

Order of Service:

2.15pm till people are seated at 2.30pm:

And I love you so - Don McLean
Unforgettable - Nat King & Natalie Cole
I will remember you - Sarah McLean

2.30pm when everyone is seated:

Mama - EL Divo

PAUL:

Mum's story.

HANS:

Any one else:

After the eulogies,

A Video/Audio(music) in mp4 format using the H.264 codec as required.. We will supply this and come and test it about noon on Tuesday.

When the coffin is going to the hearse: (the 5 grandchildren to carry the coffin)

Wishing you were somehow here again - Sarah Brightman

Paul Talk:

Today is a very sad final day for the Rubens family. An end of an era. We can never thank mum/oma enough for the sacrifices she made to enable all our family to have the wonderful, comfortable lives we all lead. For the young ones here today: you have known oma as a lovely sweet, quiet old lady, but I want you to really listen to the story I am about to tell, because your oma was in fact a really strong, beautiful, vibrant, real life super woman who survived terrible trauma, poverty, risk and sacrifice. Who loved her family so much that she buried all her own problems deep within herself so that we might all be happy.

Mum was born Milly Schelvis on the 11th September 1919. All her life she was very close to her mother Esther. Her father Jacob did not survive the war and like most of her war experiences she never spoke about him, so we know very little about him. Her brother

Jules did survive the war, and like Milly and her mother suffered horrifically. If it were not for Jules who made it his life's mission to keep the stories alive, we would know almost nothing of mum's experiences.

Mum had a normal, loving childhood although that is set in the background of Holland in the 1920's and 30's. They lived in the poor parts of the Jewish sector of Amsterdam and that meant poor housing, hunger and dreadful filth and sanitation and living on the poverty line. Her father, was a diamond worker and for a while did manage to make a better living and they were able to move into a better area for some time, but the great depression of the 1930's saw them back in poverty.

She met our dad Ruud in 1938 after her brother brought him home to sleep the night after a swim meet. Ruud had missed his train back home to Den Bosch. He and mum fell in love immediately and had some memorable times in the couple of years before the war really hit. They loved sailing on the rivers and were involved with the swim clubs and soccer clubs where Ruud competed. Ruud played soccer at the highest level in Holland. They were also involved with the fledgling labour movement in Holland that was trying to make Holland a better place for the workers. Mum and her mother also worked in the diamond industry and this was to later save their lives.

But Holland was invaded and occupied in 1940 and our father escaped to Switzerland and desperately wanted mum to come with him, but she would not leave her family.

Mum in the war –

Mum's war experiences were horrific and shaped her character and her life till the day she passed. She suffered nightmares and flashbacks but internalised them all. Growing up we never knew. And we would never have known if it was not for a letter she sent in August 1945 to her future brother in law Sal, from a Red Cross recovery camp in Sweden. Sal sent us this letter about 20 years ago, so about 50 years after the war. Before that we had no idea that she had suffered.. although (offcourse) our dad did.

In May 1944, Milly and her parents were deported from Westerbork (a German camp in Holland) to Bergen Belsen in Germany. Her father was sent to Sachsenhausen as a diamond worker in December 1944 where 4 weeks later he died. From Bergen Belsen, Milly and her mother were sent to the concentration camp Beendorf in mid-Germany. In April 1945 with countless other women they were sent in rail wagons to Hamburg to be handed over at the Danish border to the Red Cross. After 3 weeks in quarantine they found themselves in Goteborg and took 4 months to recover enough to be able to return home to Holland.

THIS IS WHAT SHE WROTE – IN HER OWN WORDS:

My mother and I arrived in Sweden on May 3rd, saved from the German claws. As you may know we were in Bergen Belsen where it was at least bearable compared to the last 5 months (of the war). Mother and I were sent to another camp for those months. There we had to work in an ammunition factory, 600 meters under the ground – very unhealthy conditions as you may expect. In the mornings we were woken at 3am and made to stand at attention for 2 hours for no real reason, then marched for 2 hours under the ground through small, sometimes very narrow tunnels with rails with guards yelling and pushing. We had to work till 6pm in the evening on 3/4 litres of cool water. When we returned to our prison at night we had a lump of bread shoved in our hands with a beating to go with as well. Because of bombers the lights were then usually turned off and we had to go to bed in the pitch dark. With the 2 of us in one bed, 3 beds against each other then in 4 square meters 12 people could sleep and there were about 200 people in one small cage. The hygiene was terrible. No water, soap, no towel. Never clean clothes. We were so filthy and totally covered in lice. Imagine Sal, we never expected to come out alive. It was a miracle that my mother and I never contracted a disease. In the winter months we only had a singlet and a summer dress, no socks, no pants and either broken or completely no shoes. We were lucky that in the salt mine it was warm but because of this we had terrible thirst and we were not allowed to drink just out of pure meanness.

When the allied forces came closer, we were forced to take flight, and that was the worst. For fourteen long days we were transported in cattle wagons. A total of 5000 people were transported on the train, with 220 people per wagon. We were barely able to stand, let alone sit or lie down and no meals at all as you can understand. The first few days a small piece of bread, then one potato or a handful of raw macaroni, then the last three and a half days, nothing. Hundreds of people died because people went mad of thirst and hunger and literally murdered each other. It was actually indescribable and you cannot even begin to imagine it if you were not there to see it.

On the 1st of May in Hamburg, that beautiful day, we were rescued by the Red Cross, and on May 3rd we arrived in Sweden. We were received with unbelievable love. One of the most wonderful moments of my life was when I was able to stand under a hot shower and wash myself with real soap, and was then given a warm towel and new clothes to wear. We were given new clothes and shoes to wear. From mother's nephew in America, we received some money, and with that we bought clothes. In Holland there is still nothing to buy but I do not have to worry about that for the next years. Mother only ways 80 pounds and I 98 pounds. But now we are gaining weight. We hope to go to Holland next week, maybe by flying machine.

My brother Jules has returned from Poland after nearly 2 years. One chance in one hundred-thousand. He worked as a printer. I am really fortunate that till now at least I still have Ruut, Jules and my mother. My father was sent from Bergen Belsen to Sacherhausen. I have still not heard anything from him. We are hoping against hope that he has been rescued by the Russians and is in Odessa. We have heard nothing from Pa, Moe, Lena and Juut. We must not get our hopes up too high.

Mum after the war in Holland - 3 children, Den Bosch, massive, bold decision to immigrate.

Mum and dad married 6 weeks after she returned to Holland. How in love they must have been! There are more letters to and from each other and there was never any other thought in those letters then that they would marry as soon as possible. One of the photos you will see soon is on their wedding day and they look so happy. Something difficult to believe so soon after what she had experienced. But such was her strength and resilience. My dad resolved that he would make her laugh every day of their life together and those that knew dad, know that he did. They were devoted to each other and she lived only for him and her family. In the next few years Milly & Ruud had 3 children and lived in Den Bosch in a nice tenement. Dad worked as a bicycle salesman. But Europe was still far from settled and mum lived with the fear that the Russians and the cold war would again bring war to Europe and she could not live with that. So with 3 kids and no money and very few belongings they decided to immigrate to Australia, although they would have taken any faraway land had it been offered. What a powerful and huge decision that must have been. We can't even imagine it.

Mum in the Rubsons era! Determination to make a better life for their children. .

Mum and her family arrived in Melbourne by ship in November 1953. The family de Zoete had sponsored us and were the only people we knew. We spoke little English – the kids none – and had no money. We found ourselves a refugee camp (Bonegilla) 3 hours by train from Melbourne. But I heard later from dad that the camp and the food were really good (probably compared to the German camps). And of course no guards. Within 2 weeks dad had hitchhiked to Melbourne and found work sweeping floors in a glass factory and we moved into a single room in a house in Coburg with 5 other refugee families. We lived there for a year while both mum and dad worked 2 jobs each. Mum wrapping Easter eggs for Red Tulip and house cleaning. By the end of the year they had saved enough money to put a deposit on a house in Springvale. Mum really knew how to save!!

Dad worked several jobs in the next 2 years the last of which was as a salesman for a food importer. This motivated them to start a business. Mum dedicated her next 25 years to this. Starting off in a small rented shop she made and sold sandwiches to local factory workers while dad bought Dutch type foods from local bakers and importers and sold them to at first the Dutch community and then to delis and milk bars. While dad was a great salesman, mum was the driving force behind the business. She would work all day, and then in the evening she would write out all the invoices for goods to be delivered the next day. The Rubsons story is another story but they made a great success of this and to their huge delight her children joined the business in their late teens. Those were her best days I think. She was truly a strong woman ahead of her time. Not many women worked or managed businesses in the 1960's and 70's. But she did.

During these years, mum's mother lived with us and took care of the house and the 3 children so that mum could dedicate her life to the business and making a new and prosperous life for her family. In this she truly succeeded. And she did all this intuitively with no real business skills or knowledge.

In all those growing years as children, not once did mum show us or tell us or talk about the trauma she and her mother had survived. We grew up absolutely normally in a normal loving family with a caring mother. I never saw mum angry, I never saw her upset. I never saw her even raise her voice.

Mum and dad adored each other and had a wonderful life together in Australia. She pandered to his every whim and in her eyes he was perfect. And he reciprocated the love, if not the pandering. Ruud kept his promise to make her laugh every day, sometimes (no - often) so hysterically that she would pee herself. He was a very funny, fun loving man. They retired from the business as soon as they were confident that their children could manage it and this was in their late 50's. They were inseparable working together and remained inseparable in retirement. They moved to Blind Bight by the sea so dad could indulge in his passion (fishing) and lived in Hervey Bay every winter. When Ruud wanted to move permanently to Hervey Bay she agreed even though she really didn't want to. It was too distant from her family and grand children. But Ruud wanted it so she agreed. She was very happy to return some years later and was able to enjoy her children, their partners and their growing family of grand children. She especially had a close bond with Jackie who lived with them from time to time.

Ruud tragically passed away after being not well for sometime 23 years ago at the age of 76. His illness took a toll on mum but she cared for him every second during his bad times. After he passed we thought she might wither, but she didn't. Her resilience resurfaced and she blossomed at Fiddlers Green. Played bowls and was a power Oma to her grand children.

Mum and I became much closer in the years since then. We went to café's every week and often twice a week almost every week for those 23 years and this continued until just a few weeks ago. The last years always to the Dutch café which she loved.

Mum didn't have many close friends outside the family. Ruud and her extended family were her world and all she needed. She loved her daughter's in law Chris and Mary, and Cor, Ingrid's husband. It

was probably difficult for mum (and dad) to at first accept our life partner choices as they were neither Dutch nor Jewish but as was their way they accepted our choices and it did not take long for them, to love them as their own. Such was their way. She also adored her 6 grand children 13 grandchildren.

The grandchildren will talk to you about her later as will Hans after me.

So again for all the young ones hear today I reiterate.

Think of the wonderful, comfortable lives we all lead and never forget, that your oma was a super woman who survived terrible trauma and loved her family so much that she sacrificed her life and buried all her own problems deep within herself so that we might all be happy.