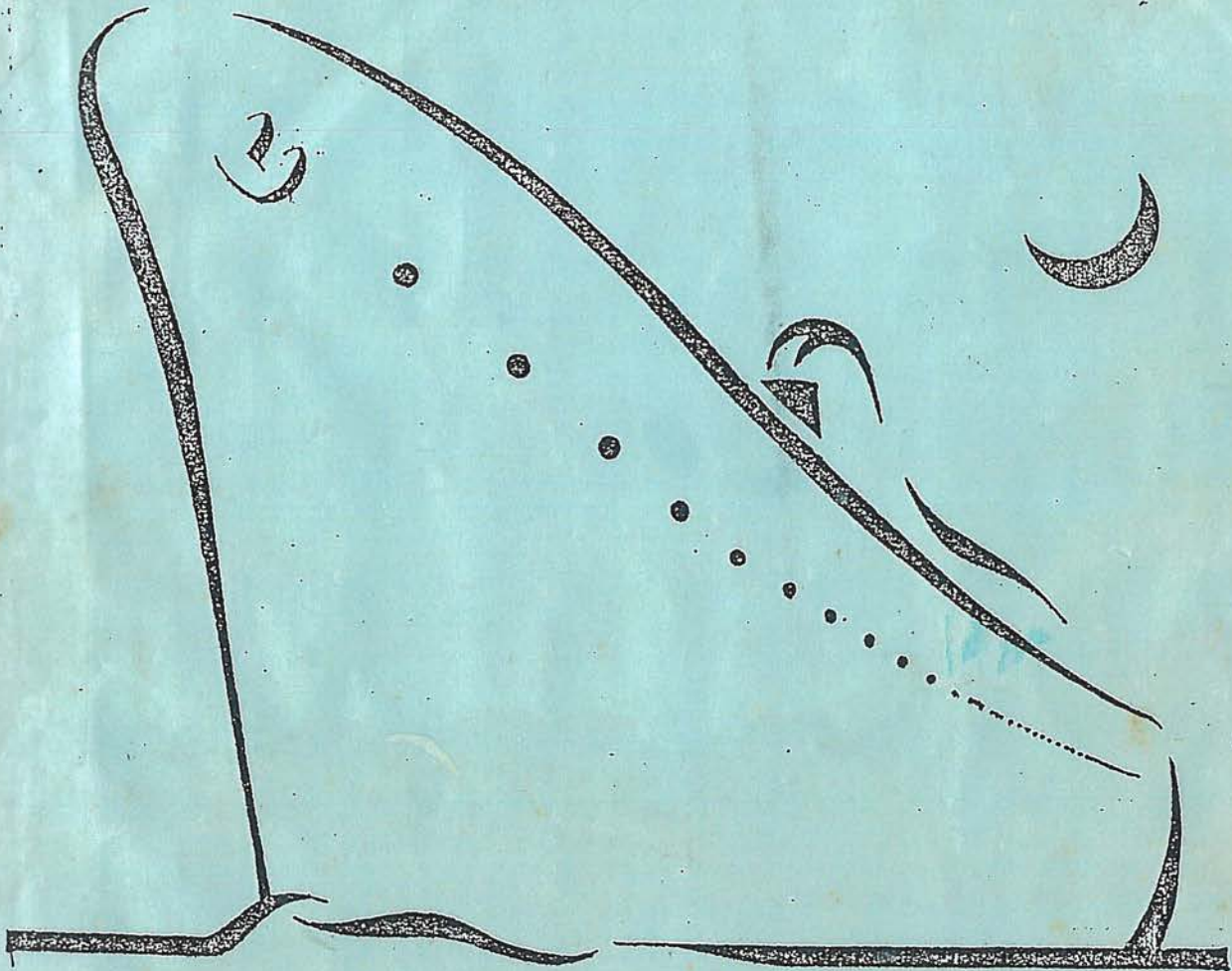


# DEAR HOMELAND, FAREWELL

Richarda Engles





## FOREWORD

In July 1988, while passing through Rockhampton, Riche showed me the book, she had written for a contest, in connection with, the Bi-centenary.

The manuscript was written in the Dutch language, and Riche told me, she felt not very confident in writing the translation in English. This mainly was for the benefit of the grandchildren, who of course cannot read Dutch.

I offered, with the generous help of my "Dinkie Di Ausie Husband", to do the translation for her.

The book has made a great impression on us, and occasionally I wiped a tear from my eye, when reading some of the very human experiences and feelings that go out from this book.

Riche did a great job writing this and I only hope the translation is equally well done.....

Nicky Hordern.

## CHAPTER ONE

THE ENCOUNTER. January 1945

Below the threatening snow-laden clouds, bent over the handlebars of her pushbike, Riche was pedalling grimly, kilometer after kilometer, over the snow-covered roads.

Her thoughts were with the family at home, and the deep distress they all shared about her youngest brother Jan, who was buried only yesterday. Jan was one of the many innocent victims, who did not survive a short grave illness, because of his weakened condition, caused by hunger and cold. In the dark days, just before Christmas he was admitted to a hospital, 6 K.M. away. Cars, Taxies and Ambulances were all not available, so Jan was taken on a stretcher through the snow and freezing cold. The hospital was situated in the Wassenaar Woods, the same woods the V.2 rockets were launched on their deadly flight to London.

Riche was very concerned about the predicament the family was in, especially the sad plight of her 2 little sisters, and was very determined to return home as quickly as possible with food. Father was already suffering hunger oedema (swollen-legs) and mother tried the seemingly impossible, to bring some food to the table every day. Frans, a cheerful 16 year boy, small in build but full of initiative, looked after the firewood supplies. Deep in the night, putting his life on the line, he retrieved post out of the paddocks, placed there by the German army, to prevent enemy planes landing. The tall posts were moved along a narrow canal, in a barge Frans had "borrowed" from the Council. Very quietly as not to be heard, he pulled the barge through the darkness, to the small jetty at the bottom of the garden. In the cellar Frank with Mothers' help sawed the posts in blocks (with a handsaw), to be gratefully used in the fireplace for cooking and heating.

There were two more brothers, Bart, who had been ill for more than a year now, and Joe, who had been taken prisoner when the Germans held a so called "Razzia", searching houses for young men, who were then forced to work in ammunition factories in Germany. Joe's convincing claims that he was needed at home, gave him his freedom. Next time, he might not be so lucky, so he was kept out of sight and even spent the nights between the ceiling and the roof, He became an expert at disap-

pearing at top speed through the concealed manhole.

It was bitterly cold, and a silent stream of mainly elderly men and young girls, travelled the country roads, knocking on farmers doors in the hope of being able to buy some food. The southern Dutch Provinces had already been liberated by the Allied Forces. But north of the big rivers, the Germans had dug in for the winter. They had confiscated the meagre foodstocks from the already plundered land, leaving the population without food. Water and electric power were cut off, transport non-existent.

Richa had been very lucky! When her so called bicycle tyre, a strip of old car tyre held together with a piece of wire, threatened to become undone, she called into a bicycle repair place to have it fixed. She had to wait for a while. The kind man told her to wait in his warm kitchen, where his wife dished her up a plate of potato mashed with red cabbage. The cosy warm kitchen, the hot wonderful food, and the freely offered help and kindness, gave Richa the courage to continue her journey. Other cyclists on the road told her, that in the village Nijkerk, the local school had been transformed into a dormitory, and indeed in a classroom, full three-tiered bunk-beds, she got accommodation for the night. Thankfully and dead tired, Richa climbed into the bunk, pulling her woollen coat, made by mother from a navy dyed blanket, tightly around her. The next morning everyone was handed a slice of bread and a mug of hot tea, before the travellers set off again down the white silent road.

The target of this journey was the northern Province of Friesland. Richa had never been there before, but she had heard people talking about the area as if it were a land of "milk and honey". Closer to the cities the supplies were almost depleted, every day it became harder if not impossible, to buy any food at all.

Many farmers, who hardly had any food left for their own family, and did not like to say no to the hungry travellers, kept their gates locked.

The constant pedalling on the rattling bike, made Richa very thirsty, and she knocked on a door to ask for a drink of water. The door was opened just a crack, and a little girl said shyly "Grandpa has no more sandwiches". At lunchtime Richa got off her bike at a bus-shelter, where certainly had not been a bus for months. At least it offered some relief of the biting wind, and Richa opened the jar full of brown beans

her mother had given her as "Emergency ration". She ate a few spoonfuls but handed the rest to an elderly man, who entered the shelter. He had been pushing a pram, and shivered with cold under his threadbare coat. His worn shoes, were no protection against the penetrating snow. Richa asked herself how was this nightmare going to end? How long could it last? How many people would die on the sides of the road? Until that black day in May 1940, Richa's world had been one of security, love and sunshine. Father and Mother worked long hours in their Hotel-restaurant, where they all lived. Father, in his white chef's outfit complete with a high chef's hat, in the kitchen, and Mother in the restaurant. The children heard a lot of talk about bad times and money worries, but they were never affected by it. They had a wonderful life playing in the big castle like hotel building, so old, that according to village tales, Rembrand had once been a customer. In summer they played with lots of friends in the large rambling gardens, went swimming or rode their bikes. Many happy holiday makers occupied the terrace, where waiters served ice cream and coffee with cakes. In winter it was cosy and warm inside, and many happy hours were spent around the big fire-place, buzzing with the sound of people who came in for a drink and played cards and billiards. After St. Nicholas with its secrets and fun, the Christmas billiard competition started. The prizes consisted of turkeys, ducks, and quails, for Christmas dinner, and it was all displayed on a large table, covered with a white damask tablecloth. Then there was the fragrant Christmas tree, decorated with silver ornaments and stars, angel's hair and real candles. Every night in the festive season, the children sang carols near the little crib, and then they were allowed to blow out the candles in turn. And all went to midnight Mass and had their Xmas breakfast at 4 o'clock in the morning. Why now all this misery?

Tears came to her eyes as she remembered last week. A Christmas without Jantje, and how her mother had gone to the neighbours, who were Nat. Socialist, to beg for a piece of soap to wash the two little sisters. At the thought of the \*little ones\* as they called their two sisters born later in life, Richa pulled herself together and told herself: "Come on, get going and see that you get to Friesland as soon as possible!"

Further ahead, was a car parked on the side of the road, bonnet up and a man using a spanner. Behind the car was a small trailer with a sort of heater on it connected to the car, the only way to go as petrol was unprocurable.

Richa noticed the numberplate "B" for Friesland! Would she ask.....could she ask for a lift? She stopped and...."Could I please get a lift from you Sir..?"

There, she had asked the question! From inside the car two pairs of dark brown eyes stared at her. The man however growled without looking up "Can't you see the car is full?" "Yes Sir of course, I'm sorry", said Richa, and started to get back on her bike. The man wiped his filthy black hands on an even filthier black rag and looked up, "where are you going?" he asked, a little less brusque but with a strange accent. "Friesland" she said. "Where in Friesland?"... "oh, that does not matter, all I want is to buy food for my family at home". After a scrutinising look at her he said; "All right, I'll tie the bike on the back of the car, and you can try and find a place in the car with the kids and keep them quiet." After shifting some boxes and taking one of the girls on her lap, the door was slammed shut. With a great shudder, lots of smoke and a terrifying roar from the engine, Richa was on her way to Friesland.

The driver explained that the fanbelt had broken and he had temporarily fixed it, but in ZWOLLE he hoped to buy a new one. "The children will not be allowed out of the car there, and you will have to stay with them" he commanded and a packet of sandwiches was tossed over from the front seat.

The little girl nestled herself against Richa and when she was asked "What is your name?", she started confidentially to talk... "Shhh" warned her sister, "You are not to talk to anyone, remember, you promised". Puzzled Richa looked at the two pairs of frightened eyes and all of a sudden she realised the situation.

These two little girls were Jewish, and it was the intention to smuggle them into Friesland. Because the car was creating problems she was unknowingly recruited as babysitter. She felt deep pity for the two children, they were also victims of this dreadful war. Despite the "Don't talk to anyone demand", the girls told Richa their names, Jannie and Lenie aged five and seven, and that they were going on a holiday on a farm. They did not know where, but the man knew and he was going to take them there.

Richa looked at the sternfaced man behind the wheel and wondered who he was and where he would take her. At first she had been wondering if it was safe to travel with them, but not anymore. There was only one goal, to deliver the children safely to their hide-out address.

Once they arrived in Zwolle, the driver drove the car into a garage for repairs, He then left in search of the right part. It had stopped snowing, but it was still very cold. The garage proprietor urged Richa to let the kids come out of the car and sit near the heater where he brought them some hot milk. He also must have

guessed the whole situation, and suggested they leave before 7 P.M. as the workshop was often used for parking German army trucks at night.

The car was not yet ready at 7 p.m., so Richa and the children had to follow the driver outside. It was pitch dark as every house had to be "blacked out". Not a shimmer of light was allowed, so as not to guide enemy planes.

In Zwolle also, accommodation was provided for the itinerant food hunters, but it was much too dangerous to take the girls there, because of the regular check on papers. (Everyone had to register and was supplied with a kind of passport, which you had to carry with you at all times. It contained a photo, fingerprint, date of birth, address, occupation.

Curfew started at 8 p.m. Little Jannie was scared and cried softly, she didn't want to be pulled along in the dark by two strangers. Lenie tried in vain to comfort and encourage her little sister.

Just when the town clock started to strike eight, a lady hurried over the footpath. In desperation the driver approached her, and asked if she could please give the children shelter for one night only. After a moment hesitation, she agreed but only if Richa accompanied them. With a sigh of relief he gave her his wallet, as security that he would pick them up the next day.

This lady and her husband made a bed for the girls, bathed them and gave them a hot meal, Richa was also made very welcome. Later, when Jannie and Lenie had snuggled into sleep, Richa told this kind couple over a cup of coffee, how she got involved with this little group, and about her little brother Jan, and the two small sisters at home. She thanked them for their hospitality, but they assured Richa, they were pleased to be able to help, and offered her to spend a night on her return journey.

This couple managed a grocery store, and lived behind the shop, there was only one door to the street, the shopdoor. As the business opened at 8 a.m., they thought that for safety reasons, it would be best if the three left them before 8 a.m.

The next morning with their woollen hats pulled practically over their eyes and the scarves round their necks pulled up high over their little faces and a small hand securely gripped in Richa's hand, the kids were led into the cold strange streets once again. Richa was worried, and hoped to find her bike and luggage safe in the workshop. The old Dodge car, with the little heater smoking behind it, met them halfway. Quickly they got in, and off they went. Richa handed the driver his wallet, he told her how he spent the night in the cold shelter, and went back very early to the workshop. On the bridge over the river IJSEL they were stopped, and a German soldier wrenched the door open. The driver could show that he worked for the distribution service, and had to take coupon-papers from Utrecht to Leeuwarden, and his "family" came on this trip with him. Richa pulled Jannie closer, and Lenie pretended to be asleep. The cardoor was slammed shut, and a sigh of relief



escaped from the driver.

Without anymore problems, they drove on till past Assen, then, on a desolate stretch of road, the car started to splutter, and as it turned out, the fire in the heater on the trailer was nearly out. More coal was needed. An army camp was close by, and with some sigàrettes, the driver set off to barter for coal. After a while (which seemed like eternity in the cold car), he came back with a box of coal. Soon the fire glowed again, but the starter motor refused. The driver pushed at the side of the Dodge, and Richa at the back. Smoking and thundering, it finally took off, driver and all, and for a moment Richa thought "there goes my bike". She ran after the car over the snow covered road. 50 meters further a now happily laughing driver waited for her, showing a row of sparkling white teeth in a dirty face. Bright blue eyes encountered hers, sparkling teasingly under an unruly mass of curly hair.

The end of the journey was in sight. The farm, where the children were to go, was deserted. Darkness was coming early in winter, and the air was filled with gloom. The family had left, afraid the children might have been picked up by the Germans, as they were a day late. When someone found out the real story, the family soon returned and all was well. Jannie begged Richa to stay with them in their new home. Richa however assured them they would be very happy with these nice people, who were so relieved and happy they had safely arrived. All round goodbyes were said, and after a last hug and attention to the coal fire, they turned into the sandy road away from the secluded farmhouse.

The driver now introduced himself as "Jaap", and he told Richa that she could stay at his place for the night. He lived with his family in a narrow house behind a pub, which was nestled between old canal side houses. The village "Gorredijk" consisted of long rows of houses along side the canal and crossed by a country road. A picturesque typical Dutch bridge was the village centre. Further down the road the canal was crossed by a narrow pedestrian bridge, which could be turned aside, to let ships pass. Richa was full of confidence, now she had arrived in Friesland, and could hardly wait till morning so she could go out and buy food, she had no idea where yet but surely somewhere!

That night when Richa followed Jaap into the gaslit room behind the pub, there was a great excitement, kids appeared from everywhere, happy to see their "Heit" (Dad) safely home again. A baby lay gurgling in a pram, the gas lamp spread a pleasant soft light in the room, and a big round "Potbelly stove" spread a welcome warmth all around. Richa found it extremely difficult to follow the conversation, as it was her first encounter with the Friesian language. A neighbour did the house-keeping and she told Richa, that Jaap's wife was hospitalised in Groningen, suffering an incurable tumor of the brain.

Richa stayed that night with Jaap's in-laws. Early in the morning he arrived with a list of addresses and references. The large basket hanging over the frontwheel, and tied to the handlebars was soon filled, and so were the large bags hanging on each side of the carrier at the back. On top of the carrier she strapped another bag into which Jaap slipped several packets of sandwiches, for the return journey. She had been able to buy meat, potatoes, loaves of ryebread, 1 k.g. butter, a piece of bacon and a bag of oats. On the way back, she called in at the little pub, to thank Jaap once more, and waved out by four children she mounted the bike again. The bike was now very hard to pedal, and progress slow. The roughly 200 k.m. ahead, seemed endless. In Heerenveen only 10 k.m. from Gorredijk, Richa heard from other food fossickers that a freight train would run during the night, destination Zwolle. The railway men did not mind if these hungry travellers rode in the empty waggons, and looked the other way when they climbed in. That night, seated on straw in the pitchdark thundering train, leaning against her bicycle, Richa joined the other travellers in singing songs and telling stories, not so much to keep awake, but to guard her precious possessions. And so singing they arrived in Zwolle, where the train stopped in a shunting-yard. It was quite an effort to get bicycles, prams and carts out of the wagons, over rails and sleepers onto the road again.

Stiff, sore and freezing cold, Richa walked pushing the bike, too tired to ride it into the town to find her new friends in the grocers shop. After asking for directions several times she found the shop, and was welcomed with open arms.

These good people were delighted to hear of the safe arrival of Jannie and Lenie at their destination. After a good night sleep, and a precious gift of sugar, tea and flour, Richa was on her way for the long bike-ride (135 k.m.) home.

It was early in the morning, the sun was shining through a frosty sky, but the sharp wind had calmed and it seemed that her bike had wings and even the bomb-craters, where the bike had to be pulled through, didn't seem so deep as on the way up.

In Ouden water a small cafe was open, and was selling hot cordial. Stretching her legs and sipping the hot drink, Richa noticed how picturesque this little town was, with its narrow brickwalled canals and high drawbridges. Would it not be lovely, to enjoy all this beauty on a peaceful summers day? The sandwiches packed in the bag seemed very tantalising, but Richa decided to leave it all wrapped up, so she could hand them around as soon as she got home. The anticipation of the happy faces and in her mind seeing the boys tuck into sandwiches won out over her own hunger, and on she went pedalling her wobbly bike.

In Gouda, another historic old beautiful town, Richa rode straight into a German checkpoint, after having avoided a few by taking a by-way, when warned by other bike riders. All her gear had to be opened and searched, but luckily they were after weapons and political pamphlets, and did not worry her about the food.

The two elderly soldiers let Richa go when she assured them that the food was for her hungry family. They were fed up with this crazy war too, and even gave her a

hand packing all the food again.

AT 8 p.m., curfew time, she still had a few k.m. to go before she was home. Walking now so as to make as little noise as possible, and often stopping to listen if the coast was clear, she continued along the dark Papelaan. This lane, lined with huge trees, bordered a country-estate, belonging to the Dutch Queen, and normally opened to the public as a recreation park. Now among the tall trees, the launching pad of the V2 flighing bombs was hidden, and the park heavily guarded.

In the dark skies, a constant stream of bomber aircraft could be heard, on their way from England to their target somewhere in Germany. Searchlights criss-crossed the dark skies, and if a plane was caught in his beam, like an insect in a gigantic spiderweb, one could hear the groundfire and could see the bullets like a string of fire crackers racing towards its victim.

Outside the hermetically closed up houses, as not a glimmer of light was allowed to show outside, it was like enemy territory. The only sounds were warsounds, army-trucks, and mens voices in a foreign language that did not belong in this country. Finally with trembling legs from exhaustion, Richa dropped the bike against the front fence, and "Open the door" she called through the letterbox opening in the frontdoor-

The door flew open and "Thank the Lord" called mother.

The boys quickly pulled the bike inside, and with something akin to reverence everything was unpacked. Mother cried from relief, the boys ate with relish, and even the little ones came out of bed to have a look at all the goodies and of course something to eat. Dad embraced his eldest daughter silently, between them they did not need any words.

Slowly, this winter (which went down in history as THE HUNGERWINTER turned into spring. The meadows once again burst into a lush green, and it became a little easier to buy a bit of milk here or there. The Red Cross sent bread and tins of food, it literally fell from the sky, as planes dropped it. Everyone got his share, a tremendous relief.

In May 1945 the war was finally at an end, it left behind a totally depleted country. Slowly life became normal again, mail services were restored, and mother immediatly sent letters of thanks to all the people who had been so kind and helpful. She extended invitations that they would always be welcome in our home, out of deep gratitude.

One year later the frontdoor bell rang, and mother called out "Richa a gentleman to see you" and there stood Jaap as large as Life; He was a truck driver now, and had to be in the neighbourhood for a delivery. He brought a bag of potatoes (food was still rationed), and also was curious if Richa had managed the long ride with all the loot intact, all the way home.

His wife had passed away recently, and to his sorrow, he had to place the children with relatives.

With great pride he spoke of his children, and teased Richa that they still remembered the girl on the pushbike, with the funny clothes on. Funny indeed!

Jodhpurs (from one of the brothers), the hooded coat made from a dyed blanket, 2 pairs heavy-woollen knesocks and a pair of her mother's shoes.

He invited Richa to come to Friesland in her holidays from the bookshop, where she now worked. She would be able to stay with his parents on the farm, where Anny Sjoerd and Eltje also lived now. Trijntje was living with his sister, and Hansje was at his in-laws.

So one summery day Richa was again on her way to Friesland, but this time by passenger train, and Jaap was waiting for her at the station in Heerenveen.

After this first holiday followed more of the same. Richa was called aunty by Jaap's children and gradually she became quite proficient in the Friesian language. She fell in love with the trustworthy man with the fair curly hair, and the bright blue eyes, who valued his family above all else.

When he asked Richa to become his wife and at the same time mother for his five children, she did not hesitate for a minute. But things were not made easy for them. Although Richa's mother had nothing personal against Jaap, she thought it too much for a twenty year old, to mother five children,

Her Dad however was a great support. He liked Jaap very much and trusted in the ability of his daughter. He said "Don't let anybody change your mind, if you love him, marry him, love conquers all".

Father and Mother went together to Friesland to meet the relations and children.

Jaap's parents and relations were not happy about the wedding plans: "Those Höllanders and city-folk as well", then... those poor kids with a stranger in the house.."

But, one fine day Jaap came to Holland to claim his bride.! The marriage was consecrated in the vestry, as Jaap, not being of the Catholic religion could not be married in the church. He could not care less about it, but knew Richa felt downgraded and found it hard to understand. She had been taught all people were equal as children of God, and felt now a second class Catholic.

She decided to ignore it, and to think it was just an idea of the church and had nothing to do with the Almighty Father himself. In reality however, it has often irked her all through life.

The wedding day was a beautiful spring day. Bright, fresh, green festooned gardens and trees, along the streets. The first tulips were coming into bloom. After a festive wedding breakfast, goodbyes were said with promises of holidays in Friesland for everybody. With lots of waving, and a couple of tears, the entire family farewelled the happy couple till the car was out of sight.

The Zuiderzee glistened under the sparkling sun. Halfway the 35 k.m. long "afsluitdijk", Jaap stopped and they climbed the steps to the look-out. On the one side the waves of the North sea battered the dike, on the other side the much

calmer Zuidersea Jaap pointed out where the new "polders" were pumped out and made into fertile farmland. Every day, he drove an old bus with a gang of labourers to the North-East Polder where they worked as a team. On Friday nights, they paid Jaap their share for the bus, while enjoying a drink in the pub. It was heavy work these strong men did, dressed in sturdy corduroy suits and heavy knee high rubber boots. Kilometers of porous drainpipes were laid in the soggy soil, and under contract they harvested the crops, in the already productive fields.

Leaving the Afsluitdijk behind, they drove into Friesland.

Stately farmhouses came into view. Seemingly endless green paddocks dotted with grazing black and white cows, under a pale blue sky presented a rustic scene.

Here and there playful little lambs, darted around sheep.

They stopped in a picturesque village built around a centuries old church. Jaap pointed it all out to her with visible pride in his Friesian "Heitelan" (Fatherland) and Richa cuddled up against him, dreaming of a new life, in this peaceful, although different environment.

## CHAPTER 2

Friesland (1946-1953)

After the first difficult days, in which there was so much to organise in this totally disorganised household, with the children suddenly all together again, shy and not quite knowing what to make of this new mother, Sjoerd provided the breakthrough. Seven year old Sjoerd helped to unpack some of the boxes that mother had brought with her. The little boy had suffered with scarlet fever, when he was 3 years old and had been seriously ill. The illness left him with his left side partially paralysed. He did not use his left hand, and also dragged his left foot. But otherwise he was a happy curly-top. He bent over one of the large boxes rummaged through the packing papers and laughing called out: "Come and look, there is a large bat in here"! His sister Annie (9) the eldest, who felt responsible for her two brothers and two sisters, came running and said: "careful Sjoerd don't break it" and lifted a Sacred Heart statue out of the box. It had outstretched arms over which a plaster pleated gown fell in folds in a triangle to the feet.

"a bat... a bat...!" laughed Sjoerd. But Annie decided it could not be a bat and asked Richa: "What is it?" "Tonight before bedtime I will tell you all about it" promised Richa. While telling stories at night, which had been so long neglected there was always a lot of laughter. The language problems seemed to sort themselves out, mother was getting better at it every day.

Eltje, who was five was the quietest of them all, and Richa knew she was missing "Beppe" (grandma) and the animals on the farm, especially the old cat she used to carry around. But as soon as she was sent to "kindergarten" she made friends in the neighbourhood "Brechtje", the baker's daughter from next door and "Jutta" who often came to stay with two old aunties in the village. In the neighbourhood the reaction to their marriage was "Let's wait and see...." The neighbours kept their distance, but in the family circle all went extremely well.

Willem van der Dam and Jan Tyskes, two of Jaap's many polder friends, used to come on afterdaynights for an evening talk, as Jaap called it. They brought their wives and daughters, and although Richa could not understand any of their conversation, she looked forward to these visits. Because it had been impossible for so long to buy drinks, etc. and Jaap worked away from home, the little Pub had been closed, for years, it was now reopened.

They bought new tablecloth to put over the bare tables, new ashtrays and glasses, and a supply of beer, gin, wines, and new coffee cups. Richa hung a white starched apron behind the door, to quickly put on and serve the customers in style.

When Jaap was home quite a few customers came in for a drink and a chat, but when Jaap worked all day in the North-East polder, only a couple of village regulars

wandered, in to sit for hours at the fire with their drink.

As Richa was still regarded as a foreigner, and on top of that could not speak their language (or take part in the village gossip), things were not going well in that respect. The busiest days in the pub, were the spring and autumn market days, when farmers and farmhands, peatdiggers, and the polderboys out of every hamlet in the countryside, came to the Gorredijk Market. All along the canal, tarpaulin stalls were lined up selling clothing, smoked eels, cheeses fish, sweets, novelties books, and other numerous goods. In the market square the cattle stood in long rows, tied to railings, restlessly moving to and fro. The farmers in their grey dustcoats and yellow clogs, traded with the many buyers. If a sale was negotiated, the deal was sealed with a hefty slap in the hand, and a thick wallet secured by a chain pulled from a hidden pocket.

For the young folk, the sideshows were the highlight. It all started with the arrival of the sideshows in town, when every boy was out there to help, in the hope of getting a free ride. It was a colourful sight, when the market-goers descended on the village early in the morning, on their bright clattering clogs. The women went straight for the market stalls, and the men made their way to the noisy crowd between the rows of cattle, to join in the bargaining that went on there. When their business was completed, they came to the pubs to slake their thirst. The later it got the noisier the crowd became.

"The MOTLEY HEN" as Jaap's pub was called, was doing a roaring trade, keeping him and Richa rushing about, with not a moment to spare. As liquor was still rationed, Jaap with the help of a friend had distilled home made "Gin" from sugar and an elixer. The resulting liquor was named "Beerenburger" after the popular Friesian drink. After a long hilarious "tasting" session, to get the flavour just right, the liquor was scooped with a jug from the ten-gallon milkcan and poured into clean wine bottles. So on this market day, the "Beerenburg" flowed steadily. If some one asked for another brand of gin, no worries, the same drink was poured out of another bottle and everybody was happy! They sang, laughed, and argued.

A thick cloud of blue tobacco smoke wafted out of the door every time it opened. But as soon as daylight faded, they gathered all their belongings and with their wives and children left singing for their walk home.

Then Jaap took Richa and the children for some delicious fried fish, a ride on the merry-go-round, a shot in the gallery, a skill-game or two and that was the end of the fun.

The villagers then sank back grateful in their quiet every-day peaceful life, and the little pub was only visited by the same old customers, who tried to solve all their problems with their drink around the fireplace.

Richa sewed, knitted and cooked. The elder girls Annie and Trijntje were a great help, they often took Eltje and Hans for a walk and came back with a bunch of field-flowers, which they put in jars in front of the Sacred Heart statue, which had got a place of honour on a shelf.

In August 1947 Marietje was born. The day Richa came back home, with the baby,

from the hospital in Drachten, she was surprised to receive a visit from her neighbour, who came to congratulate them, with a basket of fruit and a lovely knitted little dress. The ice was broken! More neighbours came to have a look at the baby, and the "foreigner" changed gradually into just one of the villagers. The contented baby fitted without any problems in the busy family, and was adored by the older girls. It did not seem long at all before Marietje was walking. She loved to go with Heit (dad) in the car and on the pushbike carrier. But that was not always possible and on several occasions she ran after him, till he was out of sight. On one of these days, she held her breath, till she was blue in the face and her little body went limp. A very frightened Richa held her stubborn baby-daughter promptly under the cold water tap. The tantrum was soon passed. As the work in the polder was seasonal, Jaap sometimes worked as a milk-can collector for the milk factory at Bontebok. The horse which pulled the large milk-wagon twice a day along the countryroads, knew the route, without help from Jaap and stopped the wagon right next to the platforms with the milkcans, at the farmers gates. Then Jaap swung the heavy cans on the wagon. When they arrived at the factory, the carts were unloaded in order of arrival and this started sometimes a wild race if two carts came from different directions, trying to beat each other to the factory gate. On the free from school, Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, the children were in turn, two at a time allowed to go with Heit on the milkrun. Very early in the morning one of the boys usually helped Jaap to catch the horse in the yard, the horse often had to be bribed with a carrot or a lump of sugar.

Every morning Tienus, the milkman with his carrier cycle, came along the houses to sell milk, cheese, butter and eggs. The large milkcans on his cart were protected from the sun by snowwhite molton covers from which a gleaming tap protruded. The milk was carefully measured and poured in the jugs, with which the housewives were waiting in their frontdoors. Marietje, lonely when all the brothers and sisters had gone to school or kindergarden, was lifted by friendly Tienus, between the milkcans and baskets of dairy-produce for a ride through the neighbourhood, her rozy cheeks aglow from the chilly air, smiling and waving proudly from her high perch.

One day, after one of these outings, a small dog, followed Marietje home, hungry and with sore paws. The dog was probably accidently left behind by one of the skippers, who sailed through the canal, and berthed to do some shopping. Joesy, as Marietje named the dog, became her faithful guarddog and playmate through the following years.

Two and a half years after Marietje, Albert was born, and after one more year Bernadetje arrived. Richa's teenage sister came in her absence, to look after the family. Opa and Oma from Wassenaar visited regularly with Richa's little sisters, on which occasions Opa made quite an impression on the villagers, dressed in his "city" suit and black jaunty felt hat, which he dipped gracefully at every raised hand, with



which the villagers usually greeted everybody in their path.

Trijntje and Netty (The eldest of Richa's little sisters) became great friends. The holidays together, playing in the green fields, or exploring in the beautiful Beetsterzwaag Woods, where they gathered wild nuts and pine cones, became highlights in their lives. ON the occasion of Netty's first H. Communion in Wassenaar, Richa was asked to bring Trijntje along for the celebrations. When Richa asked for permission to have two days off from school for her, it was refused, much to the distress of Trijntje. Jaap however said she could go!

The train journey and visit to the city was a big event. Trijntje enjoyed the rides in the rattling tram, which stopped almost right in front of Opa and Oma's front door, the visit to the zoo, and shopping in the great department stores, riding the elevators. When she went back to school however, her desk was empty, and an angry letter arrived from the school inspector. When however it was all explained, nothing more was said or heard about the matter.

At that time, Oma offered to take Sjoerd to Wassenaar to have him checked at the Academic Hospital in Leiden, Sjoerd was admitted for treatment. Oma, and Richa's sister Maria visited him often. The foot was operated on for straightening and he was measured for especially designed shoes. His left hand however, could only be approved through exercising. After a couple of weeks recuperating with Oma, Sjoerd came home, wearing the new shoes instead of the wooden clogs, the village children usually wore. Everyone was happy and excited to have Sjoerd back home again. Exercises and games were organised for Sjoerd, to encourage him (often under protest) to use his left hand. The special shoes caused a problem too. Sjoerd was used to wearing clogs especially when wet and cold weather prevailed. Often he took his shoes off and ran on in his thick handknitted socks, leaving his shoes in the most peculiar places. Annie and Trijntje then had to be sent out in search of the shoes. Richa and Jaap got very angry at him about this, but neither punishment nor threats would change him. When he, eventually grew out of the shoes, it was the end of that drama and Sjoerd walked happily as well as he could on clogs. But the operation had indeed improved his walking.

That summer it was decided that they would take out a family subscription for the swimmingpool. It was really quite a luxury in those times but they used it often and they all learned to swim! Oh, those warm summers between the green fields and so close to the Beetsterzwaag Forest where they went for long walks and there in the light midsummer evenings listened breathlessly to the song of the nightingale. It was pleasant shopping in the small local shops that mirrored themselves in the dark water of the canal. Nobody was ever in a hurry. The shopkeepers knew every family and there was always time for a chat. So it could happen that little Albert who was sent out to buy a packet of cigarettes at the barbershop of Jan van der Veen, came home with nicely cut hair but without the cigarettes.

The barber, Jan van der Veen, often agreed to shave his customers in their own homes, and often came for that purpose in the evenings, after Jaap had arrived home, tired from the long drive and the day's work in the polder. Near the fire in the room behind the pub, he soaped Jaap up, and in the meantime told him all the latest village news, adding and colouring a bit here and there. After the traditional cup of coffee, Jan even played a tune, blowing on a comb which he covered with a piece of cigarette-paper ( In those days, many men rolled their own cigarettes ).

During the holidays, if Jaap had the time outings were organised. But it must be written, for the sake of accuracy that this did not happen very often. Once Jaap had promised an outing in the car to the Hunnenbeds in the province Drente and even allowed the children to invite a friend each, he ended up with fifteen children in the back. Singing, laughing and squabbling they arrived at the Hunnenbeds,

A Hunnenbed is a group of roughly oval, enormous stones, most likely deposited in Drente by glaciers in the Ice-Age, and later through unknown methods used for erecting a burial chamber, by our pre-historic forefathers. It is unimaginable how these ancient people could lift these enormous stones to form a roof.

The car Jaap proudly drove on these occasions, was a stately Minerva, he had bought very reasonably. It had previously belonged to a home for handicapped people 'Lydenstijn' in Beetsterzwaag. The large car featured a glass partition between the frontseat and the rest of the car. It also had two folding seats crystal flower vases, and a speaker from the backseat to the driver's seat. With the car packed with happily singing children, Jaap drove through the Drent countryside, and came upon a large flock of sheep grazing in a purple heather field, along the sandy road. Watching over the flock was an old bearded shepherd and his dog, The shepherd waved his crook as a greeting at the waving, delighted children. After a short 'comfort' stop at a cafe with adjoining playground, and a glass of lemonade, the now tired and quiet group was straight driven home !

Plenty of work was always available in summer and autumn. Hay had to be made and stored in haystacks or the attics above the huge cowsheds. When thunderclouds threatened the summer sky, the harvesters worked from sun-up to sun-down. For if the hay was not completely dry when stored, it could build up heat, smoulder and burst into flames. Many a farm had gone up in flames because of this. The lightning was also a very real firehazard. And Jaap (among his many endeavours) had with a friend installed many copperwire lightning-conductors, precariously balanced on the crests of the high farmhouse roofs. They also installed one on the tower of the Carmilites cloister in Drachten, where Jaap was caught climbing over the high garden wall, instead of entering through the gate, for which he had to ring a bell everytime he had to go in or out and wait for the Sister-gatekeeper.

5 December in Holland is ST. Nicolas day, A Day of hilarious fun and gift giving, a day full of surprises and mystery, of family gatherings round the fires awaiting the arrival of the good Holy Man and his black mischievous helper, Black Peter.

When the St. Nick. and black Peter arrived, they were greeted by loud singing, excited and also nervous children. Because as the legend tells us, only children that have been good during the year get presents, the naughty ones can expect a thrashing" by black Peter. In reality, the children whose consciences are not too clear, promise to be better next year and all is forgiven. Black Peter dips in the big hessian bag he is carrying, hands the present to the Saint, who then reads the name of the child to come forward to receive the gift, then traditionally each child receives their christian name initial in chocolate.

When St. Nicholas went back to Spain, (Where he legendary resides ) the cold weather sets in, and work becomes scarce. Little Hans and Sjoerd helped with the supply of fuel. Large lumps of coal were often dropped between the rails, when the streamtram, which ran from Heerenveen to Drachten , refuelled in Gorredijk. Hans was going to kindergarden, he was a sturdy adventurous boy. Once he arrived home , with a teaspoon sewn to his shirt, . The teacher wanted it known that she thought, some of the treasures out of Hans' pockets were illegally acquired. Even a bend of chimney-pipe was retrieved from the sandpit at the kindergarden, after hours of searching , when the stove had to be reinstalled at the arrival of the colder weather. On his clickety-clack clogs however pushing a box-cart, he was an expert in the fuel collection. In the first couple of years after the war, food was still only available on coupons and as a favour , Jaap could sometimes buy a sheep off a farmer, After darknes fell, it had to be caught in a paddock and walked home, where it was slaughtered in the shed with the help of a friendly butcher. Jaap spun the fleece into knobby wool, which Richa knitted into jumpers. The spinning was a tedious job and Jaap got thoroughly sick of spinning , which was not really his line of work, If it did not go right, sometimes he literally threw the spinningwheel aside. But eventually it was all done and the boys wore lovely brown and white striped warm jumpers, the girls got colourfull embroidery on theirs.

It was always a happier time when Easter approached, and the sun showed itself now and then. Springcleaning was in progress, scrubbing and polishing went on in every household, Blankets and curtains billowed on the washinglines. Everything was cleaned meticulously and it had to be completely finished before Easter.!

In the gardens the snowdrops and crocus shyly lifted their pretty blooms. Pussy-willows, brought home by the armfull, by the girls, decorated the spotless rooms behind the sparkling windows. The boy's roamed through the spring-fields looking for plover-eggs and the girls enjoyed the painting of hardboiled eggs for hiding in the garden, where the little ones went hunting for eggs (hidden by the Easter-bunny) on Easter-morning.

One day a lecture on emigration was to be held in Heerenveen, and Jaap decided, he would like to find out more about it, so Richa went with him. ON their bikes they rode to Heerenveen, a newspaper under their coats and straw in Jaap's clogs to keep the cold wind out. The lecture began with a discussion about Canada, but the fact was

that their family was too large to be accepted there. The cold winters in Canada was also something that did not entice Richa very much. New Zealand seemed ideal, especially as Richa's brother Frans had settled there, after his military service in Indonesia. But they could not get approval there either! Unless, they had a sponsor for a job and accommodation.

Richa's eldest brother Joe and his new bride had already emigrated to Australia, and wrote enthusiastic letters about that country. But Australia was so far away and Richa knew nothing about Australia; At school it was once mentioned as the only country that never had fought a war on its own territory, and that was all she knew; The only Australian City, she had ever heard mentioned was Melbourne, the destination of the great air-race, in which the Dutch "Uiver" did extremely well. Emigration became the subject of all their evening talks, Jaap's friends Willem and Jan were working for the council, grubbing out tree roots for a pittance, until the Polderworks started again, They seemed interested in migrating too, but their wives rejected the idea completely. Jaap however, visualising owning his own farm and a better future, decided for emigration,

After weighing all the con's and pro's, Richa thought more of having to leave everything and everybody dear to her behind, and was not as keen as Jaap about owning a farm, they decided to fill in the application form.

Annie, now fifteen years old, went early mornings and late afternoons to a neighbouring farm to learn milking, just in case the dream became a reality.

The pub was closed, Richa could not entertain these few villagers, who sat for hours with one drink, and the licencing fee was too high compared with the profits they made. The empty pub was an ideal play area and often the place resounded with laughter, singing and playing children's noises. Especially the games played in a circle were popular, also hopscotch, marbles and many more.

They did not own many toys but had lots of fun. The family had now eight children. Blond curly headed Bernadetje was the youngest.

It was at that time in 1952, that a very agitated neighbour came to tell Richa, that she had a phone call reporting an accident. Jaap was in hospital in Heerenveen, with a broken ankle. He had caught the heel of his workboot in a switch of the rails and a work-locomotive nearly ran over him, in desperation he had clamped on to the bullbar.

From every direction neighbours rallied around. Richa got transport to go and visit Jaap, visitors arrived with fruit and cakes, especially during the long weeks that a very impatient "Heit" was laid up in the small front bedroom, which looked out over the canal and the streets alongside it. Richa then realised she had finally become part of the village.

Jaap's family were friendlier, especially Pake (grandpa). Richa will never forget the day, she was going to visit Pake and Beppe with little Albert, on their farm near a lake (de Lye). Pake was waiting for them at the busstop, bicycle in hand

and with a long walk ahead of them, Pake lifted Albert onto the crossbar. There he sat like a little prince, looking around at the cows in the meadows and the little birds that flew chattering from branch to branch in the brush along the sandy-path, while Pake held him in a firm grip and pushed the bike. Richa enjoyed the visits to Pake and Beppe, they had such a cosy livingroom, with the beds built in the walls, closed in behind little doors, a beautiful ornamented kerosene lamp hanging low over the table, which was covered with a red patterned plush tablecloth and flowering geraniums on the windowsill. Several bright yellow canaries, each in their own little cage, were singing their happiest song. And Beppe served lots of dainty little cups of coffee with slices of Friesian "suker-bolle" (Fruitloaf), with lumps of candy instead of sugar. Albert helped Pake to feed the ducks and chickens. The stables were part of the house, animals and people lived under the same large thatched roof. The cows, in winter were housed right behind the living area, and their tails washed and brushed each day, which Richa found very amusing. In the summer months, little curtains hung over the row of small windows in the stable and clean sand was swept like a carpet over the scrubbed floor. In the back of the stable was a pigsty. The pigs were Pake's hobby, he used to keep them pink and shiny with a bucket of warm suds and a hard brush. The chickens perched in the loft at night, but descended down a ladder specially made for them, in the mornings and had the freedom of the farmyard. When Richa mentioned the emigration plans, Beppe got tears in her eyes and did not think much of it all. Australia a strange country with all sorts of wild animals! How did Jaap ever think that up? According to her, Jaap had always been so obstinate and had such strange notions. Even his schoolteacher had said "He'll never amount to anything". When he was a teenager he went to the market in Rottevalle, drank too much gin and got into a fight, and then there was the time he rode a motorbike, belonging to a neighbouring farmer, too fast, and crashed it into a fence. Also the time he went sailing on the lake, on a wooden gate, and used one of Beppe's best sheets as a sail. Richa had better talk him out of this caper and make him change his mind as he never listened at what she had to say !...

But on the way back to the busstop, Pake said it was their decision to make. He had heard some good reports from family's that had gone to Australia earlier. However he did not think they had a chance with such a big family!

But it did not take long before they got a message from the Emigration office, to call in for an interview.

They were told, that to go independently, their family was too large, they'd have to find accommodation first. There was however a scheme, directed by Pater van IJsel, a priest, who helped large family's find jobs and accommodation on farms, and that might give them a chance.

Jaap van der Meer was not actually a farmer, but as he had grown up on a farm, that would be overlooked. Another form was filled in and the waiting game continued.

Then finally, the whole family had to go to Arnhem to keep an appointment for a medical examination. Once there, in a small waiting room, they waited tensely. The children, usually so noisy, only talked in whispers. After a little while another family entered. Apparently, according to their total different language, they came from the province of Brabant, in the south. Vogels was their name and they had nine children four boys and five girls. One by one, Jaap and his family were examined in an adjacent room. Sjoerd's turn took a long time. The doctor shook his head and did not think that Sjoerd would be accepted. Jaap got angry "Who did they think they were, as if all Australians were perfect."... Sjoerd was his son and he would look after him wherever he was, and Sjoerd was bright enough to earn his own living in the future"! Soon after the results came, they were accepted! The only concession was, a special form had to be signed, that they were responsible for Sjoerd. Now life really became hectic. The children were looking forward to the long journey and their new homeland.

Richa, who was taught the English language at school, tried to teach the children a few English words and even little Albert was soon singing "Good night, Irene, I see you in my dream". Because they lived in the country, there were certain restrictions on the articles they were allowed to take to Australia, in regard to the prevention of "Hoof and Mouth" disease. Some of their possessions were sold, others given to friends. The carpenter made a large crate, which stood ready to be filled in the empty pub. For the last time, Jaap and Richa walked to the village-generalstore and bought two large cardboard suitcases. Jaap spotted a beautiful china teaset on display, which he bought for his wife, to remember the good times in Gorredijk, and to entertain their still unknown new friends, in Australia, in style. On the last days in Friesland when most of their belongings had either been packed or sold, Trijntje, Sjoerd, Eltje, Hans and Marietje stayed with Koen and Nel, their faithful friends. Nel had been the first person in the village, to come over, with a jar of preserved pears to make Richa feel welcome, and Koen owned the bus that Jaap drove to the Noord-East polder when work was available there.

Richa went for a last visit to IJbertsje (Willem's wife) who had come to visit so many Saturday afternoons, usually with sweets and chocolates for the children. She put Marietje on the back of her bicycle and rode along the canal. It was so cold it made Marietje cry, although the little girl was rugged up from head to toe. At arrival in the cottage, Marietje was put into a built-in wallbed, surrounded by hot water bottles. And IJbertsje stoked the potbelly stove till it was almost red-hot. IJbertsje had bought Richa's sewing machine and one of the little tables from the pub. Now she brought IJbertsje as a present a pair of antique bisque statues, once given to Richa by her great-aunt Cato. Tears were shed as the final good-byes were said and Richa realised then, how much she had come to love Friesland and all the friends she had made there. Jan Tyskes and his family had also to be

visited. To get to Jan's place ,the canal had to be crossed by boat.Jan had one very gifted son,who liked nothing better than to play the piano.Many an evening Jaap and Richa had been under the spell of Douke's music that reverberated through that simple little cottage. Tsaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite had never sounded better than in that cosy smoke-filled room,dimly lit by a kerosene lamp. Richa often wondered how they ever got the heavy piano across the canal and up the bank into the cottage ? Jaap made last minute inquiries if it was at all possible to take a dog to Australia,but : alas Joesy had to stay behind. The faithful dog had to be left in the care of friends. It was later discovered,that the dog had run away and had sat for days before the closed pub door until finally the neighbours could persuade Joesy to come inside and stay with them.

The day of departure finally arrived,all their papers were in order,their business finalised,all the good-byes had been said.

The "Minerva" was sold.Koen's brother was going to drive the family to Wassenaar, where they were going to stay for a couple of days.

The children found themselves a seat in the waiting car. With mixed feelings Jaap pulled the frontdoor closed for the last time. Many of the villagers waved them good bye as they drove along the canal, over the bridge towards a new future, a new country!

## CHAPTER TREE

### THE LONG JOURNEY. (Febr.1953)

It was a bitterly cold February morning. The sun was hanging low in the sky, trying in vain to warm the snow-covered meadows. The pale sunlight made the frost sparkle in the pure white fields. A few fishing boats were visible, through the morning mist, which hung over the silvery IJselmeer (Zuiderzee).

The fully loaded car, sped along its way, over the Afsluitdijk, to Wassenaar, where Oma and Opa Engles were busy preparing their house for the ten guests, they were expecting. It was quite a problem, but practical Oma had organised it all wonderfully, and rushed out onto the footpath when the car arrived, to welcome them all with open arms.

The children, impatient to get out of the cramped quarters, came boisterously tumbling out of the car. Anny yelled at them "behave yourselves...What will Oma think of you?.. Oma however with the wisdom acquired from experience had set the table in the large warm kitchen with an enormous dish of sandwiches.

After all the greetings and having the coatrack in the hallway overloaded with coats, caps and scarves, they soon settled down. Albert kept on complaining, which was certainly unusual for the normally happy little boy. He had a temperature and was put to bed straight away. Richa was very anxious about Albert, as a passenger-ship could not accept passengers who had contagious diseases, and about a month ago measles had been going around among the village children. But after a good night's sleep, lots of fluids and extra care, Albert soon was his happy, cheerful self again. He most likely had been overtired, because of all the unusual happenings and the long time he had to sit so cramped in the back of the car.

The days with Oma and Opa flew past. The day before the departure Oma's birthday was celebrated with a lot of visitors and fun. In the cosy hours around the fireplace, a lot of good advice was given for the long voyage ahead, and many good wishes were expressed for a prosperous future and promises of many letters, but no-one spoke about the farewell which was yet to come...it was too painful! Jaap had rented a mini -bus for the trip to Amsterdam, where they had to board the "FAIRSEA", so Opa and Oma could also come with them.

At home they already said their goodbyes to Netty and Paulientje, now nine and eleven years old, sister Mary and brother Bart. Joe was already in Australia, and Frans had settled in New Zealand, after his discharge from the Army, following its defeat in Indonesia. Everyone waved and waved till the house was out of sight.

In Amsterdam it was frightfully busy in the departure hall. The family joined the long queue shuffling from desk to desk, for passport inspection, tickets, departure permits and the disinfecting of everyone's shoes. While Jaap and Richa answered all the questions, and showed their various documents to the officials, Annie and Trijntje had their hands full, just keeping the children together in the melee.

After having embraced Oma and Opa for the last time over the fence, which they had to



stay behind, they finally walked up the gangway and were aboard the "FAIRSEA". The Fairsea was a large white ship, 500 metres long and 21 meters wide. It carried 1800 passengers and 390 men crew. There were 4 passenger decks, and at first sight it seemed a maze. But soon a steward was showing them the way to the cabin, Richa, the girls and Albert had to share with two other ladies and four girls. It contained four three tiered bunks and a cane basket for Bernadetje.

Jaap, Sjoerd and Hans got bunks in a dormitory in the ship's hold, two decks deeper into the hull of the ship, especially reserved for men and boys over six years of age. It was a disappointment for Jaap and Richa to be separated, but it would only be for five and a half weeks.

In the dining room, with its rows of long tables, they were lucky to get a table for eight, in a quiet corner, all to themselves, for the duration of the voyage.

Albert and Bernadetje, nicknamed Appy and Nicky, had their meals earlier in the children's sitting. During mealtimes most children under 5 went to the playcentre, where lots of toys were available, to be looked after by the nursing staff.

Nicky and Appy however had different ideas and yelled and cried when they were left at the playroom, so Jaap, who did not like to see them so upset, shoved the pair of them under the diningroom table, where they played happily.

When the drone of the engines changed, and a slight movement was felt, Jaap realised, the big ship had left the quay. They all gathered on deck, to wave to Oma and Opa, who as arranged, would be at the gigantic Lock at IJMUIDEN. And for sure, as the ship lay in the Lock and had to wait for the closing of the huge gates at the aft, and the opening of the gates at the stern, (to let the waterlevel in the North-sea-canal fall to the sealevel) they saw Opa and Oma waving in the distance with their large white handkerchiefs! They looked so forlorn there in the gathering dusk of this cold February day. It must have been impossible for them to recognise anyone on board, but they kept on waving regardlessly!

Opa was unmistakable with his straight posture and his black hat. Now it suddenly hit Richa what an irreversable step they had taken, and Richa only now realised how she loved this small country.. Even in the bad times and with lots of worries, there had always been the feeling of belonging, of being at home!

The band on board played the tune: "Farewell dear fatherland, dear fatherland farewell" Richa burst into tears, large hot tears kept on coming and coming.

"Oh Jaap" she cried "will we ever see them again? What have we done? Just thought about ourselves, but not of them!" Luckily Trijntje and Eltsje, in all the drama and confusion took charge of the little ones, as Richa could not do anything else but cry, no matter how Jaap tried to console her.

After a rather sleepless night however, in which the ship seemed to rise and fall in a certain rhythm, the family again demanded her full attention.

The showers were salt water, which was a problem with Nicky's tender baby-skin.

The cabin steward brought Richa a baby-bath and a bucket and showed her the location of a fresh-water tap. He also indicated to her, to hide it all after use, as according to his experience, it was very possible, even likely that the bath would get "pinched". This all went on in broken language, with lots of gesturing, as the crew were mostly Italians.

In her father's hotel, Italian commercial travellers were among the regular clients. One of them, Benito Benenti, a representative from a well-known menswear manufacturer, often joined her father in his kitchen for a chat. Father had been for several years at sea, working as a chef on a passenger liner, and during his travels had learned quite a bit of Italian. Hence, the black quality hat, which father had bought from his friend. Richa had often listened breathlessly, during these talks, and admired her father. When he was six, he had been brought to an orphanage, and when he was only eleven, had gone to work as a chef's apprentice! Richa did not know any Italian, but the sounds were familiar, and she could make out quickly, what the friendly steward was saying. That was probably why she got on so well with the steward, also perhaps because they made their own beds and kept the crowded cabin as tidy as possible.

Very early in the mornings, Jaap did the family washing in the then still deserted laundry, and strung a rope-line on deck. Annie and Trijntje pegged the washing out, and the boys took turns to keep watch, so nothing got stolen. The drying never took long in the fresh sea-breezes.

The days passed pleasantly. It was really a wonderful holiday, with even some surprises thrown in! Eltje celebrated her tenth birthday on board. and the diningroom steward told her, it happened to be his birthday too. At lunch, a beautiful decorated cake, appeared on their table, and they all sang "Lang zullen zij leven" (Happy Birthday to you) The older children soon made friends on board. Sjoerd and Hans took to life on board as ducks take to water, they were seen at mealtimes only, which were announced with a musical chime, all over the ship. In a very short time, the boys knew their way around the ship from A to Z!

IN the children's dining room, while attending to Appy and Nicky, they met Gerard and Dora Vogels again, whom they had met in the small waitingroom in Arnhem. Even though they had only met on that occasion, it was a tie, people they knew, and they all smiled in recognition. They were helping their youngest daughter, Henny.!

The "Fairsea" was moored for a short while in Port Said, and was soon surrounded by a fleet of small vessels. Strange looking traders came on board, and offered a colourful variety of wares for sale, from exotic fruits, leather articles, brass ornaments to carpets and miniature camels. For Jaap and Richa it was just looking, as after all the costs in connection with emigration, Jaap's wallet was rather on the flat side. This did not prevent them from thoroughly enjoying this lively and exotic scene! For the evenings, there was often entertainment organised, sometimes even a ball, and with lots of singing and laughter, the Polonaise or Congo-line was danced all along the promenade decks.

The church services on board were always well attended. . . . The service was often closed with the singing of the hymn : " Oh Mary, star of the sea, show us the way, Star of the sea!" It was at the time , a very appropriate Hymn, and sung with great gusto, as most of the migrants felt insecure about about the unknown future , that awaited them, in that vast strange land called Australia !

In every situation in life , there are people who complain, also on shipboard. Complaints were voiced loudly about the food, the salt water showers, the service, even the narrow bunks. The Van der Meer's had no complaints whatsoever and the whole group of people, consisting of five large family's migrating under the Father IJsel Scheme, thoroughly enjoyed the sea voyage. Jaap and his family were even invited by the Captain to have a look at the "Bridge" where the children got treated with a bunch of grapes.

Most of all Jaap and Richa enjoyed sitting in the cool evenings on the forward deck, under the boundless dome of twinkling stars, talking and wondering about the future that awaited them in their new home-land. It was on one of those warm evenings on the forward deck, after seeing nothing but the sky and ocean-waves for more than two weeks , that they noticed a tiny light on the horizon !

The light-house of Fremantle ! Australia was blinking its welcome!

After the disembarkation of the passengers who had Fremantle as their destination, the transit passengers were handed Passes to go ashore, and for the first time set foot on Australian soil. How strange it was to be walking in the busy shopping street, to enjoy the windowshopping, especially the lovely summerwear! With amazement they admired the butchershops, with their extensive displays, and the colourful fruit and vegetable shops with trays of unknown fruits, like pineapples, paw-paws , mangoes and pumpkin. Leaving the shops, they came upon a sportsground, where gentlemen dressed in spotless white , threw a ball at the opposition, who with a piece of wood hit the ball away! They thought it a very strange game and could not understand the purpose! It was a beautiful summers day, but very hot. The children complained of thirst, but as Jaap did not have any Australian money, he could not buy them a drink. Encouraged by Richa , Hans took the initiative and went to the clubhouse, where he asked in perfect English "A drink of water please Sir?" and got it ! The others followed suit , encouraged by his success.

Refreshed, and very impressed by all the things they had seen and the fact that everything looked so prosperous, they walked back, talking excitingly, to the "Fairsea." At the gates, Jaap handed in the passes, and as they approached the gangplank some of the passengers already back on board, were calling out from behind the railing and pointing to the gates " Hey you've left one behind...! Annie ran back to get Albert who stood very confused behind the closed gate !

On board, some Property owners were waiting for the migrant familys, with offers of work and accommodation. The conditions offered were excellent. Jaap and Richa however did not consider any offer, which they later regretted. They were bound by the scheme for large families of Father van IJsel, who had already found them

a place in or around Melbourne. A house and work was awaiting them, and they would do well !

From Fremantle till the Fairsea reached Melbourne, the ship never stopped rolling from starboard to port, and even the best of sailors were seasick. The big dining-room was practically deserted, and nets were tied to the railings to prevent the children from falling overboard. With a great feeling of relief among the passengers, the ship at last docked in Melbourne.

Soon after the gangplank was put in place, the afore mentioned Father arrived on board and a photo was taken with the five families surrounding him. Jaap Van der Meer, and Gerard Vogels, were told not to disembark. They were scheduled to stay on the Fairsea to Sydney and from there on, to travel by train to Rockhampton in Queensland. Having no idea how far it would be and how hot in Queensland, their journey continued, as no alternative was offered.

Gerard Vogels's brother Willem had also been among the passengers of the Fairsea, with his wife and five children. They had always worked together and were very unhappy about being separated. But at least this way, they could find out for themselves, which was the best place and later on, get together again.

A bit forlorn, the travellers waved the departing families goodbye, who were waving back from the quay. It was very quiet on the ship now, as most of the passengers had disembarked in Melbourne.

The 23 of March 1953, the Fairsea sailed majestically through "The Heads" into Sydney's magnificent harbour. Sunlight danced on the cobalt water, ferries travelled to and fro... a beautiful gigantic bridge spanned both shores. It was a festive arrival in this vivacious city, in this young country !

Because they had still two days travel ahead of them in the train, the steward had prepared a lunch-parcel for everyone in the family, which was much appreciated. After receiving everyone's best wishes and again with a lot of waving, they walked at last down the gangway; Jaap carrying Nicky on his arm, and a suitcase in the other hand, followed by Richa who held Albert and Marietje by the hand. Annie heaving a heavy suitcase, was followed by Trijntje and Eltsje. Then came Sjoerd, dragging his left leg, and waving his hand uncontrollably, and finally Hans with the bag containing all the lunch parcels.

When all the formalities were finished, Jaap got £20,-,- Australian pounds, and the traintickets. When they finally passed through customs, the lunch parcels were confiscated, it was prohibited to bring in any food ! If they had known that, said the boys, they would have eaten it all !! By taxi they went to Sydney's busy Central Station, where the Vogel family was also waiting for the train to Queensland. The two families, with between them seventeen children, although Annie and the four eldest Vogel children could not really be counted as children, more as assistants, boarded the waiting train. The little ones particularly, were exhausted by all the new impressions, the strangeness of it all. Once on the train, Richa and Dora made them as comfortable as possible, in the overhead luggage nets, where they soon

dozed off. Luckily the train was not crowded, so the older children could also find a place to lay down. The young folk got together in the adjoining compartment. Where the language was concerned, things went reasonably well. Richa had studied English at school, quite some years ago, but she soon realised that the pronunciation was very different. If people spoke quickly she could not understand a word of it. But the Australians were very polite and tried to make themselves understood as much as possible, by speaking slowly and using lots of gestures.

The landscape the train travelled through, was beautiful, lots of bush and many wide rivers. The mountains were a spectacular sight, in comparison with the flat countryside of Friesland. The long black tunnels heightened the strange impression the scenery made on this group of Dutch people.

After about twenty hours train travel, the company arrived in Brisbane, where a bus was waiting to transport them to the Immigration Camp of Wacol, where they could shower, have a meal, and recover a bit before the last part of their journey was undertaken.

The Dutch population of the camp asked 1001 questions about Holland and in turn told them about their experiences around Brisbane. Some of them already regretted their adventure, and had plenty to complain about; there was no privacy in the camp, the food was monotonous, the distances one had to travel to work, their wages, but mostly about the hot climate. They warned Jaap and Richa not to go further north, as it was going to be even hotter than in Brisbane!

Others however, told them full of excitement, that they would soon move into their own home. Some even had two jobs, one in the daytime and one at night or on weekends. It was all very confusing and Jaap was glad that a house and a good future on the farm was awaiting them, instead of having to start off in a crowded camp.

From Brisbane, the scenery became quite monotonous. Jaap and Gerard looked at the cattle with amazement. Instead of glossy, black and white, Friesian cattle, skinny tan Jersey's grazed among the trees on the brown skimpy grass. And where were the farmhouses? It could not possibly be those peculiar buildings, built on wooden posts and covered with sheets of corrugated iron? No, they thought it would be different in Rockhampton! When the train approached the sugarfields, the landscape became much greener. Well, Jaap and Gerard pointed out to each other, you can see that we are getting closer to Rockhampton! It is getting better all the time! Relieved Jaap ordered tea and sandwiches for everybody. The little table, which was hooked under the train's windowsill, was loaded with pots, jugs, cups and saucers, and they all in turn got a chance to eat and drink. Richa was examining the change, and a helpful passenger offered his services. He was on his way to Bundaberg, centre of the sugar plantations, and explained patiently the Pound-Shilling-and Pence System. He even gave all the children a coin, which they accepted with happy smiles and a very timid "Thank You". This was a very welcome break in the seemingly endless journey.

Jaap and Gerard talked animatedly in a language consisting of Dutch ,Friesian and Brabants,which made repeating often necessary,and made Richa giggle. Richa,regularly held a white nappy to dry out of the open window,like a peace flag, The handbasin was used for washing and rinsing .The two families had the same destination, the "Bishop's House " in Rockhampton. Gerard joked:" If we're all going to stay at the Bishop's House,the Bishop will have to stay in the shed"!

The green canefields now changed to an undulating landscape with tree-covered mountains on the horizon, yellow and brown coloured fields under a bright blue cloudless sky. More houses came into view and the single rail-track changed into a shunting yard.

Finally....Finally...Rockhampton !With a lot of hissing and squeaking the train came to a halt. The old quaint station had large pots of green ferns,all along the platform and hanging from the rafters of the platform-overhang,were huge ferns and other greenery. It looked so cool and friendly.

A white collared priest and a middle-aged small man with bandy legs and shifty black eyes,who was introduced to them as mr. Watson, were waiting for the travellers to take them to the Bishop's house.

Their first impressions of Rockhampton included the very wide streets with broad grassy footpath. Avenues would be a better word to describe the streets.

There was very little traffic,just a few antique looking cars and several cars that looked like a cross between a car and a small truck,and which,as mr. Watson told them were called "Utes ".The houses were built on high timber stumps,surrounded by cool veranda's, each set in their own spacious garden.It looked very appealing and country-like !

On arrival at the gracious white Bishop's House,the families were introduced to a few more officials. In the tropical,palm tree lined garden in front of the house another group photograph was taken of the Bishop and his entourage,surrounded by the Dutch migrants. It was a searing hot day and they all breathed a sigh of relief,when they could finally search for a cooler spot. Which was after a short walk found in the diningroom of a typical Queensland house .Here they were welcomed by a Dutch family, Weekers,who had settled in Rockhampton a few years earlier, and treated to a lovely welcoming meal.

In the late afternoon, Watson came to pick them up in an open truck. Jaap,Richa, with Appy and Nicky in the front and the other six children climbed on the back with the two suitcases. Wearied and leaning together for support, they were then driven out of town by Watson !

STANWELL ( 1953 )

It was dark by the time the truck arrived at the farm. Twilight was short here in this sub-tropical land. When the sun dropped away as a large golden-red ball behind the mountains in the distance, darkness fell quite suddenly. Watson's wife was waiting on the verandah and with shyness on both sides they shook hands and were invited to come inside, where a friendly girl of about 13 years asked them to take a seat around a large dining table and helped her mother to serve supper.

Slowly it was explained, that the house where they were going to live, was still unfurnished. Watson would put some furniture in the house soon, and as the crate from Friesland had not yet arrived, it would be better for the Van der Meer's to stay in the farmhouse for a few days. It would be a bit cramped, but hopefully of short duration. After supper the girls were shown to an inside room, where they had to share a double bed with the four of them. For the boys, there was a piece of canvas on the verandah floor with two blankets. Jaap and Richa were allocated the sleep-out, a corner of the verandah which was blocked off on the side with a few windows. The bed was so saggy that it looked more like a hammock, and little Nicky had to sleep between them. An enormous cloud of mosquitoes hovered over the watertank, which stood close to the house.

After a restless night, they all got up at daybreak, itching from mosquito-bites. Only the four girls did not join in all the scratching, as they had slept under a mosquito-net. After a good breakfast, Jaap and Richa were told, that the dairy had not been used for a while, but Watson was going to buy a few cows, and round up the milkers, who, still with their calves at foot, were running wild with his beef-cattle herd. Jaap thought it a most peculiar way of farming! In the meantime however there was a field full of cotton that had to be picked, and they could start with that! Annie could help too, and earn some money.

First of all, Jaap should get the tractor and plough, which had been left in the back paddock. Watson pointed in the distance to a green field. Jaap drove an old ute there and found the field, covered in 6 ft. high scrub, but could not find the tractor anywhere!

At lunch, Jaap told Watson, that he drove all round the field, but did see no tractor nor plough, but added that the crop, what ever it was, looked very flourishing. Watson could not or would not understand Jaap's broken English, left the table, jumped on his horse, which was tethered to a gate post, and disappeared.

Jaap was taken aback! " Ask Mrs. Watson what kind of crop it is ?" he urged Richa. Mrs. Watson looked a bit confused and tried to explain it was a "pest", which nobody understood. Noogurra Burr, she explained....a "weed"...!

The pocket-dictionary had to be consulted, before they understood. Watson had started to plough the field to plant more cotton, but the rainy season started

earlier as usual. He had left the tractor and plough in the mud and had not looked for it since, and soon the Noogurra Burr had come up every where. The plants were full of prickly seeds, and their leaves irritated any skin it came in contact with. It took two days before Jaap finally located the tractor and got it going again. One morning, Mrs. Watson drove with Richa, Sjoerd, Trijntje, Eltsje and Hans to the school where her daughter Joanna was a pupil. It was about a twenty minutes drive along a curvy road, and the car was followed by an enormous cloud of dust. The school consisted of one schoolroom with an open verandah in the front. The teacher taught about twenty children ranging in age from six to fourteen and divided in seven grades, all in the one room. Rich got the impression, that four new pupils who could speak very little English, were not very welcome, under these circumstances. Joanne introduced the curious children, who had formed a circle around the newcomers. A few late arrivals rode up in a cloud of dust on horseback. The horse-yard was behind the school, fenced with thin long tree trunks. On the way back Mrs. Watson assured Richa: "Don't worry about the children. They'll be alright!" At the house Marietje, Albert and Nicky played happily on the wide cool verandah with doll's and toys, kindly lent to them by Joanne! Standing separate from house and connected by a wooden walkway, was the large kitchen, with an enormous wood-stove and a stack of firewood beside it. In the centre of the kitchen stood a huge table, where Mrs. Watson in no time at all, mixed a cake and shoved it the oven. A black heavy water-kettle stood on a corner of the stove, humming its tune. Marietje, happily seated at a low small table, with the little ones, poured tea from Joanne's play-teaset. They still looked tired and wan after their long journey. After the tea and cakes, they went without complaints to bed for a couple of hours. Richa admired Mrs. Watson for the skill with which she made, without recipes or scales, delicious cakes, scones and biscuits in a wink. The cooking could certainly be entrusted to her.

Mrs. Watson also showed her how the washing was done here. In a black iron stoker a woodfire was lit under a large copper tub. The tub was filled with a garden-hose from the watertank. After the washing had been boiled, it was fished out the tub with a broomhandle and dumped in a wooden trolley under which stood a bucket to catch the hot suds, to be used for the next load. When most of the suds had leaked out, the clothes were put in a three-compartment-concrete tub. There it was rinsed out twice, then wrung by hand and pegged on the washingline.

Jaap and Annie were very quiet that evening, tired because of the unaccustomed work and the heat, sunburnt even though they wore large straw hats. Watson insisted that Richa also helped harvest the cotton. His wife could look after the little ones and cook the meals.

So Richa found herself picking cotton alongside Jaap and Annie for the next few weeks. It was not easy, there were lots of weeds among the rows of plants, often with prickles or thorns. There was also lots of spear-grass, with true to its name



seeds as sharp as needles. The cottonfield had been neglected, the plants were small with tiny cottonballs, it took ages before a bale was filled. The air was hot and heavy and when a slight breeze rustled through the field, the pickers straightened up to catch as much as possible of the cooling breeze.

The children had to adjust to the unaccustomed heat too. One day when Jaap drove up after such a hot dry afternoon, two ghostly figures stood at the gate waving to the cottonpickers. Hans and Albert in their underpants, covered with a green slime and you could smell them meters away ! Hans had thought it very hot that day, and remembered and longed for the Gorredijk swimmingpool. He went looking for a swimming spot, but all he could find was the trough for the horses. Enthusiastic he had asked Mrs. Watson if it was allowed to swim in it. She did not understand what the boy meant, but did not want to disappoint him and had nodded "Yes"! Wonderful, those two boys had gone swimming in the stinking trough!

On the weekends, the schoolchildren came along to the cottonfield, they picked and moved along the rows faster and faster, trying to beat each other in filling their kerosine-tin first. Jaap could hardly keep up. So he emptied the full tins and packed the cotton in a large strung up bale and stomped it in as tight as possible. Easter passed nearly unnoticed. For the Watsons every day was the same, even on weekends one just worked on!

Jaap and Richa often thought and talked about their life in the Friesian village, and the work in the North - East Polder. There had been problems too, but at least, they had their weekends and traditional holidays together.

If only they could shift into the promised house, things would be better. When Trijntje told Richa that next Monday was a holiday and asked if they had to pick cotton again? "No my girl" she answered, thinking it must be Pentecost-Monday, "not on Pentecost"! and she remembered the happy Pentecost days in Wassenaar, the long rows of cyclist on their way to the tulip-fields, festoned with garlands of bright yellow daffodils. Richa had often helped her brothers to string the flowerheads into garlands. They were then hung over a broomstick and offered for sale to the holiday-makers.. It was a Pentecost tradition, and no cyclist would be without a lovely perfumed flowergarland. In Friesland it was a time to go boating on one of the many Friesian lakes or hiking in the Beetsterzwaagse Woods, with a visit to the playground in Oranje Woud. That night she discussed the holiday with Jaap, it was not good especially for the children to always work so hard, day in and day out. They had to have a treat. "I agree" said Jaap "Great idea"! Because they had no transport, the possibilities were very limited, they decided to organise a picnic. Their Sunday best clothes were taken from the suitcases early on the Monday morning and the festivities started. At breakfast, Richa told the story about the Apostles and the Holy Spirit that had shown itself as tongues of fire ! Jaap had explained to Watson that it was a holiday, no cotton to-day he gesticulated Richa asked Mrs. Watson, if she could borrow a basket, and pack their lunches, as the whole familie was going on a picnic. "Sure, sure" the friendly woman beamed

and helped Richa pack the basket and added cakes, her delicious home-made cookies pine apples and bananas.

The hottest part of the summer had passed, "It was still quite warm but not so muggy any more. With the basket between them and smiles on their faces, they walked out through the gate, the younger ones skipping ahead. Not towards the school, but the other way to see what it was like on the other side!

The road rose steadily then sloped down and wound its way through the dry countryside. From the crest they had an endless view of brown land, cut by tree-lined creekbeds, in the low areas, and far away a mountain-range. It really looked like a road to nowhere.

In a creekbed stood a windmill, its blades clapping, pumping water from a water-hole. Water dribbled into a flat tank connected to a cattle drinking-trough. The tank was leaking slightly here and there and had formed a cool collar of mossy grass all around. What an ideal spot this was, shade and grass. Happy to be just together and to be able to speak their own language, they settled down around the basket full of goody's and the boys soon had an area cleared to built a small fire to "boil the billy", just as Mrs. Watson had shown them.

The girls were playing their old familiar games, like they used to play in Gorredijk. Annie however was staring over the brown land, deep in thought, she missed her old neighbourhood friend Henny and also the new friends she had made on board the Fairsea. Jaap and Richa were sitting close together leaning against the old tank-stand, talking, and wishing they did not have to wait much longer before getting a place of their own. Time passed quickly, Nicky had fallen asleep on a small rug, which had covered the basket. A dust cloud down the road announced an old Ute approaching. It slowed down and stopped and a man's voice called out "Got troubles"?

Richa gathered that it must be to say the least, unusual for people to sit in the grass near a cattle trough. "No mate "called Jaap " a picnic !You want a cuppa ?" " You must be that crazy Dutchman, that works for Watson !" said the man. He jumped out of the ute and shook Jaap's hand, introducing himself as Peter Mc.Nulty. At the repeated invitation for a "cuppa " he declined. "No thanks , I've got something better"...he grinned and pulled a flat flask out of his pocket. "Rum " he said, again with a grin. He sank onto the grass next to Jaap and with lots of gestures, and now and then a translation by Richa, the conversation got going. Jaap sipped his rum from a small glass Peter had dug up from his glove-box, Peter drank straight from the flask. Richa, under a faint protest had a bit poured in her tea. As Jaap understood, Peter was a neighbour, living and working alone on his farm down the road. " Why are you all sitting in the creek?" he wanted to know .? "Pentecost " said Jaap as if that explained all. Peter shrugged his shoulders, took another sip, and offered them a lift back. Nobody really felt like walking all the way back over the hill on the dusty road, so with the warning; "Be careful where you sit, mind your Sunday-clothes" they found a spot in the back between the tools, boxes and bottles. Richa and Nicky sat in the front, where the seat was quickly

emptied and wiped with a dirty rag. At the Watsons gate, they all got out again and said their thanks. Peter drove off, Jaap stood on the road, his hand raised in a salute till the Ute was out of sight. He was delighted with the companionship, and friendliness so freely offered by this stranger, it had made the picnic day a day to remember.

The next day brought a letter from Oma in Wassenaar, telling them about the beautiful weather at Pentecost, she even had walked along the beach with the girls. Jaap and Richa looked at each other in astonishment, they must have been picking cotton at Pentecost after all. The day off, was granted because of a teacher's seminar!

The three little ones spent a lot of their time playing happily on the wide verandah, and started looking better every day, with the excellent care of Mrs. Watson.

One day however when the cotton-pickers came back for lunch in the large kitchen, Nicky was sick, she was as white as a sheet and her eyes seemed to roll in her head. Jaap picked her up and smelled kerosine on her playsuit. Mrs. Watson was very upset, and did not know what could have happened. But Annie who had just washed her hands near the tankstand, came inside with an empty lemonade bottle. She had found it next to the washboiler, where it apparently had been used to start the fire with kerosine. Nicky must have picked up the lemonade bottle and swallowed some kerosene. Jaap asked Mrs Watson to ring the Rockhampton Hospital, and with his wife and Nicky drove as fast as the old ute would go, in the direction of Rockhampton.

Halfway an ambulance came towards them, the driver waved for Jaap to stop. They had come to get the toddler! Quickly Richa with Nicky changed into the ambulance and racing now with sirens blaring they drove through Rockhampton to the hospital. After being treated, Nicky was admitted to the childrens ward for observation.

In the waitingroom a friendly lady introduced herself and her husband to Richa, guessing who she was, as the arrival of the Dutch family at Watsons was well known in the district, partly because the group photo taken in front of the Bishop's House had been printed in the local Church-paper. The Lovaas had a farm at Kalapa not very far from Stanwell, and offered to drive her back to the Watson farm. Mr. Lovaas had originally come from Norway, where his mother still lived. He had been a sea-faring man for many years and had often been in Rotterdam, Holland's busiest harbour, As is often the case with strangers, who find something in common, they talked about all the familiar places in Rotterdam. And Mrs. Lovaas bought Richa her first Australian meat-pie. Delicious!

They also asked Richa, how they were making out at Watsons? Did they get on well with him? Were they contented? With the invitation; "If you ever need friends, we live in Kalapa"! Richa was dropped off at the gate.

Two days later Jaap borrowed the Ute to pick Nicky up from the Hospital, Richa went with him. Jaap did not allow her to pick cotton any more.

When they arrived back and drove up the drive, all the seven children were eagerly awaiting them, happy to see little blond Nicky healthy again and calling excitedly,

that the long awaited crate had finally come!

Without further delay, the mustering of the milk-cows was now organised and at the same muster all the cattle had to be "dipped" Jaap, Annie and Trijntje were asked to help, the others had to stay home as it was too dangerous, they were told. But on hearing the stories, that night, Richa was glad not to have been there. Trijntje still covered in dust and her dungarees stained with cow-dung, said: "Mum you should have been there, the cows had to jump in a deep trough with water and come out at the other side, where the milkers had to be chased through one gate and the other cows through another. The cows were scared and milled around snorting and bellowing. And Watson got mad and drove his horse in the herd, and cracked his whip, and yelled at the dogs to chase the poor animals in the dip. And Dad got really mad and felt sorry for the animals and tried to calm them down. It was awful!!"

"Pake, (granddad) in Friesland, would never believe it, if I wrote to him how the poor cows get treated here. But the only thing that was nice to-day, I saw some really nice green grass around the dipping yards. Honest, Mum, I don't make it up, real green grass!"

Early, the next morning, the suitcases and crate were loaded on the ute, and at long last the family was on their way to their new home, near the dairy.

The house was old and delapidated, closed in between the stumps with corrugated iron and inside divided with the same material into a room and a kitchen, where an old piece of lino lay on the dirt floor. A wood-stove, a few cupboards and an old milk-vat to wash up in, was all that was supplied in the kitchen. In the "room" stood a large table and a few chairs. Upstairs were three bedrooms, a lounge-room and a verandah, without railings, which were eaten away by white-ants.

The lounge was totally empty, two bedrooms contained a double bed each, and one wardrobe. The third bedroom, which only had three walls and was more part of the hallway, contained two campbeds, which in better times had been used by cotton-pickers, the mattresses were filthy, with large rips in the covering, from which the cocofibre-filling spilled out. Everywhere on the walls and ceilings were large lumps of mud, which turned out to be wasp-nests. There was no electricity and the water supply was only a 100 gallon tank.

"I suppose you wished you'd never met me there near Hulshorst!" was all Jaap could utter. "Oh, come on Jaap, keep your chin up, we'll make something of it!"

And anyway we're on our own again!" consoled his wife.

In the centre of the kitchen stood the "Crate" and for some unknown reason it seemed to have shrunk. In the pub in Gorredijk it had seemed enormous!

As they had to be careful with the use of water, everything had to be "dry-cleaned", the wasp nests and spiderwebs brushed away and the floors swept.

Jaap threw the dirty mattresses out and burnt them, and used some blankets out of the crate to make some temporary mattresses.

With great ceremony, the crate was unpacked, The mundane pots and pans, plates

and cups looked so beautiful now. Like old friends. Marietjes face beamed as her favourite doll emerged. Books, linen, and clothes were unpacked, but because of the shortage of shelves, several items had to be put back in the crate.

The crate was placed in the middle of the lounge and covered with a pretty cloth and the beautiful teaset arranged on top. " We'll just pretend that we are "Japanese" laughed Annie.

In the evenings, while they sat around the table, a milkcan and a few upended fruit-cases were used to supplement the few chairs, they discussed the situation.

Jaap realised this was not the right place for his family, but what could he do?? They had no money, and up till now had not been paid for all their hard work in the cotton-fields. They had no transport and still difficulties with the language.

They decided, that when they finally got paid, to start saving as much as possible, and try to speak good English, studying from the newspaper with the help of a dictionary. To keep every one happy, Jaap promised to buy a radio as soon as possible.

In the dark nights they listened to all these strange bush-noises. A dingo howled repeatedly. From the dilapidated verandah they heard animals scuttling around the house. At school, Eltje Hans and Sjoerd, had been told scary stories about snakes and opossums who came right inside the houses at night. That gave Jaap the idea that they should have a dog again. " Ask the kids at school, if anyone knows of a pup we could have " he told them. Within a couple of days Sjoerd brought a young dog home, which was promptly called "Joesy ".

Trijntje did not want to go to school anymore. She pleaded her case with stories, how the four of them practically spent all day on the school verandah with a booklet to learn English, for example "This is my nose " with a drawing of a finger pointing to a nose. She claimed, some of the children teased her at play-time, and once the teacher had hit her with a stick in the palm of her hand, because he thought she was swearing !

Jaap was fuming : "Who did that teacher think he was? If Trijntje swore, which he could not believe, who's fault was it then ? Jaap himself could only swear in the Friesian language , so who had taught her to swear ? Don't let it get you down Trijntje.... They were going to save all their money and find a much better place."

But Trijntje, who was nearly fourteen showed her stubborn Friesian character and declared to be willing to help with all the work in the dairy, in the cotton-field, around the house, but if she had to go to school she was going to run away....!

Well, it did not come to that, but Trijntje , who was still sent to school, played truant some where along the road, till school was out again. Jaap and Richa, who had enough problems as it was gave in, and Trijntje did not have to go to school anymore! The first day, that there was milking to be done, was quite an experience. Watson, seated high on his horse, drove the cows in the direction of the dairy-yards. The gate stood wide open, but the cows, with their calves at foot, had not been milked for ages, and could not be moved to go through the gate. After lots of yelling ,

whip-cracking, and running backwards and forwards of the horse, Sjoerd finally closed the gate behind the last cow. Now the calves had to be removed to another yard. The cows bellowed and milled around and one could hardly see the yard, because of the great clouds of dust, coloured golden by the rays of the early morning sun just peeking over the hills. Of course there was hardly any milk, but Jaap expected it to be better tomorrow, now the calves were removed.

Some of the cows were so wild and kicked in all directions, that it was death defying to get close to them. Before Jaap could put the milking-cups on the udder, he had to tie up their hindlegs with great difficulty and courage ! Jaap could never in his blackest dreams have imagined a dairy like this ! He loved animals however, spoke calmly to the cows, had a lot of patience with them and each passing day the situation improved. Annie and Trijntje helped with washing the udders and afterwards with the cleaning of the machine. and Sjoerd and Hans kept the yards clean, and filled the fodder-troughs. There were about seventy cows to be milked twice a day. Watson brought another horse and taught Annie to ride, so she could help driving the cows from the paddock to the dairy. She learned quickly, and loved riding and rounding the cows up for the milking.

A big bull grazed also with the herd, but was not allowed in the yards, One day Trijntje tried to chase the bull away from the gate but the enraged animal turned snorting on the screaming girl, . Trijntje ran, trying to hide behind a tree. Watson who was luckily not far away, galloped his horse at the bull. Trijntje was shaken but unhurt. After this incident, the vicious bull was kept in a separate paddock.

With the first Milk-cheque, and the help of Mrs. Watson, a secondhand advertised fridge was bought, a kerosine model, and transport of the fridge arranged with the milk-truck driver. The fridge was soon delivered packed in a wooden crate. Richa was delighted, two problems solved at once. The crate was scrubbed clean and a sheet draped over it, a mattress-cover was sewn (from empty flour bags) and filled with cotton from the bales in the shed, and Nicky had a little cot of her own. A lovely day, especially for Richa was the day, Jaap had arranged to go to Rockhampton together, to pay for the fridge. They got a lift, with the milk-truck, the first milkcheque safely in Richa's handbag. First to the bank to cash the cheque, but as it was stamped "not negotiable" there had to be a bank-account to cash it. "O.K." said Jaap "I'll open an account." and handed the teller the cheque. " Now it will take three days before you can draw any money " said the bankteller. " But we have no money and want to do some shopping" pleaded Richa. The bank manager was called, and after some talking to and fro, which both parties only half understood, the teller was allowed to give them most of the money. Their first earned Australian money, after the £20.-- they were given when they landed in Sydney, and that was more than two months ago, as for the cotton harvest not a cent was received yet.

As the nights were getting quite cold now, they bought two mattresses for the boys.

After paying for the fridge, the cheap mattresses and the grocery-bill, there was hardly any money left, but it was so nice to walk in the busy shopping street, among the well-dressed shoppers and to enjoy a meatpie in a busy cafe. They travelled on the 4 o'clock railmotor back to Stanwell where Mrs. Watson was waiting with the ute to take them home. The cows were already in the yard, and the children had started the milking when Jaap got to the dairy.

Whenever he had a chance, Jaap asked Watson for the cotton money, but he always had some excuse or other. With the next milk-cheque Jaap bought the promised radio, one that worked on a battery. They all enjoyed the music, and at newstime, Jaap and his wife were trying very hard to understand the news, with reasonable success. Jaap often wondered if it would be possible to listen to Radio Netherland, or a Dutch Broadcast from Victoria and he even made an aerial, constructed from old plough-discs. Once they heard quite clearly in Dutch; "And this Ladies and Gentleman is the end of this program." It was the only Dutch, that radio ever gave out! One day, Mrs. Watson brought the groceries she had collected for them from Stanwell's one and only shop, and also brought some news about the Vogels family. She told them that the "Vogels" worked in Alton Downs, about an hour and a half drive by car, and that their eldest daughter Ann, was working on a farm in Dalma, which was not far away and on the road to Alton Downs.

Jaap wanted to talk things over with Gerard badly, as everything had turned out so different to what they had expected. The future did not seem so "rosy" anymore, but full of worries and hard work in a very hot climate! The whole family, was expected to work for one meagre income. Jaap loved his family but still missed his old mates especially Willem!

Early one evening after the milking Jaap asked if he could borrow the ute to visit the "Vogels". Watson had 1001 reasons why he could not, but Mrs. Watson talked him around and explained where they could find Ann Vogels, who could surely guide Jaap to her parents place.

Ann was thrilled to see the Van der Meers so unexpectedly, early in the evening, and in no time at all, was ready to go with them. After about another hour driving on dark country-roads, they found the happily surprised Vogels Family. They were living in a large shed, with partitions divided into rooms and dimly lit by kerosene lamps. In the best of Dutch tradition, Dora soon had the coffee ready, and they all gathered round the table in front of the woodstove.

Gerard and Dora were also very disappointed in their expectations and were also trying hard to make the best of it. Gerard hoped, just like Jaap, to find somewhere better in not too distant future. But just talking and even joking about the difficulties in the pleasant company, seemed to lighten the burden. It was with renewed optimism, that Jaap drove back late that night.

One afternoon when Richa was catching up on some mending, her thoughts were far away with Willem's IJbertsje, who now used her much appreciated sewing-machine. Such a

pity ,she could not have brought it,as it took ages to do everything by hand.

"Anybody home ?" someone called and in the doorway appeared a smiling little lady,a basket with mandarins on her arm. " Ellen Landers ",she introduced herself, a neighbour, and pointed to the hills behind the dairy. Richa was surprised and delighted, to hear there were neighbours so close by, and with this sudden friendly visit "Come in Ellen,how lovely to meet you" Quickly the fire was stoked up and the kettle put on. Ellen Landers lived just over the hills with her husband,they worked a small dairy.They also grew oranges and mandarins in the garden ,they had created in the 25 years they had been living there. The trees bore more fruit than they needed for the two of them ! She told Richa that behind the hill ran a track with two houses on it to the Stanwell road, and invited Richa to come over any time she liked,it was only about half an hours walk!"The only trouble was the speargrass " said Ellen ,picking lots of "spears" out of her trousers before she could sit down. From the hilltop you could see their house, assured Ellen. The afternoon went too quick !! Shortly after lunch one day,while Nicky and Albert were taking their nap and Jaap was going to dig up a corner of the garden for starting a " Vegie-Patch", Annie saddled up the horse and helped her Mum in the saddle,to visit Ellen Landers. The horse however would not move,till Annie gave it a hard slap on its rump and yelled at the top of her voice,and then it took off.. straight for the creek at the bottom of the hills,steep down the creek-bank and drank..and drank.. as if it would never see water again...!

Richa hang on for dear life,and was scared she would tumble in the creek straight over the horses head,so she leaned back as far as she could,shaking the reins and yelling " Giddy-up...Giddy-up " She kicked the horse with her heels,pulled on the reins,but all to no avail. Finally,after what seemed to be an eternity to the frantic rider ,the horse lifted its head and scrambled up the bank.and cantered back home again.....! Straight into its paddock and stopped under a shady tree. Jaap and Annie were laughing wholeheartedly,they had watched the whole episode.! They walked over to the indignant would-be horse-woman,where Jaap still grinning helped her off the horse and promised to take her and the little ones to the neighbours real soon,but then by means of the ute and over the road and track. In August Marietjes six 'th birthday was celebrated.with a lot of fun.The old Dutch games were played in the yard and with gusto, they sang the accompanying songs.

A beautiful big cake with six little candles was waiting on the table. Joesi, who had grown into a big glossy dog,joined in the fun,his favourite game was hide and seek. It was so funny ,how the big dog tried to hide behind a small tuft of grass. Marietje loved joesi now as much as she did his little predecessor in Friesland. Jaap made no progress with digging up the garden ,as the ground was as hard as rock. In a corner of the yard leaned a rusty old plough against the fence. Jaap tied it to the truck and with all their might they tried to get it in the ground,while Jaap slowly edged the truck forwards. It made hardly a scratch on the hard surface,as the plough skipped and slithered behind the truck.



Laughing their heads off they tried again and again, Sjoerd and Hans put all their weight on the ploughs handles and several times straightened the "Thing", but to no avail, the plough kept jumping around like a bronco.... It was no good! Then Jaap got the use of tractor for a few hours and the garden was ploughed up.. Even though the soil consisted of big lumps and little lumps all as hard as creek pebbles, they planted silverbeet and beans with great optimism. Each little seed was carefully encouraged with a tin-ful of water. But as soon as a green shoot appeared and with great care had reached edible proportions, a kangaroo, or wallaby ate it and that was the end of the vegetables.

One day, during the milking a dairy -inspector arrived unexpectedly and started a loud argument with Watson! Jaap who was busy with the cows could not understand enough, to hear what it was all about. During the heated discussion Watson repeatedly pointed at Jaap. He was as mad as a hornet, jumped furious on his horse and galloped away !.. On the way to his car the inspector asked Jaap "How the hell did you ever get here ? " Jaap did not understand what he meant , could not answer that question and the car shot off, leaving a large cloud of dust behind. For a few days after this event Watson was unbearable and Jaap sensed that trouble was brewing, but did not have a clue, what it was all about. He did not trust Watson for a cent, and was most annoyed that all their work in the cotton had not been paid for yet ! That same week Father van IJsel was in Rockhampton for a meeting with the Catholic Immigration Committee and he came to visit Jaap and Richa accompanied by Watson, who for that occasion wore his best suit and tie and was friendliness personified. With great sweeping gestures Watson pointed to the dairy as he told the Priest that everything went according to plan. The milking-herd was splendid. The cotton-cheque was expected any day now. His wife took the children to school every day and things were going well there. They could not get a word in edgewise ! Jaap had had enough and wanted to say how disappointed they were, how his wife and children also had to work for the little money he received. But he never got a chance and was interrupted by the Priest : " Every beginning is difficult, give it some more time.... According to Watson here, the returns will get better soon!" and the gentlemen departed, bowing, nodding and busily talking together..... Jaap was livid!... and the work went on as usual. Jaap never stayed cross for long. He had a quick temper but never bore grudges, and now the cows had calmed down and were used to the routine, they all worked amiably together. Jaap , and Annie hand stripped the cows after the machine milking (to increase the milkflow) Richa and Trijntje washed udders, and put the cups on, Sjoerd and Hans kept the cows coming and also if a cow lifted its tail and threatened to splash the dairy floor with a "pancake" , Hans came rushing with a big shovel, to catch the droppings in time. Hans who was only seven needed all his strength to lift the heavy shovel, and even then Jaap occasionally called out ; "Keep that shovel higher boy, don't let that so and so cow splash all over the place !"

The milking machine and the big milkvat were in a separate part of the dairy

behind a wall and out of view from the bales where the cows were milked. One early morning, Hans saw Watson, pouring a bucket of water into the milkvat.. and told his father. Jaap jumped up from his low milkstool and chased Watson, who fled to the ute and jumped in. Jaap grabbed the steering -wheel with one hand and punched Watson with the other hand where ever he could get him. Watson managed to get the ute going, but Jaap hang on, steering the ute into the heavy log-fence of the pig-sty Richa stood screaming with her hands clasped over her ears in the dairy-doorway. Jaap! Jaap! Let him go ! You'll get hurt! Watson put his foot down and Jaap had to let go or be crushed against the fence. Richa had never seen her husband so angry and was secretly very glad that Watson had managed to get away. It would have turned into a fight for sure! Jaap was shaking with anger! If at the milkfactory was discovered that the milk was tampered with, Watson would probably put the blame on "the immigrants". Usually the young folk walked to the Watsons after breakfast, about 15 minutes, from where Mrs. Watson drove them and Joanne to school. That day however they were all allowed to stay home.

To prevent difficulties between himself and the milk-factory, Jaap decided to go to town and explain the situation. Perhaps he could still catch the milk-truck, other wise he could try and thumb a ride or catch a train in Stanwell.

The children were told to stay near the house and not to let Watson in under any circumstance." Just throw a rock at his head "was Jaap's advice! But the man had more sense as to risk coming near Jaap and stayed away!

Richa would have liked to stay at home, but she was the one who spoke better English. On the way out , they encountered Mrs. Watson, who was wondering why the children had not turned up. Richa told her what had happened, and the embarrassed woman did not seem surprised at all. She told them, that when her husband answered the advertisement for placement of a immigrant family, with a home supplied, she knew immedeatly that it would not work because; "He could not even afford breakfast for his dogs, let alone take a large family in his employment..."

She had opposed it, but could not change her husbands mind. But she had never expected a family to come, once information was obtained about Watson and the farm! She also told them that the cotton was planted by a few hired workers who were promised a share of the profit and had not been paid either !

Mrs. Watson knew how hard Jaap and his family had worked, and these troubles were certainly not their fault. She understood that they wanted to leave, and said, she would miss them all, especially little Albert of whom she had become very fond. She took Jaap and his wife to Stanwell station in the car, and went home straight away, she seemed scared of her own husband and didn't want to create any more problems.

At the milkfactory they were told that the milk had been under suspicion for a while, and they were also told about Watsons bad reputation and how he once chased an inspector out of his dairy with a stick and because of that incident the dairy had been closed! "How in the world did you ever come to that place?" asked the manager, shaking his head. After it was all explained, the manager

still could not understand it, as Watson's reputation was quite well known in the district. According to him, even his own sons would not work for him!

After Jaap explained that he was entitled to 40% of the milkcheque, it was decided that 2 cheques would be written out and Jaap would be getting his share straight away. He also asked the manager if he would keep Jaap in mind, in case he heard of some farmer needing a worker.

From the milkfactory they went to the Bishops House and told the whole story again, this time to a member of the Immigration Committee. They were told there was a hostel in town where the family could get temporary accommodation.

A priest, connected to the orphanage "Neercol" would come to Stanwell to take Richa and the children to the hostel in Rockhampton, and they would arrange for a truck to transport the crate, fridge, mattresses, suitcases, the dog and the cage with 6 chooks, which Jaap had bought for fresh eggs, and for which he had already built a chicken-coop and run. Jaap and the girls kept on working the dairy for the cow's sake, but Watson stayed away. The waiting seemed endless, although it was only a few days. They were all excited and a bit anxious where they would be ending up next. Once again all their belongings were packed. When a man arrived with the truck, he also brought this message. Sorry, but the Priest could not possibly come, because there was an important cricket match on that day!

Joanne came up on her horse to say goodbye. With tears in her eyes she hugged her friends Trijntje and Eltsje! The little ones kept waving out of the truck-cabin, "Bye Joanne, Bye.. Joanne!" All the children from Annie to Albert were travelling in the back, holding firmly on to Joesy and the wire case with the chooks.

It was exactly six months since the family had arrived in Stanwell!

## CHAPTER 5

### DERBYSTREET AND BUSHLEY. (1953-1954 )

The Migrant Hostel in Derby-street was situated in a large old house, not far from the railway-station, and surrounded by a neglected garden.

One of the airy high-ceilinged front rooms, was occupied by Miss Pietersen, who was in charge of the house and its inhabitants. The second front room plus part of a partitioned-off verandah, was occupied by the family van Helvoirt, who had also recently arrived on board the Fairsea with their three children. Behind these rooms was the lounge, which all the families, totalling 28 persons shared. Next to the lounge was a large bedroom, to be shared by the five girls. This bedroom opened out on a partitioned off verandah to be used by Jaap and his wife. The three boys were shown another verandah corner, where Hans found to his dismay, that he had to sleep in a large cane-cot. The kitchen was behind all these rooms and also shared by every-one. In the diningroom next to the kitchen lived a young couple with three small children.

Fortunately nobody complained about the dog and the chickens, who were temporarily housed under the house, which like most Queensland homes was built on high stumps. Richa was relieved to be in town again, after all the stress on the farm and happily cooking on gas again, even if she had to wait her turn. Also, doing her own shopping, even although every penny had to be turned over 3 times before spending it, was all very pleasant to her, more like home. She got on well with the other occupants. Because she had grown up in the busy hotel in Wassenaar, she had learned young, how to live with a lot of different people and keep good relations with them all.

The girls loved to go for walks in the busy streets, enjoying the windowshopping, and then walking back in the cool breeze along the Fitzroy river, which divides Rockhampton in North- and South-. and not to mention wearing their pretty dresses instead of overalls, to their great delight, the boys discovered a swimmingpool nearby, and they soon learned how to earn a few pennies here and there, so they could go for a swim!

Jaap went looking for work every day after searching through the newspaper advertisements first thing in the mornings. He had not given up his dream, to own his own farm one day.

He went to firms and businesses, who traded with farmers to ask them, in his very foreign sounding English, if they might know of a place where a worker was needed.

Queensland however was in the grip of drought, which Jaap was told happened every so often, Milk-production was down and agriculture at a standstill and would not be resumed until they'd had good drought-breaking rain!

It was definitely a "lean" time!

Pietje, Hans and Marietje were enrolled at the Catholic Primary School next to the beautiful sandstone St. Joseph Cathedral, opposite the stately Bishop's House, where

now 6 month ago,they had their photographs taken.

All the pupils were compelled to wear uniforms. For the girls a navy blue pleated tunic with a white blouse,a white panama hat and white socks.For the boys ,navy pants and a blue shirt,felt hat,tie,hat-ribbon, long socks,all in the school-colours and well-polished black shoes. The whole idea of having to wear school uniforms was very strange to our Dutch way of life,and on top of that Richa could not afford to buy all these new clothes immediatly,and could not see the need for the uniforms as Jaap was hoping to find another farm- job soon and hoped to move out to the country again. So the children were send to school,neatly dressed,but not in uniforms. Richa went with them to explain the situation.

The next day,while she was busy in the kitchen,Mr van Helvoirt ,who was a shoemaker by trade and repaired shoes in a little room under the house, came up the stairs and said," Some people to see you downstairs." " I'll go" said Jaap,hoping there was an suitable employer calling. But soon he called for Richa to come downstairs. She found another "Father",accompanied by a lady with a big bag between them. It appeared that as the children had no uniforms,the school had enlisted a Welfare Committee. They brought second hand uniforms and lots of other clothes which,with a large family like theirs,would sure come in handy,and with a smile the bag was extended to them.

For Jaap,a true son of the proud Friesian race,this was the last straw...

"Had they all gone mad ?Who did they think he was! That he could not look after his own family? Take those rags away,there are other schools to ,you know...!

Jaap got more and more exited...! The chickens,frightened by the shouting fluttered around in the cage,Yousee scampered away with it's tail between his legs.

Although the 2 visiters probably could not understand a word of what was said, (Thank goodness ) they must have understood the meaning of it,as they hastely departed, with their bag !

his episode was just the last straw for Jaap,who already felt that he had been treated badly by the Immigration Commitee,who had sent them to a man like Watson.

Who had never paid them for all the hard work they did in his cotton,which still made his blood boil everytime he thought about it. Hence his outburst this time !

He wanted to send the children to another school straight away. Richa however tried to smooth things over: " Jaap,there is allways something amiss,where ever you go.You have made your point and this will probably be the end of it" And indeed it was,nobody ever mentioned uniforms at the school again!

Miss Pietersen sewed pillowcases and hemmed bedsheets for a department store in town, to make some extra money,as she was engaged to be married.With envie Richa could hear her Electric sewing machine whizz along for houres. One day Richa mentioned,that she had not been able to bring her machine,and missed it a great deel as she liked sewing, especially things for the children. Miss Pietersen generously offered her the use of

her machine, even gave her the key to her room, so Richa could sew as she was at work. Cotton remnants were cheaply bought and many pleasant hours filled making all sorts of garments.

One afternoon Eltje, Hans and Marietje came running home from school, as fast as their legs could carry them, all wanting to tell the great news at once! "Dieny, Jan and Gerard came to our school to-day and they 're living in the Peoples Palace !" they shouted with glowing faces. Dieny, Jan and Gerard were three children of the Vogels family and The Peoples Palace was just round the corner, a large hostel, which was run by the Salvation Army.

That same evening Jaap and Richa went to the People's Palace and found Gerard and Dora Vogels in a room on the first floor with a new baby " Mary " in a carry basket.

In several similar rooms the whole family was accommodated.

After all the "How-do-you-do's" and the congratulations, Jaap and Gerard left the ladies to their " womens talk " and went outside. Sitting on the curb, they caught up on all the latest happenings and news ! It turned out that at the farm, the Vogels family was placed, they were also expected to work with the whole family for one wage, even though his two eldest sons were grown up, full time workers. Gerard was also looking for a more suitable place.

Jaap, in turn told Gerard about their nasty experience in Stanwell, and how he could not understand that they had been sent to such poor places, where the farmer himself could hardly make a living, let alone support a big family. It was quite in contrast with all the colourful propaganda they had been shown and had been told at Emigration Meetings in Heerenveen. Jaap was so happy that he had met Gerard again, and to celebrate the arrival of baby Mary, that he treated the whole group of children to an icecream from the Chinese in the cornershop.

The girls soon drew a hop-scotch game on the footpath in front of the People's Palace and a small part of the old village-atmosphere returned for a little while, bringing back memories of left behind friends.

The radio weather forecast predicted thunderstorms and hopeful they looked at the sky, where dark clouds were building up. The air smelled like rain. Then the first large drops splashed onto the tarred road, and soon accelerated into a tropical downpour, drumming deafening on the corrugated iron roofs. The downpour stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and a hesitant sun peered through the clouds illuminating the freshly washed town. The next day grassshoots appeared already in the gardens and on the footpath. As if touched with a magic wand all the dull browns and greys turned into a myriad shades of green.

The chickens and Yousee made themselves well at home in the hostel, which the chickens demonstrated by loud cackling, preferring the very early morning hours. To pacify the other house-quests and forstall complains, Richa shared the fresh eggs around, hardly keeping any for the family.

Yousee had the run of the neglected garden. But one day as a cat invaded his territory, the dog gave chase, as a self-respecting dog ought to do. The fleeing cat jumped over the fence down the road, the dog scaled the fence too, and continued in hot pursuit. Alas! When the cat scrambled over a garden gate, to seek refuge in his own yard, Yousee came to grief. He jumped not quite high enough and got a front paw caught in the netting. Howling piteously the dog landed with a broken leg on the footpath. Marietje came loudly crying bolting up the stairs, to get "Heit". Jaap carried the whimpering dog home and was met by anxious stares. What could be done about this? They were not going to lose this Yousee too? "Heit, can you please take him to the vet?" they begged him. Pocket-money was an unknown luxury and seldom was Jaap asked for anything at all. This request just could not be refused and with some of the fast-dwindling money, Jaap carried the dog to a vet, who put a plaster-cast on the dog's leg.

Gerard Vogels and his boys Martin and Frans did not have to wait long, before they found work on a farm in Goovigen, about 100 K.M. from Rockhampton. Their job was to pull out Noogurra-Burr bushes put them on heaps and burn them. In the searing-heat, they worked in long pants, long sleeved shirts and gloves to protect themselves against the stinging seeds and irritating leaves. As it was too far to travel to work every day, they left at daybreak Monday's and returned Friday evenings to the People's palace.

It was not easy for Dora, in a strange country, with foreign language, different customs and a new baby. But she was greatly helped by the older girls. The happy gurgling baby soon became the focus of the family, and thrived on the countless words of endearment and smiles.

A farmer called in October to see Jaap, they had met a few weeks before, when the farmer had been loading his truck at the Red-Coomb Produce Store. He was the owner of a dairy-farm, milking about 80 cows. He wanted his fields ploughed, to grow cotton. He wanted to know, if Jaap would be interested to work for him? Jaap was eager to discuss it and they came to an arrangement. Mr. Bugle, as he had introduced himself, lived in a large house, with his wife two sons and a 5 year old daughter. Jaap and his family could be housed there temporarily too, and together they would build a cottage as soon as possible. Richa thought, that it was impossible to be offered more cramped accommodation as in the Hostel. They would be moving to the country again and Jaap would be earning a wage, which made him enthusiastic all over once more. In reality, there was no other choice, as the money Jaap had received at the milk-factory was petered out.

Sunday morning, as was agreed, Mrs. Bugle arrived by car to take Richa, the girls and Albert to the farm. Good-byes were said to all the other occupants, and with the best wishes for their future, the Smit and van Helvoirt family's joined by Miss Pieterse waved them off. Mr. Bugle arrived in his truck to get Jaap, Sjoerd and Hans and all their possessions. It was now halfway October 1953, and 4 rather pleasant weeks had been spent in town at the Hostel. (At least Richa and the girls thought so).

The large house of the Bugle family, stood a short distance from the road, surrounded by paddocks. A wide creek, fringed with trees, which had its origin in the mountain-range in the distance behind the fields, wound its way through the property, between the house and the road. The track, from the gate to the house and dairy, crossed the dry creekbed. The wide house in typical Queensland style, was built on high timber poles, and sheltered from the sun at the front and sides, by open verandahs.

Two bedrooms at the rear of the house were prepared for Jaap- Richa and the girls.

For the boys an area was arranged on a side verandah. A wide hallway ran right across the house, and was called the breeze-way. A corner of this cool breeze-way, was made into a dining area for the Dutchy's. Richa was also granted the use of the kitchen, and Mrs. Bugle agreed that she would cook their own meals.

The ploughing was started immediately, and between the morning and afternoon milking, Jaap spent all day on the tractor! Annie and Trijntje also helped in the dairy, but Annie, quite naturally for a 17½ year old girl, was starting to wonder when she would be earning some money for herself? She corresponded regularly with Hans, a boy she had met on board the Fairsea and who lived in Sydney with his family. She often said, she would have much rather stayed in Sydney than to work in this heat on a desolate farm!

The schoolaged children went to the Kalapa school, a half hour walk. Two teachers taught 7 Grades. Nobody took much notice of the new pupils as the school-year was nearly finished any-how.

Shortly after their arrival on the farm, Mr. Bugle arrived home with a load of building materials for the cottage. A site was selected, a fair distance from the homestead, and the construction was started. The timber was sawn to size with a large bow-saw, a handle at each end. It took quite a bit of practice for the would-be carpenters before they could handle the huge saw. Richa could hear the yelling from the kitchen, Sjoerd! Hans! Sjoerd! Hans! Sjoerd! Hans! whoever turn it was to yank the saw through the timber.

But eventually they got it right and the sawing proceeded smoothly. Slowly a tiny low square cottage emerged, divided into four areas by two walls, three to sleep in and one to cook and eat in. The outside walls were clad with fibro sheeting and the roof covered with corrugated iron. In each room a small window opening was left uncovered. Every body, who had a minute to spare helped with the building, if only to sweep the sawdust or throw the left-over timber on a heap. When the cottage was almost ready, Jaap and Richa borrowed the truck and went to town. They brought back 8 beds a long table and 10 chairs! All on time payment. Nicky could still sleep in her packing case and Albert had to share a bed.

The first Australian Christmas was fast approaching. The school had closed with a Christmas party, which was held in the hall next to the school. After all the children had been given, a beautiful wrapped present from under the Christmas tree. The tree was unceremoniously carried outside, and an orchestra started to play. The ladies sat on benches lining the walls, while the men stood, talking together and drinking beer, around a keg, with stools near the door. The children chased each other and slid over the powdered floor.



Gradually however the mood became livelier. The hall was gayly decorated with streamers and balloons. After each dance the ladies returned to their benches and the gents went back for a fresh glass of beer from the keg. Towards the end the ladies made tea and supper was served from long tables. Cakes, biscuits, sandwiches, tarts etc. in profusion, all homemade by the ladies. Everybody took a plate from the huge stack and served themselves. Through all this noise, babies slept peacefully, either in the car outside or on a blanket under the table. That evening Richa met the Lovaas again and introduced Jaap and the children. Then it became real enjoyable, and they were invited to visit the Lovaas soon, which they did a week later.

Bill Lovaas was originally from Norway and was a seaman, he had now settled in Kalapa, where his wife ran the Post Office agency. He always grew pumpkins, and told Jaap that pumpkins were easy to grow and not many bugs seemed to affect them. Mrs. Lovaas had just had a new electric fridge installed in her kitchen, complete with freezing compartment from which red ice-blocks were produced for the children. What a great luxury! Shortly before Christmas, the cottage was so far finished that they could move in. No doors as yet or glass in the windows, but as it was the hottest time of the year, nobody worried about that! A few sheets of iron were kept handy in case it rained so they could be nailed in the window openings.

Christmas arrived, on the wooden crate, again covered by a pretty cloth, the Nativity Set was displayed. Jaap had built a new little grotto from bark, to represent the stable of Bethlehem. With utmost care the colourful statuettes were placed inside. The set had been a present from Oma and Opa for their first Christmas together in Gorredijk. The small flock of sheep, together with the sheepdog and a few shepherds were placed on a handful of straw from the dairy, outside the crib. Pine-cones collected from the Beetsterzwaagse Woods and painstakingly painted and sprinkled with silver glitter, formed a circle around it all.

A small Christmas-tree was cut and decorated. The cork of a champagne bottle, opened by Opa on their last night in Holland to toast the future, and handed over to Richa as a memento, had also found a place in the tree.

Soft candle light threw a pinkish glow on the happy faces of the children, as they sang, the whole repertoire of Christmas Carols, and the age-old Christmas Story was told once again. That there were no presents, nobody noticed!

But it was one of the rare occasions, that Richa had to fight back tears of home-sickness, the cutting of the cake (beautiful decorated by Eltsje and Marietje) soon demanded her attention. After a quick wink to Jaap, she knew that he also was with his thoughts at the other side of the globe, the usual Christmas cheerfulness returned.

A neighbour, who sometimes came to the fence and talked to Jaap, when he ate his lunch in the shade of a tree, told him, that another Dutch family lived just down the road. Jaap and Richa hoped to meet them soon. So one moonlit night, they walked down to the indicated place to meet and get to know their fellow countryman. Ben Eilers and his

wife came from Drente (a Dutch province adjoining Friesland) They had six young children. Ben, also was a farm worker and lived in a proper house, for the time being, Ben was happy where he was. Mrs Eilers soon had a pot of coffee brewing and they found plenty to talk about. All the experiences in this new land, but also about the memories they left behind, and all the stories about the war, which were so etched in their memories.

After this very enjoyable visit, they often walked up in the evenings. a Pleasant half an hour stroll.

The cotton which Jaap had sowed, came up very well but so did a carpet of weeds. There was no suitable machinery at hand to keep the weeds down. Speargrass and Burr in the cotton meant difficult picking and lower prices. Mr. Bugle brought out a collection of hand-hoes and suggested that every available Van der Meer attack the weeds by chipping amongst the cotton. Richa stayed home with the little ones, but even Hans who had only just turned 9 in September, stood hoe in hand, chipping for most of the school-holidays in the searing heat.

On Sunday, when the milk-train did not run, Jaap brought the milk by truck to the factory in Rockhampton and they could all come for the ride! One very hot day, as an extra treat, the truck was stopped at the Gracemere Hotel and Jaap guided the whole family inside for a cold drink. At the time, there were not too many customers and room enough for all to settle themselves on the high barstools, looking forward to the cold drinks.

Hans and Albert were jokingly pulling silly faces in the mirrors behind the bar, and giggled at the reflections peeping back between bottles and glasses. Jaap, probably thinking about his little pub back in Friesland, casually ordered a beer for himself, and lemonade for every-one else. The barman stared, then shook his head: "No, ... every-body out, I can't serve you! Only you can stay" he said to Jaap, who did not understand the barman. The order was repeated, and Jaap added: "Not me on my own, everybody wants a drink!" and he waved his arms at them all. Again the barman shook his head and pointed to the door. Jaap was getting angry and asked: "Why not?" and pulled his wallet out of his pocket. "Did that man perhaps think he could not pay?" The barman shrugged his shoulders, smiled and served large glasses of lemonade with straws and ice in them. With great delight, they sipped the icy drinks, made even more enjoyable through the novelty of sitting in a real pub on a high barstool.

The publican patiently explained to Richa that only Men were allowed in a licensed bar in Australia. They were actually breaking the Law, and should have been sitting in the Lounge. Never before had he served a lady and children in his bar, even if they only drank lemonade. It was all laughed of then, and they promised Stan, that was his name, next time they would all sit in the Lounge. "Sorry Stan" Jaap grinned, "See you next Sunday."

While in town, they visited the Weekers house in Talfordstreet, where they had been made so welcome, the day of their arrival. Jaap complained that again the whole family was expected to work for one low wage. He was thinking of trying for work closer to town.

Then the older girls could find work in their own right.

Mr. Weekers gave him a note with the address of the owner of several small farms near Rockhampton, or "Rocky" as the locals called the town. Jaap carefully put the note in his wallet and said, he would give it some serious thought and talk it over with Richa and the girls.

After an extremely hot day, which Jaap and the older children had spent chipping in the cottonfields, when they were just sitting down to their tea, Mr. Bugle appeared in the doorway, carrying a shot gun in his hand, complaining about Yousee, and even threatening to shoot the dog. Yousee, tail between his legs, crawled under one of the beds. The man just stood there shouting and pointing the gun to where the dog had disappeared. Richa understood that the playful dog had barked at the chickens, which had, cackling scattered in every direction. Because of all the noise, the dog got even more excited, chased one of the chickens, grabbed it by the tail and ended up with a mouth full of feathers. Everyone was deadly quiet and staring at the angry man with his shotgun, who stood in the doorway, sharply accentuated against the leaden sky.

Richa thought "Even though he is angry about the dog, he has no right coming here with a shotgun." but she was too stunned to say anything.

Then the cloudburst started, inside between Jaap and Mr. Bugle and outside as well, as the grey sky lost its load. The rain came down in buckets, clamouring on the roof.

On top of his voice, Jaap put it to Mr. Bugle, "That there were more important matters to discuss, than a playful dog who had chased a chicken. For example, that in the contract only Jaap was mentioned and that the boys would rather play with their dog, than work all day in the cotton-fields. If they were expected to work as well, they should get paid for it. And he was not intending to let the children chip any more weeds in their school-holidays, but take the dog out instead."

He also expressed his difference of opinion (and that put's it very politely) about the running of the dairy. According to Jaap, the new-born calves were left too long with the mother-cows upsetting them very much when the calves were taken away. Jaap's experience had taught him: "The earlier the calf is removed the better for the cow!"

As a final remark Jaap added; "and if you don't leave quickly with that gun, I'll pick you up and throw you in the creek!" Most of it was uttered in the Friesian Language, as it was extremely difficult to set things straight in a foreign tongue. But Mr. Bugle apparently got the gist of it and stormed from the cottage into the pouring rain, to his own house. The wet season had well and truly started, the rain kept pouring down, soaking the fields into mudflats, making the roads impassable. At the same time replenishing the tanks and dams, bringing the farmwork to a standstill. Despite the rain Jaap wanted to talk to Ben Eilers, just to have a break. Richa and Annie walked with him through the mud and rain. Wet and bedraggled they arrived at the Eiler's house. Ben was at home and soon the conversation was in full swing. "I am going to start something on my own, what ever it takes" Jaap declared with a determined shake of his head "I am

not going to let these greedy farmers exploit my children any longer!" Mrs. Eilers poured a cuppa. It was really cosy in the large kitchen. The fire glowed brightly in the woodstove, and the lids of the boiling sauce-pans clattered in a gentle rhythm.

"Stay and have a bite to eat, the meal is just about ready?" invited Mrs. Eilers. Gladly they accepted and that is why the visit stretched longer as originally planned.

When at last, they were on their way back, it was still raining steadily. There was a strange roar in the air, which got louder as they approached the creek crossing. A wild foaming stream of water cascaded over the usual dry crossing. What now? They had to get home!

There was a bridge near Kalapa but that was such a long way around. After a short deliberation, Jaap decided they could make the crossing. He told Annie to stay behind him and hang on to his belt. Then holding on to Richa, he pushed her in front of him and so they struggled up to their waist in the swift flowing stream. In their inexperience, they had underestimated the force of the water. Anxious voices were rising out of the darkness on the other side. <sup>Hans and Sjoerd were waiting.</sup> They had been worried, why had not Heit, Mam, en

Annie come back in time? Did Heit not realise that the creek was rising sharply?

At last they could hear and see them coming. The boys threw a rope to Richa, and after two unsuccessful attempts, she grabbed hold of it, and with the boys' help, the soaked, rather sheepish, ashamed trio made it safely to the other side.

It kept on raining for days on end! The food supply needed replenishing badly, but Rockhampton could not be reached. The same neighbour, who had told Jaap about the Eilers family, Harold Iker was his name, offered Jaap to come along with him in the truck to a country-store in Wowan. In the evening, he returned through the soggy fields with his load of supplies, which consisted mainly of pumpkins, dripping and flour to cook "Dampers". It had been quite a struggle for him, as with every step, he slid about ankle-deep in the mud, all the way from Kalapa Bridge.

Milking was cut to once a day, as the cows stayed around the dairy and production was low. The udders had to be thoroughly washed before the milking, and during the milking a fodderbag was hung around the cows' neck. The cow-feed had to be bought as no hay was made on the farm. High in cost but low in profit.

In the idle hours, a lot of talks were held in the little cottage.

Annie Sjoerd and Trijntje were all in favour, and looking forward to another move. So Jaap decided that with Richa, he would go to town, to look up the address, Mr. Weekers had given him, and which was still safely kept in Jaap's wallet.

Maybe they could find a place to rent, and if Jaap could get a job in town as well, they surely could save some money, to buy their own farm-implements. Now the whole family had to abide by other people's rules and they were not getting ahead at all.

So they dreamed of better times ahead and made new plans.

Together Jaap and Richa took to the soggy road, hoping for a ride in, but there was very little traffic that day. They were still walking along, when they got to the Lovaas house.

They were called in for a quick cup of tea and a bite to eat, and Jaap told Lovaas of their new plans. Lovaas offered to drive them in, but Jaap was confident that they would get a ride soon.

It was stiffling hot and at Neerkol they sat in the shade of the bridge, on the bank of Neercol-creek for a while, dangling their feet in the cool fast streaming water. Shortly after they continued on, a baker's van stopped, and took them right into Rocky, very obligingly dropping the thankful passengers off at the right busstop. a Council bus soon took them to a pleasantly green suburb, with freshly painted houses in varying pastel colours. Jaap soon knocked at the door, at the address on his note.

"Come in out of the hot sun", the friendly man who opened the door and introduced himself as "Bonny Shaw" said! What can I do for you?" After Jaap told him what they came for Bonny, nodding his head said, he had indeed a place for rent, about ten miles out of town. There was a large area (about 100 acres) with it, but most of the land was in the foothills of the Berserker Mountain-range and thickly covered with scrub!

The house was old and needed some repairs, but there was electricity and a school close by. He could not show them the place that day, as the creek-crossing was still under water. Rent was £2.10.- per week in advance.

Richa's eyes lit up when she heard the word "electricity", especially with all the recent troubles with damp wood for the stove, and the inconvenience of crowding around the kerosene lamp, to do some reading. She was all for it.! Jaap too was cautiously interested, but in the end he pulled out his wallet and put down a small deposit to secure the place for them.! All they wanted now, was to go home as quick as possible to tell the others the good news. Just out of town they got a lift to Stanwell and from there, set off to walk the last miles home. They walked along one of the shadier side roads past a brick-works, where Richa knocked on the door to ask for a drink of water. "No, you can't have just water" said a friendly woman, "you can have a cuppa and a sandwich and some cake as well!" "You must be the Dutchies. We have seen you busily chipping weeds in the fields. Too hard work for children!" "Yes," Jaap said, "We think so to!". Once they got home and spilled the news, every-body was looking forward to a new life once more.

That evening in bed, Jaap confessed that he was real relieved that he had finally made the decision. He had noticed that Richa got very thin here, Sjoerd coughed a lot, and living in this draughty cottage, could not be right for him. The doors and the glass for the windows had never eventuated! Annie could get a job in town too, Trijntje could help Mam for a while and the boys look after the chickens, and Jaap would get a cow, for their milk and butter. Quite late, they still heard the girls giggling and whispering. Too excited to go to sleep after hearing all the news! They had to wait till the creek-crossings were passable before they could move. Jaap went to Lovaas, who helped him organise a truck from town and all their possessions were loaded on once more.

Their possessions had grown considerable with the addition of the beds, the large table and the 10 chairs. The forth of March, on Eltjes Birthday, exactly one year after the birthday celebrations on board the "FAIRSEA", they departed from Bushley to try their luck in Nerimbera!

NERIMBERA. (1954 -1955 )

The truck, with all their belongings slowly climbed through a narrow lane to the hill-top. The house was still hidden from view through the overgrown scrubbery, grass and weeds along the lane. But suddenly after a last bend, there it was, a colourless, quaint house, sitting on low black stumps, perfectly blending in the surrounding scrub and trees.

As soon as the truck came to a halt, the family tumbled out and up the little front-verandah. The view was magnificent ! Against a background of tree-covered mountains and hills, lay the valley below, patterned with fields in different shades of green, and dotted by half a dozen farm-houses.

Spikey pineapple plants in straight rows covered a hillside of a neighbouring property. The door opened in a surprisingly large airy room, behind which was the kitchen, containing an old woodstove, a kitchen-table and a few cupboards. Two doors from the room opened in two tiny bedrooms, a door in the kitchen opened into another tiny room. And that was it. a Water tank stood just outside the backdoor and a crooked lean-to shaded the back door from the hot afternoon-sun. a Typical Aussi dunny stood between the trees, some distance from the house. Several of the windows were broken and the walls and ceilings were of smokestained weatherboards.

Soon after this first inspection, Bonny came up the hill and showed Jaap how far the land stretched. There were about 80 acres, most of it was covered with scrub, not fenced of and went steep up the mountainside, behind the house. On the side of a ridge was a patch where pineapples had been planted at one stage, but were now so overgrown, that the plants were hard to find. Bonny explained to Jaap how he could pull the young shoots from around the old plants and use them for new plantings. While Bonny talked to Jaap, Richa had made a list with the measurements of all the broken window-panes. And before he left, she handed him the list, in the hope that he would do something about it.

Bonny also told them, that at 8.30 every morning, the Emu-Park railmotor stopped at the Nerimbera railway siding. It was mostly used by children attending High-schools in Rocky. It was only a brisk 20 minute walk to reach the siding. As soon as they had settled in, Jaap and Annie caught the railmotor to Rockhampton in search for jobs, Richa went along to get some groceries. Annie found a job as daily help with an old lady, and Jaap got her a new bicycle (on time-payment) and proudly she pedalled back to Nerimbera.

Jaap and Richa took the bus to Lakes-Creek and from there started the long walk home.

It started to rain again. An old ute pulled up and the driverside window wound down, and a friendly voice said : " I am Ben Bom and this is my son Robert " pointing to the young man who sat on the passenger side " Could we offer you a ride ?" Surprised by the clearly noticeable Dutch accent of the friendly man, Jaap stared at him for a moment and said : " Ik ben Jaap van der Meer en dit is mijn vrouw Richa." Well, well, what a surprise! Who would expect to meet Dutch people here, in the rain on this muddy road !"

Jaap pointed in the direction of the house on the hill. "We have just moved in there".

Ben Bom told them that he lived in the valley, also in one of Bonny Shaw's houses. He drove the sodden couple right to the house and promised to come and visit them soon with

Jaap's endeavours to find work were not immediately successful. He was told that his best chance was to try the Meat-Works. Because of the big wet, and the resulting lack of supply of cattle, the Meat-Works were temporarily closed. Next month there would be a much better chance of getting work. One month at home came in quite handy as there so many things to do around the house and land.

Together they started by washing down the smokey ceilings and walls. The ceilings turned to a drab grey, but to clean the rough wooden planks of the walls, was practically impossible. Here and there, the gaps between the planks were so wide that the sun came peeping through inside. While all this cleaning was in progress, Bonny arrived with the panes of glass and some putty. Bonny quickly realised his good luck and the chance to get his house fixed up and offered to bring some masonite and nails. And he also happened to have some paint somewhere!

They worked like slaves, and the place began to look better every day! The windows were shiny, the ceilings were painted white, the walls panelled and painted. The timber around windows and doors was badly termite damaged, but Jaap just soaked newspapers, squeezed the paper into a paste to fill the holes and when dry, just painted over the lot.

In the small poky bedrooms Jaap fixed a rod across a corner, to serve as wardrobes. And to top it all off, Richa made a silky lambshade for the lounge over a wire frame, Jaap had fabricated. It was all great fun!

On one of these pleasant days, a little panelvan came chugging up the hill, announced by the loud singing of the man behind the wheel,

"Mother, look at that, it looks like a shop" sang out the little ones. Bread, butter, jam, vegetables, potatoes etc. it was all on hand, and what he did not carry, could be ordered. Twice a week he would be calling, announced the cheerful man, and he also delivered the mail and collected letters for posting!

After Richa had bought a few things, Mr. Shepherd offered Albert and Nicky a lolly and singing heartily drove down the hill again.

The school in Nerimbera was on the other side of the valley on a hill. This time it was a one teacher school! But this teacher, Mr. Polkinghorne, spent a lot of time and effort, to teach the children English. They now became part of a class, not outsiders any-more.

And for the first time since their arrival in Australia, they liked going to school.

Sports afternoons were especially popular. As there were not enough boys to make up two footy teams, the girls joined, some with great skill, the boys in football. The teams were cheered on from the side lines by little brothers, sisters and mothers, who came to watch, and at the same time get all the local news from the valley, while relaxing in the shade of the trees around the school-yard. Football was played in bare feet, which was tough on the newcomers, who were used to wearing shoes. But even though he often limped, from the stone-bruises, Hans kept running after the ball. After a while, he always went, like the local kids barefooted. Luckily it did not take too long before Jaap got work

at the Meat-Works. He bought himself a bike to go to work on and from his first pay, put a deposit on an old tractor on steel wheels, fitted with spikes, to work on the hillside,

and the flat cultivation around the well. After his day at the Meat-Works ,he drove that tractor for hours on end. At last the soil in the flat was ready to be planted. Jaap selected beans,tomatoes and cabbages,hoping for a quick cash-crop,and the children helped as much as they could,with the sowing,the planting and yes,the chipping again. On the hillside behind the house Jaap planted the pineapple-slips,he had pulled of the old overgrown plants,as Bonny had shown him. On Richa's 30 th birthday,Jaap gave her a brandnew electric Singer sewingmachine. Richa was delighted with this extravagant present.When not in use,the machine sank down in its own beautiful table. As a new baby had announced itself to be on the way, Sheets and little pillow-cases were made for the oak cot and then handworked with beautiful open embroidery. Many a pleasant hour was spent on the verandah, making lovely baby garments. As there was simply not enough room in the bedroom for the cot,it had to be put in a corner of the livingroom.Albert and Nicky looked in it every morning to see if the Baby had arrived yet!

Mr. and Mrs. Bom often visited in the evenings,arriving in their ancient ute.It used to be real cosy in the little house ,especially in the wintertime ,when they had a blazing woodfire in the stove. The Bom's had seven children,three big boys and one older daughter,two schoolage girls,and a little girl about five. He was a pleasant man,a newcomer at agriculture, in Holland he had been in the hotelbusiness. He was now working for an Italian market-gardener who had a thriving small-crop farm,complete with irrigation. At present,they were harvesting a bean crop and could hardly keep up with the work. They asked Sjoerd,Hans and Eltje if they would come and help with the bean-picking, they would get paid for each pound picked. Hans picked as if his life depended on it! Even when he was very thirsty,he send one of the others to get him a drink,he could not spare the time,as he was saving money to buy a pushbike.

With Jaap's vegetable garden things were far from rozy.He planted ,he weeded,but at night the wallabies and even wild pigs created awful damage.Only the pineapples with their sharp swordlike leaves escaped the attacks. Yousee's chasing and loud barking,did not keep the intruders away. And then it happened . Poor Yousee.... in the scrub she had got a tick, a parasite that attaches itself to the host-animal under the skin and slowly paralises and poisons it,... even after a visit to the vet and an injection, she died.This again was a price to pay for inexperience.

The neighbour ,Bill Herdman,who kept pigs on a nearby block of land,found the tick in the dogs coat and told Jaap allways to look for ticks after a dog had been in the scrub, to use an anti-tick wash. For poor Yousee,al this well meant advice was too late! Marietje's tears were hardly dried,when a replacement arrived. Jan de Git,a Dutchman, who farmed on an island in the delta of the Fitzroy -river,came to visit and had a few dogs with him,riding in the back of his ute. When he was told the story about Yousee, he very kindly decided to leave one of his dogs with the children. It was an older more experienced blue cattle dog, named Bingo ,much better at keeping the night raiders away. Bingo was never very playful,but a more faithful' guard-dog and snake killer would be hard to find anywhere.



In September, when the cold nights were past and spring announced itself with fresh green growth, Bart was born! In his beautiful cot in the corner of the living room he slept peacefully and was never disturbed by all the noise around him. Even when Mr. Bom one evening at one of their cosy-get-togethers, trying to explain how a German soldier came to his Hilversum - Hotel, pushed away the cot's mosquito-net as if it was a window-curtain of his Hotel, and yelled: "Nein, Sie können nicht herein kommen, das Hotel ist geschlossen." (no, you can't come in, the Hotel is closed), baby Bart slept on regardless. Mr. and Mrs. Bom had both been members of a choir, and loved singing. Sometimes aided by Jaap and Annie and encouraged by the admiration of their audience, their singing reverberated through the room. They were mostly classical songs. On nights like this, Mr. Bom often brought something "under the cork" which turned the mood a trifle sentimental. Then they sang the old Dutch songs "aan de voet van die oude Wester", (About an old tower in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam) with great vigour, to be followed by "In 't groene dal, in 't stille dal" where every-one joined in wholeheartedly. The home-made concert to be concluded with the Frisian National Anthem, during which the whole gathering rose to their feet.

Marietje was asked once at school, if she could sing a Dutch song? She sang; "Hoepel de poep zat op the stoep....", a rather bawdy party-song, which fun-loving Mrs. Bom had taught her!

Because owning his own place was still Jaap's ultimate goal, they tried to save money, but with so many mouths to feed, plus the term-payments, not much accumulated in the kitty. With a lot of the land unused, Jaap decided to buy a milk-cow. Near the well at the bottom of the hill, he built a milking bay out of saplings, and fenced an area where the cow would have enough to graze for a while. He would keep an eye open for a second-hand scythe and cut some fodder every day. In answer to an advertisement, he was offered a large black cow, fresh in milk, as a bonus, the generous vendor included a hand-separator in the deal. This would come in handy, to make butter from surplus milk. Sjoerd and Hans had to walk the cow all the way home from Koongal, at least 8 K.M. away, with strict instructions not to drive the cow too hard and to let her graze whenever she wanted to. Jaap and Annie milked the cow and Hans was learning to milk. It turned out to be very hard to keep the cow in her own yard, many a time she broke out, and the schoolchildren had to go looking for her and chase her out of the scrub. To make matters worse, was that this cow seemed to enjoy a game of hide and seek. But then Bingo realised what was going on, he was a born cattle dog and took up guarding and minding the cow as his personal interest. The chickens supplied a fair few eggs and there were already some baby chicks, and as they were too small for the netting to hold them in, they often ran freely out in the yard. One day, Jaap was working among the pineapples, when an eagle, like a dive-bomber, fell out of the sky and grabbed a baby-chicken in its talons. Jaap was alerted by the squeaking and the commotion in the chook-pen and threw a stone at the eagle, hitting bull's eye! The bird dropped the chick and fled. The poor stunned chick had a large tear in its neck. But with the aid of a darning needle and white cotton, the rip was carefully sewn up, and a bandage applied.

When Jaap took the "stitches" out about 4 days later, the neck was completely healed. Then Jaap made the chookrun, chicken proof, to keep them safe inside.

Mr. Shepherd brought, with the grocery's, a letter with happy tidings! Richa's brother Joe and his wife, from Sydney, were coming for a visit! He had his annual holidays and would drive to Brisbane and from there fly to Rockhampton. The house on the hill, seemed like a beehive from that moment. Delicious baking smells wafted around the house. A borrowed tent was set up for the boys to sleep in during the visit.

Joop and Riet duly arrived per bus and then on foot from the airport, and during their stay, the weather was glorious. It was a real holiday time for all, they went hiking in the hills and the most enthusiastic ones, even climbed the high mountain with the visitors, where they discovered lots of native flora and fauna.

A badminton game (a present from Joe and Riet) supplied lots of fun. In the late afternoons they went swimming in the nearby crystal-clear creek. Albert and Nicky (as Bernadet was now usually called) played in the shallow part near the bank. Lots of splashing and diving antics went on. It was on one of those afternoons that Nicky had so far unnoticed, got into deep water and was floating face down with the current, till Joop spotted her and with a scream went after her. He managed to grab the little girl and bring her to the bank, where first aid was applied. After some spluttering and gasping, thank goodness, Nicky started to cry! Thanks to her uncle Joe, Nicky's life was saved. Joe, after having listened to all the story's about Stanwell and Bushly, told them that in Sydney it had been very difficult in the beginning too.

He had been working for the council, mowing nature strips and had lived in a garage for a while. But now, he had bought a block of land, and hoped to start building a house on it soon. He had a good job as a salesman in an electrical appliances shop. He hoped however to start a business for himself in the not too distant future. He thought, that it would have been easier for Jaap around Sydney and he also found the hot climate in Rocky hard to get used to. "I would like to go back to Sydney" Annie remarked, but for the time being Jaap and his family had to stay here. They had no money to go anywhere and Jaap was confident that the worst was now over. Here in Nerimbera, Jaap was his own master, and they'd really make a go of it. All too soon the visit came to an end leaving behind many wonderful memories.

The family Weekers where Jaap had been given the address of Bonny Shaw, also came to live in Nerimbera. They rented a house along the road in the valley, with some land, and another Dutch family, Nouwens, who had arrived on the same voyage, with the "FAIRSEA" as the Van-der-Meers, rented an old house next to Weekers, also with some land. They all wanted to save for their own place or business by growing vegetables. The family Bom, left the Italian and rented a larger farm about 12 K.M. from Nerimbera on the Emu-Park road. This farm had been worked by the Dutch family Wouters, who had given up market-gardening to go south to a cooler climate.

Jaap worked permanently at the Meatworks and often had to work overtime, when there was a ship in Port Alma waiting to be loaded with frozen meat for Export.

Jaap spoke English quite understandable now and had made a few friends among his

fellow workers. It took him about half an hour to ride to work on his push-bike, which in the summer month, when the temperature rose to 30 or 40 °C, was pretty hot work.

One night Richa was still waiting up for him at 10 P.M. She kept the stove burning slowly, to keep his supper warm. All was quiet! From the verandah she looked out in the darkness, if she could spot the light of his bike... That was normally the sign to put the kettle on. One by one the lights in the valley went out, till it was pitch dark.

Richa looked at the clock for the umpteenth time... midnight and still no Jaap!

She tried to read, but could not concentrate on the book. It turned one o'clock!

"What could have happened? They surely could not be working this late? He had started work at 8 a.m. Could he have had a fall in the dark? No... Jaap would not fall off his bike! There were often horses grazing on the side of the road. Could he have collided with one of those horses.?"

Richa could not stand it any longer. She grabbed Sjoerd's torch and took Tryntje's bike. She told Bingo to stay on the verandah and rode down the hill. It was pitch-dark and except for the rattling of the bike on the rough road, dead still. Her memory went back to the bike-trips during the war, to get food, it seemed all so very, very long ago! Last week they'd had a letter from Jaap's old mate Willem... Times were good..

There was plenty of work in the polder, in building, and in road-construction.

Richa had thought; "I wished we had stayed there" but had not uttered a word in that direction. She did not want to discourage Jaap by complaining. Looking back was useless. They were here now, and had to make the best of it. After a very long half hour, she could see the lights of the Meatworks, but no sign of Jaap yet.

At the entrance of the Meat-Works was a gate, and an office of the night-watchman. The light was on and Richa knocked at the door. The door opened and a surprised man stared at her "Is Jaap Van der Meer still working?" she asked, "I'm so worried".

He answered; "I'll give them a call. Do you know which department he is working in?" After Richa told him, a call was put through, and much to Richa's relief, he told her that Jaap was indeed still working. It would not be for long however!

Richa waited near the gate and soon the first men started coming through. The news of Richa's bike trip in the middle of the night, had been seemingly been spreading quickly amongst the men, and as the workers passed her, several greeted her with; "Don't worry, Jack (as they called him) will be here soon!" And there was Jaap! He looked so tired. "Och Famke", he said, "were you so worried?" "I was offered this overtime, and I could not send a message, but I did not want to refuse the extra money, triple time pay!"

"Of course not" replied Richa, "I understand, don't worry about it..!"

And together they pedalled home, walking the last stretch, pushing the bikes up the hill. Christmas 1954 had come. The Nativity Scene was displayed again and the boys had cut a Christmas tree in the bush on their own land. It was a tall spindly tree with sparse long needles, only with lots of imagination did it in any way resemble a Dutch Christmas tree. With a big smile, Mr. Shepherd brought Christmas cards with every trip. Cards with snow scenery, sleighs and singing choir boys. Because St. Nicolaas on the 6th of Dec. (their traditional present giving day) had passed unnoticed, presents were

now given at Christmas. But it was all so strange, not like the Christmas feeling of old in midwinter! But they still sang all the familiar Christmas Carols in front of the candle-lit manger.

As happened every year, a pic-nic was organised for and by the workers of the Lakes-Creek Meat-Works. They saved for it all through the year. A specially decorated train left Rockhampton early in the morning. At different stops, families and friends of the workers, boarded the train and with lots of whistles from the locomotive, shouting, and waving of flags, which were handed to the children on boarding, they were steaming off to Emu-Park. Once arrived there, they walked to a large shady park, close to the beach and every family found a shady spot, put down a rug and installed themselves for the day! Mrs. Bom and her two youngest children were the quest of the Van der Meers, and had boarded the train at Sleipner. All sorts of races were organised for the children and everybody took part with great enthusiasm, or barracked for the participants.

The committee men barbequed countless steaks and sausages, which were served with breadrolls and salads. In between, the kids were treated lavishly with ice-creams and soft drinks. In the afternoon, they all went swimming in the sea and had a great time there, and at about 5 p.m. the train carried all the sunburned, tired but contented holiday makers back home!

For Jaap and his family, it was their first visit to the coast! And how they enjoyed the day! The frolicking in the azure blue ocean, and the seemingly endless white beach. "As soon as possible, I'll buy a car," promised Jaap, "and then we can go to that beautiful beach more often!"

The family Bom came to celebrate New-Years Eve (1954) with them. The children were allowed to stay up late and as the evening progressed, after a few drinks, the whole gathering sang to their hearts content! They even danced the "polonaise" or "congoline" around the table, out the frontdoor, around the house and back inside in a long line, just as they had done on the "Fairsea" when they passed the equator. When 1955 finally arrived, at when they had all wished each other a Happy and Prosperous New Year they sang, standing in a group on the hill, in the cool night under the bright stars,

"Ik heb u lief myn Nederland".....as if to send a message home. Every-one's thoughts went back to that little country, so far away, where they all had left so much behind! Where Fathers and Mothers, relatives and friends were also remembering them, on this night, and felt the emptiness they had left behind. In harmony and very seriously they sang! The silence that followed after the last sounds had died away, was interrupted by Mr. Bom, who said abruptly; "Come on, folks, get in the car, it's time we went home!" Mr. McDonald, their neighbour, who worked the pineapple field up the neighbouring hill, with a pair of beautiful sturdy horses, told Jaap later how they had listened with great pleasure to the "sing-song" of their foreign neighbours.

The summer was hot and dry and the vegetables shrivelled up in the fields, the well had dried up and there was barely enough water for the cow. The large watertank next to the house was nearly empty too and not a drop could be wasted. Billy Herdman told Jaap, that in case of emergency a tanker from the council could bring out water, but that

was very expensive. Sjoerd and Hans had been forbidden to carry any matches as even the smallest spark could start a bushfire !

Occasionally a whirlwind swept through the valley, a funnel of dust, which carried leaves and small twigs etc. The Whirly-Whirly as it was called, stormed so quickly over the hills, that there was seldom enough time to close the doors and windows, so often a cloud of dust and mess was left inside the house. Often Richa looked into the bright blue sky if she could perhaps spot a cloud on the horizon?

On one of such hot mornings, Mr. Shepherd came to deliver an order and told Richa the news, of a cyclone heading in the direction of Queensland. It was still a long way of somewhere in the ocean He however urged her to stock up on some extra food and to tell Jaap, to fasten down any-thing that could blow away. His advice also included tying up the cow under the awning near the back door and checking the corrugated iron sheets on the roof to see if they were nailed down properly. For a minute Richa thought; "He

must be joking!" But when Jaap came home, he had been given the same advice. He had even brought some long nails with him and was soon sitting on the roof, putting in extra nails. The boys were sent to fetch the cow, Tryntje and Eltje were busy catching chickens to put them in cardboard boxes and shove them under the kitchen table.

Firewood was stacked around the stove and the kerosine lamps filled. Warnings were now sent out regularly through the wireless! Lead grey clouds now appeared, soon hiding the sun. The first gusts of wind blew clouds of dust in front of them. Large drops of rain began to fall. The wind was getting stronger and stronger and the rain was coming down horizontally now. During the worst part of the gale, the rain was making such a racket on the roof, that conversation was impossible. Fearfully the little ones huddled against Jaap. Water came in under the door, and then almost as suddenly as it had started, the gale-force wind stopped. A steady heavy rain however kept falling for hours on end. Finally all was quiet again, shrieking birds left their hiding-places, frogs quacked their delight with all this water, and the chickens tried to jump out of the boxes even before they were wide opened.

Early in the morning, drawn by the thunderous noise of the swollen creek, they walked down the hill to have a look.

The Weekers were already there and in amazement they all looked at the raging torrent, the calm creek had turned into. Large rocks came thundering with the torrent down from the mountain. The bridge had already disappeared under water ! Also on the land the devastation was great. All the vegetables lay flattened in the mud and deep erosion furrows were carved in the soil ! Jaap was so disappointed; " Again all the work for nothing It would be a long time before the land would be ready again for planting!" and Nerimbera had only suffered the edge of the cyclone !

Tryntje went now to work in the Meatworks too. Jaap did not like that at all and that was one of the reasons he wanted to move again. If they lived closer to town, there would be more possibilities for the girls.

"we will have to try and find somewhere else to live again!" Jaap told Richa one day.

When I ever get the vegies growing again, the wallabies will be coming down again or the well dries up Why do you think , these farms are so easy and reasonable to rent? It is very pleasant living here but we'll never make any money !" "Let'S put an ad in the paper! Who knows what offers we'll get!"

It was not easy to find another place. Often it was the size of the family that was the objection .One market-gardener told Jaap straight out, that such a large family ate too much of the profits, and damaged his house. "You could not work for a man like that anyhow", Richa comforted him " There would have been arguments all the time."

In June they tried again, put another ad in the local paper.

Only one letter was received as reply. a House on the bank of the Fitzroy-river was offered with 9 acres of land. a Drawing was enclosed, how to get there and it also told them where to find the key, which was hidden under the house. If the place was to their liking, they could contact the owner at such and such adress.

That same day , Jaap and Richa went to have a look at the house. They took the rail-motor to Rockhampton Nrth. and from there walked. They walked along briskly, but it still took about an hour before they got there.

"Jaap, this is the wrong house, it is much to nice" said Richa pointing to the large high-built house. a Wide staircase, decorated with a pattern of timber slats, led to a square verandah, where the front-door was. Jaap had found the key, so they went inside. "oh Jaap" sighed Richa, "If this could be true, I can't believe it !" They found themselves in a large livingroom with a wide window, overlooking the river, an archway led them in the separate dining room also overlooking the river, another archway and they stood in the kitchen, compleet with electric stove and an stainless steel sink. The bedrooms were big and airy and the greatest luxury of all... a bathroom with a snowwhite bath ! a Couple of huge shade trees bordered the driveway. The house was situated on a rectangular block of land , with the narrow side bordering the river, Room for the cow and the chickens, and land for growing vegetables!

"The family will probably be too large again " Richa thought.

They stood on the riverbank. " Would not the boys love to have a boat in there, and think of the fishing they could do."

It was time to walk back to the station, they were just on their way, when a car approached and stopped. The driver, John Smith, asked; "Are you the Dutch people, that were going to have a look at my house ?" "Yes, we are " said Jaap. Then John asked, "Well what do you think ? Are you interested ?" All, that Richa could say was, " We have nine children !" "How lovely !" said John.

The rent would be £3.-- per week, to be paid monthly, with one month in advance. If they wanted to, they could buy the house later.

Jaap and John shook hands on it .

In three weeks time they would pay him £12.-- and move into this big beautiful house. Next day , they rode their bikes to Bonny, to tell him straight away.

" What a pity that you are leaving" Bonny said " Maybe you know another Dutch family

who would like to rent the place ?"

Apparently Dutch people were good tenants, because they were known to care well for their house, Because Jaap had done so much work in the Nerimbera house, Bonny gave them the kitchen table, three cupboards and the beautiful oak baby 's cot.

Now it was three long weeks waiting before they could move, when the child-endowment cheque would arrive to pay for the month rent in advance !

They had lived in Nerimbera for one and a half year and even with failures of the vegetable growing, it had been a pleasant time. Shortly after they left, another Dutch family, the Van der Werff's moved in .

## ON THE BANKS OF THE FITZROY.

Richa sat beside the wide open window with her sewing. The quietness only disturbed by the droning noise of the tractor. Bart and Nicky waved to her triumphantly. They knew very well, that Mum would rather, they did not ride with Heit on the tractor. But Jaap could sometimes not withstand their pleading voices and smiles.

Triumphantly they sat there, with their white sun-hats on, close to Heit on the big, red tractor. Backwards and forwards he drove between the straight rows of pumpkin plants. Eltje, Hans, Marietje and Albert could arrive any time now from school, tired and hot after their long walk. Sjoerd was chipping in the tomato-rows. He would also be glad when his days work was finished.

Since Annie had left for Sydney, he did not seem to enjoy the work on the land any more.

There had been a letter from Annie this morning, telling them that the parents of Hans Kalwy, had bought a bakery in Dunedoo. Annie had got the job of serving in the shop, which really suited her and she and Hans were saving hard, to get married.

Sjoerd was now nearly seventeen and would like a change too. In his boyish dreams, Australia was the free country of men on horse-back, with large herds of cattle to move, not standing here in this vegetable patch chipping weeds. On top of that, Jaap

continuously reminded him to use his left hand more, and told him to keep his foot straight.. Sjoerd had allways been a happy, cheerful boy, but lately he was quiet and withdrawn. Richa sighed... If he could only get a suitable job in town, he 'd feel

better. Fortunately Tine (Trijntje), who had just like Elly (Eltje), changed their name for an English version, had found a job in a cafetaria in town and had made friends with the other girls, who worked there. Richa's meditation, came to an abrupt end, noisy steps on the stairs... "Hello Mum!" "Is there anything to eat?" The school-children were home and that was the end of the peace!

Jaap and Sjoerd came in too, the two little ones running ahead of them. They all sat themselves around the large table for a cup of tea with cakes and bisquits. Richa or Eltsje usually baked something as there were plenty of eggs and milk. Sometimes, the cow produced so much milk, that Richa churned their own butter.

During the afternoon tea-break, the usual stories were told about what had happened at school that day. But the stories were now told in English, but were still answered in the Dutch-Friesian mixture. Nicky and Bart however, still under the influence of home, also spoke the Dutch-Friesian mixture, just as Mum and Heit, as Jaap was called by this Friesian word, meaning Dad.

Since moving to this house, it was even further for Jaap, to ride his bike to the Meat-Works As most of the money from the sale of vegetables and eggs was used to buy farm and irrigation equipment, it was necessary, for at least a couple of years, for Jaap to keep his job.



He also wanted to built proper poultry housing ,so he would be able to produce more eggs. From a local sawmill Jaap bought a truckload of rejected timber,and together with Sjoerd and Hans,he started building larger accommodation for the chickens.But with the lack of tools together with the lack of building skills and the bends and twists of the second grade timber,it proofed to much of a job. a Workmate advised Jaap to try and borrow some tools from Evan Schwarten,the local carpenter.He even went with Jaap as he knew Evan.Well, not only did Jaap get a lend of the tools,but in the weekends Evan and a few workmates came over to give Jaap a hand,and the buildings were up very soon. Jaap now had real Aussi mates.

A large area had been planted with beans,which were watered with the new irrigatio pump from the river.Richa picked beans all day,while Bart and Nicky played among the rows.

After they returned from work or school,the others also helped with the picking. As Jaap still had no car,the bags of beans were taken to the market on their bikes.

One bag on the handlebars ,two on the back-carrier. But very soon they had to hire a carrierservice,which took a lot out of the profit.

After having thought a lot about it.they decided to use the "bean-money"to buy a car.

Jaap and Sjoerd went to town and came back with a large used "INTERNATIONAL" ute.

How happy Jaap looked...! In Friesland he had never been without a car! When all the beans had been picked,Jaap took the whole family to the beach in the "new" car .These outings to the beach became from then on a regular thing, but it was always unexpected.

Jaap would give a little cough and say casually:" If you can all be ready in ten minutes,we'll go to the beach!" This created instant pandemonium of-course and somethings were forgotten. Very soon however a sort of roster was organised; Hans looked after the billy-can wood and matches,Albert filled and packed water containers,María,the plates cups sugar and tea,Elly,towels,togs hats and sunoil,Nicky,the beachball,playbuckets and spades. From then on when Heit said;"Shall we go to the beach?" the whole lot was indeed underway in 10 minutes !

One of the first outings with the car,was to visit the family Vogels ,who were now living in Mt. Murchison on a Dairy-farm.It was a long drive,especially for the ones sitting in the open back ,about 250 K.M. there and back. But it was sure worth it.

The children soon got together with their old mates from the FAIRSEA, the long trainride and then the time spent in Derbystreet, while Gerard and Jaap had many things to discuss. Baby Mary had grown into a lovely little girl allready ! The Vogels farm turned for the day in a sort of Babylon ,because Brabants,Dutch ,and Friesian were spoken,liberally laced with English. Gerard liked the farm,where he worked now, but he could not stand the Queensland heat very well. He also hated being so far from his brother,who as you may remember was placed by Father van Yssel in Victoria,which was definitely a long way off. As soon as he could ,he wanted to go to a dairy-area west of Melbourne. One of their daughters allready had a boy-friend here,also a Dutchman,a son of the farmer,who brought us "Bingo" the dog in Nerimbera. Gerard wanted to leave before the boys got girlfriends too.

He said to Jaap behind his hand: " You know what it is like. If one cow in the barn starts, within a short time , they all put up their tails !". Not long after, Jaap heard that Gerard Vogels had put all he possessed on the back of a truck, and drove all the way to Victoria, to live near his brother.

The Fitzroy river at Rockhampton was tidal, the river levels varying meters between high and low tides, created dangerous currents Therefore the children had been forbidden to just go for a swim in the river. Only when it was high tide and under supervision of Jaap, were they allowed to swim and even then had to stay close to the bank.

Even though it was forbidden, the temptation to cool off with a swim, must have been too great for the older boys, as quite often hidden towels were found behind a tree or scrub. One time, Jaap saw, to his great surprise, Hans and Albert floating down this great wide river, in a sawn off, upturned roof of a car. They were using home-made oars, to keep their vessel moving, which spinning like a top, was drifting with the current. They ended up in a river bend on the other side.

Later, when an explanation was required, Hans declared very innocent, Oh, Heit said, not to go swimming, Heit said nothing about boating "

In dry times, just when Jaap needed the water most, the river water became so brackish, that because of its high salt content it could not be used for irrigating the vegetables. In 1957, Joe was born, who just like Bart hardly changed the daily routine.

The Bom's called in regularly. They had given up the market gardening and had bought a house on the outskirts of town near the Airport. Jaap, with his ute, helped with the moving. Mr. Bom had taken a job as a cook for a team of sheep-shearers. With his team he went from one shearing shed to the next, often not coming home for month on end. Then when he did come home, he entertained every-one with colourful stories about the shearers life , way out in the West.

About that time Sjoerd disappeared unexpectedly, took all his clothes, but had hardly any money with him. Night after night , Jaap lay awake worrying, wondering where the boy would be. Jaap supposed that he had hitched a ride on a train to Sydney, to go to Annie! But it turned out different.

After a while , a letter arrived from Sjoerd, in which he wrote, that he had "indeed" taken a train, but to the West, and had ended up in Clermont, about 400 K.M. from Rockhampton. Clermont was a small country town, surrounded by huge beef-cattle stations. When he arrived in the town, he had found a job in a saddlery for a short while. Now he was working, ( wrote Sjoerd proudly ) on one of these cattle-stations namely (Highland Plains ) as the "Rouse-about" of the station. Don't worry about me, I like it here very much and can look after myself.

To every-body's great delight, Oma and Opa from Wassenaar wrote, that they were coming for a visit! They had booked their passage on the passenger liner Willem Ruys ! After a stay with Joe and Riet in Sydney, they intended to fly to Rockhampton and after spending 4 weeks with them, continue on to Frans and Bernice in New Zealand, where they would board the " Willem Ruys" for the return trip.

Frans had been send as a soldier to Indonesia in 1950, in compulsory service, to fight in the war against the Indonesian Independence. After the peace was signed, Frans had been given the choice to go back to Holland, or emigrate to Australia, New Zealand, or Papua New Guinea. Frans chose New Zealand where he after a couple of years met and marrie Berenice. In Auckland 1964! It just seemed unbelievable that Richa's parents would travel such a long distance to see them all. Bart asked if they were the Opa and Oma from the "Happy Birthdays"! He thought of the regular arrival of the constant flow of birthday-cards from Holland They had never yet celebrated a birthday without a message from Opa and Oma.

A week before their departure however, Rita received an urgent letter, in which her mother wrote, that because of Father's age (he was 69) they could not get a visa to enter Australia, unless a quarantie was received, that in case of illness, the Australian Government could not be held responsible for medical costs.

When this letter arrived Richa was doing the laundry. Jaap had gone to work in the car, and there was no time to be lost! She dried her hands, and told Tine the situation. Tine did not have to start work till the afternoon and thank goodness could take over for a while. On her push-bike Rita rode straight away to the Bishop's House, to speak to someone of the Immigration commitee. She was told that it was much too late to do something about it now. a Guaranty could be arranged, however, the spokesman said, these matters take time. The best idea would be, if Mrs. Van der Meer's parents, postponed their voyage, till this problem was ironed out. Richa, quite desolate, got on her bike again. What now? She could recommand her parents to postpone the departure date, but if the passage had been paid for, they could loose part of their hard-earned money. Not to mention the dissappointment! Richa had heard of the Major of Rockhampton, mr. Pilbeam, that he was always available if any of his citizens needed advice. And if you don't try, you won't succeed! Richa rode to the Town-hall, an imposing building set in a park, with wel kept flowerbeds and shady palmtrees. She found the Major's office and knocked, to be invited in immediatly. After getting her breath back, from the fast ride, she confronted the amazed Mr. Pilbeam. She translated part of Oma's letter for him and added that she did not know, how much the guarantee should be for, but she was sure that their bank deposit was not enough. And she stated, that her father was a very healthy man, Richa could not remember Father ever to be sick. Mr. Pilbeam was a man of action. Straight away, they went together to the office of the local member of Parliament. His secretary informed them that he was in Canberra at present. After Mr. Pilbeam explained, the urgent matter they had come for, and that he was sure the town could somehow help out, she rang Canberra! Mr. Pilbeam spoke to the Member in Parliament, who organised the whole business there and rang the Australian Embassy in Holland. The same day Richa's father got a phone-call from the Embassy to come and collect his visa! After that they were life-long supporters of Major Pilbeam, and after her father had arrived, they went to the townhall to thank him. In his real

old world gracious style, father offered the Major a large Dutch cigar.

At Rocky's airport, it had been a grandiose reunion, with Bart and Joe meeting their grandparents for the first time. Father was carrying a large very well wrapped parcel, and declined every offer to relieve him of it, even in the car home he did not let go of the awkward parcel. After all the first excitement calmed down and they finished their first cuppa, father produced the parcel and handed it to Richa. It was a beautiful very old painting, one out of father's own collection. As long as Richa could remember, had it hung, in their lounge in the old hotel. Tears of happiness flowed. Father said; "We wanted to give you something, that would be a memory of our happy home forever!"

The weeks passed too quickly, many outings were arranged. In the Botanic Gardens, the visitors admired the exotic trees and plants, loved the quiet moments in the coolness under the huge banyan tree, near the kiosk. Rather squashed in the front of the ute, with all the children riding in the back, many trips to the beaches, were never the less immensely enjoyed. The age old limestone caves, with all the interesting formations, were one of father's favourites!

Every-thing they had read about, in the many letters from Australia, Oma and Opa could now see for themselves. Opa loved, to sit on the bank of "this majestic river" as he called the Fitzroy, and watch the Shag dive for fish right under, and then spreading his wings to dry, perched on a branch, the splash and glitter, when a silvery fish broke the smooth water surface, the tranquility of the whole river scene.

One day, during their stay, a strange car was coming up the drive, two ladies got out and introduced themselves as representatives of the Immigration Committee.

They came to visit and see how the family was getting on. "Yes, Mrs. Van der Meer" said one of them with compassion to Richa, "We were sorry, about that disappointment with your parents visit, but you know what it is like, official business can't be hurried!" Richa started to laugh and answered; "My Mother and Father are having a cup of tea inside, come in and join us!"

Bart, who had not started school yet, often went for a walk with Opa and Oma in the mornings, when Richa had to attend to the housework. He showed his grandparents with pride, where the birds nests were, and butterfly cocoons, and the names of plants and birds, they even came across a frizzy lizard!

All too soon their visit came to an end. They kept waving, till Opa and Oma's plane was only a little dot in the bright blue sky.

After Frank was born in 1961, Richa got her first washing-machine. Jaap had wanted to buy one sooner, but money can only be spent ones, and there was always something else needed for the running of the farm "I've done the washing allways without a machine" Richa would argue... This time however, she could not talk Jaap out of it "You 'll get a washing-machine, we'll buy it on terms. To-night when I come home, there will be a machine!" On his way to work, Jaap went to see a Dutchman, Tony Leenders, who ran a business in electrical appliances "What kind of washing-machine do you want Jaap?"

Tony asked " You sort that out Tony " Jaap said " You know more about washing-machines as I do. As long as a suitable washing-machine is installed when I get home tonight." And to Jaap's contentment, a washing-machine was there, ready to be started, when he got home. Tony was still there too, and they had a drink together, while they talked business. As soon as Richa started using the washing-machine, she could not imagine how she had ever done without one for so long.

The cow soon found out, that when the machine started humming, nice fresh rainwater was usually in the cement-tubs. She apparently preferred this over the muddy creekwater. As soon as she heard the motor switched on, the cow came running across the field, her udder swinging to and fro, and stuck her huge head in the rinsing water. Richa, who could not possibly stop the animal, then frantically held on to the clothes, afraid that some of the smaller articles, like the children's socks and hankies would disappear in the cow's stomach. A chain on the gate soon held the fastidious cow in her own domain.

Frank was a very lively baby with silvery white hair, who claimed a lot of attention. He liked company and instead of being put in his cot for the night, lay on a rug in front of the radio, till the grown-ups went to bed. This routine was established after Richa had given in to his loud protests, when she tried to put him in his cot at a more reasonable time. He was a lovely looking alert baby, who did not sleep much! One afternoon when he was about 5 month old, Richa, alerted by the unusual quietness, found him limp and deadly pale in his cot. Her frantic efforts to bring him around failed and with the limp baby in her arms, she ran screaming to Jaap, who was very fortunately home at the time. In record time Jaap was racing to the nearest doctor, while one of the girls would ring the doctor, to tell him they were on their way and what happened. When at Glenmore the car flew over the railway-crossing, Richa shot up, baby in her arms, and hit the roof of the cabin. The shock made Frank come around and he began to cry.

The limpness disappeared, but he was very pale and admitted to hospital for observation. The doctor could not say for sure what the cause had been, but surmised it could have been the initial stage of S.I.D. in which babies for as yet unknown reason, just die in their bassinet or cot. After one day in hospital, Frank was his own noisy, charming self again. Frank was just nine month old, when he started walking and talking.

Twice a week, he went with Mum, to make the eggs and vegetable deliveries. The customers, were all shopkeepers and caterers. Little Frank knew them all by name, and with his smiling ways and happy chatter, he always got spoiled with sweets and ice-creams.

Joe had started his school life. He was just as quiet, as Frank was noisy! Joe liked music and for £35-- Jaap bought an old piano and Joe was enrolled in piano-lessons at school. Fishing in the river was however Joe's favourite pastime!

Straight across the land ran Splitters Creek, which was mostly dry, except for a deep hole, that Jaap had dug for the cow, to drink from, in the times the riverwater got too salty. After heavy rain, the creek rose quickly and flowed over the road. The house stood on an island then, on one side the river on the other the swollen creek.

The road was then cut off, by the deep creek flowing fast towards the river.

Sometimes, after a heavy tropical storm, they had to ring the school, to ask, if the Van der Meer children could please be send home immediatly before the road was cut, and the water too deep to get safely through. Usually the waterlevel went down fairly quick, after the rain stopped. But when the river was in flood and the floodwaters flowed from the river in the creek, then it could be up to two weeks before the road was passable again. The first floodtime this occured, Jaap decided to make a raft, from the left over timber of the poultry-houses, and ferry the children, eggs and vegetables to the otherside. The ute was allready left there, in care of a neighbour. A sturdy raft was bolted together, and with the tractor pulled towards the creek and with united strength, they pushed the raft into the water, where it stayed at the bottom, it did not float ! Jaap was carrying on terrible; " This stupid rotten Australian wood, you can hardly drive a nail in, that does not bend, and now it want even float ! Who has ever heard of wood that does not float ? When I was a boy, I sailed a wooden gate across the Friesian lakes. ! " But he had no alternative, the heavy raft had to be dragged home again. To the delight of the boys, they had to buy a dinghy ! The difficulty was that the first one who rowed across in the morning moared the dinghy to a tree at the other side out of reach. One of the boys then had to swim across to retrieve it. Hans had soon made himself a boat, a 44 gallon drum, cut in half with a plank laid across !

When Frank and Joe were respectively 2 and 6 years old, Jaap decided to take a few weeks holidays. The Meatwork's season was finished and temporarily closed and nothing was ready to be picked or planted at that stage. Hans and Bart would look after the chooks and do the milking and the girls could manage the housekeeping between them. Frank and Joe were coming with Heit and Mum to Sydney. They were of course, going to stay with Joe and Riet, and also visit Annie , whom they had not seen for years. She had married Hans Kalwy and had a daughter and small son.

The old ute was traded in for a better car, a Dodge Sedan, the same brand of car, that Jaap drove so many years ago, during the war, towing a charcoal burner. Jaap looked so forward to driving the 1800 K.M. to Sydney. At last all the preparations were finished and they were on their way. Joe sat quietly enjoying himself in the backseat, next to Frank who's enthusiasme knew no bounds; "Mum, look there did you see that ?"

"Look Heit, quick, there comes a train, can you beat that train ? Only when he dozed of for a while was the peace restored. Jaap never tired of the driving over these seemingly endless roads through the endless changing scenery. And then staying the night in a motel ! It was indeed a luxurious holiday. Behind the wheel, Jaap was imagining a future holiday to Holland. "Can you see us drive into Gorredyk, just like this, me with one of those Australian felt hats on ? " "Yes" Richa laughed "and then I'll buy you one of those bright embroidered rodeo shirts. Would not the old men, gathering, at the bridge enjoy the sight ! " They fantasised and laughed about it for a while, realising very well, the impossibility of it all ! They passed through many towns, Jaap parked then for a while , to give the boys a chance to get out of the car for a spell, and themselves to have a look around.

Jaap commented, that Rockhampton compared very favourably with all the towns they had seen. Once arrived in Sydney, Joe and Riet showed them many of the breathtaking sights around this beautiful harbour city. Last year, Eltsje and Marietje had been together to Sydney by train, and Uncle Joe, had shown them around. At different places and look-outs he said to the boys; "Opa and Oma have been here too, and Eltje and Marietje also, now it is your turn." Father and Mother had so enjoyed their time in Australia, and all they had seen, they still wrote about it in every letter.

With Annie and her little ones they went to the zoo, where the youngsters did not have eyes enough to take it all in, and where it was the perfect opportunity to talk, while strolling along, about all the family matters in Rockhampton and Sydney.

On the return trip on the ferry to the city, they could not help remembering the arrival with the "FAIRSEA", now more than ten years ago. "Would you have liked to stay in Sydney"? Jaap asked "Not in the City itself, but in the outer suburbs would have been very nice!" Richa confessed. But all the older children had now practically settled in Queensland. Tine was engaged to Les, a young farmer from Goovigen. In the old packing case, they had brought from Gorredyk, she was getting her trousseau together. Each pay-day she added something to it. Jaap had just as much pleasure in it as Tine, and many a time, because Heit, asked her to, she unpacked all her treasures to be admired. Elly who worked in the Hospital had a boyfriend too. Both the girls were making wedding plans and would stay in Queensland! Sjoerd was completely at home in Clermont. Hans was working for a builder. They had all made friends in Rockhampton.

You could not just uproot everybody and start all over again and it was very nice living on the riverbank.

There were also plans for a barrage to be built across the river with gates designed to hold the fresh water back and that would solve the problem with the brackish water, "no Jaap", Richa said "When you think about it and talk about it, the only thing to do is stay where we are! We'll have to try and save to buy the place!"

That "saving" was easier said than done. The irregular work-periods at the Meatworks and the problems with the salinity of the river, meant good and lean times. The lean times always seem to consume the savings of the good times.

Tine got married in January 1963 to Les, and started life on the farm about 100 k.m. outside Rockhampton. Elly married Eddy a few years after, and also settled on Eddy's land far outside Rockhampton. Eddy was a grazier and forrester. On his mountainous land grew many rosewood trees, which were cut for fence-posts and yard-railings. The cattle grazed between the trees. Eddy's place was very popular with Hans, Albert and Bart who spent many weekends there, helping with the dipping of the cows and measuring of the trees, but the great attraction was the hunting of wild pigs, and the wallabies, which unchecked could reach plague proportions. All the boys had a gun of their own. Joe especially was a very good shooter.

Jaap had applied for a permit to build a small poultry abattoir, to process the old chooks, who did not produce enough eggs to earn their keep. He could then also buy day-old chickens and rear them till ready for the table! Before his application was approved he was required to send in a plan of the building.

And a site plan of the land, showing the position of the house and abatoir. To save the costs of having the plans drawn up, Richa did the necessary drawings herself.

The inspector came around and pointing to the poultry sheds, he asked did they have an approval for those buildings. Jaap, pointed out, that at the time he did not know that they needed an approval. Luckily the inspector was an easy-going man. "Just draw all those sheds on the side-plan too!" he advised.

The permit was soon granted and John Smith, the landlord came over to help Jaap with the building. That small abatoir turned out a good extra income. The young roosters sold very well, as the first rotary chicken ovens had just come out in cafetaria's, the broiler hens sold very well to the caterers. Bart was always Jaap's best helper with the slaughtering. They competed against the clock, who was the fastest worker, Bart always won! He could process 12 chickens, from start to finish in half an hour. The plucking was done by a machine.

In 1965, a daughter was born "Jacky"! Nicky was then 14 years and the little girl was spoiled right from the beginning, by her older sister. Frank was 4 now, and quite a character, never missing out on the delivery trips to the shops and caterers.

On Jacky's first birthday Opa and Oma from Wassenaar came for a second visit, again with the beautiful liner the "Willem Ruys". Again they enjoyed the long sea voyage. They had made friends on board, to play scrabble with, and a game of cards now and then. According to Opa, the losers had to pay for a round of drinks! They had gone ashore in Athens for a couple of days. Opa even climbed the Acropolis! He was now 76 and still very fit and full of interest for every thing, he encountered, on this second world-trip.

"We miss you very much in Holland Richa" he said one day, "but if you and your brother Joe had not immigrated to Australia, we would never have made these wonderful trips, almost around the world." "I think it is fantastic living here, and the world is getting smaller all the time. You'll see Holland back one day for sure!"

"The children are much better off here. The housing shortage, which started during the war, had still not been solved!" They visited Tine and Les, and Elly and Eddy on their property's and were amazed at the distances travelled, and the beautiful scenery.

Father, who had never driven a car, loved to drive, with great pride, the tractor on the land. Mother offered to help with the picking of beans, and to the amazement of the giggling children cut off every bean with a pair of embroidery scissors. Oma was a big help indeed! From Rockhampton the visitors flew again to Auckland in New Zealand, to stay with Frans and Berenice and their son Paul. In Auckland they would board the Willem Ruys again. On the return voyage, the ship would spend two days in Sydney harbour.

A couple of weeks after the visitors had left, Jaap was working on the car all day, singing happy Friesian ditties as he worked. Two pairs of legs protruded from under the car. Bart was helping, handing over the required tools. Finally Richa heard the clatter from the tools being thrown back in the metal tool-box and to her surprise, they started washing and polishing the car.. While he was still buffing up the last bit of chrome, Jaap called; "Come and have a look dear?" "beautiful," exclaimed Richa, "But why? the car has never shone like this! I have a feeling that you are up



to something.?" "Darling what would you say about a little trip to Sydney, while the "Willem Ruys" is there?" "Oh Jaap!" said Richa and threw her arms round his neck, which she had to pay for with a face full of greasy marks!"

Bart, Frank and Tine with her little daughter Carmel, came with them. After driving for two days, they arrived in Sydney just in time to welcome Oma and Opa on the quay.

Joe and Riet with their son Alan, Annie with her children, they were all there!

At the end of the two days, which flew past, with Oma telling about Frank and his family in New Zealand, and how she had even bathed in a hot pool!, Joe and Riet treated them all to a delightful farewell dinner, with as dessert an icecream-cake in the form of a ship, much to the delight of the children.

By the departure, all along the railings of the big ship stood lots of people still connected to their relatives on the quay, by countless colourful streamers, which had been thrown over, and snapped as very slowly, it's steamwhistle booming, the ship was towed away from the quay. Hundreds of white handkerchiefs waved at the ship, although the passengers were no longer recognisable. Joe quickly drove to the Heads, where they saw the stately ship sail out of the harbour. Richa's tears flowed again in profusion, these farewell's were always the saddest part of immigration, not knowing if they would ever meet again. All other problems, with the language, the totally different customs, the heat, and the literally fight to built up a new existence, she could cope, with common sense and a sense of humor.

Not long after that visit, Jaap bought the house and land, after a bean-harvest, which was prolific as well, that the price was good, which seldom happened both at once.

A mortgage was taken out to be paid over the years.

In 1967 Richard made his entry into the world! The two year old Jacky, took him under her wing as soon as he took his first step. They became inseparable!

Bart and Joe built soapbox-carts, to put the two little ones in. And then the racing was on. The boys pushed with all their might down the road, while Albert from the high tank-stand cheered the racers on. He did a good imitation of a racing commentator at the horse-races! Richa thought, it was too rough and dared hardly look, but Jaap just laughed and gave good advice with their cart-building, "Let them be, they'll be careful". Jacky and Richard loved it and could not go fast enough, did not even mind, as they came, without slowing down, on two wheels through the narrow gate!

That summer Jaap came home from the Meatworks with a sore back, which even under doctor's treatment got worse and worse. He gave up his job at the Meatworks, but kept on going as well as he could with the farm-work, especially as the barrage in the river was nearly finished. After the next good flow in the river the steel gates would be lowered and the water-supply for irrigation would be permanent.

The pain got so bad that an operation was necessary. Alas, his left foot was paralised as a consequence... He now had a caliper built on his shoe, to keep his foot up.

Richa bought him a walking-stick, which he seldom used, and then to make fun of it.

Jaap hardly ever complained and kept on working the farm and the small abatoir.

Maria in the meantime married Charles. She was now a fully qualified nursing-sister, at the general Hospital and after her marriage, she kept on studying for several nursing-

diplomas. Hans now worked for Les (Tine's husband) on their property. He loved the country life in all its aspects. Albert worked in town at a tyre-business. Rich would have liked him to stay at school for at least another year, but Albert chose to go to work. One evening at teatime, when all the happenings of the day were usually discussed, Albert mentioned, that at "smoko" a workmate had asked him where he lived. Albert had explained in Farmstreet at the bank of the river. "You can't be, a bunch of foreigners lives there" was the reply. "Yes mate! Sure. I'm one of those foreigners!" Albert had said laughing. Albert drove proudly in his own ute and often took a load of vegetables to the markets on his way to work early in the morning.

The barrage in the river was at last finished and with the necessary festivities, the gates were closed. For one day, the service walkway over the top of the barrage was open to the public, and with the children Richa joined in the fun.

Now there was a reliable water supply for their small business, Jaap had ploughed the field, it was ready to be planted. The tomato seedlings in the seedbeds were ready to be planted out. That was usually done towards the evening to evade the heat of the day. Then for a few hours it was "All hands on deck"!

Richa carefully dug the young plants out of the seedbeds, while Jacky and Richard carried the seedlings in trays to the field, and then ran back for the next lot. Jaap on the tractor pulled straight furrows in the damp soil and Bart, Joe and Frank planted the seedlings in the furrows.

The work was done fast and efficient. They all earned some pocket money to spend at the Rockhampton Show. This was always held in June. Frank, Jacky and Richard went with Heit and Mum at night, to watch the fire-works, then they rode on a horse in the merry-go-round and waved to Heit and Mum everytime they came past. The glow of a thousand little lights reflecting on their happy faces. Jaap was always so proud of his children.

He always enjoyed having the little ones around him and was obviously pleased as they were having such a good time. Richa had never even thought about a kindergarten as there were so many things to do on the farm to keep them occupied. Jacky was a great fan of Sesame street and could write lots of words, before she even started school.

She always included Richard in her games, who usually did what she told him to do, without protest or squabbling. And in their way, they helped, with feeding the chickens, collecting the eggs, with the planting and the picking and then accompanied Mum doing the deliveries. The tomatoes were doing great! It was going to be a bumper crop!

Every day they picked and packed. Joe had the task of emptying the heavy full baskets in the truck and the supplying the pickers with empty baskets. It was quite a hard job for Joe who was only thirteen. But he was allowed to drive the truck a short distance now and then, to stay close to the pickers, and for these bits of driving, he did not mind the "hard labour".

Most of the tomatoes went just as the eggs and the lettuce, straight to the shops!

It was Richard's third birthday, early in August, Jaap went with them to do the deliveries that day. After all deliveries had been made, Richard was taken to a big toyshop.

"Now boy" said Heit. "seeing it is your birthday, and you are already such a good helper, you may pick out your own birthday-present!"

The hundreds of toys on the shelves were too overpowering for the little boy and very modestly he picked up a little toy car. "No, boy" Jaap said "I'll show you something a bit better!" Together they inspected the rows of toys, till they came to a big red tractor with a trailer. "Would you like that?" Richards cheeks turned red with delight. On the way home, he sat happy and speechless between Heit and Mum, holding tight unto the big box on his lap.

Most of the tomatoes had been harvested. One more time, they would go along the rows, before the plants would be ploughed in. Hans had come home for a few days, he would do the ploughing! Richa was pleased that it would be less hectic for a while.

The coming Sunday was Fathersday and the whole house smelt nice from all the cooking that was being done. Tine and Elly would certainly come home, even although that meant a long drive. Tine and Les, with their two girls and little Michael, Elly and Eddy with Pauline. Jaap had already received cards from Annie and Sjoerd.

Father's day arrived, 7 Sept. 1970, a perfect day, with sunny skies and cool breezes. Jaap got, as usual with such a large family, lots of presents. They laughed hilariously about the new screwdriver. Jaap used a screwdriver for 1001 little jobs. But seldom to drive screws, he usually used an old knife for that purpose, as the screwdrivers, were always bent. So every Birthday, Christmas and Father's day, there was always at least one screwdriver among the presents.

Maria and Charles brought a fruit cake, with lots of currants and sultanas, made by Charles himself, while Maria was at work, and in which he had, Charles assured Jaap, put an extra measure of rum!

"Then it must be an extra special cake" Jaap laughed, "Those women-cooks are always so stingy with the fruit, you almost need a pushbike to go from one sultana to the next, to say nothing about the little drop of rum!" Charles also brought Jaap, a Dutch stone bottle of Bols. But that was not opened straight away, as the men present rather had a beer. Jaap would keep the bottle till his friend Ben Bom came. Now he would rather have a cup of tea as usual.

There was a very happy atmosphere, also partly because the tomato harvest had been so successful. And with the available fresh water, all year round, Jaap could see the light at the end of the tunnel. With Hans, Bart he discussed, what would be best, to plant next, and decided on beans again.

Jacky and Richard played outside, with their little nieces and nephew. They all climbed on the large gate between the garden and the fields, which then squeaking and groaning swung to and fro, to their great delight!

After all the visitors were gone, and the children in bed, Jaap and Richa sat talking for a while. In the boys bedroom downstairs, they still heard, the murmur of voices, that

was Hans and Albert talking about the events of the day.

"I wonder, where Charles got that bottle of Dutch Bols, here in Rocky?" said Jaap.

"How nice of him to go to all the trouble.. Next week on Jacky's birthday, we'll have a glass... Remember that home-brewed Berenburg we made?... Yes, we did have a lot of fun in that little pub!".. I wonder how Willem is, probably still driving for Koen Oenema!

Getting up from his chair, Jaap said; "Come on dear, tomorrow is another day."

For Jaap however, there was no other day!

He died during that night from a heart-attack.

There was inexpressible dismay and sadness. Richa sat there in the livingroom holding Jacky and Richard tightly against her. Albert had gone to get Maria and Charles and had left again to go to Elly and Eddy, who had no phone.

Hans had tried to revive Jaap and was so upset that he practically collapsed. Charles had taken him outside to calm him down. An ambulance attendant was trying to revive Nicky, who had fainted. Bart was making pots of tea, trying to do something to help.

The house seemed full of people, a doctor, a priest, ambulance-men, and one of Jaap's mates.

Richa rang her sister Maria in Holland, but could hardly utter a word. Also there (in Holland) great sadness! "Oh, Richa, I wished, I could be there to share this with you.

Yes I'll go with Leo to Mother and Father. I really don't know what to say, and how to tell them...!

After the first grim black days, Albert, Joe and Bart picked the last tomatoes. Hans did the ploughing. Richa sat on the riverbank with Frank, Jacky and Richard. It seemed as if part of herself had gone with Jaap.

She still heard Jaap's voice, telling her that the children needed her now more than ever.

The Sunday after that fatal Fathers-day was Jacky's fifth birthday. She had been sick all week "Asthma", the doctor said, "caused by grief!"

She felt a bit better now. They sang "Happy birthday" and Nicky had made a cake. The sad little birthday-girl got many presents, among which, a blackboard on an easel and a box of chalks. "Oh, thank you" said Jacky, then straight away, she took a piece of chalk from the box, and this just five year old, who had never even been to kindergarten, wrote in clear letters "J A A P" on that blackboard.. It seemed all of a sudden, he was still present at this birthday-celebration.

Three months after Jaap passed away, Richa got the sad message that her father had also died. Again there were the doubts with this new sadness; "Why did we ever come here?

Would it have been better if we had stayed in Holland? Father had hardly known his Australian grand-children. Was it worth all the heart-ache, this Immigration?"

"Also, according to Willem and Koen's letters and the Dutch newspapers Oma send occasionally, conditions in Holland were now far better as here in Queensland.

The Dutch Government had to import so-called "Guest-Workers" from countries like, North Africa, The West Indies, Turkey and Spain. This all seemed to make the Emigration Policies of the fifties so unnecessary!" Willem had long ago written that the work-

situation improved almost immediately after so many had left. She wished with all her heart, that they had stayed in Friesland. And so Richa's thoughts tumbled around and around. She often thought back to the conversation she once had with Jaap, in which he had said, to sell the house and the land in case something happened to him. At the time she had said: "Oh Jaap, don't be so morbid, what are you talking about?" unable to even assume, that such a situation could become a reality.

She did not know what to do.

Albert had to go into Military-service. He had already received dispensation for one year, but soon he had to go to Singleton in N.S.W.

Bart and Joe were still at school. There was not enough land to support a whole family, without having an outside income. Then on top of all that, there was the mortgage to be paid off!

On the other hand, Richa could not bear the thought of having to leave this place! It was a little world, so full of memories! Then came a letter from Joop and Riet, inviting Richa to come with the little ones to Sydney, to have a break. She travelled with Jacky and Richard per train to Sydney. Joe and Riet, as always, did their utmost to make their stay as memorable as possible. One highlight was an evening at a Dutch-Inn, where an accordion-player came to their table and invited Jacky to choose a song, and he would play the chosen song for her. Shyly she said; "Two little boys had two little toys, Each had a wooden horse" which to her great joy was then played.

When she returned to Joe's place, after having spent a day with Annie, he told her that Frans had phoned from New Zealand. Frans had bought tickets for his sister Richa and the children to fly to New Zealand. They were already halfway, Frans had reasoned! Once arrived there, and after a lot of talking, Frans also advised her to sell the house and land and to buy a house in town, She would be free from money-worries then and could concentrate herself fully to educate the children.

Bart's school years were coming to an end. He went to work in an engineering business as an apprentice fitter and turner. Nicky worked in a motel close-by. A year and a half after Jaap had died, the decision was made, The house was sold and together with Maria (Marietje), Richa found a suitable, nearly new house, on the outskirts of Rockhampton.

"You know what you should do Mum, you go on a holiday to Holland and take the kids" Nicky advised her, "Bart, Joe and myself will do all the moving. Hans and Les will come with Les's truck and give a hand too!" When you come back, the new house will be ready for you. These teenagers were 20, 17, and 15 years old at the time. Jaap had left his family a valuable legacy, not in money or possessions, but in love, caring, and the readiness to take on any job!

August 1972, the dream of 20 years became a reality. From Sydney, where she stayed with Joe and Riet, and who took her to the airport, Richa boarded the plane, with Frank, Jacky and Richard, destination ; " HOLLAND "

It was nearly 20 years ago that the family Van der Meer had left Holland on board ;  
" The Fairsea "

## CONCLUSION

The sun glittered over the snow-covered Alps.

Frank, Jacky and Richard, looked down in admiration, their noses pressed against the small windows of the plane, on the white expanse of mountain ranges.

"Snow" Mum had so often told them about snow! But never in their wildest dreams, had they expected anything like this, so pure and white and beautiful!

"Mum, do you think any one has ever been on those mountains?" Frank asked, "I can't see any tracks or path!" The beautiful view was suddenly wiped away by grey rags of mist, followed by a sombre dark cloudfield. "How can the pilot find his way mum?"

Frank wanted to know. After a little while, the plane descended beneath the cloud-cover and there beneath them was Holland!

Tears came into Richa's eyes. Seeing her native country again, where Jaap and herself had so often dreamed and talked about, was now a reality! It was such a typical Dutch scene, they now looked at from the plane; Long rows of brick houses with red tiled roofs, orderly arranged around the town centres, from which the church towers like fingers pointed to the heavens. Fields, straight as arrows and meadows cut by glistening narrow canals, into neat rectangles, here and there a windmill could be seen turning its sails slowly in the wind. The country-side was such a bright green as only the Dutch meadows can be! The stewardess helped the children put their seat-belts on, and soon after that, the plane landed on one of Schiphol's many runways.

While they were waiting for their brand-new suitcase (a present from Sjoerd) Richa peered at the waiting crowd behind a glass partition. Suddenly a large doll being waved about high above the heads, caught her eye. That was her sister Maria, who waved the doll, but those two excitingly waving ladies next to her, could they be her two little sisters? With a wave of his hand, a custom officer indicated Richa to move on with the three children. After the first welcoming embraces Netty called out; "Sis, you are so small!" She must have imagined her eldest sister also being the tallest one, and she had outgrown her sister! Leo drove the family to Oma in Wassenaar, who was eagerly awaiting them. The country-side they drove through, was to Richa still so familiar, as if she had never been away. Excitedly she pointed familiar landmarks out to the children, while talking non-stop to her sisters.

At arrival at Oma, every-body talked at the same time, so happy with this reunion.

Only about half an hour after their arrival, Richa saw from the window to her consternation, Frank rowing a boat in the canal that bordered the garden.

She had forgotten to warn Frank, not to trespass into other people's gardens, or to go rowing in any boat, he came across. He was not used to such restrictions.

"It's O.K. Mum" Frank called, "I asked those boys over there", pointing to a few boys on the bank. Frank could not speak Dutch and those boys probably no English but children seem to have this uncanny ability to communicate and words are not always necessary.

Also getting on with his cousins was no problem at all, the language difference was no barrier. This was certainly evident, when they visited uncle Leo and Aunty Maria, who were so fortunate to be living in Panbos, a natural forest area surrounded by sand-dunes, with a play area and even a small zoo! With lots of chasing and screaming, they played a game about a bad witch, where by a quiet little play-house in the vast garden, was used as a prison guarded by the Witch!

Leo and Maria had five girls and one boy (the youngest about 8 years old) and going to their place was always tops with the three young Van der Meers.

Many things had changed since 1953. Large high-rise buildings stood, where Richa could remember only meadows and fields. Many previously quiet streets were now busy traffic area's, many times she had to sound the warning; "Be careful children, stay on the footpath!" But Richa really felt at home again. One Sunday morning, she accompanied her mother to church, and she met an old schoolfriend. "Hello Betsy, How are you?"

"Oh, hello Richa, I have not seen you for ages, Don't you live around here anymore?"

And when she went to the butchershop, the butcher said "He, I know you, let me think! Of course, Richa from Hotel "Den Deyl", I have not seen you for a long time!"

When Richa went visiting old friends, she told them all about her life in Australia, and her family, some how, it sounded all very rosy!

The first terrible disappointments, the gnawing homesickness, and the feeling of being an outsider, these things were not discussed. It was not at all omitted on purpose, but how could anyone understand these things, unless you experienced them for yourself. Anyhow that was all in the past now. But she often thought; "If we had only stayed here. Had the emigration, the exhausting heat, the lack of all his old friends, perhaps been too much for Jaap?"

The weeks flew past with lots of outings and visits. The children were especially fascinated with Madurodam, a miniature country, with many replica's of wellknown Dutch buildings complete with canals and an airport, and the Efteling (a fairy story park). Frank found the planetarium in the Hague very interesting and shuddered at the thought of all the cruel torture that went on in the Prison Gate (Gevangen Poort), centuries ago.

Shortly before the departure day, Oma gave a farewell party, at which the conversation was very lively with hilarious laughter when Leo popped the champagne corks against the ceiling.

Departing time had arrived! "Allready" thought Richa. "At last" said the children happy to go home again! They had had a wonderful time, and thought Holland was very beautiful, but there were too many signs with "no trespassing", and you are not even allowed to walk on the grass!

They had also felt the cold, which was often, because they forgot to put on their coats, before going outside to play, as a coat was hardly ever worn in Queensland. And they were longing to see the new house, they were going to live in, and where Nicky, Bart and Joe were waiting for them.

The plane was full and they could not all sit together. Frank got a seat in another compartment of the plane, but as soon as the sign "fasten your safety belt" was off, he came to tell Mum not to worry. He already was on friendly terms with his travel-companions and when the stewardess proposed to ask if anyone wanted to change seats with him, he said; "No thank you", he would rather stay where he was, especially as he had a window seat.

In Karachi, where Richa stayed on the plane, as all personal belongings had to be taken with you, if you went to the terminal, and Richard had just gone to sleep, she saw Frank shuffle past to the Exit door, with an elderly couple. "This is Mum" he said in passing. "We'll keep an eye on him, they reassured Richa!

After landing in Rockhampton, Frank and Jacky were the first off the plane, they were so happy to be home again! The tropical heat, which engulfed the travellers as soon as the air-craft's door was opened, did not bother them at all. The air shimmered above the hot surface of the tarmac.

In the shade of the palm trees, Nicky, Bart and Joe were waiting for them. They drove straight to the new house, that Nicky with the help of Maria had made ever so cosy. Large fans, suspended from the ceiling, spread a cool breeze throughout the house. The following weeks, (with her thoughts still often back in Holland) were spent, trying to create a garden out of the bare piece of land surrounding the house. Richa loved gardening, and while digging and planting, she could let her thought wander...

"It had been so cosy in those Dutch houses, I can do that here too! a Happy atmosphere you have to create, it just does not come automatically. And think about those wonderful planes, you can so easily be in Holland now in just 24 hours! She was going to save, and there was no reason, why she could not go again in a few years. May-be she could earn some extra money, a part-time job?" Her Dutch family did not seem quite so far away now. With satisfaction she looked at the young healthy trees, and the strawberries already began to show their rosy colour. she turned on the sprinkler and just stood there for a minute looking at the birds, who came straight for the sparkling water, to have a shower, with a fluffing of feathers and twitterings of delight.

As the last one in the long line, Richard had started his school-years.

While in Holland, Jacky and Richard had each got a small bicycle from Oma, which were dismantled and carried in the big suitcase. Joe had reassembled the bikes again, and proudly they rode to school together on their shiny bikes.

That same year Nicky married Trevor, and Jacky, who was the junior bridesmaid, was in tears at the wedding, she did not want to part with her big sister. For years she and Nicky had shared a bedroom, and played countless "Country-Music" records.

"Trumby was a good boy" was one of them, for ever imprinted in Richa's head. Jacky and Nicky, regardless of their 14 years difference in age had been very close, and now Nicky was leaving home! But she will stay in Rocky, I'm sure you will see her often, Richa tried to console her youngest daughter.

It was getting much quieter in the house!



One day, Richa heard on the radio that many students of the College of advanced Education were looking for accomodation,preferably with full board. That would be a nice way to earn something extra for my next trip,went through her head.

And so it happened that Steve Thimios came to board with them. Steve came from Cairns, and fitted in very well.Jacky ,Richard and Frank,all grew very fond of him,Steve taught them to play cards and took Frank sometimes for a game of table-tennis.

Steve was always full of praise about the tropical beauty around Cairns and advised Richa to go for a holiday there some time.

For Christmas (1974 ), Frans and Bernice send their godson,the now 13 year old Frank an airline -ticket to New Zealand ;to spent the Christmas holidays with them and their 15 year old son Paul.Frank was so happy, and full of confidence he boarded the plane alone! Waved off by Mum and several brothers and sisters!

After Franks departure,Richa took the train to Cairns with Jacky and Richard,where Steve had organised accommodation. The next day she met Steve's parents and younger brother,who would the next year be a student in Rocky too. and wanted to stay with his brother at Richa's place. Steve got a loan of his Fathers car and drove the tourists around, to show them the wondrous beauty of the area,he had spoken so often about. Mr. and Mrs. Thimios treated Richa and the children to a pic-nic at the Mosman- Gorge It was a wonderfull spot,a waterfall cascaded from above into the crystal clear water of the creek,which flowed through the ravine.The creekbed was full of huge boulders,polished smooth by the swift-flowing water over the centuries. The high walls of the ravine were covered by tropical trees and vines. The beauty of the place combined with the very pleasant company made this an onforgettable day. The following year both brothers Thimios boarded with Richa.

It was close to holiday-time again and Albert,who since his discharge from Military-Service had settled on the Gold-Coast,rang up and said : "Mum,you know how I dislike shopping,so you won't get any presents coming Christmas. Instead I rented a holiday-flat for you and the children!" what a treat that was! By train and bus they travelled to the Gold-Coast. All sorts of outings were made to the different attractions, the Lion-safari Park, Sea-world with the dolphins,and Currumbin the bird-sanctuary. In between they lazed on the white sand of the beach,or swam,or walked along the shore. They gazed in amazement at all the luxury and pomp of some of the buildings there. No wonder it was called " The Playground of the Southern Hemisphere !"

In 1977 Richa took Jacky and Richard again to Holland,as it was the last year Jacky could travel for half price, and now they were 5years older,they could enjoy it even more. A stopover was made at Athens,where they climbed the Acropolis and Richa thought of her father,how he must have enjoyed those few days in Athens,back in 1966! Especially father ! Who had those beaut ancient history and mythology books,just out of interest ! Joe and Frank stayed at Maria and Charles during that trip. The school years of the young ones flashed past and allready,they were both in high-school,when the family in Holland were making plans for Oma's 80 th birthday.

Richa would love to go to Holland for that occasion, but who would look after the children? Joe and Rose, who had recently got married, and lived in a flat, offered to stay at home with them, so Richa could go to Holland with peace of mind. Joe and Rose's new house would be built for them in the meantime! Tine would accompany Mum to Holland. It would be quite an experience for Tine, to see the country, where she was born again, after so many years. Richa's brothers Joe and Frans would come to Holland too, for their Mother's 80th birthday.

On the day, Oma was surrounded by flowers and they had a lovely festive dinner, Oma's only sister, who had been living in England for years, had come over too.

Frans had brought his guitar all the way from New Zealand, and in between the Dutch songs, he sang Maori songs and even Aussie songs in which Richa, Tine and Joe heartily joined!

One quiet evening, when Richa and her mother sat cosily together, Mother brought out a large box and said; "Do me a pleasure and choose whatever you like to have and take it. I am getting older and I am cleaning up." A treasure of old photographs unfolded, some nearly 80 years old. Each photo was admired, while mother talked about her parents, aunty's and the occasions when these photographs were taken.

But the greatest surprise was yet to come! In the bottom of the box, Richa found a yellowed newspaper-clipping that mother had cut out of the "Volkskrant" in 1953.

It was a large newspaper-photo, of the five families around Father van Yssel on board the "FAIRSEA", in the harbour of Melbourne, with an associated article, that predicted a "Tremendous Future" awaiting these migrants!

Richa had never known that photograph existed and read with growing amazement the article, that pictured Australia as a real Mecca for Dutch farmers, who would all be in a few short years, very successful landowners. She could not stop studying the photo, again and again, it brought back so many memories! Very carefully, she put the newspaper-cuttings among the selected photo's she was taking back to Australia.

During their holiday, Richa and Tine also travelled to Friesland and stayed with Koen and Nel Oenema in Gorredyk. Koen was the owner of the transport-business, who years ago had employed Jaap to drive a bus with workers to and from the North-East-Polder every day. And Nel had become Richa's best friend from the first day, she married Jaap. They did an awful lot of talking to catch up. Koen had built up a large transport and car-sales business. He told Richa also, that not long after Jaap and you left, the Dutch economy had rapidly recovered from the post-war depression. His son had succeeded him in the business.

Nel organised a couple of bicycles for the visitors and together Richa and Tine went looking for the old familiar places. It was early spring and although it was sunny, a cutting wind blew over the fields. Their travels brought them to the spot on the lake, where the old thatch-roofed farmhouse, where Jaap grew up, once stood.

But at the end of the sandy back-road through the beautiful Friesian landscape, now stood a proud new farmhouse. Tine recognised the two large pear-trees that had stood in front of Pake and Beppe's house, still healthy and in full blossom! It still was

a very idyllic setting. Only the rustling of the long reeds on the shore of lake "the Lye" was audible accompanied by the sound of many birds....

A man was cleaning water-weeds out of a ditch and noticed the two strange ladies leaning on the gate. He looked a spitting image of Pake, who had worked this same land for so many years. Blue farmers jack, black clogs, and a stubbly face under an askew grey cap, his back bent by long years of hay-making and ditch-cleaning. With slow paces he came to the gate, touched his cap with his hand in greeting, and asked in the "Friesian" language if the ladies might have lost their way?

"No Sir" Tine answered in Australian accented Friesian, "My folks used to live here. I am one of the children of Jaap Van der Meer. Sjoerd and Tryntje were my Pake and Beppe". (grand-parents)

"Oh yes, Jaap went to Australia" said the man, "You must be Annie or Tryntje?"

"Yes, I am Tryntje and this is my mum, we are here on holidays, all the way from Australia!" "Oh, Lordy" answered the man "Little Tryntje, how are you all doing out there? How is Little Sjoerd, with his sore hand? Can he earn a living out there? And fat little Hans, he must be nearly a man now? Oh Lordy! if only old Sjoerd could have been here now, how happy he would have been,! He missed you all so much!

"Come with me to the house Yes, farming has changed a lot. A highway is cut straight through the meadows to Ljouwerd! There was an other little girl, Eltje, was n't there? I remember you all so well." After having talked for a while, they got on their bikes again, deep in thought, they pedalled on to the auntys Tine and Teikje, Jaap's sisters, who had never left the tiny village "Opeinde".

They were not visiting strangers here, part of them had stayed behind in this flat green land. At the end of the sandy road they looked back once more..

The farmer and his wife were still at the gate waving goodbye to them. Richa could just imagine what they would say to each other; "Oh Lordy, Lordy, this womanfolk all the way from Australia! How did Jaap ever dare to go so far, far away with that Dutch woman and all those little kids!"

The squat farm dwelling, at the second lock in the canal at Jubbega, where Jaap's best mate Willem used to live with his wife Eibertsje, had been demolished and a new house built in its place. The people that lived there now, told them that Willem had moved to Joure, to be closer to their daughter, now they were getting older. They did not have their address.

The next day, Koen and Nel drove them to Joure, an interesting old town, where years ago, Douwe Egberts established a coffee, tea and tobacco business and where the first small factory is now a very well-known museum! Taking a chance, Koen stopped the car and asked a passing lady, if she perhaps knew, where Willem van der Dam was living?

The woman looked thoughtful for a minute, and to Richa's amazement said; "Oh yes, Lieskes father moved here from the "second lock" in Jubbega!" And five minutes later they knocked on Willem and Eibertsje's door. What a reunion! Tears were shed about Jaap's passing away again Willem had been so upset when the news had reached them at the time There was so much to talk about and catch up on.!

" As soon as you left, times were getting better "said Willem,"You only have to look at all the new homes and highways that have been built !" But right now things were not so good either, Willem's grandson had been out of work for quite some time . Tine had to get used to Willem's new image. Instead of the dark corduroy work trousers and coat,clogs and cap,he now wore a suit,with a crisp shirt,shining shoes and a jaunty hat. "Whenever we knew there was something on T.V. about Australia,we always watched "said Eibertsje," We thought you never know,may-be we'll see Jaap or Richa or one of the children on the screen !"

Koen and Nel,took their visitors back to Wassenaar over the great causeway "Afsluitdyk" through the Zuiderzee. A delightful day was spent on the island Texel,where Nel originally came from,and where they still had a holiday- home.

But all good things come to an end,and this lovely holiday was no exception.

In the plane on the way back to Australia, Tine confided to Richa,that before they had left for Holland,she had been terrible worried about her family and how they would get on in her absence,it had been so difficult to decide whether or not to go with Mum. Once in Holland however,she had not worried at all and hardly ever had the time to think about the family. There had been so many things to see and do.

But she did not think she could ever get used to Holland again and was very happy to live in Australia "Brrr...That cold bleak climate..." Tine said, "give me warm,sunny Queensland any time "!

Since that last visit to Holland ,three years have passed again.

Frank,who wanted to see more of Australia before settling down,now lives in Perth.

Jacky has entered the nursing profession,hereby following in her sister Maria's footsteps. Richard is working as an apprentice in a kitchen-factory .

One day Richa received a letter from Frank Vogels ,who lived in Timboon in Victoria.

Years ago Frank had drawn a block of land in a land ballot. A new house was supplied with the land,but it had to be stocked and improved within a set time. Over the years Frank had, with his wife Dorothy ,built up a thriving dairy-farm, had evn bought the neighbouring property. Now Frank and Dorothy invited Richa to come to Timboon for the wedding of their eldest daughter. To Richa's regret she could not go on the wedding-date. Frank wrote again and asked her to come in February,as that was the time they were not so busy on the farm.

And that is why Richa sat now in the train speeding towards the south.First she planned to stay a few days with Albert and Robin at Pimpama at the Gold-coast,then she would travel on to Sydney,to stay with Joe and Els and also visit Annie and her family.

From Sydney she took the nighttrain to Melbourne. From Melbourne a three hour train-journey took her to Camperdown, where Jenny (Frank's Daughter) lived and took her to her home. That is where Frank came to meet her and in an other hour ,she was in Timboon. The scenery was totally different from the Queensland landscape.

It consisted of undulating green paddocks,with dark green lines of trees,planted there to shelter the houses and the dairy's against the strong cold ocean wind.

Frank Vogels pointed out several farms occupied by Dutch people, He showed her proudly his modern dairy and his well-fed, glossy, black and white Friesian cows. Dorothy had always helped him in the dairy.

After a few days in which Frank and Dorothy showed Richa a lot of the surrounding country-side and the rugged coast-line, with sandstone formations, known as the twelve apostles, rising from the ocean, they took her to Frank's mother, Dora Vogels.

After about a half hour drive, Frank turned in through a wrought iron gate, on which in artistic lettering could be read "Slabroek". This was the name of the place the "Vogels" originally came from, in Brabant, a southern Dutch Province.

Dora Vogels was already waiting at the door. She had not changed a bit, still the slim friendly woman, Richa remembered so well. She was still living on the same farm, where they had settled after arriving from Queensland. Even the old truck, that had carried them and all their possessions stood in a shed like a museum-piece.

Her sons Martin, Gerard and John had worked together, for many years now, on this extensive modern farm. Something that Richa noticed straight away was, that they still spoke Brabants a lot. Even the grandchildren could understand their Oma perfectly, even when she spoke in her soft fluent Brabants tongue.

Dora explained that there were a lot more immigrants here than in Queensland.

There were clubs and organisations specially for people who came originally from Holland. Even a local Dutch Newspaper.

With Frank and his mother, she visited Diny and Jane, and recognition came instantly. They attended a house-warming party for "baby" Mary at Peterborough, a nearby coastal township.

For the last evening of the visit, a Vogels family get-together was organised. "Uncle Bill" and his wife were there too. Willem Vogels had also travelled as one of the Father Yssel families on the "FAIRSEA". Richa remembered them well. He was the brother Gerard had always talked about and wanted to join so badly.

Richa took the yellowed newspaper-clippings from her bag and showed them around. NO-one present had ever known of the existence of the article or seen the photograph. There was great hilarity when they examined the photo and read the article! They were all present in the old-newspaper. I still remember that dress I'm wearing laughed one of the "girls". Willem then told Richa that his family had been sent to the edge of the desert, after leaving the Fairsea. There had been times that the family could only exist by trapping rabbits. They had no transport and the "farmer" where they had been sent, prevented them from having any contact with the outside world! It had been a real nightmare for them!

It turned out a very happy evening, even with all the memorable stories of their arrival and the first dreadful years. Thank goodness that they could all laugh about it now!

After all the visitors had finally departed, Richa and Dora sat at the table and talked for a while.

The conversation was mainly about Gerard and Jaap and how they, as head of their families had to bear the brunt of all the worries, and had felt so responsible for all the decisions that had to be made.

Gerard had died of a heart-attack too, in 1968. He was 65 years of age.

Dora agreed that if they had stayed in Holland, life would have been a whole lot easier. They came to the conclusion however and this was their great consolation, that all the children and grand-children had very happily settled in, and not one of them had ever thought about going back to Holland.

Dora and Richa however, both hoped to be able to go on another trip to Holland soon visit family and friends once again. For them, the old home country still held a lot of attraction, even though "HOME" was now here in Australia!