Dutchmen Fight for the Dikes

eyewitness account of holland's heroic struggle to hold off the stormswept north sea flood tides

"There is nothing exciting about a fight against the water . . . and seldom anything spec-

"Sometimes one can watch a dike break: first the water flows over the top, then pavement is slowly scratched away, the underlying material follows, and finally, with a waterfall-like effect, the dike breaks and the hole is widened and deepened by the water itself.

"But most the time the water rises imperceptibly, everywhere. And while you fight it, you curse the wind, the lack of organization, the cold hands and the wet feet-but never the

water. There is nothing to curse in water. It follows only one law-gravity. It has only one way to attack-against everything, always seeking out your weak points. You can only try to change your own weaknesses, and there is nothing exciting about that."

This is the story of a few frantic hours in the history of Western Europe. It's one man's account of Holland's fight against storm-driven water from the Atlantic ocean.

You read the newspaper accounts, the hundreds dead and the millions of dollars in damages. You probably had a mental picture of

dikes popping like overripe melons and flood water cascading into fields, sweeping away farms and inundating whole villages. Perhaps you wondered what it was like.

Dirk Schepers, now back in Holland after a three-year stint here at the University, was there. We gather he was out on Putten Island, fighting to hold the dikes. It must be a small chunk of land; we couldn't find it on a map. And naturally, it was only a small part of a very big battle.

But we imagine that wherever men gathered to fight for their land and country on the night of February 1-2, the description given by Schepers would have applied.

By Dirk Schepers

At 5 o'clock the student club was dikes behind the breach. full of boys, most of them dressed The Men Dug Clay in warm overcoats and rubber those who were to go. Group leaders were appointed and destinanobody had ever heard of before.

arrived, that a large group could work hard. leave. They drove south in a the Rhine, Thames and the Schelde come in the morning.

A Huge Funnel

The North Sea is a large funnel, walked over to see. carrying the water into the estuara leap tide and the water rose a with improvised oars and inexper- anyway? meter higher than ever before, explains the situation.

Where the heavy protecting sea dikes had been broken, little could be done, for the land behind it was lower than sea level. And the inland dikes, those that had once been on the sea, had been neglected in the centuries of safety. Farmers had plowed up the sides of them and trucks, far heavier than the horsecarts the dikes were built to carry, had simply pushed them down into the mud.

The sea dike on the island of Putten was broken on the south I side, but there was hope that the hole could be filled before the - whole island was overrun with salt water. The three bus loads of students were sent here to reinforce

a company of soldiers there who ienced men, an attempt was made

boots, some with spades in their nated the scene where the men it hands. When a bus arrived, the were digging clay and filling jute student body president would ring bags to be piled at the base of A House Disappeared å bell and call out the names of the dike at its weak points, two

The storm wind blew straight tions given, mostly places that across the flat land, carrying hor- fore it could be reached. One fel-There were far more volunteers clothes proved of little value. The of wood, but no more . . . than could be used and it was not only way to keep warm was to until 7:30 p.m., when three busses keep your back to the wind and village cafe where a continuous

sweeping rainstorm, the same one spades, but nobody complained—it of a blazing stove and pass out that was blowing the water of the would stick together equally well again to the dike. Girl volunteers North Sea down into the mouths of against the water that was to were distributing food. Children

A farmer came by and told us,

The people of one farm got safely into the boat, but another farm house crashed into the water beizontal gusts of rain, and city low was found clinging to a piece Deceptive Tranquility

The victims were brought to the stream of men came in to drink The clay stuck to boots and hot coffee, dry their feet in front lay asleep on bags of hay.

Close to te cafe was te village almost incoherently, that his farm hall where the mayor was directwas under water. Groups of men ing the fight. He had a map showing where the dikes were, but not Far away, in the direction of the how high they were. Who in ordinies of the three great rivers. This sea, we could see a faint light ary days would have cared about wind, plus the fact that this was signal, an SOS. In a row boat a difference of a few feet in height



During the middle of the night, when the tide was low, the water quiet and the wind steady, an early morning moon came out. Bare willow trees and farm buildings formed black silhouettes against the reflected moonlight on Night's Work Gone the water and made a black and silver scene of indescribable beauty and deceptive tranquility.

Making use of the light and the had formed one-way circuits on the highway. But it was no use. The dikes too narrow for two lane traf- highway was too low. Now there fic and a steady supply of clay- was nothing to do. filled jute bags came in. But soon the water began to rise again.

outside and an hour later the presunexpected places, suddenly, and in every minute. farmers began to drive their cattle

driven the other.

It Was No Use

the dike was carried away. More was room.

The men retreated to a tramline built on another dike and began to fortify it with sandbags. The tram dike was the last protection in front of the highway; and the highway connection had to be held at all costs.

A cow was caught in the rising water. There had been no time to save her. The water rose quickly to her belly while she plowed this way and that. The wind took the sound away, and there was nothing to do but watch

The tram dike was built of gravel and soon the water was running through it. The mayor came to the scene and directed greater supply of trucks, a good the feverish attempt to pile the deal of work was done. The police rest of the bags alongside the

The rest of the dry land was protected by a high dike that did At 4:30 a.m. it was high tide not seem to be in danger. A few volunteers went back to guard it sure began building up on the in- and a village behind it. The vilside. The water started to flow in- lage square there was full of belto pockets of land that had al- lowing cattle that had not been ready been given up. It rose at milked, and more were being led

Big plow horses, nervous from the noise, were brought in, farm-The dike was crowded with ers holding onto their bits to keep trucks and people going one way, them down. And the traffic, unscreaming pigs and cattle being able to use the now-submerged road, came tooting through the town to get to a road north of it.

The confusion was complete Then the water came over a part when a few hundred dog-tired volof the strengthened dike. There unteers spread out over the vilweren't enough men there at the lage's cafes and hotels to fall time to stop it and the top of asleep on chairs or wherever there

Plans Announced for Red Cross; Students Asked to Contribute

ing made for the annual Red Cross · und-raising campaign to be held March 2 through 5, general chairnan Pat Ruan, has announced.

All house representatives for the und drive will meet Monday at :30 p.m. at Delta Gamma, Miss Ruan said. Information and proedures to be followed during the Cach living organization will select house representative this weeknd to collect money during the our day drive, she said.

Students will be asked to conribute a dollar to the campaign. eceive a membership card in the ary, will speak in living organiza- places.

donate a dollar will receive a and the importance of contributthe membership upon payment of the dollar.

The goal set for the university will be announced next week, Miss Ruan said. Progress reports will be published in the Emerald, and the living organizations leading in the trive will be given at that time. drive will also be acknowledged. Faculty contributions are being handled by Karl Onthank and will be added later to the University total, she said.

Members of Kwama, sophomore women's honorary, and Skull and hose contributing that sum will Dagger, sophomore men's honor-

Final arrangements are now be-1953 Red Cross. Those promising to tions on the purpose of the drive pledge card, to be exchanged for ing. Flying speeches will also be given throughout the week of

Creative Arts Petition Deadline Advanced

Deadline for petitions for the general committee and sub-committees of the Campus Creative Workshop has been extended to next Wednesday at 5 p.m., Valerie Cowls, general chairman, has announced.

Petitions may be obtained in rooms 301 or 310 in the Student sist of specialty musical numbers Union, and turned in at the same and a college skit centered around

TREAT FOR THE ARMY!

Washington to Host **Beta Entertainers**

Thirteen members of Phi Beta, national women's honorary in music, speech and drama, will leave Saturday by Army transport plane to spend the weekend in Washington, D. C., as guests of the United States Army.

As part of the Phi Beta National Army Collaboration program, the girls will present a variety show in several army bases and hospitals in Washington, D. C.

Directed by Joanne Forbes, junior in speech, the show will conthe theme, "Men."

Performing in the program will be Marilyn Patterson, junior in speech; Judy Ellefson, sophomore in speech; Jeanette Stone, senior in music; Tamson Breese, sophomore in music; Pat Hartley, senior in music, and Jackie Madigan, senior in music.

Allison LeRoux, freshman in journalism; Mary Sweeney, freshman in music; Janis Evans, senior in music; Joyce Skinner, junior in music; Lou Ann Wolf, junior in music, and Sally Hayden, junior in business. Exine Anderson, faculty adviser for the group, will accompany the women.