and was six years old when the Japanese occupation of World War II began. In *Darkness in Paradise*, author Gloria VanDemmeltraadt—Onno's wife—tells her husband's story from the unique view of a young boy in the midst of darkness in his paradise.

In this memoir, Gloria has captured both the horrors and humor of her husband's early life in war-ravaged Indonesia. This recollection shares memories of fierce Japanese soldiers bursting into his family's home, and later having one of them teach him to fish. Visions, such as Onno's family running down the street with mattresses covering their heads as bullets fly by them, are stark. The stories tell the pains of war, but are filled with hope. Inspiring both tears and laughter throughout, *Darkness in Paradise* reveals layers of human compassion during the awful times of World War II.

### Praise for *Darkness in Paradise*

“What a wonderful first-person read. Onno has such a magnificent recall of facts I felt like I was there with him during many of his adventures. Told from a child's point of view, it's about a country affected by WWII, and the subsequent Japanese occupation of Indonesia. You get a sense of the diverse cultures of Indonesia, both the native inhabitants as well as the mix of people from Holland who immigrated there. The many transitions of place, culture, and age are all brought to life.”

—Connie Anderson, Author, *When Polio Came Home*

## **Darkness in Paradise: Memories of Onno VanDemmeltraadt from His Youth in Indonesia during WWII Details**

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## **From Reader Review Darkness in Paradise: Memories of Onno VanDemmeltraadt from His Youth in Indonesia during WWII for online ebook**

### **Mary Jo Wiseman, CMP says**

A very compelling read about a young man's formative years growing up in the Dutch East Indies during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. It is a lesson in history, but also a story of love and family connections, of struggles and perseverance.

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### **Charles says**

This book is basically a factual recollection of the experiences of Omno in his youth, where he was a young Dutch National living in Indonesia during the Depression and the Japanese occupation in World War II. While some aspects of the occupation were brutal, other than his soldier father spending years in a POW camp, the family emerged largely unscathed.

Omno witnessed bombing and other war events, yet mentions the positive actions of some of the Japanese soldiers he and other members of his family encountered. Some of the soldiers were conscripted Koreans that avoided engaging in the cruelty that they were expected to exhibit to the conquered. Many of his experiences during the war were things that boys would consider adventures.

In Indonesia, there was more dangerous violence after the war than there was during the war. When the war was over, the Dutch government tried to reassert control over Indonesia and criminal gangs arose that were thugs, although they professed to be fighting for independence. The growing oppression of those of Dutch ancestry led to his family moving to Holland.

Once in Holland, Omno and his family experienced the bias of the Dutch people towards those that moved into the country from former colonial lands. Eventually, Omno's father went back to Indonesia in order to restart his business importing and servicing motorcycles.

Although Omno made his way to the United States after graduating from college in Holland, this autobiography largely ends with his arrival in the U. S. Structured as a history, there are no major revelations in the book. The most interesting aspect is the kindness expressed by some of the Japanese soldiers. One of them even smuggled clothing into the POW camp for the prisoners that were often in rags. With so many people living in occupied countries during the war, there are millions of such stories that could have been told. Each one adds something to the history of that time and this book is no exception.

This book was made available for free for review purposes.

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### **Cole Williams says**

This is an accessible book that helps shed light on a new perspective often not told about the war. I enjoyed reading about Onno's experiences that illuminate life in Indonesia as well as the confusions, complexities and misnomers associated with war time. It shows that not all 'enemies' are evil, that not all patriots are protecting the country, that extending love and compassion to your family and community is paramount to

survival. I especially enjoyed the motorcycle stories and learning about the horrible unrest after the war that seemed more detrimental to citizens.

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