

More than just a Cat



Leo Feijten

*More than just a Cat*

The Knijpkat from Philips is 80 years old

## **David Koker**

Born in Amsterdam, November 27, 1921

Died in Groß-Rosen / Dachau, February 23, 1945

Poem lines from the 'Diary written in Concentration Camp Vught' by David Koker.

*'Very nice is to squeeze a pinch late,  
You must understand all this well,  
Such a device makes noise and gives light,  
And illuminates a person's face'.*

## **For Martha**

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*In every house,  
Belongs this monument.  
The Knijpkat carries a true story,  
And tells this every year on 5 May in his own language.  
Pinch the Knijpkat a moment on that day,  
And keeps the liberation alive*

# 1. Preface by the Author

First of all, my apologies for my inadequate knowledge of your beautiful English language. Occasionally it is 'double Dutch'. In your country I can make myself understood, but writing a book in your language is not my thing. Fortunately, I got great help from Tyler who corrects me where necessary. His position is: Leo it is your book and your way of telling. I do not want to change that. Tyler became a good friend of mine. Fortunately there is an internet translation program, which even became also a friend of mine. But that remains a drama. Despite that I hope that it has become readable and you can take it with a laugh.

Since the Second World War, the Philips hand dynamo, or Knijpkat (squeeze cat), has been a marvel for many people in the Netherlands and worldwide. This booklet is meant for everyone who is interested in this gem, which during the dark years of 1940 - 1945 brought the often unpleasant circumstances in which people were forced to live without basic illumination. Nobody knew at the time that the Jewish and political prisoners in concentration Camp Vught in Holland would be forced to make these Knijpkatten for the German Wehrmacht.

For me, the Knijpkat or Kat (cat), as I usually call him, is much more than just a hand dynamo flashlight. I do not know exactly how the name originated. It is said that the sound is like a purring cat. I noticed that it seems no two Knijpkatten produce the same sound.

Ir. Frits Philips had an agreement with the German Wehrmacht, which stipulated that a number of carefully selected Jewish people and prisoners in Camp Vught could do work directly for Philips. Therefore they would not work directly for the Wehrmacht. It is hard to imagine that the Nazis were the murderers of their family. He could not know it in advance, but Frits Philips saved the lives of many Dutch Jews. In the 1990's I interviewed one such worker Martha Mozes. Martha worked in the concentration Camp Vught during 1943/44. Martha worked as a forced laborer at the Philips-Kommando for the Wehrmacht in the workshop for hand-held dynamo lamps and also the radio tubes department. I asked if she knew how this flashlight got its nickname. Martha relayed to me they simply called it the 'Knijpkat'. Martha was a friend of mine.

In my book: 'Glassplinters' I retell the story of Martha, as she relayed it to me during the many conversations we had. She passed away in 1997. So many things I wanted to ask her, but she died during a holiday in Germany.

Germany, the country where she has experienced so many terrible things in various concentration camps. "Now Hitler still has her", her husband said after her death. Martha Mozes lost her father, mother, sister Roosje and foster brother Horst Eichenwald. They were all deported to Sobibor in Poland and sent to the gas chambers on arrival.

This is one of those stories that comes to my mind about the Knijpkat. Through my research I now have a different view on this unique, historical gem. In this booklet I want to create an image of the Knijpkat and highlight a number of parts. Not all Knijpkatten are the same. I also want to show you what makes the Knijpkatten often no longer function. That is why I started to focus on overhauling the Knijpkatten and learn more about the history and its functions. I am not in the true sense a collector. But my interest is reviving a 'living' Knijpkat from two 'dead' Knijpkatten. That is my interest. If you know someone that is still in the possession of a non-working Knijpkat- I will be happy to revive it for you. If Knijpkatten you want to give it to me, I assure you that you will make me and many other Knijpkatten happy. The financial value of a Knijpkat is small, but for me the emotional value is great. The Knijpkat was born in 1939, like me and still exists 80 years later –here in 2019. That's why I ask you:

### **'Give your Knijpkat a second life'**





## 2. Foreword by Tyler Carlson

The circumstances for myself becoming a part of this book(the English version) are very unusual. And for me I am honored to have had a part in it. Leo and I have never met. I don't speak a word of Dutch and his knowledge of the English language will get him by as a tourist in most cities here in America. That leaves us with a online translation and that is shaky at best-sometimes. Sometimes it doesn't make any sense at all. I have 'met' and become friends with Leo thru the collecting of the Knijpkat-philips 7424 flashlight. Leo does not necessarily consider himself a collector.

We communicated many times thru a translator through his website: knijpkatershop.nl. I asked about a book and one was in the works and when it came out I got a few copies. But they were in Dutch! I had translated a few pages seeking knowledge on the subject of the 'kat' and was frustrated. I was not finding or at least understood what I was reading- the translation was terrible. I asked if he had an English version as there are many collectors here in the U.S. that would like to have one also. He didn't up to this point. But finding someone fluent in both Dutch and English for the translation was a problem. So we are stuck with the online translator. Leo has a wonderful sense of humor and his writing style is interesting to say the least with regards to its presentation and content. He asked me if I would edit his book and it seemed an interesting undertaking. I agreed but to the point I would correct the translator's errors but wanted to retain the full 'flavor' of the book and its message. After all it is his book. Its an outstanding work and there is not likely to be another on the subject. Leo is considered to be the world's leading authority on the subject of the Philips 7424. His knowledge has surpassed that even of the Philips archives! His research on the subject-much of it thru the generosity of Philips archives is noteworthy. He has interviewed people who worked in the shops building the kats. He has heard all their stories. Leo himself has been the subject of several television segments on the subject of the Knijpkat. He has been in several newspaper articles on the subject of the history of the subject kat! He has provided the 'kat for movies and school projects. He has been active at many commemorations or events surrounding people associated with the kat. And was a featured guest at the recent commemoration of the Philips museum-providing them with items of historical value on the subject of their Knijpkat. He is the 'go to guy' on the subject of the Knijpkat-Philips 7424 flashlight. Leo has stated many times although the monetary value of the kat seems low but for him it is everything-I believe him. I know you will enjoy his book.

### 3. Introduction



Source: Frans Wilbrink

*Note: If the name of the Knijpkat, (pronounced: Knaip kat) is literally translated from Dutch into English, it is a 'squeeze cat'. I decided to teach you a new word and chose the Dutch name: **Knijpkat**.*