

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

IMPRESSIONS – REFLECTIONS

Beth Vermeulen



Figure 1
Family Vermeulen arriving in Australia
Courtesy: Vermeulen Family.

Some forty years or more ago I had the privilege to become part of the Vermeulen family. I would like to give you an insight in to the family as it was then and how it is now. You can, or I hope you can, imagine the culture shock for me. I had come from a family of only four people, one of whom was hardly ever at home, so there was just Dad and Mum and myself - a really quiet family where there was never much discussion!

I vividly remember my first Sunday at 45 Leschenault Street in Lockyer. Nel and her boyfriend, John Spaanderman had picked me up from David Street where we were living and had taken me to church, which at that stage was all delivered in Dutch.

Rene translated the service into English, as it went along. After church, it was back home to Leschenault Street for coffee, cake and lunch. Poor Oma Vermeulen, here she was with someone for lunch who only spoke English, and to think her eldest son did this to her!

Lunchtime approached, the girls set the tables and Oma called out: "Tafel sitten". There must have been about eighteen or more of us. What a noise, all talking at once and then Oma places this huge pot of soup on the table and proceeds to give everyone a generous helping, but before we start to eat she asks for a blessing on the food. All is now quiet except for the clinking of spoons on the plates – delicious soup – as only Oma could make it. I've tried and tried over the years, but mine never tastes as good as Oma's.



Figure 2
Family Vermeulen's first house
Courtesy: Vermeulen Family.

After the soup, the noise starts again but only until the main meal. Let's face it, there were many different personalities around the table, some talkative, some argumentative and some just happy- what a special day this was turning out to be for me.

Now to the main meal.

Can you visualise me sitting at the table with all these people and being used to usually having my meal placed in front of me, already served up by my mum – no saucepans or dishes in sight? To my amazement, out comes the meal and also the saucepans which held enough to have fed our own family for about two weeks; there were potatoes, beans, cauliflower and yummy meat balls and, of course, gravy or jus and sometimes even *Appelmoes*. Then, to top it all off, usually custard and fruit or something just as nice. The Bible is read and thanks given for the food. The table is cleared and the dishes, many of them, are washed and put away.

Games are played or just talking together, but all of this is so special, a real happy family life.

Oma didn't have it easy, yet she loved each one of her children. Each one was special and she was always there for them, not only for her children, but for others children too. She was always there to listen to them in their time of need, and as I stand here tonight, I can't help but think how the Lord has used each one of Oma's children to help build His church, through children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

So you can see by just this brief outline, how the Vermeulen family have become my family, a different culture maybe, but all serving the same Lord.

Figure 3 and 4

Left, Family Vermeulen - all grown up.
Right, Family Vermeulen and their partners.
Courtesy: Vermeulen Family.

